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**The Greatest of Men in the Worst of Times: An Introduction to Job
Job 1:1-5**

June 16, 2019
Christ Church of Clarkson
0619Job1.1-5(1) | 51:58

The Democracy of Suffering

Starting the book of Job on this day carries with it a little bit of irony. I have been hoping to begin a series in Job for quite some time, and as you no doubt know, it's a book about suffering. It's also a book that, over the past few years, I've spent quite a bit of time in.

The last three years Lois and I have been in a time of unparalleled grief and suffering—and we recognize that we're not alone— that suffering is a democracy freely included in this race called life. But here we are starting the book of Job on June 16 (that's part of the irony). June 16 marks the three year anniversary of Giana's passing following her last surgery, the surgery that would subsequently claim her life. We don't know exactly when she died. Maybe the evening of the 15th (right after surgery), maybe the 16th, certainly by the 17th. But her earthly race was run. The fact that this is Father's Day makes it especially difficult.

But we said that suffering in this life is a democracy. We all suffer because of the introduction of sin into this world. And that's true as well for those who are savingly related to Him, today and in the past. Speaking of the past history of humanity, we now go far back in time to a story about a man named Job. And so with that in mind I want you to focus your attention on the first verse of chapter 1: Job chapter 1, verse one.

1 There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job; and that man was blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil. 2 Seven sons and three daughters were born to him. 3 His possessions also were 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 female donkeys, and very many servants; and that man was the greatest of all the men of the east. 4 His sons used to go and hold a feast in the

house of each one on his day, and they would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. 5 When the days of feasting had completed their cycle, Job would send and consecrate them, rising up early in the morning and offering burnt offerings according to the number of them all; for Job said, “Perhaps my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.” Thus Job did continually.¹

May our Lord add His blessing to the reading of His Word as we devote our time to Him.

We pray, Lord, that you would bless our time beginning in this book named Job. Impress the truth upon our minds that we might remember; press it into our hearts deep that we might learn and obey. We asked these things in Christ's name. Amen.

The Greatest of Men in the Worst of Times

My title is “The Greatest of Men in the Worst of Times.” Verses one through five set the stage for this story, but verses one through five also set the stage for impending disaster. It's about the greatest of men in the worst of times, indeed. And it's a story about his life. It's a life story.

Each one of us has a life story and Job is no different. For us that story includes happy times and sad times. For those of us who have suffered calamity in our lives, there is always a tendency to look back, to think back when things were better. One of the hardest things for me to do is to look at pictures of our daughter back during those good times, to see her smiling and happy, with no idea that calamity would fall upon her life (and ours). A calamity that would unfold starting with a trip to get a Christmas tree on December 24, 2015—a trip that would be cut short by an encounter with a drunk driver. For Job there were happier times. If there were photographs back then, we might see pictures of a smiling Job with happy children and a prosperous household.

¹Scripture citations are taken from the NAS95 unless otherwise noted.

Setting the Stage for Disaster, Part 1

This morning we are going to be setting the stage—doing so in two parts as far as our outline is concerned—“Setting the Stage for Disaster, part one” (verse one). But first I want you to note that this is a story about a man named Job, something we see from the very beginning in verse one: **“There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job.”** According the Old Testament scholar Gleason Archer, the name “Job” likely comes from an Arabic root meaning “to come back” or “repent,” but that's by no means certain. Other scholars hold that it means “to hate” or “to be an object of enmity.”

As for the book that bears his name, it is considered a literary masterpiece within Christian circles and outside of them. Martin Luther uses two words to describe the book of Job, “magnificent and sublime.” Thomas Carlyle, the 19th century Scottish essayist said that “there is nothing written, I think, in the Bible or outside of it, of equal literary merit.” The Old Testament scholar R.K. Harrison writes: “Certainly it is unmatched in the writings of the Old Testament for its artistic character, its grandeur of language, depth of feeling, and the sensitivity with which the meaning of human suffering is explored.” Tennyson called Job “the greatest poem of ancient or modern times.”

Job is largely a poem. It's part of what we call “Old Testament. wisdom literature,” which includes the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. As far as Job the man is concerned, he is mentioned elsewhere in the Bible, such as in Ezekiel 14:20 and James 5:11. As far as that latter passage from the New Testament we read that, as James writes, “We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.” The old King James Version

translates the word “patience.” The Greek word *hupomonē* is better translated “endurance.” Job wasn't always so patient in the midst of his struggles, but Job endured.

Job lived in a place called Uz and we can only speculate as to where Uz was! Locations in ancient Edom (which bordered Israel from the south) and northern Mesopotamia (north of Israel) have been suggested, but as one commentator notes, “Uz was distinguished from [Edom] in Jeremiah’s time, if not before it (Jer. 25:20–21).” So we’re not exactly sure that the location of Uz in Job’s time was consistent with what we see in latter times. Some scholars suggest that Uz was in Bashan, south of Damascus (Syria). Others say Uz was east of Edom, in northern Arabia. An Arabic locale fits many of the customs, geography and vocabulary of Job. So we’re not exactly sure where Uz was located in Job's time. However, Uz was near a desert (Job 1:19), it was fertile for agriculture and livestock-raising (1:3, 14; 42:12), and it was probably outside Palestine proper.

The book itself was likely written in Aramaic and translated into Hebrew at a later date. It's a book with a rich vocabulary that reveals influences from several different languages such as Hebrew, Aramaic, Akkadian, Arabic, Sumerian and Ugaritic.

What about the structure of the book of Job? How does it break down? Well, the simplest way to see the book in a way that you can actually remember has been described by one commentator as four “logues:” prologue, dialogue, monologue, and epilogue. The “prologue” is in prose or narrative (chapters 1-2). The “dialogue,” contains prose and poetry (chapters 3-37). The “monologue” involves God directly speaking (chapters 38-41). And then an ending “epilogue,” again in narrative form (chapter 42). 83% of the book, as I noted, is dialogue. That's the majority of the book of Job from chapter 3 through 37. It's dialogue; it's a conversation. And

in that conversation, there are three cycles of speeches whereby Job replies to each of his friends. It's sort of like "three go-rounds whereby Job interacts with his friends. Three cycles.

Now some may ask the question about Job, "Is it really historical? Did a man named Job really exist? Some have claimed that the man Job never existed, that this is merely a parable or an allegory. For several reasons that I'm not going to go into now we would reject that idea. Indeed, it's a book about a real person who experienced real suffering—and who worshiped a very real God. Harrison writes, "While the book cannot be regarded as history in the ordinary sense, there seems little reason to doubt the existence of a then historical personage behind the narrative who passed through some sort of experience involving suffering . . ." [Harrison, 1032]

So Job is a poetic dialogue. And the poetic dialogue (the conversations between Job and his three friends) is not intended to be verbatim quotes of what they said, but accurate portrayals of their conversation in poetic form. God preserved the account in poetic form and that is what is inspired and inerrant.

When we talk about the date of the book of Job, we talk about it from two perspectives: 1) when did the events happen?; 2) when were they recorded or written down?

As far as the events of Job's life, when they occurred, there's no doubt in my mind that we're talking about a time before Moses, during the time of the patriarchs (such as Abraham).

Quickly, here are nine reasons for this assertion:

1. The length of Job's life matches those during the time of the Old Testament patriarchs. Job may have been around 60 when the events of the book transpired and we know that he lived another 140 years after that. He was part of that period of unusual longevity that was nonetheless diminishing (because it was so closely related to the time subsequent to the Flood). As the effects

from the Flood began to wear off and dissipate, people's life spans became more like they are now. If we look at Terah, Abraham's father, he lived to be 205. Abraham lived to be 175; Isaac 180; Jacob 147 (you can see that the longevity is starting to decline). So Job's approximate age of 200 places him in that general time period. So number one, the length of Job's life.

2. *Job's wealth was measured in livestock.* That was common for that time period (this was true of Abraham, and later Jacob).

3. *We read in Job about groups of people, Sabeans and Chaldeans, who are described as nomadic (they traveled around in tents).* This wasn't true of the Sabeans and Chaldeans in later times as it was true of them during the patriarchal period.

4. *Job was the priest of the family.* There was no official priesthood in place yet. He served as father, husband, and priest over his family.

5. *There is no mention of the Mosaic Law in the book.*

6. *The word "Almighty" (Hebrew Shaddai) is used of God 31 times in the book of Job.*

This is typical use during the patriarchal age.

7. *Personal and place names used in the book are those associated with the patriarchal period.*

8. *The name "Job" was a common Western Semitic name in the second millennium BC.*

9. *There are stylistic parallels to ancient Ugaritic literature in the book.*

So those are our nine reasons (obviously, they could be expanded further). But just to give you an idea, scholars are nearly unanimous that the events described in the book of Job occurred during the patriarchal period. The evidence is weighty.

But when was the book of Job written? This is a different question than when did the events themselves happen. When was Job written? Well, we don't know for sure. Some have held that the book was written shortly after the events themselves, but views overall have ranged from 2100 BC to 600 BC. Older scholars thought the book was written by a contemporary of Job, or Job himself. Most modern scholars, even conservative ones, date the actual writing to a latter time. Here are some of the options:

1. Written before the time of Moses in the Patriarchal age. Uncommon today.
2. Written during the reign of Solomon. This is a more common view today. It was the view of Martin Luther.
3. During the reign of Manasseh (7th c. BC).
4. During the period of Jeremiah (late 7th c. BC).
5. During the Babylonian Exile (6th c. BC).

All of these have been suggested; we don't know for sure.

You might wonder who wrote the book. Well again, we don't know for sure. Some of that depends on when it was written. Obviously, if Job wrote it (or a contemporary of Job) then it dates to the patriarchal period. Common among the Jews was the view that Moses wrote it. Some say Solomon, others Hezekiah, some say Isaiah, or even Ezra. So like our New Testament book of Hebrews, only God knows for sure who wrote it.

What about a theme? What's the major theme of Job? You say, "Well, it's about suffering." Yes it is, but it transcends that. Beyond suffering, it's a book about faith. It's a book about faithfulness: "Why does a righteous person serve God?" For the benefits? For "fire insurance?" Or because they recognize who God is? And it is a book about God's sovereignty, His holiness, His faithfulness. It's a book that looks forward to the time of Jesus Christ, the only

person who ever lived, who personified undeserved suffering, and who alone could join all of His suffering servants into one redeemed church. And it's a story about a man of faith and character.

And so if you look back at verse one, “There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job; and that man was blameless, upper right fearing God and turning away from evil.”

Job's Piety

I want you to note, first, as we look at the text, *Job's piety*. He's described according to four different titles: “**blameless, upright, fearing God, turning away from evil.**” He is a blameless man, but not a sinless man. Calvin suggests the word “integrity” that would encompass the meaning of this Hebrew word for “blameless.” He is also “upright,” from the Hebrew word meaning “straight” or “level,” a consistent behavior that is in line with the ways of God. As one author notes, “Whereas the previous term blameless highlights internal wholeness of character, this word implies external straightness in comparison to others.” [Talbert, 28] He was, in other words, blameless inwardly, but he also was blameless or a man of integrity outwardly as well.

Third (and we will spend most of our time here), he feared God. Here's the first time in the book of Job that the name of God is mentioned, right here in verse one. But again, note the time, the time when the story occurs. We're talking roughly the time of Abraham, 2000 years before Christ. Here's a man that feared God. The real God, the true God. The only God. This was during a time of spiritual darkness before the nation of Israel, before the giving of the Law through Moses.

Hop back into the time machine with me. We're back in the patriarchal age, a time of nomads and tents and sheep. We're as far back on the backside of the Cross, 2000 years, that we are now on the front side of the Cross, 2000 years. We live in a time where there's just so much

abject paganism. People have drifted away from a knowledge of God; a knowledge that had been initially preserved by Noah and his family after the Flood. And God calls a man named Abraham out of a place called Ur of the Chaldees (Genesis 11). And God promises this man Abraham a great inheritance consisting of land, the land of Israel, a posterity (he would become a great people and blessing; through him all the nations of the earth would be blessed). And it's a sovereign call. Abraham wasn't seeking the true God, but the true God was seeking Abraham. And then around the same time, many miles away, God is calling a wealthy man named Job in the land of Uz. And unlike Abraham we're not told how God called him, but here he is: he fears God, he fears the true God who stands as a light out of all the false pagan deities of the age.

We're more familiar with the phrase, "the fear of the Lord," and there's actually scholarly debate as to whether Job's "fearing God" and the later Solomonic, "the fear of the Lord" are the same thing, or are they different. For one thing, when you read the phrase "fear of the Lord" in the Old Testament, it's almost always "the fear of Yahweh" (or Jehovah). The fear of Yahweh, the covenant, personal name of God revealed to Moses in Exodus chapter 3. But here in verse one we have "fearing God." God here is the more generic term *Elohim*. It can mean god, it can mean false gods (plural) or the one true God. We have *Elohim* used in Job 28 where we have the phrase "the fear of the Lord," but not "the fear of Yahweh," "the fear of Elohim." But I think when the dust settles we're basically talking about the same thing. To fear the Lord, Yahweh, in the rest of the wisdom literature, like Proverbs, is not unlike Job's more ancient concept of fearing God, or fearing Elohim.

What Does It Mean to “Fear the Lord?”

But were still left with the question, what does that mean? What does it mean to fear God? What does it mean to fear the Lord? It’s not something we talk about very often. We talk about knowing Jesus and “Is Jesus your ‘personal Savior?’” But perhaps we could talk in terms of “Do you fear God?” That would seem awkward. But you see it's not just an Old Testament concept. Acts chapter 9, verse 31: “The church, throughout all Judea and Galilee, and Samaria, enjoyed peace, being built up and going on *in the fear of the Lord*. The apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:11 said, “We persuade men, knowing *the fear of the Lord*.” But what does it mean? What does it mean to fear the Lord?

Defining the word “fear” and what that means for the believer can be like nailing the proverbial Jell-O to the wall sometimes. And the struggle is, how do we take the English word “fear?” Synonyms just don't seem to do it justice within the biblical context. I looked up some synonyms for the word “fear” and I came up with “angst, anxiety, concern, despair, dismay dread, horror, panic, scare, terror, aversion, distress, foreboding, fright, trembling, trepidation.” Is that what we’re talking about when we talk about the fear the Lord. It depends.

For the believer, here's how I would define it: “Reverential awe that results in worship and humble obedience fueled by love.” It is reverential; there’s a reverence for God. And there's an awe, not like being in awe of something like fireworks or the Grand Canyon, but an awe that's a jaw-dropping awe at the majesty of God. And that reverential awe that encompasses a healthy fear, results in worship and humble obedience. For the believer it's humble obedience; it’s not earning my way before God. It's I am so in awe of Him and the power that He has, that is so

awe-inspiring that I will serve Him, I will obey Him. And it's fueled by love. It's a powerful awesomeness that leaves the worshiper changed. That's for the believer.

I think for the unbeliever, though, it is a foreboding terror (at least it ought to be a foreboding terror for the unbeliever). So it just depends on which side of God you are on. Do you know Him through Jesus Christ? Then it's *a reverential awe that results in worship and humble obedience fueled by love*. If you don't know Christ—if you're going to face a holy God in the nakedness of your sin—then it ought to be a foreboding terror.

Think of a superhero. Think of an imaginary Superman with superpowers. You're at home and some crooks break into your home, and they're threatening you and your family—your very lives. They mean business. And suddenly Superman shows up unexpectedly. You would see Superman in a very different way than the bad guys. The bad guys would feel a foreboding terror. You would experience a reverential, joyful awe. That's a glimpse, a small glimpse, a very imperfect analogy—but it's an analogy nonetheless. This Superman, after all, if he existed would melt before holy omnipotent God. We wouldn't worship the Superman. In fact, the head of a pin in comparison to infinite space would not come close to comparing him to God. But it gives us some perspective. Take my Superman illustration and then apply it to an immeasurably, holy, sovereign, eternal, omnipotent God, who holds the power of life and death, heaven and hell. The result is reverential awe that results in worship and humble obedience fueled by love.

In Genesis chapter 20 we find Abraham in the land of the Philistines, the wicked Philistines, and he is seeing the depravity all around him. And so what he does is not something he should have been done, but what he does is he lies about his wife, thinking to himself, as recorded in verse 11 of Genesis 20: “There is no fear of God in this place. They won't respect my

marriage, so I'll say she's my sister.” Deuteronomy chapter 25 verse 17, the wicked Amalekites are said to have *no fear of God*. Friends this is where we live, we live in a time when there is no fear of God. We live in a culture of death, a culture of moral confusion. There is no fear of God in America today. Our currency may say “In God we trust,” but we neither trust nor fear Him. People fornicate like animals. Marriage is under attack in so many ways. The family is in disarray. We reject God's role as Creator, and refusing to accept the roles He has given for sex, gender, and marriage. We reject God's role as life-giver in our modern day secular sacrament of abortion.

We can understand a secular nation that doesn't fear the Lord. I find it hard to understand a church, a Bible believing, evangelical church in America that also doesn't fear the Lord. But we have to be honest with ourselves, *do we fear Him?* Do we have that reverential awe that results in worship and humble obedience fueled by love? If we truly feared God would we trivialize our worship? We waste away our days? Men, if we truly feared Him, would we be looking at the things that we ought not be looking at, on the computer, or on the streets, or on the television? You see, Proverbs chapter 1 verse seven says “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.” Knowledge, biblical knowledge, begins with fearing Him. Proverbs 8:13, “The fear of the Lord is to hate evil?” Do you hate evil? Do you see the massive devastating consequences of sin in our culture, in our lives, and hate it? Proverbs chapter 15 verse 16: “Better to have a little with the fear of the Lord than treasure and turmoil.” Job later, chapter 28 verse 28, “Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.”

You see, Job was blameless. Job was upright. Job was one who feared God. Satan affirms that Job fears Him, although Satan questions Job's motive for doing so. Look at verses nine and

ten, “Satan answered the Lord, ‘Does Job fear God for nothing? Have you not made a hedge about him in his house, and all that he has in every side. You've blessed the work of his hands and his possessions have increased in the land.’” In other words, “Yes, Job fears you, Job serves you, because you have blessed him with family and stuff and a life of relative ease.” Of course, we know the story. That wasn't why Job was fearing Him and that's proven to Satan. So we see Job's piety: he's blameless; he's upright; he fears God.

And fourth, *he's about repentance*, he's about a life of repentance. Job turned from evil. The Hebrew language implies that Job “feared evil.” “*That's evil, that's sinful; no I cannot have a dalliance with that.*” And while I suppose you can turn away from evil without fearing God (people do it all the time) you can't fear God without turning away from, and fearing, evil. I think of Genesis 4:7. God speaking to Cain says, “If you do well will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin, evil, is crouching at the door—and its desire is for you—but you must master it.” That's a lesson for us: sin, evil, crouching at the doors of our lives, the doors of our hearts. It's desire is for us. We have an enemy that prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to destroy. You need to hate; we need to fear that. The fear of God ought to induce in us a fear of sin and evil.

Job's piety: he's a blameless man, a man of integrity, and an upright man. He puts his money where his mouth is. He's a man who fears the true God and a man who turns from evil, fears evil. You see, you've got a note something right off the back. The author is establishing Job's righteousness in light of the rest of the book. The author of the book of Job, right here in verse one, is shouting to us! This is a good man, a blameless man. You need to understand that

before you see what's going to come around the pipe into his life so that you don't, like his friends, say it's because of his sin.

Job was a servant of the true God. We see this reiterated. In verse eight, “The Lord said to Satan, ‘have you considered my servant Job? There is no one like him on the earth, blameless, upright, fearing God, turning away from evil.’” Chapter two, verse three, the Lord says to Satan, “have you considered my servant Job? There is no one like him on the earth, blameless, upright, fearing God, turning away from evil. And he still holds fast his integrity.” That is Job's piety.

Centuries after Job's life ended, God would bring up his name and piety again during the time when the southern kingdom of Judah slid into idolatry and God judged the nation of Judah, just as He said He would do if they did not follow Him. Their wickedness was terminal. God spoke through a prophet named Ezekiel saying that even if Noah, Daniel, and Job were living in Judah at that time, they would not be able to persuade Him to deliver anyone but themselves (Ezekiel 14 verses 14 and 20). Think about that. Of all the righteous figures we read about in the Old Testament: the patriarchs Abraham, or Joseph; leaders like Moses and David; prophets like Elijah and Elisha, Isaiah and Jeremiah; the three men most noted for their righteousness that came to God's mind in Ezekiel 14 were Noah, Daniel, and Job.

Job was a righteous man. But Job still needed a Savior. And that Savior would come two millennia later in the person of Jesus Christ. Ultimately– I don't want you to get confused here–ultimately, Job could not stand merely on his own goodness before a holy God. Ultimately, Romans chapter 4, Job, like Abraham described in Romans chapter 4, was justified, or declared righteous, by his faith. And ultimately, like Abraham, like the Old Testament patriarchs and all of the figures and servants in the Old Testament that were rightly related to God, the basis for their

salvation, even though yet future, was the work of Christ on their behalf. Jesus is throughout this book of Job; Jesus, who in John chapter 8 verse 56, told the Jews: “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day and he saw it and was glad.” And I think the same thing could be said for Job.

Job isn't named among the heroes of the faith in Hebrews 11, but what was said of them certainly didn't exclude him. Hebrews 11:13-14 which says that “all these heroes in faith died in faith without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcome them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth; for those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own, a heavenly one.”

Setting the Stage for Disaster, Part Two

That's verse one. That's where we spent the majority of our time. But we're going to get through verse five, quickly, very quickly, believe me. This is *Setting the Stage for Disaster, part two*. First, note Job's threefold blessing: *Job's paternity Job's possessions and Job's prominence*.

Job's paternity is in verse two, and his paternity refers to his children. We are told about Job in that second verse that “**seven sons and three daughters were born to him.**” Interesting that there's no mention of Job's wife. She's only mentioned once in the book, chapter 2, and that in probably a negative light. But we are told about Job's kids. Ten children! Ten (two hands)!

Psalms 127:3-5, “Behold, children are a gift of the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So are the children of one's youth. How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them . . .” Job had ten kids! His quiver was full! He was blessed! And of his ten children, seven were sons. Very important in that culture which was so dependent on male workers and male heirs. *Job's paternity*: ten kids.

Job's possessions: wealth. I like the way the Holman Christian Standard Bible translates verse three. It refers to his estate: “**His estate included 7000 sheep, 3000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 female donkeys, and a very large number of servants.**” Job's possessions were his estate. This is how wealth was measured back then, in livestock, land, workers. Charles Swindoll writes:

. . . [Job] had amassed a remarkable number of possessions. Among them were 7,000 sheep. Much of the wool from the animals would have been sold. The portion held back could be woven into fabric that would be made into warm clothing for the cold winter days. The family's food would be provided from these animals and acres of crops. There were also 3,000 camels. I would imagine Job 'ran a trucking business' for the caravans that went from east to west. No doubt, his camels were for hire, and those camels became his personal transportation. There were 1,000 oxen, yoked together in pairs to plow the fertile fields, preparing the soil for planting the seed that was later harvested for an abundance of food. And we're told there were 500 female donkeys. In that ancient era, female donkeys provided the delicacy of the day—donkey milk.²

In his own whimsical way, Swindoll adds:

Over and above all that was a happy, healthy family of ten adult children living nearby. No diapers to change. No baths to give. No carpools. No big meals to prepare. No lunches for school. No boys with big tattoos driving sleek chariots, showing up and honking out front for the daughters. No teenaged daughters with nose rings and pierced belly buttons running around the house. All that's now behind Job and his wife. Job's got it made, and amazingly, no one was criticizing because there's nothing about him to criticize. Job had it made.³

That's Job's blessing; the blessings upon his life, his paternity, his possessions.

And then note *his prominence*: a good reputation. The writer simply adds, “**and that man was the greatest of all the men of the East.**” Numero Uno. He had reputation, he had respect. Later we see in Job chapter 29, verses seven and eight, Job says “When I went out to the

² Swindoll, *Job*, 6.

³Ibid.

gate of the city,” (and the gate is where the prominent people stood, where business was done, and legal procedures) “when I took my seat in the square, the young men saw me and hid themselves, and the old men arose and stood.” Job had a good reputation.

In verses four and five, we see *Job's practice*, a practice of spiritual integrity. Note the occasion in verse four: **“His sons used to go and hold a feast in the house of each one on his day, and they would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them.”** Note that again, the beginning of verse four, “His sons used to go and hold a feast in the house of each one *on his day* . . .” Well, what does that mean? What is “his day?” The same construction is used in chapter three, verse one: “Afterward, Job opened his mouth and cursed *his day*.” Translators add the implied idea, “the day of his birth.” “Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth.” We see the same Hebrew construction here in verse four when we read that Job’s sons used to go and hold a feast in the house of each one “on his day.” We are likely talking about birthday celebrations. Birthday celebrations go back a long way. The NIV fills it all in. The New International Version says: “His sons used to hold feasts in their homes on their birthdays.” And it says in verse four, “and they would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them.” It’s possible the sisters still lived at home; no mention of husbands. And the brothers would take turns hosting birthday parties in each of their houses. I don’t know. Maybe they were Baptists; they were all about eating and drinking—depending what they drank, they could’ve been Reformed or Lutheran’s! I don’t know. But we have a big happy family. No sibling rivalries; everyone is getting along. And Job would use those celebrations to remind him to do something.

Verse five is intercession: **“When the days of feasting had completed their cycle.”**

Again, we just don't know for sure how some of these details worked out, but we don't want to get lost in the forest. This could be cycles of feasting, a cycle (singular); could be for each person, or yearly cycle of birthdays. We don't exactly know how all this works out. But Job on these times **“would send and consecrate them”** [his children] **“rising in the morning and offering burnt offerings according to the number of them all”** [the ten children] **“for Job said, ‘perhaps my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.’”** *Maybe they have sinned. Maybe they have cursed God.* This is the Hebrew word *barack*, the word for “blessing.” You could read that “they've blessed God in their hearts,” but that's misleading. You see, the Jews were so careful about the name of God that they wouldn't put the word “curse” and the name of God right next each other. So blessing, depending on the context, became a euphemism for cursing. “Perhaps my sons have sinned, and (*barak*) they have cursed God in their hearts. And Job did this continually.” This was *Job's practice*. This is verse five and verse one meeting together: Job practiced his piety.

We know the details are lacking, but one scholar asked an entire series of questions in this regard. And he says:

Not that it is important, but the text does not say how often the brothers hosted their sisters. Was it on their birthdays? Were they established feast days? Were these parties every day of the week since there were seven brothers? Why did not the sisters invite the brothers to their homes? Were any or all of these children married? Were all the children at all the parties or just one brother at a time with his three sisters? Did Job attend all these affairs? How close to one another did these family members live? Though lacking details, the text does describe a big, happy family. They not only got along with each other but enjoyed each other's company.⁴

⁴Robert L. Alden, *Job*, vol. 11, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 51.

Yes some details are lacking, but this we know: Job's family life matched his description in verse one. And above all, he was concerned for his children's spiritual welfare. Parents: you never stop being concerned for the spiritual state of your kids, even when they're grown. No, don't meddle, but do pray, do minister to them, until they, like our daughter, have gained the inheritance that is there's in Christ.

What is the picture we get in verses one through five? When we open the shades, part the curtains, and take a peek into the life of this man named Job, what we see? Christopher Ash, in his excellent commentary on Job, writes:

It sets a happy scene . . . The happiness consists in a good man being a great man, a pious man being a prosperous man. It is a picture of the world being as the world ought to be, a world where the righteous lead. It is a world where the prosperity gospel seems to be true.⁵

But we know what's coming. We know what's coming, and what came into Job's life, because it's history, it's recorded in sacred writ. But you know, for us, we don't know what's coming do we? We don't know what's around the bend in our lives. December 23rd I had no idea what was going to happen on December 24th of the year 2015. You have reminders in your own life, no doubt, looking back on those unexpected bad times that came crashing down on your good times. It's where I live.

But as we focus on Job, we focus on the Cross. Ultimately, Job was redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. It was needful for everyone, whether they lived on one side of the Cross before, or on the other side of the Cross after; they were all justified by God's grace through faith, through trust, through belief, and on the grounds of the Cross of Jesus Christ. There's no better place to be than in the shadow of the Cross, especially when calamity comes.

⁵Ash, *Job*, 35.

So Lord, we thank you for this time and we pray, as we sort of set the stage, that you impress upon our own hearts, that though we be in good times, rough times may be right around the corner. May we be prepared that we be girded up, wrapped in your sovereignty, wrapped in the righteousness of Christ, the refuge and shadow of His Cross. And so, Lord, we pray that again as we have just established a bit of a foundation here, that it will serve us well as we continue in this book. Continue to pour out your grace upon each one. I pray for any within the sound of my voice that knows not Christ. That still thinks that they can measure up before you based on their own innate (supposed) goodness—their practices—no, even Job ultimately couldn't stand on that regard. No, we need Jesus. In these things we pray in His name.

Setting the Stage for Disaster
Job 1:6-12
June 30, 2019
Christ Church of Clarkson
0619Job1.6-12(2) | Audio Length: 56:40

On September 24, the year 1757, the son-in-law of the great theologian Jonathan Edwards, Aaron Burr, died unexpectedly at 42 years of age, a mere two days before Edwards was to make his public commencement as the first president at the College of New Jersey, now Princeton University. Shortly after his death, Burr's wife, Esther (the daughter of Jonathan Edwards) wrote this letter to a close family friend, reflecting on the loss of her husband:

Your most kind letter of condolence gave me inexpressible delight, and at the same time set open afresh all the avenues of grief, and again probed the deep wound death has given me. My loss—Shall I attempt to say how great my loss is—God only can know—And to him alone would I carry my complaint. . . . Had not God supported me by these two considerations; first, by showing the right he has to his own creatures, to dispose of them when and in what manner he pleases; and secondly, by enabling me to [someday] follow [my husband] beyond the grave, into the eternal world, and there to view him in unspeakable glory and happiness, . . . God has wise ends in all that he does. This thing did not come upon me by chance; and I rejoice that I am in the hands of such a God.

Less than 8 months later, Jonathan Edwards, Esther's father, also died.

On April 3, 1758, Sarah Edwards, Jonathan's wife, wrote a letter to her daughter Esther (both women now being recent widows):

My dear child, what shall I say? A holy and good God has covered us with a dark cloud. O that we may kiss the rod, and lay our hands on our mouths! The Lord has done it. He has made me adore his goodness, that we had him so long. But my God lives; and he has my heart. O what a legacy my husband, and your father, has left us! We are all given to God; and there I am, and there I love to be.⁶

How do we—who profess to know and love God—how do we respond to suffering and death? Do we, or will we, be able to say, “God has wise ends in all that He does. This thing did

⁶Account taken from Douglas Sean O'Donnell, *The Beginning and End of Wisdom*, 91-92.

not come upon me by chance; and I rejoice that I am in the hands of such a God.” And, “A holy and good God has covered us with a dark cloud. O that we may kiss the rod and lay our hands on our mouths! The Lord has done it. . . . We are all given to God; and there I am, and love to be.”

I can say that I am yet living in such suffering. And while I can agree with these two saints who have so long ago now receive their reward, I also know what it means to wrestle with God, to have a hard time swallowing the bitter, bitter pill of suffering.

Will Disaster Derail Your Devotion?

Let me bring you back to Job chapter 1 verses 6 to 12. The title for this morning is “Setting the Stage for Disaster.” The big idea from this text is in the form of a question. It’s a question we can all ask ourselves: “Will disaster derail your devotion?” Or ask it this way: “Will disaster derail *my* devotion?” This is the question that Job is unwittingly facing in this passage” “Will disaster derail Job’s devotion?” The Satan sure thinks so, and he asks in verse nine, “Does Job fear God for nothing? Have you [God] not made a hedge about him in his house and all that he has on every side? You bless the work of his hands and his possessions have increased in the land. But put forth your hand upon him, touch all that he has and he will curse you to your face.”

Setting the Scene

We now have a scene, a heavenly scene. And we see lots of scene-shifting (that’s the way it’s referred to in the world of cinema: “scene shifting”) in chapters 1 and 2. Well, in the unfolding story of Job we have now changed scenes. Verses 1-5 give us an earthly scene, a happy scene. There we see a man, a good man, named Job. He’s godly and has an unparalleled reputation. He has been blessed with wealth and family. This is living in the burbs with a happy family and a nice home surrounded by a white picket fence with a BMW parked in the driveway.

But we get to verse 6 and the scene changes; the curtain comes down on verses 1 through 5 and when it comes up again we're no longer on earth. Now we are in a different realm—the realm of heaven, the very presence of God. As I mentioned before, we have several such scene changes in these first two chapters. In verses 1 through 5, we're on earth. The scene changes in verses 6 through 12 and we're in heaven. Then in verses 13 through 22 we're back on earth. Then back in heaven in chapter 2, verses 1 through 6; and then back on earth again in chapter 2, verses 7 through 13. And that brings us to the extended dialogue between Job and his three friends that dominates the rest of the book up to chapter 42.

But as we look the passage for this morning—just as Dorothy discovered that she wasn't in Kansas anymore— as we come to verse 6 we recognize that we're not on earth anymore. We are in heaven; we're setting the stage for disaster.

The Council

I want you to follow along. As for our outline, we're using the letter “C” to guide us. The first word of the “C” is “The Council.” Look at verse 6: **“Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them.”**⁷ This is the council of heaven. That's the scene that is being painted here, *a celestial counsel*. Old Testament scholar John Walton says, “On the basis of [the] biblical and ancient Near Eastern background, we can conclude that Job 1 features a gathering of the divine council as the sons of

⁷Scripture citations are taken from the NAS95 unless otherwise noted.

God come together to give their reports and to do the work of heaven.”⁸ It's a similar picture that we get in Psalm 89 verses 5 through 7:

5 The heavens will praise Your wonders, O LORD; Your faithfulness also in the assembly of the holy ones. 6 For who in the skies is comparable to the LORD? Who among the sons of the mighty is like the LORD, 7 A God greatly feared in the council of the holy ones, And awesome above all those who are around Him?

You see, God has, as it were, a counsel. We see this in verse 6, the picture of a council gathered in heaven. But note how the verse begins. In the New American Standard it's this way: **“Now there was a day.”** That transitions us to this next scene, verses 6 to 12. Other translations simply say, “One day.” And we have these time markers that occur throughout the first two chapters. Chapter 1, verse 1: “Now there was” (which brings us in time to Job's life). Chapter 1, verse 4: “On his day” (talking about what we think are the birthdays of Job's sons). Chapter 1, verse 5: “days of feasting” are mentioned. Chapter 1, verse 13: “Now it happened on the day.” Chapter 2, verse 1: “Again there was a day.” And here in verse 6 we have: **“Now there was a day.”**

Interestingly, we talk about “a day,” that something that is being mentioned here. The Jewish Targumic and Midrashic traditions thought that this was a special day. They thought that this was Jewish New Year's Day. I don't know why they thought that. I don't think there's any reason to draw that conclusion—certainly not from the text. It may have simply been an instance when the heavenly court came together to do business. So this is “The Council.”

⁸John H. Walton and Kelly Lemon Vizcaino, *The NIV Application Commentary: Job*, ed. Terry Muck et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 63.

The Characters

The Sons of God

Secondly, we see “The Characters” in verses 6 and 7. Who are characters convened in this drama? We have three players, as it were. We have the sons of God (“**There was a day when the sons of God came . . .**”). “**Sons of God**” is a phrase in the Hebrew language, the language of the Old Testament, “bene Elohim.” “Bene,” the word “sons,” along with “Elohim,” the word for “God” (“bene Elohim” = “sons of God”). It's a word that's only found here and in Genesis chapter 6, verses 2 and 4; Job chapter 2, verse 1, and chapter 38 verse 7. That's where will see this phrase “bene Elohim.” So it's used three times in Job and two times in the book of Genesis.

Who are the *bene Elohim*? Who are the *sons of God* that gathered on this day? We have two basic options: 1) they are either angelic beings, 2) or they are human. Interestingly enough, the great Baptist theologian John Gill seems to think that the “sons of God” here are believers in heaven. That may be possible, but the use elsewhere in Job would indicate angelic beings. We see this phrase again, “bene Elohim,” in Job chapter 38. In that chapter, Job is asked by God, as God is scolding him, “Were you there when I created the earth,” and when, 38:7, “. . . the morning stars sang together And all the *sons of God* shouted for joy?” The *bene Elohim* shouted for joy! “Were you there, Job, when this happened? When I created the earth?” Well clearly that's not humans, that's not humanity, because men had not been created yet. Along with the vast majority of scholars I would say that these are angels here in verse 6, “**the sons of God.**” So we're talking about good angels, holy angels, the *sons of God*. But who else is there? Well, there is the Lord. The sons of God came to do what? Verse 6, to “**present themselves before the**

LORD.” God is there (well that's obvious, that goes without saying). And they are gathered in His presence.

The Lord

You may be wondering, “Well, they gathered in His presence before Him. But isn't God present everywhere? I mean, I learned in theology that God is omnipresent. God is present everywhere. It's an His attribute of His divinity, His deity.” And that is true: God is omnipresent. But the Bible indicates that there is also a place, another dimension, where God dwells in the *fullness* of His glory. And so, Jesus in the disciples prayer, Matthew chapter 6, verse 9, says pray “Our Father”—not “Our Father who is everywhere”—although you could pray that way, but He specifically says, “Our Father who art in heaven” (who is in heaven). Pray that way.

In Isaiah chapter 6, verse 1, you remember, the great vision of Isaiah, when he said, “I saw the LORD sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple.” So here we have the unique, holy presence of God in its fullness and the *sons of God* coming to present themselves before Him, before the Lord. Here's the first use of the *tetragrammaton*, the four character name for God in Hebrew: Y.H.W.H. (“Yahweh”). It's Anglicized as “Jehovah.” Here's the first use of that word, “Yahweh,” in the book of Job. They are gathered before the Lord, Yahweh, the covenant-keeping God. This is the personal name for God, the Great I Am.

One of the things as I've been studying Job that came out to me is that we think Job is a book about a man. And while that's true, in an even greater sense, it's a book about our God. God really is, the Lord really is, the central character in the book of Job—if I can say “character.” But in His person, in His fullness, He is the central One, the central figure of the book. It's about

God's sovereignty, that He's in control of all things, heaven and on earth; it's about God's grandeur, and His faithfulness, and that He's the One who calls the shots; He's the One who blesses (1:21); He's the One who gives and He's the One who takes away.

The Satan

So we have the sons of God, gathered before the Lord, and then, note verse 6, who else is there? **“And the Satan also came among them.”** Your English word “Satan” is a transliteration from the Hebrew *śāṭan*. When it's referring to a being, to the Devil, it's transliterated. The Hebrew is, as we see it in English, would follow along *satan*. Every time this word occurs in Job, *śāṭan* — and only in the first two chapters — but every time it occurs it's preceded in Hebrew by the definite article: it is “the Satan.”

According to Walton, the Hebrew language does not put a definite article in front of personal names. In other words, it's never “the Moses” or “the David.” But here we have “the Satan.” So Walton argues that this should simply be translated “the Adversary” because that's what the word *śāṭan* in Hebrew means, “adversary.” So every time you see “Satan” in Job chapters 1 or 2 in your English Bibles, read “the Adversary.” That's what Walton concludes.

This may be stretching things a little too far. Certainly, a literal translation is “the adversary,” and certainly the word *śāṭan* in Hebrew itself is neutral. In other words, sometimes it's used as a descriptive term, and it can refer to any challenger or any adversary — even a good one. Interestingly enough, Numbers 22:22, refers to “the Angel of the LORD” (whom I believe to be a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ—Christ appearing in the Old Testament as “the Angel of the LORD”) and it refers to Him as serving as a *śāṭan*, as an “adversary.” Could you follow that?

So sometimes the word is just a neutral word that means “adversary,” but when in the context it's referring to an evil personage it's referring, I believe, to Satan. And Walton says that you don't see definite articles in Hebrew before a personal name, or proper name? This may be an exception, because in language we do have exceptions. I don't know, but whomever is being described here is clearly an angelic being, is evil, and seems to have an exclusive, high place among the demons. So if you want to call this person, “the Adversary,” it's still a person, and it certainly sounds like Satan to me. So I may say “the Satan” or I may say “the Adversary,” but I think standing behind that, this is talking about whom we refer to as the Devil, Satan himself. And he becomes a key player in the story, even though he's mentioned only in the first two chapters. After chapter 2 there's no more mention of him. But he is mentioned 14 times in these two chapters. We see him again in 2:1, where the scene is repeated: Again, “There was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord.” And there again we have “the Satan,” “the Adversary,” or “Satan also came among them to present himself before the Lord.” So I'm taking this, as is most commentators, most scholars would, as referring to Satan, the Devil, Beelzebub, the Great Liar, whatever the name you want to come up with (all the different names that he has in Scripture); this is talking about Satan, the chief leader of a band of fallen angels.

Here's a little background. At some point, before the creation of the cosmos, I believe God created a host of beings known as “angels” or “messengers.” And at some point, likely between Genesis chapter 1 and Genesis chapter 3, this angelic being we know as “Satan” rebelled and led a host of angels with him in that rebellion. He became “the Devil” and his angels “demons.” It's possible that we see a record of Satan's fall in Isaiah chapter 14. People are

divided on this. Most theologians think that this is a reference to the fall of Satan. If you've been around church and the Bible very long, you are familiar with this. Isaiah 14:12-15:

12 “How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, You who have weakened the nations! 13 “But you said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, And I will sit on the mount of assembly In the recesses of the north. 14 ‘I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’ 15 “Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol, To the recesses of the pit.

But if you know the context of Isaiah chapter 14, you know that this is being directed initially, at least, to the king of Babylon. But it looks like, as that passage unfolds, that it started to go beyond the king of Babylon to something greater and much bigger than that earthly king. These words are so lofty that they seem to be looking at a supernatural being who many think is Satan. Theologian Wayne Gruden writes that “It would not be uncommon for Hebrew prophetic speech to pass from descriptions of human events to descriptions of heavenly events that are parallel to them and that the earthly events picture in a limited way.”⁹ We call it “telescoping” that you see in prophetic language. That “looking beyond this, we're going out to this or that.” And I think that is what we see in Isaiah 14. And if that's true, it's talking about the fall of Satan and it's talking the root of his issue being one of pride. And you say, “Well, how can God create a perfectly good being who then fell?” Well, that's another sermon. I'll put it this way, God created angels that were elect and angels that were unconfirmed in holiness, and those angels that were unconfirmed in their holiness fell. But if you want to know more about that, see Wayne Gruden.

⁹Grudem, 413.

He is the *śatan*. The New Testament word is *diabolos*. We get our word, “diabolical” from this Greek word (*diabolos* meaning “accuser,” or “slanderer”). This New Testament word is translated “Devil.” Far from the caricatures of him as wearing red, with horns and a tail, carrying a pitchfork. No, far from that, we are talking about a being who is a powerful force of evil in the world—the most powerful force of evil in the world. His names are descriptive. In the Hebrew language he is *śatan*, the Adversary. In the Greek language, the language of the New Testament, he is the *diabolos*, the Accuser the Slanderer. He slanders, blasphemes, the name of God. He accuses and opposes all that is good, including God's saints.

We see in Zechariah chapter 3, verse 1, this Hebrew word *śatan* used twice, once as a personal name and once as a verb. And here we have Zechariah who says, “Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the LORD, and Satan (*śatan*) standing at his right hand to accuse (*śatan*) him.” That's what he does. He accuses God's saints. He's the one (and his demons) that say, “You've messed up! You can't be forgiven! You're a failure before God!” When we have one who accuses us in such ways, we know that we have, John calls him “an advocate,” One how is greater, who stands as our defense attorney, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Three times in the Gospel of John, Jesus calls Satan “the ruler of this world.” He counterfeits God's plan. He attempts to subvert it. He ultimately stands behind the godless worldview of our contemporary culture. John 8:44, Jesus calls him “a liar and the father of lies; no truth dwells in him.” In Genesis 3, he appears as a crafty snake, an animal that fascinates by the flickering of the tongue before he strikes and bites with deadly venom. He also appears as an angel of light. That's his deception described in 2 Corinthians 11:14. Yes, he is powerful, he is

strong, he can be deadly. But that power is limited by God. He doesn't possess the attributes of God. So no, he is not omnipotent. He's not all-powerful. He's not omniscient. He doesn't know all. He can't take possession of true believers. He can't possess you, but through his demonic forces he can afflict you. But even that only by God's permission. By the way, there's no indication that Satan or demons can read your mind. No indication of that. He's always subject to God and cannot do a thing apart from God's permission (we'll see that later in Job). We know that he has been defeated at the Cross, and for that we say "hallelujah!" Satan and the forces of evil have been defeated at the Cross, but we're also told, "Don't be ignorant of his schemes" (2 Corinthians 2:11). James 4:7 says, "Resist the Devil and he will flee from you."

So as verse 6 sets the stage. We see that **"there was a day when the sons of God, [good angels, *bene Elohim*] came to present themselves before the LORD, [before Yahweh]. And the Satan, [the Adversary], also came among them."** That's the Council; that's the Characters; that's verse 6.

The Conversation

What about verse 7? Here we see "The Conversation." And the Lord calls out to Satan: **"From where did you come?"** Here we have this heavenly court, the council of angelic beings before the throne of God, and the Lord calls out to Satan: "Where did you come from?" You say, "Doesn't God know that? He knows everything so why would He ask that?" Certainly, God being omniscient knew the answer. This is what we might call "a conversation starter." It's a leading question. It's similar to what we see in Exodus 4:2, where the Lord says to Moses, "What is that in your hand?" *Moses, standing there with the staff, and God says "what's in your hand?"* Moses doesn't say, "Lord, can't you see? It's a staff." So this is a way of God saying to Satan, "What

have you been up to? What do you have to say for yourself?” Verse seven, **“Satan answered the Lord and said what I been up to is roaming about on the earth and walking around on it.”** Think about that. Instant access from heaven to earth, and all points in between. Note **“Walking around on it.”** The Hebrew word *halak* is in a form that indicates wandering around, exploring, even pacing. The word in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint (the Old Testament that was commonly used by the apostles) that Greek word is *peripateo*. We get our English word “peripatetic” from this Greek word. Satan is peripatetic. He’s mobile, very mobile. He's very fast. The Arabs have a name for Satan that means “the active, busy, industrious one,” and that's what he is: he’s active, he’s busy, he’s industrious. We’re told in 1 Peter 5:8, we’re warned, “Be of sober spirit” (be aware, be serious). Why? “Be on the alert.” Why? “Because your adversary the Devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith.” This did not just apply to those in the first century or to those around at the time of Job. This applies to us today. There is another dimension, another realm, a spiritual dimension, where there are angels, good angels, holy angels, and devils, demons at work.

The Consideration

Verse 8: “The consideration.” **“The LORD said to Satan, ‘Have you considered my servant Job?’”** Think about that. If Job knew what was going on, he would say “wait a minute God! I’m not looking for a fight! Don’t point me out!” God asks, **“Have you considered my servant Job?”** But here we see God's omniscience. Read between the lines. God knew what Satan was up to. He was as “a roaring lion” looking for a candidate to devour, someone who knew and served God. Satan thought, “I can get that person to turn against God. I can prove that person is worshiping selfishly. It's all about what they get, not who God is!” In being pointed out

by God, it shows what a good, godly man Job was, and how great God's grace was in keeping him – even in the midst of Satan's onslaughts. That's the consideration: **“Have you considered my servant Job?”** And look at how God characterizes him. Some familiar? **“There's no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil.”** The same thing we saw in verse 1 last time: “blameless, upright, fearing God, turning away from evil.” We'll see it again in chapter 2, verse 3. And this elicits a challenge, a challenge from Satan. Some say even a wager. I guess I would not go that far. But the challenge is this, verse 9, **“Does Job fear God for nothing?”** Literally, “without cause.” The same Hebrew phrase is used in chapter 2, verse 3, where God says, “You incited me against Job to ruin him without cause.”

Satan says, **“Does Job fear God without cause?”** Verse 10, **“Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.”** What did we see in verses 2 and 3? Job was blessed with seven sons and three daughters. Verse three, his possessions were 7000 sheep, 3000 camels, 1000 oxen, 500 female donkeys, very many servants. He was the “greatest of all the men in the East.” Yes, Job is industrious. Job worked hard. Job feared God. *But this was ultimately due to God's blessing.*

We ought not be jealous of someone else's blessed life. Whether they acknowledge it or not, those blessings are ultimately because God permitted, ordained, or orchestrated those blessings. So Romans chapter 12, verse 3 applies: “For through the grace given to me, I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think.” No! “Don't get too big for your britches” is what your grandmother may have said. “But think so as to have sound judgment; for God has allotted each a measure of faith.” God has allotted to each that

measure, as it relates to faith, as it relates to giftedness. I would extrapolate that to say, even as it relates to blessings, ultimately, for anyone. Those blessings are either permitted or ordained by God.

So Job has been so blessed. And Satan says, *You've hedged Job in, for good.* A vivid picture. Hedges were used to mark boundary lines, property lines (still used that way today). Thorn hedges were used in antiquity to keep out intruders, an ancient burglary system. And Satan says, ***"You hedged him in!"*** Some translations use the metaphor of a wall. "Have you not put a wall around him?" Others, "You protect him all around like in an enclosure!" It's sort of like an invisible fence (you've seen those). Maybe you have one. For dog owners, an invisible fence keeps canines within the confines of their yards. And you can imagine: you're going out for a walk one day and you come across a neighbor's yard. A 200 pound Rottweiler sees you and charges. There's no chain to hold him back. There's no fence that you can see around the yard. And you're thinking, "Oh no, this is going to get ugly!" All of a sudden he stops short before he hits the sidewalk, because he knows what you don't— that there is an invisible fence that he cannot cross. The invisible fence around Job isn't meant to keep Job in; it keeps Satan and his demonic forces out. And so Satan issues the challenge: **"God put forth your hand now, and touch all that he has and he will curse you to your face."** In other words, who's in charge of that invisible fence? Satan? Who's in charge of it? God is! Look at how the verse is phrased, verse 11: **"Put forth your hand (God) and touch all that he has and will curse you to your face."**

Satan rightly affirms God's sovereignty. He knows that he can do nothing unless it comes through the hand of God. But Satan wrongly affirms that Job serves God merely for selfish

reasons. Satan's idea is, "Sure he fears you sure, he loves you, sure he serves you, because you bless him. Take away those blessings and he will curse you to your face" (brazenly, openly). Do you think Job is on trial here? Well, he is, but you know what? Look at from the backside: Satan is trying to put God on trial. This isn't just about Job. Satan knows that God is omniscient, that God knows the motives of Job's heart. And yet Satan is basically saying: "God, you are buying Job's worship and you know it!" This is a *quid pro quo* arrangement. Job wouldn't serve you if you weren't giving him all of these blessings."

It's like a very wealthy yet undesirable man who buys love with riches, and he knows it. So he lives with a wife who "loves him," not for who he is but for the riches he gives her. The same thing. God is complicit in some sort of hypocritical worship system going on here. Satan thinks God is buying Job off. *God knows that's not true.* Does Satan? Does Job? What are your motives for fearing God? Chuck Swindoll wraps it all up and says:

It's a clever plan. . . . [However] Job does not deserve even the suggestion of mistreatment. Job has walked with God, certainly in his adult years. He is now the best of the best, 'greatest of all the men of the east.' On top of all that, he is a servant of God. But none of that impresses Satan. Evil suspicions prompt his insidious plot: 'You want to know what [Job's] really made of, remove all that indulged treatment and pervasive protection. Strip away the veneer of the man's comfort, and You'll see right away; he'll turn on You. 'He will surely curse You to Your face' . . . Satan's prediction, 'Instead of treating him like an overindulged child, why don't You treat him like anybody else on earth? [*Then I nearly wept as I read these words*] Let him know what it's like to suffer the death of a child....'¹⁰

Why do we serve Him? Why do we serve the Lord? Why do we profess Jesus Christ?

What are our motives, inasmuch as we can discern our motives? It's a question I have been faced with every day, especially since Christmas Eve of 2015. Like Job, I pray that I pass the test. But

¹⁰Swindoll, 10-11.

what about you? *Will disaster derail your devotion?* Breach the hedge of your comfort and blessing: family, children, health; see how much you care to serve the Lord. It's a question we face living in this fallen world.

In New Testament terms, it's easy to pursue Christ during times of ease. But what about when life seemingly turns against you, when your sweet cup of blessing turns into a bitter cup of suffering? The book of Job is asking the question of us all: "Why do we serve Jesus Christ?" Is our worship genuine, or is it counterfeit? Do we serve Jesus Christ because there's something written within our spiritual DNA, that regardless of what happens to us, drives us to confess His name? I think that is what is within the heart of a true believer, written into the code of his or her spiritual DNA: "By your grace, I will follow you no matter what, even when the earthquakes and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, I will serve you." Nothing like suffering answers that question. It confirms our faith (1 Peter chapter 1:6-7). *So will disaster derail your devotion?*

The Condition

Lastly, verse 12: *The Condition*. "**The LORD said to Satan, 'behold, all that he has is in your power. Only do not put forth your hand on him.'**" Satan is given power, but it's secondary. It's contingent upon God's, and God sets the conditions: "Touch what he has, don't touch him." The British theologian H. Wheeler Robinson observes:

It is God who first calls attention to Job, God who permits the trial of his faith . . . and assigns its proper limits. Throughout it is the will of God that is being done. . . . All that comes to Job comes not by blind chance nor by the compulsion of the Adversary. It is the simple development of God's first word: "Hast thou considered my servant Job?"¹¹

¹¹H. Wheeler Robinson, as cited in Talbert, *Job*, 39.

So, Satan, the Adversary, “departed from the presence of the LORD,” setting the stage for disaster—disaster that falls upon Job in the next set of verses.

Closing Observations

The Picture is Bigger than the Frame

Let me give you some closing observations. The first one is this: *The picture is bigger than the frame*, the picture is bigger than the frame. At this point in the narrative (think about it) Job does not know what is coming, or why. He still living a happy life, and as far as we know Job never understood, during his earthly life, the reason for the tragedy. But Job understands now, of course. But the lesson is that we go through things in this life that make no sense to us.

The events that unfolded on Christmas Eve of 2015 that culminated with death of our daughter. How those events unfolded make no sense to me. But the picture is bigger than the frame; it's a bigger picture that I can't see. And we when we go through things that we don't understand we have to say, “we see in a mirror dimly;” we don't know everything as God knows. Job certainly didn't know. And that's an example for us.

So what we do we trust? Proverbs 3:5-6: “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, don't lean on your own understanding. . . .” When you start to question, when you start to doubt, when you start to complain, say, *Stop it! I am not going to lean on my own understanding; I'm going to trust the Lord.* “And in all my ways acknowledge Him; and He will direct my path.”

God is Bigger than the Picture

The picture is bigger than the frame. And *God is bigger than the picture*. That's the second point, and by that I mean He knows the outcome. Many have asked the question “Why was Job put to the test when God in His omniscience already knew the answer?” It's like Genesis

chapter 22. Abraham is asked to sacrifice his son Isaac, the child promise. Why did God do this when God knew the outcome? He's omniscient, He knows everything. Why is God putting Job to the test when God knows how he will do, and that ultimately he will stand the test? Why do we face trials and difficulties when God knows how it will turn out? Why bother?

Yes, certainly God knows. But He is the only one that does. Think about it. Satan doesn't know. The demons of hell don't know. The holy angels don't know. Those around us living on this third rock from the sun don't know. We ourselves don't know how we will do sometimes. You see, our suffering transcends us in a way that we cannot comprehend.

When you suffer—believe me I know this and many of you know this—when you suffer you feel like you are so alone, like you are in a vacuum of your own tears. But you are not; others are watching. And we've learned that, just as far as how other people have observed us, and what they've seen in our affliction. I never tire of those precious words of our daughter who said. “I want to live for whatever God chooses to do my life that will bring Him glory.” That's acknowledging that the picture is bigger than the frame, and acknowledging that ultimately it's about God's glory. And believe me, God is glorified when fallen humanity sees us suffer well (not suffer perfectly, but when we persevere).

I have shared with you how badly I have done at times and some of you know the dirty details of how badly I did, especially after that first year. But, you know, I'm still here. And God is being glorified in your love for us, your prayers for us. In some humble way I say God has been glorified in the fact that my wife and I are still standing and still professing the name of Jesus.

Others are watching. God is glorified when fallen humanity sees us suffer. God is glorified when the holy angels see us suffer well. In 1 Peter chapter 1, verse 12, it talks about

how angels, the holy angels are trying to—the picture is stretch up on their toes—to see what's going on in the gospel realm on this earth. God is glorified. We have we have people watching us. We have angels watching us. And God is even glorified when the demons of hell—even the Satan—see us suffer well, sees us persevere. I like the way Layton Talbert puts it:

Job suffered to prove, among other things, that there are people who serve God 'for nothing' other than for Who He is, people who worship God 'without cause' (1:9) even when they suffer 'without cause' (2:3). What, then, does our suffering accomplish? When we cling to God amid inexplicable affliction, we demonstrate that we are some of those people. We are not proving anything further about the character and integrity of God; that was eternally substantiated by the case of Job. But we are proving a great deal about ourselves, about the integrity of our faith and the sincerity of our relationship to God. More than any other kind of suffering, this kind of suffering is a testing of your faith (James 1:2-3).¹²

Suffering is Bigger than Satan

Thirdly, *suffering is bigger than Satan*. Keep in mind that not all suffering is due to Satanic involvement; most of it isn't. Sometimes we suffer because of our sin or because of the sin of others. We suffer because we live in a fallen world and are subject to affliction and subject to death. So don't conclude when you're under fire that it's due to some heavenly wager between Satan and God. On the other hand, don't discount or diminish the forces of evil that are out there. In Ephesians chapter 6, verses 12 and 13, we're told "our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, the powers the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the full armor of God!"

God is Bigger than Affliction

Fourth, *God is bigger than affliction*. We see throughout Job, and we see here, that God is sovereign. Brethren, rest in that precious jewel, the sovereignty of God. He is in complete

¹²Talbert, 45.

control. Nothing can afflict or bless us apart from coming through His hands. The sovereignty of God is such a blessed truth. And people don't reject it, Christians don't reject it, because of God's blessing. People reject the idea of God's absolute sovereignty because of suffering. Because, as they say, suffering just doesn't seem fair. Therefore, God can't possibly be in control over it. That's the view of the world, not the view of the Bible.

In 1981, a Jewish rabbi wrote a best-selling book, "Why Bad Things Happen to Good People." That's a misnomer if I ever heard one. It should be, "Why Good Things Happen to Bad People." That will be more theologically accurate. Rabbi Kushner wrote, at least in part, due to the tragedy of his own family when his young son was stricken with the disease progeria, a disease of rapid aging, and was not to live beyond his teenage years. At the close of the book, Job is considered as one of those "good people who have bad things happen to them." And Kushner writes in his book that Job, "forced to choose between a good God who is not totally powerful, or a powerful God who is not totally good ... chooses to believe in God's goodness." Kushner concludes that, "God wants the righteous to live peaceful, happy lives, but sometimes even He can't bring that about. It is too difficult even for God to keep cruelty and chaos from claiming their innocent victims." Is that a God who can be trusted? Is that the God Job trusted? Job 42: "I know that you can do all things, no plan of yours can be thwarted."

Swindoll paints a tremendous lesson for us all when he writes:

. . . Do not try to grasp each thread of His profound plan. If you resist my counsel here, you'll become increasingly more confused, ultimately resentful, and finally bitter. At that point Satan will have won the day. Accept it, enduring the trial that has been permitted by God.

Nothing touches your life that has not first passed through [His] hands... He is in full control and because He is, He has the sovereign right to permit trials that we do not deserve.

He continues ==>

I would be willing to wager that most of you . . . are going through something that [seems] unfair. . . . The consequences may have started to get to you. You didn't anticipate any of this. You didn't think it would come to this, but it has. Trust me here. What has happened is a necessary part of your spiritual growth. Yes, necessary. . . . The silence of God's voice will make you wonder if He is even there. And the absence of God's presence will make you wonder if He even cares. He is. And He does.¹³

Our Hope is Bigger than Earthly Life

Lastly, *our hope is bigger than earthly life*. It is such a tragedy when churches, for the sake of numbers and finances, put forth an earthly hope as being the attractiveness of Jesus Christ. The attractiveness of Jesus Christ is bigger than this earthly life, why we serve the Lord is bigger than this earthly life. That's a lesson from Job. Donald Whitney wrote this:

As you are reading this, tens of thousands of the Lord's pilgrims around the world are threatened with execution, torture, slavery, starvation, homelessness, poverty, imprisonment, and other persecutions designed to destroy their faith in Jesus Christ. And yet ... they find it 'worth [their] while to endure those hardships' because of what they have and hope for in Christ. . . . [O]ur endurance testifies to the worthiness of Christ. Unrelenting faithfulness in the absence of all earthly explanation says to the watching world, 'It is worth enduring all this pain and heartache to know Christ and to anticipate the glory of being with Him forever.'¹⁴

Our hope is beyond this earthly life. Is yours? Is your hope, your life, solely Christ? Do you recognize that you have fallen so far short of God's glory, God's standard of holiness, that it is immeasurable. That you can't be good enough, you can't be religious enough. You and I have hearts that are sinful, fallen, and we have no hope apart from the death, burial and resurrection of

¹³Swindoll, 12-13.

¹⁴Donald S. Whitney, as cited by Talbert, 46.

Jesus Christ. We can't do it, but He did. Do these words resonate within you? “Wretched man that I am. Who will free me from this body of death? There is therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus!” Oh, if you're steeped in your sin, if you're trusting in your religion, cast it aside for Jesus, for the hope of Christ and Him alone, to live for Him alone and the glory of God.

And so, Lord, I thank you for this time as we work our way, slowly, at this point, through this tremendous book of the Old Testament. I pray, Father, that you encourage the hearts of everyone who hears the sound of my voice. I pray for those that are facing a Christless eternity. Oh Holy Spirit, show them their great need. And then show them the great provision in Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God slain for sinners. For those of us that are going through times of trial and suffering, we thank you for one another. We thank you, Lord, for your grace to us, your common grace to the church, the provision of brethren with whom we can weep, with whom we can rejoice, especially, Lord, during those times of weeping. And I thank you Lord for a church, for a family, that is been there for Lois and me over these past three years. Bless our lives and show us the hope we have that so far outstrips this earthly life. Show us the truth and that as we live lives in pursuit of Him. In Jesus name we pray.

When Calamity Comes Knocking (Part 1)

Job 1:13-22

July 21, 2019

Christ Church of Clarkson

0719Job1.13-22(3) | Audio Length: 51:58

Many of you are familiar with the story of the hymn writer Horatio G. Spafford. If you're not, the story will become familiar to you. Spafford was a successful lawyer and businessman in Chicago in the 19th century. He had a lovely family wife, Anna, and five beautiful children. But even with that they were not strangers to tears and tragedy. Their young son died with pneumonia in 1871, and in that same year much of their business was lost in the great Chicago Fire.

On November 21, 1873, the French ocean liner, *Ville du Havre*, was crossing the Atlantic on its way to Europe with 313 passengers on board. Among the passengers were Mrs. Spafford and their four daughters. Although Mr. Spafford had planned to go with the family, he found it necessary to stay in Chicago to address some unexpected business needs, and he told his wife he would join her and their children in Europe. Some four days into the journey across the Atlantic, the French liner collided with an iron-hulled Scottish ship, the *Loch Earn*. Chaos erupted. Anna Spafford hurriedly brought her four children to the back and knelt there praying that God might spare them if that be His will.

Some 12 minutes after being struck, however, their liner slipped beneath the dark waters of the Atlantic carrying with it 226 of the passengers that were on board, including the four Spafford girls. Anna was spotted floating alone on a piece of wreckage. She was rescued and taken to Wales. From there she wired her husband a message which began, "Saved alone, what shall I do?" Another of the ship's survivors later recalled Anna saying, "God gave me four daughters. Now they have been taken from me. Someday I will understand why."

Horatio Spafford booked passage on the next available ship to join his grieving wife. With the ship about four days out, the captain called Spafford to his cabin and told them that they were over the place where his children perished. It was at this time that Spafford wrote the great hymn, "It Is Well With My Soul." Remember how it goes?

"When peace like a river attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll.
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
It is well, it is well with my soul."

Two things we learn from this story, as we will learn from Job, is that *true worship survives the fires of affliction*, and *comfort can give way to calamity without warning*. So with that in mind, if you would grab your copy of the Scriptures and turn to Job chapter 1, beginning in verse 13. And we will read verse 13 to the end of the chapter, verse 22. Job chapter 1 beginning in verse 13. We read:

13 Now on the day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, 14 a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, 15 and the Sabeans attacked and took them. They also slew the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you." 16 While he was still speaking, another also came and said, "The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them, and I alone have escaped to tell you." 17 While he was still speaking, another also came and said, "The Chaldeans formed three bands and made a raid on the camels and took them and slew the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you." 18 While he was still speaking, another also came and said, "Your sons and your daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, 19 and behold, a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people and they died, and I alone have escaped to tell you." 20 Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped. 21 He said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked I shall return there. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD." 22 Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God.¹⁵

¹⁵Scripture citations are taken from the NAS95 unless otherwise noted.

So, Lord, we pray that as we look at the conclusion of chapter one, that you will bless us and impress these truths upon us. Job's confession is at once encouraging and challenging. Lord, we want to be fit when calamity comes our way, to suffer well— not suffer easy but suffer well. We pray, Lord, that you will prepare us for those bad times, even as we make our way through those that are seemingly good. We pray your blessing on our time. In Jesus name, amen.

The Stage is Set: A Family Gathering

Well, the stage in Job chapter 1, verse 13, is set. *We see a family gathering.* And what we're encountering here in verse 13 is another "scene shift" (we've talked about that in the past). Remember, the book of Job is a story. And like any story you have scenes. Picture a movie which begins with an introduction, an opening scene, and then shifts to another place. Maybe the movie begins with a scene looking at the outside of a nice home. It's a beautiful summer day. The sky is blue. Picture a beautiful landscape with children playing out front with birds chirping. And then the scene changes to inside the house where you see a lonely woman silently crying with tears streamed down her cheeks as she peers outside. And you wonder: the beautiful landscape outside of the house now seems secondary to the grief that's found inside.

This is similar to how we began the book of Job as a picture of what it looks like when life is good. We have a man named Job, a good man, a godly man. He is materially prosperous in an age when wealth is measured by land and livestock and workers. He was materially prosperous, but he was also blessed domestically in that Job has ten children. The family gets along well (as we saw in verse 4, his sons would go and hold a feast in the house of each one on "his day," on his birthday, and they would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them). It's a big, happy family. For the most part everybody's getting along. And Job loves his

family; he's concerned for their spiritual welfare. In fact, he offers sacrifices on their behalf, verse five, because, as he thought, maybe they have sinned by "cursing God," note this, "in their hearts." Perhaps this is a more subtle form of taking God's name in vain. For Job's family, life is good. That is the opening scene.

Then in chapter 1, the scene shifts from earth to heaven. And in verse six we see a celestial council gathered together. Angels adorn the throne room of God. And among those holy angels called *sons of God* is a demon, in Hebrew, definite article, *the Satan*. He's always referred to in that way, in the book of Job, as "the Satan." As Peter would describe him 2000 years later: "He is a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour"—particularly someone who loves and fears God. So God brings Job to the Satan's attention in verse eight: "Have you considered my servant Job? For there is no one like him on earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil." Remember Satan's response? "Yes, I know about Job. You've blessed them with family and things in a relative life of ease. In fact, that's why he is a blameless, God-fearing man, because of all the blessings you put upon him. But take away his stuff," Satan says, "and that will change. He will curse you openly to your face." That heavenly scene closes with verse 12: "The LORD said to Satan, 'behold, all he has is in your power. Only do not put forth your hand against him.'" With that, the Satan departed from the presence of the Lord.

In chapter 1 we've gone from earth (verses one through five) to heaven (verses six through 12). We go back to earth again in our passage for today: verses 13 through 22. *The stage is set: A family gathering.*

As we examine verse 13 note that there are three questions we can ask that will guide us: "when?" "what?" and "where?" The first question, *when?*, we see in the beginning of verse 13:

“Now on the day.” This is another time marker. It’s like what we saw in chapter 1, verse six: “There was a day,” and chapter 2, verse one: “Again there was a day.” We looked at those time markers a week or two ago. Here we have: “Now on the day.” We don't know how much time passed between verse 12 (Satan departing) and verse 13 (this day), but I suspect it wasn't very long. So that's the *when*: “Now on the day.” The *what*, verse 13: “his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine.” And the *where*, “in their oldest brother's house.”

There's the picture that's being painted here. I think this verse, verse 13, connects back to verse 4. Remember verse 4? Look there with me: “His sons used to go and hold a feast in the house of each one on his day, and they would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them.” Now draw a line in your mind to verse 13: “Now on the day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house.” (I think this is probably one of those birthday celebrations; whether it is or whether it is not, we don't know for sure.) But don't miss what is important. What is essential for you to notice is that we see a happy family gathering. We see a joyous occasion of eating and drinking, drinking wine, real wine (Psalm 104:15, “wine which makes man's heart glad”). But those joyous events are suddenly interrupted. This particular day was not just a day of feasting, it was an appointment with tragedy, and we know how fast how fast things can change in our lives, in our circumstances; we know the best times to the worst of times can come in the blink of an eye.

Christmas Eve, 2015 for me was initially a frustrating day. I was working on various projects trying to get a few things done before officially breaking for the holiday. And I lost my cell phone. While I was working outside, I sat it on top of the car (not a wise thing to do). And then I went to do something else. When I came back, the car was gone. Lois had gone to the

grocery store with my cell phone riding on top! I tried to get a hold of her, to no avail. I ran down to the store and couldn't find her. When she finally showed up, my cell phone was still riding on top of the car! So how can that be? Well, the car had a sunroof, and a visor on top in front of the sunroof, and it slipped in front of that visor (so thankful for that). As you may remember (we talked about this before) that was also a very unseasonably warm day. It was 60° on December 24, 2015. I had stowed my motorcycle for the winter, but I thought, "I have got to be able to take a motorcycle ride just so that I can say I did that, I went for a motorcycle ride in upstate New York on December 24, on Christmas Eve." So I did that. And then I was ready to wind down, looking at family time. But we hadn't gotten around to buying a Christmas tree. This was the latest that we'd ever gone in our marriage in not getting one. So, as was customary since Giana joined us as a baby in 2001, as was customary, she and I would go to the tree farm and pick one out. So I said to her, "Jump in and we'll go to the tree farm" (Lois was making dinner); we'll decorate the tree together, maybe watch *It's a Wonderful Life*." For us that day wasn't so wonderful. Before we could reach the tree farm a drunk driver, coming the opposite direction, crossed the center line hitting us head-on. It would be six months before I would return home from the hospital and rehab (Giana's rehab). Giana made it to a different home, an eternal home in heaven.

But when I look at this first chapter of Job, I note how quickly things can change from celebration to calamity. I've lived it. Perhaps you have as well. At one level or another we've all seen that which is sweet go sour, turn on a dime; delight to doom, pleasure to pain. And if you look at our passage, look in verse 13, "[Job's] **sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house;**" that is a time of pleasure, a time of celebration. And then

verses 14 and 15, suddenly a messenger arrives, arrives before Job, announcing that the oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them. And the Sabeans, nomadic raiders, attacked and took them. And they also slew the servants, or the workers, with the edge of the sword, and he says, **“I alone have escaped to tell you.”** Then in verse 16, another comes and says, **“The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them. I alone have escaped to tell you.”** Verse 17, another messenger arrives and says, **“The Chaldeans formed three bands and made a raid on the camels and took them and slew the servants with the edge of the sword. And I alone have escaped to tell you.”** As if that wasn't bad enough, we come to verses 18 and 19: **“While he was still speaking, another came and said ‘your sons and your daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, and behold a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people, and they were killed.’”** We go from a time of of enjoyment, a time of leisure, a time pleasure, to a time of calamity. And each of these four disasters unfolds like falling dominoes, one hitting into the next.

But how did we begin? Verse 13, Four words: **“Now, on the day.”** It was just a day. It could've been any day. And here it was, a day of celebration. But that celebration is suddenly overturned by tragedy, forever etched upon Job's mind, the day when everything changed. Forever etched on me and my wife's mind, December 24, 2015, the day when everything changed. What happened in Job? One writer sums it up this way:

“Satan began his assaults on Job when his 10 children were feasting in the eldest brother's house . . . The assaults were alternately caused by human and ‘natural’ forces: ‘a Sabeian attack’ . . . ‘the fire of God’ . . . ‘a Chaldean raid’ . . . ‘a great desert wind. . . .’ God permitted Satan to move both kinds of causes to accomplish his purposes—and to do

so in rapid, precise timing. Job, while reeling in shock from the news of one loss, was stunned by another.¹⁶

Calamity Strikes: An Appointment with Tragedy

Look at how this unfolds. I'm calling verses 14 through 19 "The Four Horsemen of Doom" – and we're using "horsemen" figuratively. (If the messengers were riding anything, it would've been camels. But "four camels of doom" just doesn't sound as good as "the four horsemen of doom," so we're going with "four horsemen.") These four disasters that rapidly strike alternate from human attacks in the form of raiders, plunderers, to (the best that I can come up with), "natural disasters." Don't accuse me of being a Deist. I don't mean "natural" in the sense that there is no involvement of God in them, but they're the things that we call "natural" (or what insurance companies used to differentiate between "acts of men" and "acts of God").

The First Horseman: Raiders (Sabeans)

So we have the four horsemen of doom in verses 14 through 19. The First Horsemen: Raiders (the Sabeans). That's verses 14 and 15. Follow along there with me. Verse 14, **"A messenger came to Job and said 'the oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them and the Sabeans attacked and took them. They also slew the servants with the edge of the sword. And I alone have escaped to tell you.'**" The picture is one of a normal agricultural day in the middle east. Some scholars believe that this event happened in the winter months which started in October and ended in April. Job's farmhands are plowing with teams of oxen joined by a yoke, the donkeys feeding beside them. And so with this the writer is bringing us back to verse three. Remember, part of Job's wealth included "500 yoke of oxen" ("yoke" being

¹⁶Roy B. Zuck, "Job," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*.

two each, or 1000 oxen) and 500 female donkeys. So it's a normal workday. But it is suddenly interrupted by a group of nomadic raider (*sabe* in the Hebrew, or the plural *sabeans*). The Sabeans were nomadic marauders descended from Sheba, a grandson of Abraham (Genesis 25:3). They may have come from Northern Arabia, but we're not sure. They later settled in the southernmost part of the Arabian Peninsula. Sheba became a wealthy nation. At the time of Solomon you may remember his visit with the queen of Sheba.

To paraphrase what's going on, the oxen are plowing, the donkeys feeding beside them. It's a normal day. And suddenly there is this attack, a sudden attack, by these people we call the Sabeans. And they kill the workers with the sword. And they take the oxen and the donkeys. Verse 15 concludes by saying, **"I alone have escaped to tell you."** You picture the messenger covered in sweat. He's agitated. He's excited. He's out of breath. In fact, the Hebrew language reads: "and I am escaped, only me, I alone to tell you."

The Second Horseman: Natural Disaster (Lightening)

And before you can hardly finish, The Second Horseman arrives: Natural Disaster. Verse 16, **"While he was still speaking, another also came and said 'the fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants and consume them. And I alone have escaped to tell you.'"** I take **"fire of God"** in verse 16 to be "lightning" (it's within the range of meaning for this phrase). But remember, these disasters, as typified by by four horsemen, alternate from being what we might call "human" and "natural." We have a raid on the oxen and donkeys: human. We have lightning: natural. We have a raid on the camels, then we have wind, natural.

Some writers think this was a miraculous fire out of heaven. But to me and others, that seems out of place as it relates to what's going on here. It seems to bookend the last, which is what we might call a “natural wind” even though it had supernatural powers behind it. The Holman Christian Standard Bible interprets this in their translation: “A lightning storm struck from heaven. It burned up the sheep and the servants and devoured them.” That's how that translation renders this, and certainly a lightning storm can burn grasses, start fires, and incinerate animals. The ancient historian Herodotus wrote that: “The Egyptians believe fire to be a live animal, which eats whatever it can seize, and then, gluttoned with the food, dies with the matter which it feeds upon.”¹⁷ So I take it to be that lightning, a lightning storm hit.

But the question is (maybe one you're thinking it – I've pondered this): *Who did it? Who did this?* After all, God gave Satan permission, verse 12, so I take this to imply that Satan has permission by God to affect natural things, like tornadoes and lightning. I'm not at all certain about that, but I think that makes the best sense here in light of verse 12 and what we see unfolding. Martin Luther in his Larger Catechism said, “The devil causes strife, murder, rebellion, and war, also thunder and lightening, and hail, to destroy corn and cattle, to poison the atmosphere. . . .”¹⁸ Interesting, but we know whatever the cause, God is the sovereign agent, He is the one that ultimately is in control.

What God permits, He is sovereign over. We see that in Job's confession in verse 21: “It is the LORD who gives; the LORD takes away.” We also see it in the dialogue of chapter 2.

¹⁷Herod., iii. 16 — H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., *Job, Pulpit Commentary* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 6.

¹⁸Martin Luther, *Larger Catechism*, Question 4.

Look at chapter 2 where God says in verse three that Job “still holds fast his integrity, although you incited *me* against him, to ruin without cause.” And in verse four, Satan answers and says to the Lord: “Put forth *your* hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, he will curse you to your face.” God is being cited as the ultimate sovereign agent, even though in verse six we see that the Lord said to Satan, “Behold, he is in your power, only spare his life” – a little theological tension there. But in Hebrew thought, in biblical thought, that which God allows or permits (His permissive will) is that which He is sovereign, or in control over. It must pass through His hands. That's the story of the book of Job.

The Third Horseman: Raiders (Chaldeans)

The next domino falls in verse 17, The Third Horseman: Raiders again (this time, Chaldeans). Look at verse 17: **“While he was still speaking,”** the messenger, verse 16, **“another also came and said ‘Chaldeans formed three bands and made a raid on the camels and took them and slew the servants with the edge of the sword,’”** and then we have again repeated, **“I alone have escaped to tell you.”**

Who were the Chaldeans? At this early time, were talking second millennium BC, they are not to be confused with the later Chaldeans, or the Babylonians. These Chaldeans would likely be associated with the Chaldea of ancient Ur (a city in southern Mesopotamia). Abraham was from “Ur of the Chaldees” (Gen 11:28). These nomadic peoples formed three bands, we see that in verse 17. This was a common military tactic, a three-pronged attack, enabling the raiders to surround the fast-moving camels and capture them. Certainly a herd as large as Job's will be a great prize to camel raiders. And again, the fate of the servants, the herdsman, is the same as in

verse 15. And so Job is losing not only his livestock but is also losing many of whom must've been friends. He is losing his workers as well as his servants.

The Fourth Horseman: Natural Disaster (Wind)

With that, the last most painful domino falls in verses 18 and 19. Here's the Fourth Horseman: Natural Disaster (wind). Verse 18, **“While he was still speaking”** [that is the messenger of verse 17], **“another also came,”** [another messenger shows up] and says this: **“Your sons and your daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house”** [that takes us back to verse 13 where we started], but note the first two words of verse 19: **“and behold.”** The word “behold” in Hebrew is the word *hinneh*. We see the same word in verse 12. The Lord speaking says *“Behold, all that Job has is in your power.”* We see that same little particle here, *hinneh*, “behold,” and it marks this event as the most climactic. It's not seen in the other events, but it's marking this event as being really the pinnacle, the worst, the most climactic of them all. Verse 19: **“A great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house and it fell upon the young people and they died. And I alone have escaped to tell you.”**

These great winds, or *siroccos*, were common in the Middle East. Tornadoes, while not common, also occur, though rarely, but this may have been one since it had the force to topple a house. There are fatalities in this case: Job lost every single one of his children, seven sons, three daughters. Talk about a family struck by catastrophe! Don't let the fact that this happened so long ago remove you from the pain that must've been ever-present within Job's heart. One commentator observes:

An alternation of two human terrorist attacks and two ‘natural’ disasters have deprived Job of everything. If we dwell for a few moments on this scene, it is hard not to weep with Job. Throughout the rest of this long book we must never forget the trauma of this scene. We are used in our culture to post-traumatic stress disorders and to the training of trauma counselors to assist in times of natural disaster, terrorism, and war. But rarely if ever in human history can there have been a succession of such extreme disasters as this. Bankrupt and bereft, Job is basically left alone. His protective hedge has been broken, his outer skin so to speak violated, and all he had has been taken away.¹⁹

Another writes, “While the number of Job’s children did not compare with the numbers of lost livestock, there is no comparing the grief that arises from losing children.”²⁰

We lost our daughter. Ten months later I suddenly lost my dad. And I always thought, when my daughter was alive and as my mom and dad were getting older, I thought, “If something happens to my parents, I am so close to them, it will be devastating” (I had never lost anyone close to me). God bless my dad; he’s with the Lord and his granddaughter. He was 80 years old. But after losing Giana, the loss of my dad was a tiny blip on the radar. It really doesn’t compare to losing your child.

How do you respond? Picture yourself in Job’s sandals. You feel utterly helpless; nothing on earth, or in heaven, can undo what has been done. Yes, you can always get more camels, but you can’t replace children. There is such a finality when you lose a child, knowing that there is absolutely nothing that can undo what has been done. Nothing in heaven, nothing on earth, can make it not to have happened. That’s what Job was facing. Talk about feeling small. Talk about feeling empty. Talk about feeling helpless. Yet Job’s response has been both a challenge and

¹⁹Ash, 48.

²⁰Robert L. Alden, *Job*, vol. 11, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 60.

encouragement to millions of sufferers, including this one. I've read through the book of Job dozens of times since 2016. I continue to read it.

Job's Conduct: Five Verbs

What follows in verses 20 and 21 are five verbs, actions by Job, followed by five statements that come from his mouth. So, our third main point is: Job's Conduct. Five Verbs (verse 20). 1) Job ***stood up***: Then Job arose. He had been sitting the entire time, but with this last most painful announcement he stood. 2) Then Job ***tore his robe***. He grabbed and ripped his outer garment in anguish and grief. I have torn at least one shirt during a moment of agony myself. 3) Job ***shaved his head***. This is another cultural way that sufferers demonstrated their grief. Fourth verbal idea, 4) Job ***fell back to the ground***. Remember, he was sitting. He stood up, he tears his robe with one hand, shaves his head with another, and then falls flat on his face. But what does Job do last? Not what you would expect. I suppose we've all seen news accounts of some disaster that strikes. And the survivors who have lost loved ones are in anguish, inconsolable. And sometimes you literally see them falling to the ground in agony, falling to their knees, on their faces. And we would expect Job to do that, but Job wasn't simply falling in agony. Note this, he was falling on his face in worship. That's the last verb, 5) Job ***worshiped***. His falling prostrate was an initial act of reverence. He, note this, *responds to his adversities with adoration; his woes become worship*.

Job's Confession: Five Statements

And then Job speaks. Job's confession consists of five statements that stand in parallel to the five verbs of verse 20. Count them with me. Verse 21, he said:

**“Naked I came from my mother’s womb,
And naked I shall return there.
The LORD gave
and the LORD has taken away.
Blessed be the name of the LORD.”**

Francis Anderson, in his commentary on the book of Job, calls this “the noblest expression to be found anywhere of a man’s joyful acceptance of the will of God as his only good.”²¹ It is hard sometimes to see the will of God during difficult providences as “my only good,” but what did Satan predict in verse 11? What did Satan say? “Touch all that he has and he will curse you to your face.” Satan predicted cursing; Job responds with blessing. But don’t misunderstand, this is not dry-eyed stoicism. You have to hear the words of verse 21 through the tears of verse 20. Picture the scene: you hear the tear of the robe, you watch Job shave his head, you see the tears, you hear the sobs as he falls to the ground. But then, through it all, there’s trust. Believer, when calamity comes, do you pursue God or run away from him? Job teaches us that *true worship ultimately survives the fires of affliction*. How can he do that? How can he say those words? Do you think that the Holy Spirit was only active in the New Testament? There is no way a man faced with calamity like this responds in genuine worship, apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. Sam Storms puts it this way:

God is blessed not only for the giving but also in spite of the taking. In every circumstance he is to be honored. Thus, although Job knows nothing about Satan’s involvement, he in effect says: “Satan, you are wrong. God is still worthy of worship even when life is hard.”²²

²¹Francis I. Anderson, cited in Talbert, 49.

²²Sam Storms, *Biblical Studies: Job* (Edmond, OK: Sam Storms, 2016).

Verse 21: **“Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall return there.”** And then words I cited at our daughter's memorial service: **“The LORD gave, the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD.”**

The author gives a closing commentary in verse 22: **“Through all of this Job did not sin nor did he blame God.”** The word “blame” in Hebrew, *tiphlah*, refers to something that is empty or inappropriate. Job believed that no wrong can be credited to God's account. Job was trusting that somehow, someday, God was acting with a purpose. And so Job didn't sin in his tears. He didn't sin in his anguish of heart. He didn't sin in his worship. And he certainly didn't sin in ultimately attributing his calamity to the hand of God. No, Job stood the test of faith.

So chapter 1 ends with the greatest of all the men in the East, destitute, childless, afflicted. The greatest of men, the happiest of men, becomes the least of men: broken, but not helpless (as we'll see as this book unfolds).

Six Closing Thoughts

1. Beware: calamity comes without warning

I will leave you with six thoughts from this passage. The first thought is this, “Beware: calamity comes without warning.” We see that here; we've experienced that. Calamity can come without warning, and just as we should always be ready for the Lord's return, we should always be ready for death, let's also be braced in the power of the Holy Spirit for adversity. I'm not trying to be morbid. I'm not saying we need to live a life of fear, but we ought to be prepared. We ought to realize that we live in a fallen world, where afflictions touch even the best, the strongest of Christians.

2. God is always in control, always

Number two, “God is always in control, always.” I use the word “always” twice on purpose. God is always in control, always. Job did not say “the Lord gave and the Sabeans have taken away; Job did not say “the Lord gave and the Chaldeans have taken away”—or even “Satan has taken away.” What he says is, “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away.” Job acknowledges that whatever secondary causes were involved— and the secondary causes do bear blame—ultimately nothing could touch Job apart from the permission of God. Acts of men or acts of nature, nothing can touch us apart from God's permission. As one commentator put it,

Job sees only the hand of God in these events. It never occurs to him to curse the desert brigands, to curse the frontier guards, to curse his own stupid servants, now lying dead for their watchlessness. All secondary causes vanish. It was the Lord who gave; it was the Lord who removed; and in the Lord alone must the explanation of these strange happenings be sought.²³

3. We leave this world as we enter it: naked

Thirdly, “We leave this world as we enter it: naked.” Job says, “Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall return there.” Job's point, “I didn't bring it with me when I came in; I won't take it with me when I leave. All I own is on loan from God.” There was a custom in the ancient near east: to bury the dead in the fetal position. This a vivid picture of a return to the womb in death to the womb of the earth. But think about it, we leave this world as we enter it, with nothing. Think about all your possessions, think about whatever money you have, think about your family, your relationships; if you're married, your spouse; if you have kids, your children—everything that you have—all of those things, in one way or another, you were given since your birth, and all of those things, in one way or another, are surrendered at death.

²³Storms / FA/ 88.

You come naked, literally. And you leave earth the same way. Ecclesiastes chapter 5, verses 15 and 16:

15 As [man has] come naked from his mother's womb, so will he return as he came. He will take nothing from the fruit of his labor that he can carry in his hand. 16 This also is a grievous evil—exactly as a man is born, thus will he die. . . .

Ray Stedman was a popular preacher from a few decades ago. He spoke of having traveled for a series of meetings in which he was to speak. And after he arrived he realized that he didn't bring along with him a suit (and apparently that was something that was expected). He had a novel idea: right by his hotel was a funeral home, and he thought, "maybe I can borrow a suit from them—one of the suits that are used for corpses." He saw the funeral director who agreed to loan him one of the suits. Stedman appeared at the conference wearing the suit; no one the wiser. And as was his habit, as he was talking, he reached to put his hand in his pocket. Finding the flap he found no pocket because cadaver suits don't have them. We leave this world as we enter it with nothing.

4. Are you willing to pay the cost of faith?

"Are you willing to pay the cost of faith?" We live in an age of ease. Even in the church there are those who teach that being a Christian entitles you to a life free of suffering. No, we are not so entitled. This certainly wasn't true for Job. The thing about it that's really ironic is that faith and devotion were the reason why he was suffering in the first place. Think about it. This goes back to verse eight, "Have you considered my servant Job, there's no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil." The reason Job got chosen was because of his godliness and his faithfulness.

This makes me think of the great missionary to the American Indians, David Brainerd. When he was dying of smallpox, Jonathan Edwards, perhaps America's greatest theologian, allowed Brainerd to convalesce at his home. But Brainerd did not recover. Brainerd died in Jonathan Edwards home and Edward's daughter served as his nurse. As a result of caring for David Brainerd, Jonathan Edward's daughter contracted smallpox and she died. Afterward, Edwards was quoting as saying that he had absolutely no regrets in taking Brainerd into his home. It was an honor, it was a blessing—even though his faithfulness cost him the life of his very daughter.

I often think, “what if we had not moved here from Arizona in 2002?” If we weren't here, the events of Christmas Eve, 2015 would not have happened. But I don't look at it that way. I know that this was all part of God's plan and I rest in that. What might your faithfulness cost you? Are you willing to pay that cost?

5. Know the difference between a loan and a gift

We've talked about this before: “Know the difference between a loan and a gift.” Charles Swindoll says,

It's as if [Job] is saying, ‘The One who gave me life and has put everything on loan to me during my lifetime has chosen (and has every right) to take everything away. I won't take anything with me anyway. Blessed be His name for loaning it to me while I had it. And blessed be His name for choosing to remove it.’²⁴

²⁴Swindoll, 24.

Francis Anderson once again,

God has given [Job] a rehearsal for death. All things belong to God absolutely, to be given as a [loan] . . . to be taken back without wrong. There is no talk of human ‘rights.’ The Lord is the sovereign owner of all, and Job rejoices in this wonderful fact.²⁵

Layton Talbert,

Job had not done anything to deserve the removal of all God’s blessings. God Himself acknowledges this (2:3). But neither had he done anything to deserve all those blessings in the first place.²⁶

You see, everything we have, relationships or possessions, everything we have, our intellect, giftedness, it’s all on loan—our very lives—all on loan, and God has the sovereign right to call that loan. Technically the only gift we have is the gift of salvation. If you know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior that will never be taken away. Know the difference between a loan and a gift.

6. The shadow of the Cross is never absent

Lastly, “The shadow of the Cross is never absent.” It’s easy when we read in the Old Testament to forget about Jesus, to forget about the Gospel, to forget about the Cross. But I have no doubt that Job is now in the presence of his God, and not because he was righteous. No, because he “believed God” like his contemporary Abraham (Genesis 15:6). He believed in the Lord and the Lord reckoned it to him, credited it to him, as righteousness. The Cross casts a large shadow, and if you lived during the time of Job, or even if it was just 100 years before Christ came, and you were a faithful believer in the true living God, your salvation was ultimately secured at the Cross.

²⁵Francis I. Anderson, cited in Swindoll, 26.

²⁶Talbert, 51.

We live on the other side, we look back to the Cross as history, so the shadow of the Cross ought never be absent to us. That's the hope we have. If you take away the Cross, everything else is meaningless. I pray that each one here knows Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. You are not going to get by on your religiosity, or because you think that you're better than most. God's score is a perfect 100, perfect holiness. You can't do it; I can't do it; but Someone did it on our behalf: Jesus Christ. He lived the life we could never live and died a death we all deserve, so that if we believe in Him and turn from our sin, we will have eternal life, the hope of heaven.

So Lord, we thank you for this lesson, we thank you for Job, for this book. And for lessons that are there. There's so much we could spend, so much more time on this chapter, but that we don't have. But I pray, Lord, that we would all be prepared, that when affliction strikes us, that we may suffer well and rest in your sovereign hand, and above all to rest in the fact that knowing Jesus is a gift that can never be taken away. I pray, Lord, for anyone within the sound of my voice that's not been born again and I pray, Holy Spirit, that you would be pleased to work in that heart, in that life, bringing conviction of sin, bringing faith in the Cross, bringing true repentance and granting eternal life. To the glory of God we pray. Amen.

When Calamity Comes Knocking (Part 2)

Job 2:1-10

August 4, 2019

Christ Church of Clarkson

0819Job2.1-10(4) | Audio Length: 54:50

If you haven't done so already, go ahead and open your Bibles to the book of Job, chapter

2. And if you would, stand together as we read our text for this morning, which is verses one through 10 (Job chapter 2, verses 1 through 10). Follow along with me as I read:

1 Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the LORD. 2 The LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it." 3 The LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man fearing God and turning away from evil. And he still holds fast his integrity, although you incited Me against him to ruin him without cause." 4 Satan answered the LORD and said, "Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. 5 "However, put forth Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh; he will curse You to Your face." 6 So the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your power, only spare his life." 7 Then Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. 8 And he took a potsherd to scrape himself while he was sitting among the ashes. 9 Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!" 10 But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.²⁷

So, Lord, as we commit our time before you, we pray that you would impress upon our hearts these words that we have read. And as, Lord, I seek to exposit this text, that you would imprint that upon our hearts, those truths, Lord, that reflect the value of our God and Savior, those truths which help equip us when we to face affliction. And so, Lord, we ask that you would smile upon us this morning, as always, and we ask this for the sake of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

²⁷Scripture citations are taken from the NAS95 unless otherwise noted.

True Worship Survives the Fires of Affliction

This is part two of “When Calamity Comes Knocking,” where we see Job struck by a second wave of calamity; hence, part two (we see that in chapter 2). The central idea remains the same: “True worship survives the fires of affliction.” Affliction in the life of the believer will not ultimately destroy his or her worship. This goes back to Satan's challenge in chapter 1.

Remember what we've seen so far in that chapter? Job was “the greatest of the men of the east,” as he is described in verse one. He’s “blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil” (the way we also see him describe again in chapter 2). He is blessed with children, *10 children*. He’s blessed with possessions, verse three. Indeed, he was “the greatest of the men of the east.” And he cared for those under his charge. He cared for his children. Even though they were grown, he still looked out for them spiritually and would make sacrifices on their behalf, lest, as the text tells us, they may have “cursed God in their hearts.”

And we see in verse six of chapter 1, a day comes when “the sons of God” (that is, “the angelic host”) present themselves before the LORD, and Satan appears before them. Here we see a repeat of what we've just read in chapter 2 where God asked Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job?” And again we have that repeat, which we see three times: “a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil.” And Satan’s question, which is a question that could be asked of us, Does Job fear God for nothing, or without cause? You’ve put a hedge around him, God, and you have blessed the work of his hands; you've blessed him with stuff. But touch that stuff, Satan challenges, “and he will curse you to your face.”

Job is then visited by *the four horsemen of doom*. God is the one who sets the parameters for this trial, chapter 1. And you have, first of all, the Sabeans who attacked (verse 15) and they

killed the servants and stole the oxen. And the second horseman of doom appears, the fire of God. We take that to be lightning falling from heaven and burning up the sheep and the servants. We see the third horseman of doom, the Chaldeans, forming three bands, making a raid on the camels, and killing the servants. The last horseman of doom, the worst of all, Job's children are killed. Job and his wife lose all 10 of their children. And yet, see how he responds—and this comes back to the central idea: *True worship survives the fires of affliction*—verse 21, Job worshiped saying: “Naked I came from my mother's womb, naked I shall return there. The LORD gave the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.” *True worship survives the fires of affliction*. We've also learned that *comfort can give way to calamity without warning*, just as it struck Job without any warning (and Job's family).

The Council in Heaven Convenes Again (2:1-6)

The Council Convenes (1-2)

Now as we go to chapter 2 we're looking again at “the council.” The council in heaven convenes for a second time. And we have a basic repeat what was seen in chapter 1, and so I'm not going to go into the detail that we went into then (if you're curious, I would encourage you to get a copy of the recording and listen to it). We see the council convening in verses one and two. So if you focus your attention on Job chapter 2, verse 1, “**Again there was a day**” [another time marker like we saw in verse 6] “**when the sons of God**” [Hebrew *bene Elohim*, here referring to angels] “**came to present themselves before the LORD,**” [YHWH, or anglicized to Jehovah] “**and Satan**” [the Satan, definite article in Hebrew, the Adversary] “**also came among them to present himself before YHWH.**” In verse two Yahweh asks the Satan, “**Where do you come from?**” The Satan answered the LORD and said, “**From roaming about on the earth and**

walking around on it.” Job's character is then confirmed again, verse three (a restatement of what we saw in chapter 1:8): **“The LORD said to the Satan, “Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man fearing God and turning away from evil . . . ”**

Job's Character Confirmed (3)

There's no doubt about Job's character. Had it been mentioned once in sacred writ we wouldn't doubt it, but this is the third time that Job has been referred to by these descriptors. Once he was referred to in this fourfold fashion by the author, by the narrator of the book, and then twice we have the direct words of God, who also calls him “My servant.” These four qualities we saw in chapter 1, we see repeated here. He is **“blameless”** and **“upright”** (that speaks of his integrity). He **“fears God”** and he **“turns away from evil.”** But something new is added at the end of verse three that we haven't seen before: **“He still holds fast his integrity, although you incited me against him, to ruin him without cause.”** He holds fast to his *tammah*, a Hebrew word meaning “wholeness” or “completeness.” Later, Job says in 27:5, “Till I die I will not put away my integrity from me.” Job held fast, embraced his integrity in the midst of his suffering.

This is what I call a wholehearted commitment to one's worldview. Your worldview is what you believe about the central issues of life and existence, and how you act will be reflected in those beliefs. For Job it was wholehearted in that he was consistent. His actions were, for the most part, consistent with his profession, a profession that he persevered in. In that I see a glimpse of the reformed doctrine of the perseverance of the saints in the life of Job. After all, nothing, and we've talked about this before, we'll talk about it again, nothing proves the integrity

of faith quite like suffering. Those who claim to serve God—and I've seen this happen, it's happened throughout history—those who claim to serve God who later renounce their faith often do so because of the allures of the world, love or lust for another man or woman (the lesson of Solomon), or the philosophical problem of evil (and the related issue of suffering). Nothing proves integrity, the reality of your faith, like going through trials and afflictions. Peter agrees and ties suffering with perseverance in 1 Peter 1:7 where he writes that the proof of the genuineness of faith “is more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire.” The “fire” refers to the fires of affliction. You see, this is holding fast one’s integrity.

But there’s a greater question here that I want to spend a bit of time on: “Who caused Job's suffering?” You say, “Satan did.” Did he? If so, in what way did he cause it? We can ask the corollary question, “What is God's relationship to evil and suffering?” If you ask the average Christian today, he or she would likely say that God is not at all behind suffering.

Let's hear from a voice from the past, William Barklay. Some of you may be familiar with him. He was a Scottish theologian who died in 1978. He wrote a very popular and influential set of commentaries that remain popular among evangelicals, even though Barklay was a liberal. I would be not be surprised if some of you had Barklay's Daily Study Bible commentaries in your library. In his Spiritual Autobiography he wrote: “I believe that pain and suffering are never the will of God for his children. I cannot conceive that it is the will of God that anyone should be run over by a driver under the influence of drink or that a young mother should die of leukemia . . .”

If I believed that I'd be much more of a more of a mental case than I am right now! Seriously, I was “run over” by a drunk driver, along with my 14 year old daughter whom we subsequently buried. Barklay's theology is not driven by the Bible, which he did not consider

inerrant anyways. And I'll argue that this mentality, even shared by those who believe in the Bible, is not what is taught in the Bible.

In our Wednesday evening study in systematic theology last week we talked a little bit about a movement in the church, a heretical movement, called “open theism.” Open theism has spread within evangelicalism. It's the view that the future is partly open (hence, *open theism*) because God does not exhaustively know the future. He does not have—contrary to classical theology—God does not have complete omniscience. So open theists would say, since future random acts have not yet happened they're not there for God to know. We took a look at that in our theology class. This is how open theists react to this problem of evil. Similarly, by the way, the most popular of open theists are three men, Clark Pinnock, who passed away a year or two ago, John Sanders, and especially a man by the name of Gregory Boyd who is a pastor-scholar in Minnesota. And Boyd has done much to popularize the movement in the church with his books, *Letters From a Skeptic*, *God at War*, and *God of The Possible*. But listen first to this quote from John Sanders in his book *The God Who Risks* (and that is sort of a little catchphrase among open theists, they like to talk about the “risks” God takes). John Sanders says:

God does not have a specific, divine purpose for each and every occurrence of evil. When a two month old child contracts a painful, incurable bone cancer that means suffering and death, it is a pointless evil. The holocaust is a pointless evil. The rape and dismemberment of a young girl is a pointless evil. The accident that caused my brother's death was a tragedy. God does not have a specific purpose in mind for these occurrences.

Accidents and calamities are tragic, but that doesn't mean that they are ultimately, finally, without any purpose. I think Sanders has it wrong. Here's a quote from Greg Boyd's *Letters From a Skeptic*:

When an individual inflicts pain on another individual, I do not think we can go looking for the purpose of God in the event. I know Christians frequently speak about the purpose of God in the midst of tragedy caused by someone else, but this I regard to simply be a piously confused way of thinking.

Or this quote from *God at War*: “Neither Jesus nor his disciples assumed that there had to be a divine purpose behind all events in history. The Bible does not assume that every particular evil has a particular godly purpose behind it.”

You see, these are not matters merely reserved for theologians. These are practical issues that touch each one of us. And so again we ask, “What is God's relationship to evil and suffering?” This is what we call in philosophy and theology one’s *theodicy*. Alvin Plantinga, perhaps the foremost Christian philosopher alive today, refers to a theodicy as “the answer to the question of why God permits evil.” It is the vindication of God’s goodness and providence in view of the existence of evil.

I recently wrote a paper on this topic and I may at some point bring the weight of my research into our study. (I may do that next week as because I had planned on covering verses 1 through 13 this morning, but then it was just too much and I had to cut it short, so we’re stopping at verse 10 today.) And next time we will pick it up, Lord willing, in verse 11, so I may touch on this issue of theodicy and God's will as it relates to evil. But suffice for now for me to tell you that when we talk about causation in this evil world, and when we talk about God’s relationship to evil, we are talking about a rather complicated matter.

Did Satan cause Job's suffering? Well at one level we can say “yes.” Chapter two, verse seven, “Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and smote Job with sore boils” (that, by the way, is the first direct reference of Satan afflicting Job). But Satan is nonetheless *the*

secondary agent in Job's suffering. God is what we refer to as *the primary agent* behind Job's suffering. By that we mean God is ultimately sovereign, He is ultimately in control. What did we see back in chapter 1, verse 21? “The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD.” We see that Job ultimately attributes his calamity to the sovereign hand of God. Job didn't say, “The LORD gave, *the Sabeans* have taken away,” or “The LORD gave, *the Chaldeans* have taken away,” or even, “The LORD gave, *Satan* has taken away.” He says, “The LORD gave; the LORD has taken away.” Job acknowledges that whatever secondary causes that may be involved (Sabeans, Chaldeans, Satan) ultimately nothing could touch him apart from the permission of God. Here's a quote from last time by Sam Storms:

Job sees only the hand of God in these events. It never occurs to him to curse the desert brigands, to curse the frontier guards . . . All secondary causes vanish. It was the Lord who gave; it was the Lord who removed; and in the Lord alone must the explanation of these strange happenings be sought.²⁸

At the end of the book, chapter 42, verse 11, we read:

Then all his brothers and all his sisters and all who had known him before came to him, and they ate bread with him in his house; and they consoled him and comforted him for all the adversities that the LORD had brought on him. . . .

Who is responsible for what happened to Job, ultimately, God or Satan? God brought Job to Satan's attention (1:8), God permitted Satan to afflict Job within set limits (1:9-12).

And so we've got to come to Scripture “not leaning on our own understanding.” We have to let Scripture speak for itself. As commentator Layton Talbot said:

Systematic theology argues that God is not only good but also omnipotent and therefore must be responsible for what happened to Job. Affliction tempts us to question these two divine attributes. Either God is good but not omnipotent since He wasn't able to prevent the suffering, or God is omnipotent but not so good after all since He permitted

²⁸Storms / FA/ 88.

something so painful and unfair. Since both options are expressly unbiblical, we are faced with a choice: 1) Ignore what the Bible says about God and reevaluate Him on the basis of our limited experience, knowledge and understanding or 2) accept God's self description and reevaluate our circumstances in light of the Bible's depiction of reality.²⁹

Yes, the Bible gets to define reality. God gets to define reality. And so now look at chapter 2 where God says what, verse three? ***“Job still holds fast his integrity, although you incited me against him, to ruin him without cause.”*** Only here is God the object of this verb “incited.” God says ***“you incited me,”*** but what does that mean? The Satan provoked, motivated, prompted, persuaded God against Job. What does that mean? The other side of that is Satan did not move God to do anything morally evil because their purposes were different. God's purpose in this was to test Job to the glory of His name. Satan's purpose was, not to test, but to tempt Job to destruction, to the detriment of God's name. God's goal was testing to His glory, Satan's goal was the destruction of Job and the scandalization of God's name. But God is in control. John Piper says this:

However we look at it Satan is weak. That is, he can't do anything without God. He doesn't control the lightning, he doesn't control the wind, he can't decisively make the Sabeans and Chaldeans do anything except as God gives him leash. [John Piper, Look at the Book: Job 1:18-19]

So in verse three, yes, Job still holds fast, clings to his integrity, ***“although you incited me against him, to ruin him.”*** The Hebrew word *bala* means “to swallow up or gulp down.” This is a very picturesque word. It's used in Joseph's dream where seven thin, scorched ears of corn swallow up the seven plump, full ears. The same word is in Jonah chapter 1, verse 17, which states that God “appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah.” It's used in Numbers 16:30 of the ground that opened up and swallowed the disobedient sons of Kora. Yes, *Job still holds fast*

²⁹Talbert, 57.

his integrity, although you incited me against him to swallow him, and that without cause. That's the same word used by Satan in chapter 1, verse 9, "Does Job fear God *without cause*, or for nothing?" Job has been afflicted without cause, for nothing. There's no direct reason why he is being so afflicted. In fact, the book in the first two chapters makes that so very explicit, that he is blameless, upright, fearing God, turning away from evil.

Is Job's undeserved suffering unfair? Well stop and think a minute about the ultimate in unfair, the ultimate in suffering. Look no further than Jesus Christ. In Psalm 69 the psalmist writes about "those who hate me without cause are more than the hairs of my head." You say, "What's significant about that?" Well, Jesus cited that Psalm in John 15:25, "they have done this," that is hated and opposed Him, "to fulfill the word that is written in their law: They hated me without cause." No one in history has been subject to greater undeserved suffering than Jesus, the Lamb of God. No one. So don't gauge your suffering by comparing it to others. Gauge your suffering in light of the afflictions of Christ.

The apostle Paul writes in 2 Corinthians chapter 1, verse 5, "The sufferings of Christ," the unmatched, unparalleled sufferings of Christ "are ours in abundance, and also," he adds, "our comfort is abundant through Christ." That's the Cross. That's the hope we have. That is what ultimately gives meaning to suffering. As Michael Horton wrote:

The Cross was the cup of eternal wrath, distilled from the anger that had been building up since the sin of Adam, concentrated into one terrible drink. The Son drank the cup of wrath, so that we could drink the cup of salvation. And when he had finished his cup, there was not even one drop left for us who gratefully receive the benefit of his death.³⁰

*"When I stand before the throne
Dressed in beauty not my own;*

³⁰Michael Horton, *We Believe*, 102.

*When I see thee as thou art,
Love thee with unsinning heart;
Then, Lord, shall I fully know—
Not till then—how much I owe."*

Satan's Consequent Challenge (4-5)

We see Satan's *consequent challenge* in verses four and five. Satan answered the LORD and says, **“Skin for skin, yes, all that man has he will give for his life.”** *Skin for skin* seems to be a proverbial saying. We don't exactly know what it means (we can speculate). I would say that the second statement seems to define the first. In other words, if you look at verse four the first statement is *skin for skin*; the second statement is *yes, all that a man has he will give for his life*. When we have two statements together like that, the second appears to define the first. We call that, here's the three dollar word for the day, *epexegetical*. That means you've got a statement, a statement that's in two parts, and the second part tells you what the first part means; it's an *epexegetical* statement. So that seems to be what we have here. The Holman Christian Standard Bible captures that as they translate it, “Skin for skin. A man will give up everything he owns in exchange for his life.” What I think the Satan is saying is that it's one thing to trade your skin for another's. In Job's case, it was trading his skin not only for the animals which were stolen, but ultimately, trading his skin for that of his children, his seven sons and three daughters. But Satan is saying you will do anything to spare your own skin. A man will give up everything he owns in exchange for his life. Everything he owns. What did Job lose? 7000 sheep, 3000 camels, 1000 oxen, 500 donkeys. He lost his workers, his servants as well. But worst of all, he lost all of his children.

Remember Satan's challenge in chapter 1: “Does Job fear God for nothing?” *You’ve hedged him in, you’ve blessed him, you’ve protected him, you’ve pampered him; no wonder he serves you!* Chapter 1, verse 11: “Put forth your hand; touch all that he has and he will surely curse you to your face.” What a fake Satan is! He was so sure of himself! “Take away his stuff – even take away his kids – he will curse you!” And what does Job do, chapter 1 verse 20? *Job falls on his face and worships!* Satan lost the wager and doesn't even admit it! He defines, in one sense, the parameters of the contest; God defined it ultimately. He loses and then comes up with another set of conditions. It's like someone saying they can beat you in a 40 yard sprint. And then that person loses and says, “Well I got a bad start. Let's make it a 100 yard dash.”

And so Satan comes up with another challenge, verse five, “**Put forth, God, your hand now; touch his bone and his flesh, he will curse you to your face.**” Satan understand something that many Christians don't: God is sovereign. And Satan believes something I don't think is absolutely true. Think about it. Is it true that people will sacrifice everything on the altar of their own flesh? In other words, is it completely true, that people are so self-centered that they will willingly give up their own children to save themselves? Will I trade my wife’s skin, my parent’s skin, my children’s skin for my own? Well, that's sometimes true, but certainly not absolutely. Stories abound of parents who have risked life and limb in order save their own children. I would've traded my life for my daughter's. I don't remember what happened during the crash that day, but witnesses said I was, though badly injured, trying to go back to the burning wreckage to rescue my daughter. I would've given my life for my daughter! And that makes me think of John chapter 15, verse 13, “Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his skin

his life,” his own life, “for his friends.” And that’s what Jesus willingly did. But in Job’s case, I believe Satan is desperate and he believes that Job will curse God when it comes to his own skin.

And so God gives his contingent consent. In verse six the LORD, Yahweh, says to Satan, **“Behold, he is in your power. Only spare his life.”** So again, I ask you, “Who’s in control here?” Satan says, **“put forth your hand,”** God says, **“he is in your power, only spare his life.”** As John Piper so well states it, “Satan is a lion on a leash and God pulls it, according to his sovereign will.” Listen, nothing can touch God’s child apart from God’s consent. Nothing can touch you or afflict you, unless it comes through the hand of God. Nothing.

More Calamity Concerning Job (2:7-8)

Chronic Sores from Head to Toe (7)

There’s more calamity concerning Job coming in chapter 2, verse seven and eight; another wave: chronic sores. Look at verse seven, **“The Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.”** That by the way, ends the third scene. Satan departs and is not seen for the rest of the book, though he may have been behind the scenes, we don’t know. Satan ultimately receives the final insult and that is to be ignored! And here it’s an immediate departure to afflict Job: **“Satan went out,”** verse 17, **“from the presence of the LORD,”** [here begins the fourth scene, back to earth] **“and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.”** We don’t know how much time elapsed in the white space between verses 12 and 13. Here it certainly seems to be immediate. As soon as Satan departs, he **“afflicts Job with sore boils”** – that’s the New American Standard. Other translations have “painful sores,” or “terrible boils,” from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.” His entire body is afflicted with these painful oozing sores. We can only speculate what sort of disease this was. One author writes:

Medical doctors have been curious about this particular ailment for years. In my research I've found numerous comments made about the disease. One said it was smallpox. Another one, elephantiasis. Another chronic eczema. Another leprosy. . . . Another keatosis. One identified in medical terms, pemphigus foliogeus.³¹

Another writes of *pemphigus foliogeus*, that “this disease, as attested by physicians today, matches the symptoms of Job’s afflictions.” And then this writer gives the types of symptoms Job was having as described throughout the book. All we read at this point is *painful sores* or *sore boils*. But as we follow the rest of the book we find out that they are inflamed ulcerous sores, that they’re itching (2:7-8); that there happens to be degenerative changes in facial skin (2:7,12); there is a loss of appetite (3:24); there's depression (3:24-25); a loss of strength (6:11); worms in the boils and running sores (7:5); difficulty breathing (9:18); darkness under the eyes (16:6); foul breath (19:17); weight loss (19:20, 33:21); continual pain (30:17); restlessness (30:27); blackened, peeling skin, and fever (30:30).³² This isn't just some sort of measly case of the chickenpox. This is pure, dire affliction.

I find it noteworthy that the two Hebrew words translated “**sore boils**” here are also used in the sixth plague upon Egypt, in Exodus chapter nine, “boils breaking out in sores over man and beast.” It's also a disease that parallels the curse of Deuteronomy chapter 28, the curses that would befall Israel if they failed to keep covenant. Deuteronomy 28, verse 35, “The LORD will strike you on the knees and legs with sore boils from which you cannot be healed,” and note this “from the sole of your foot to the crown of your head.” What do we see here? “**Satan smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.**”

³¹Swindoll, 32.

³²Roy B. Zuck, "Job," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 721.

A curse on Egypt; a curse for not keeping covenant. There's no way a Jew would be reading this and not thinking, "Job? Is Job cursed?" And yet we read that he did no wrong; he was blameless. But there's another, a greater sufferer than Job, a greater man than Job: Jesus Christ, the Son of God who was cursed without cause. The pictures of Jesus that we see in this book! Galatians 3:13 "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us, for it is written, cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree." So the calamity continues as chronic sores in verse seven.

Cruciation on an Ash Heap (8)

And then what I call, this for the sake of the outline, *Cruciation on an Ash Heap*. We read in verse eight that "**Job took a potsherd to scrape himself while he was sitting among the ashes.**" Where is Job now? He's at the town dump. This was the greatest man in the east, chapter 1, verse 3, now living among the ashes, scraping himself with a potsherd, a piece of broken pottery, in the town dump.

When I was a kid living in Arizona there was a vacant lot adjacent to our home. Walking across that lot I would find potsherds, broken pieces of ancient Indian-American pottery. I had a plastic bag full of them (and I have no idea what I did with them). In Job's day potsherds were broken pots and dishes that ended up at the town dump. With them were ashes that were discarded there, including, note this, burnt excrement. Job is sitting in ashes that included the ashes of burnt excrement. The greatest of the men of the east, Job, used those ashes to soothe his blistering flesh. Warren Wiersbe describes the scene:

There the city garbage was deposited and burned, and there the city's rejects lived, begging alms from whomever passed by. At the ash heap, dogs fought over something to

eat, and the city's dung was brought and burned. The city's leading citizen was now living in abject poverty and shame.³³

A similar place was used by Jesus in the first century to describe hell, the Gehenna of fire, the valley where the refuse from Jerusalem was deposited and burned. Job is in his own earthly hell.

A Curse Called for by Job's Wife (2:9)

The Curse Called For

Then as we come to verse nine we see *A Curse Called For by Job's Wife*. This is the only appearance of her in the entire book. She's mentioned two other places: chapter 19, verse 17; chapter 31, verse 10 (so she was still part of Job's life). But here's her only appearance—and she calls for a curse. Verse nine, Job's wife said to him, **“Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!”** **“Curse God,”** she says, knowing that this act, the curse of God, brings a death sentence. Remember Job making sacrifices on behalf of his children in chapter 1, verse five, thinking “perhaps they have cursed God in their hearts.” She says **“curse God and die!”**

Consideration Given to Her

Well, what do we make of her? She has been roundly condemned and vilified ever since the writing of this book. One of the issues in biblical interpretation has to do with *tone*.

Sometimes we're not exactly sure. We ask, “What is the *tone* of the statement?” There are cases where we're not sure. Is there sarcasm here? It's easy to read this that way. Maybe anger? We don't know. St. Augustine called her *adiutrix diaboli* (“the helpmeet of the Devil”), while John Chrysostom in the fourth century asked, note this:

Why did the devil leave him this wife? Because he thought her a good scourge, by which to plague him more acutely than by any other means. Moreover, the thought is not far

³³Cited in Swindoll, 33-34.

distant, that God left her to him in order that when, in the glorious issue of his sufferings, he receives everything doubled, he might not have this thorn in the flesh also doubled.

I think that's perhaps a little harsh; we ought to give her a break as she too suffered much loss.

Think about it: she lost the 10 children that she bore, she lost her wealth, her possessions, and especially, for a wife, the security that's involved in one's financial estate. The security of having a healthy, strong husband who she now sees in horrible, physical suffering.

Job's Correction and Confession (2:10)

Job's Correction

Job gives *A Correction and a Confession*. Verse 10 is a correction. He said to her, **“You speak as one of the foolish women speaks.”** Note this, very important: Job doesn't call her a foolish woman. He said that she speaks *as* a foolish woman.

I thought this was kind of humorous. The United Bible Societies Commentary, one commentary I use, deals with translation and textual issues. And the United Bible Society said that in some cultures one way to understand this is “women with heads made of gourds.” Don't say that to your mother, or your wife, or your sister, okay? You didn't hear it here.

But the word **“foolish”** is the Hebrew word *nebalot* (related word, “nabal”). Remember Nabal? Remember Abigail? Nabal was her husband. And Abigail says to David regarding her husband in 1 Samuel 25:25, “Please do not let my lord pay attention to this worthless man, Nabal, for as his name is, so is he. Nabal is his name and folly is with him . . .” What does the word “nabal” mean? It means “fool.” Psalm 14:1, “The fool (*nabal*) has said in his heart, ‘There is no God. . .’”

I think what Job is saying is that his wife is *acting as a fool*; not that she is a fool, but she's acting like one in that she's shortsighted. This specifically relates to religious, biblical truth: "You're shortsighted when it comes to the truth of who God is." She's acting as a practical atheist. Sometimes we act as practical atheists, don't we? We believe that God is; we believe the Holy Spirit dwells within us; but sometimes we act as if that isn't true. That's when, we're not the fool, but we're acting as the fool. It's like Peter, who in response to Jesus' prediction of His impending suffering for the sins of the world. Peter says, "God forbid that this happen to you!" And what does Jesus say? "Get behind me, Satan! You're a stumbling block to me, for you're not setting your mind on God's interest, but man's." And what Job is saying is, "My dear wife, you are not setting your interest on God's matters, on divine truth, you've got a very earthly way of thinking and that needs to be corrected." And Job corrects that. He's priest of his family; he's a godly husband.

Job's Confession

And he says, the second half of verse 10, "**Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?**" (Some translations have "evil," "calamity," "affliction.") *Who does Job think is ultimately in control?* I love the way John Piper puts this:

Now I think in heaven at this moment just before those words were spoken as she said: 'Curse God and die,' a great smile came across Satan's face. And all of tens of thousands of angels watched . . . But when they heard Job say: 'Shall we not receive evil at the hand of God as well as good?' Twenty thousand arms, angelic arms went up. 'Yes, Job! Yes! God is more valuable than your health. Thank you. Thank you for holding fast to your God and to your integrity!' And Satan's countenance falls and that is the last we hear of him in this book.³⁴

³⁴John Piper,
www.desiringgod.org/messages/holding-on-to-your-faith-in-the-midst-of-suffering.

The Author's Confirmation

We get another confirmation that this wasn't bad theology by Job because we read in the last part of verse 10, **"In all this Job did not sin with his lips."** His confession was spot-on. His theological doctrine was pure. I tell you what, you tell some your Christian friends about God's sovereignty in this light? You're going to get an ear-full. Job gets confirmation. It's like what we saw in chapter 1, verse 22, "Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God."

Don't take this to mean that Job did not sin. Don't take this to mean that Job just sailed through his suffering. You probably read the book. You know how he falls on his face time and time again. I thought about that. I thought, here while the wounds are still fresh, he can say, "The LORD gives, the LORD takes away. Blessed be the name of the LORD." He can say, **"Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?"** More than one commentator noted the difference between these descriptions we get in these two chapters and the struggling, doubting Job of chapters 3 through 31. And as I thought about this, I thought "this is not uncommon when you've gone through calamity." I've seen this pattern in my life. There is an initial falling on your face before God. Yes, there is the shock over the tragedy. But then as the days turn into weeks and weeks turn into months there's kind of a simmering of your thought as to what happened, and you start to really struggle. You fight against cynicism, you fight against bitterness and anger. You still can say when you're walking in the power of the Spirit, "The Lord gives, the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." I can say that by the virtue of the Spirit who dwells within me. But I can also tell you about the times, like last night, when I just cried and cried – and grabbed my T-shirt and ripped it off my body in agony! We're human, folks. We suffer. We're afflicted. But in the end, as believers, we support one another. We weep

with one another. We encourage one another. And as you've done to me and my wife, when we fallen down, you've picked us up. You've helped us hold fast our integrity.

Well for now, at this point in the book, there's silence in heaven (until we reach chapter 38 when God speaks). What we see in these first two chapters, especially, is the question that we all need to ask, "What do you value and why? Is God to be valued simply because He is? Or do you value Him because He gives gifts? The lesson of Job is that He is to be valued for who He is, period. You either get that or you don't. Think about it, which is more valuable? Gold or tin? You say, "gold." Well why? It's greater worth is due to the value it has monetarily. It can be used to buy things. It's a mercenary value. And that's Satan's accusation against Job, that he's worshiping God because He is the God of gold, because He gives stuff.

Why do we, especially as Christians, value a beautiful sunset? Because as believers we say "look at the handiwork of our God." We look beyond the gifts to the person, to who God is. God is to be valued for who He is. And listen, that makes no sense to a fool. That makes no sense to a nonbeliever. There would have been people who looked at Job and said "Why do you continue to serve and fear God? Look what's happening, it isn't working!" And we live in such a pragmatic culture today where a lot of people would say, "You know, it's not working if you're suffering." After all, how many churches are geared toward pragmatism? "Let me tell you how the faith can work for you and enhance your life and make you a better husband, to make you a better father, and a better employee, and feel better about yourself." Isn't that what drives many of the large churches, that very message? Tell people that, as a believer, you are going to be afflicted – and that ultimately comes through the hand of a sovereign God—that you be tested as to whether you value Him for who He is or whether you value Him because you consider Him a

deity of gold. That's not a popular message. God is to be valued for who He is. For the fool that doesn't make sense, but for the believer in Jesus Christ it makes perfect sense because, I believe, it's written into our spiritual DNA.

The best gift of the Gospel is not eternal life. We're not into this just because we want fire insurance. The best gift of the Gospel is seeing and savoring the supremacy of Jesus Christ.

[I'm indebted to John Piper for this concept] The greatest reward of the Cross is knowing the supremacy of Christ, for whom, as Paul said, "we have counted the loss of all things, and count them but *skubalon* (dung, rubbish) that we may gain Christ."

Lord, we know what it's like to struggle. When our passion is dim and our hunger and thirst for you is not what it ought to be. But I think everyone here, everyone within the sound of my voice, knows what it's like to cry out and say "I do hunger and thirst for you! Quench that thirst, feed that hunger!" Lord, I pray for any within the sound of my voice yet walking in darkness. Oh, Holy Spirit, would you be pleased to show them the bankruptcy of their estate, that they are headed to a Christless eternity in a place called Hell. Turn them to Jesus. Yes, for redemption, but also turn to Jesus because of who He is, because He is inherently valuable, because of His supremacy. Lord, you can write that into our DNA, and we're thankful when you do. For Christ sake, we pray. Amen.

**Interlude: God and the Existence of Evil
Job 1-2 and Selected Scriptures³⁵**

August 18, 2019

Christ Church of Clarkson

0819Job1-2ss(5) | Audio Length: 50:51

Let's devote our time to the Lord. *Indeed, Father, you are the one who holds us fast. We are held fast in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. We pray that you would bless this time as we encroach on some issues that are difficult. I pray Lord that you would give understanding to each that hears these words. Bless our time and minister among our hearts, Holy Spirit of promise. We pray in Jesus name, amen.*

Open your Bibles to the book of Job, if you haven't already done so. We're going in a bit of a different direction today. This is what I'm calling, "Interlude: God and the Existence of Evil." I would like to take some of that which I have studied in my postgraduate courses and use that, as I see it as relevant to the book of Job.

The last time we met we asked the question, and this is what's very relevant for us this morning, we asked the question, "Who caused Job's suffering?" And we noted that from one perspective you could certainly say that Satan caused it. And we saw in 2:7, which is the first direct reference to Satan afflicting Job, that he went out from the presence of the Lord and smote Job, struck Job, with sore boils all over his body. Satan indeed was a cause, but what we referred to in theology and philosophy as a *secondary cause*. Why secondary? We see back in 1:20-21 that Job worshiped—this was after his affliction—Job worshiped. He falls on his face and he says, "The LORD gave, the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD." And so we see that Job looks at all that has happened to him, both good and what we call bad, as coming

³⁵Scripture citations are taken from the NAS95 unless otherwise noted.

through the sovereign hand of God. And so we noted that true worship, true devotion, survives the fires of affliction. Job ultimately attributes his calamity to the sovereign hand of God. We see that at the beginning of the book and we see it at the end where we read in 42:11 that “all his brothers and all his sisters, and all who had known him before, came to Job and they consoled him and comforted him for all the adversities *that the Lord had brought upon him.*” Who is responsible for what happened to Job, God or Satan? Well ultimately it was God who brought Job to Satan's attention (1:8); God permitted, He allowed Satan to afflict Job within God's set parameters, we saw that in 1:9-12, as well as in 2:6. So God is sovereign. God stands as the *primary agent* behind Job's affliction because He is sovereign. He is ultimately the Boss. He is ultimately and finally the One who is in control of all things.

Introduction and Review

This may raise some questions in your minds. Those are some of the questions that we are hoping to answer today. Look again with me at 2:3, where God says that “Job still holds fast his integrity, although you incited me, Satan, against him to ruin him.” “Ruin” is a Hebrew word, *bala*, meaning “swallow.” It's used in Jonah 1:17 where we read that God appointed a great fish to “swallow” Jonah. It's the same word translated “ruin” here. “You incited me to swallow him” (note the last two words of verse three) “without cause.” Why without cause? Take a moment to reflect on what we've learned so far in the book of Job.

Job is a converted man

There are three things we noted in chapter 1 about Job, the first being that *Job is a converted man*. He is described three times in these first two chapters as a man who is “blameless and upright;” that's who he is. He's a blameless man and he's an upright man. And as a result of

who he is, Job “fears God and turns away from evil.” That's what he does. He's a good man, a man who knows and serves the Triune God of the Bible.

Job is a prosperous man

Secondly, we noted that *Job is a prosperous man*. God blessed him with material possessions, a measure of wealth back in Job's time, land and livestock and servants (1:3). And God not only blessed him *materially*, He also blessed him *familially* with sons and daughters (seven sons and three daughters, 1:2). Job is converted man and he's a prosperous man. No wonder he's called, verse 3, “the greatest of all the men of the east.”

Job is a spiritually sensitive man

Job is also *a spiritually sensitive man*, and we saw a great glimpse of that in the fifth verse of chapter 1, that his children, when the days of their feasting had completed, Job would offer burnt sacrifices on their behalf, thinking that maybe, just maybe they have cursed God within their hearts. Job had a spiritual sensitivity.

And so God says that Job has been “afflicted without cause” (2:3). Why without cause? Because there was nothing, humanly speaking, that Job did to bring this calamity upon them. He wasn't a sinner, he wasn't living an unrighteous lifestyle, he wasn't reaping bad because he was bad. No, he was “afflicted without cause.”

Review of 1:14-19–The Four Horsemen of Doom

We noted also that Job is a man like us, one who is not immune from calamity. As we've seen in chapter 1, Satan is permitted to afflict Job. We saw *The Four Horsemen of Doom* in verses 14-19; these four disasters that rapidly, one after the other, boom! boom! boom! boom!

strike Job's life. And they alternate from human attack (that is, raiders) to what are often called “natural disasters,” what insurance companies once referred to as “acts of God.”

The *first horseman* was raiders (these were the Sabeans). And a servant comes to Job in verse 14 and he says, “You know it was a normal day the oxen were plowing, the donkeys feeding beside them, and the Sabeans attacked, these nomadic raiders attacked, and they killed the servants, and they took the livestock. And only I have escaped to tell you.”

Before the visibly shaken servant can finish talking, the *second horseman* arrives, natural disaster. We take this as lightning. Another comes and says, “The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants and killed them. I alone have escaped to tell you.”

The next domino falls in verse 17, the *third horseman*, raiders again, but this time Chaldeans. And they formed three bands(verse 17) and made a raid on the camels. They take them and they kill the servants, and the servant says, “I alone have escaped to tell you.” Three dominoes fall in rapid succession. But there's one more.

The most painful of all: the *fourth horseman*, natural disaster. The scene is introduced in verse 18. While the previous servant was still speaking, another also came and said, “Your sons and your daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house.” And then note how verse 19 starts, “and behold.” We only see that here among the four horsemen, these words, “and behold.” It's marking something as the most climactic, which it was. A great wind comes from across the wilderness, hits the four corners of the house, and the house falls. Boom! Well, Job's children were inside and they all die. Job loses wealth and status, most painfully of all, his children in a single day.

Imagine losing everything you own and being bankrupt. Imagine losing your status, whatever that is, your reputation (maybe unfairly); then imagine losing your family. Those of you that have children, imagine losing all of your kids, all like that!

Review of 2:7-8—more calamity concerning Job

As if that's not enough (that was just chapter 1), we see *more calamity concerning Job* in chapter 2. Satan is unsatisfied. Yes, Job passed the first test, the first proposal that Satan offered. But how about another go? And so we see a repeat in chapter 2. We saw how the divine counsel in heaven convenes again in verse 1, “the sons of God.” These angelic beings present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also comes in. We see a repeat of what we saw in chapter 1 and in verse 2 of chapter 2, God asks Satan, “Where have you come from?” Satan's has been roaming around the earth, walking about it. And the Lord again brings Job to Satan's attention: “Have you considered my servant Job?” Here we see that fourfold description of him as a righteous man, and Satan answered the Lord and says, “Skin for skin!” And we took that as a reference to the fact that while Job was willing to save his skin by sacrificing the skin of others, but touch his own body, his bone and his flesh, and “he will curse you to your face.”

And so God gives Satan permission (verse 6), “He is in your power. Just spare his life.” Satan then strikes Job physically with sore boils, painful, running, oozing, maggot infested sores, from the top of his head to the soles of his feet. And he is no longer in his house. He is now sitting at the town dump among the ashes, using a piece of broken pottery to scratch and scrape that oozing pus. And yet, even after his wife says “curse God and die,” Job utters a great confession of worship: “Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?” We're

back to verse 3 of chapter 2, “he still holds fast his integrity, although you incited me against him to swallow him without cause.”

What is God's Relationship to Suffering and to Evil

An age-old question

It's one thing to say that God is sovereign, it's another to ask the question, “How can He be sovereign over evil, even ordaining it for His purposes, and yet be good?” This is an age-old question. Skeptics have wrestled with it and have for years cited the existence of evil as sufficient proof that the God of the Bible does not exist. Dr. Ron Nash, a favorite philosopher of mine (Dr. Nash passed away some 10 years ago) wrote this: “Every philosopher I know believes that the most serious challenge to theism, was, is, and will continue to be the problem of evil.”³⁶ Nash wrote those words in 1988.

But let's go back in time to about the fourth century BC. We have what has been called the “Epicurean Paradox.” Epicurus was a philosopher, and here is the paradox attributed to him: “God,” it was said “either wishes to take away evils, and is unable; or He is able, and is unwilling; or He is neither willing nor able, or He is both willing and able.” This paradox is been put in the form of a syllogism, logical statements with a conclusion:

1. If God were truly omnipotent, He would be able to prevent evil.
2. If God were truly omnibenevolent, He would prevent evil.
3. Evil exists.
4. Therefore, a truly omnipotent and omnibenevolent God does not exist.

Before you worry that that's sealed somehow within the laws of logic, let me tell you that there are some flaws in this syllogism, but I'm not going to go into that now. My point is that this

³⁶*Faith and Reason*. Grand Rapids, MI, 1988, 177.

has been fodder for skeptics. And over the years I have encountered those who rejected Christianity who have followed this line of reasoning.

I think of one man (we'll call him Fred, not his real name). Fred had a great appreciation for my theology and preaching. Fred gave at least an outward affirmation of what we cherish as the doctrines of grace. But all was not right in Fred's heart, and after I lost touch with him I learned he slowly and deliberately began to reject the faith. At the heart of what he claimed was the reason was the existence of evil.

So this is a question for skeptics, but it also is one that perplexes Christians. As Stephen J. Wellum observes:

The problem of evil, however, is not just an issue that non-Christians raise and which rightly requires a full-blown biblical-theological answer; it is also a problem for Christians . . . it is a problem in regard to our daily lives, questions, and struggles, what has been labeled the emotional or religious problem of evil. Christians too, live in a fallen world ravaged by sin, and even though we may not question in exactly the same way as the non-Christian how God and evil can exist simultaneously, we often wrestle with the relationship of God's sovereignty to evil and wonder why specific evils happen to us and others. . . .³⁷

This was also a question that perplexed St. Augustine. Augustine, born in the fourth century, who it was said early in his quest for the truth, wrestled over the problem of evil more than any other issue. It's a matter that affects us all: evil, suffering, trials, afflictions—in light of a good, sovereign God.

Here is where we are going to take a deep dive. We are going to go deep so you need to put your on your thinking caps. Howard Hendricks had a friend who was a forensic pathologist.

³⁷"God's Sovereignty Over Evil," in *Whomever He Wills: A Surprising Display of Sovereign Mercy*, Ed. Matthew Barrett and Thomas J. Nettles (Cape Coral, FL:: Founders Press, 2012), 231–32.

And Hendricks asked his friend if he had seen many brains. The man said he had. Hendricks asked his friend if he'd ever seen one that was worn out. And his friend reportedly replied, "Worn out? I've not even seen one hardly used!" Well, let's buck the trend and use our brains this morning.

How do we define evil?

First of all, the when we talk about the problem of evil, we have to define what evil is. What does it mean? We are generally more familiar with the question of suffering. After all, everyone suffers and knows what it means to suffer. But what about evil? Theologian R.C.

Sproul gives this definition:

Historically, evil has been defined in terms of privation . . . and negation . . . , especially in the works of Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas. The point of such definitions is to define evil in terms of a lack of, or negation of, the good. We define sin, for example, as any want of conformity to, or transgression of, the law of God. Sin is characteristically defined in negative terms. We speak of sin as disobedience, lawlessness, immorality, unethical behavior, and the like. So that, above and beyond the problem of evil always stands the standard of good by which evil is determined to be evil. In this regard, evil is parasitic. It depends upon a host outside of itself for its very definition. Nothing can be said to be evil without the prior standard of the good.³⁸

In other words, apart from that which is good, a righteous standard, there is no moral evil. John Calvin, following Augustine, wrote that, "evil and sin are nothing in themselves but only a disorder or corruption of what ought to be."³⁹ Evil is the lack of true good. it stands in contrast to—and is the absence of—the revealed holiness of the Bible's Triune God. In short, evil cannot exist apart from God's existence. We'll talk about that a little later.

³⁸"The Problem of Pain," *TableTalk*, (June 2006).

³⁹*Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 169.

But notice, we must never lose sight of the fact that nowhere in the Bible do we see God portrayed as the author of evil. Saying that God is the author of evil is a historically, biblically, heretical position. God is not the author of evil and is not to be blamed for moral evil; He does not take delight in it. And we must never come to the place where we think we are not responsible for the evil that we do, thinking that God is sovereign anyways, or that God takes pleasure in evil, or is to be blamed. The fault always lies with the creature not the Creator. That's James 1:13-17, where James says, as a relates to temptation,

13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. 14 But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. 15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. 16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. 17 Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.

Some of you may be thinking, "Well I have the answer for sin and suffering: it's free will." This is the most commonly cited solution to the problem of evil, a favorite of pew-sitter and pundit alike. And the argument goes that evil is the result of the unhindered free choices of rational creatures, whether human or angelic. And the argument continues, God is not in any sense foreordaining these free acts. And, therefore, because He doesn't foreordain them, He is not responsible for them. While that sounds feasible at first blush, it does not conform to the totality of the biblical evidence. For one thing, this sort of free will theism strips God of the sovereignty and the glory that is rightly His. For another, it just doesn't exist. People are moral agents, they do have a degree of freedom within the confines of their fallenness, but they do not possess the kind of liberty that is usually proposed by those who uphold this sort of free will theism.

Most Christians who chirp about free will actually are holding to what has been deemed a heretical view throughout the history of the church going back to the time of Augustine and Pelagius. The 16th-century Protestant Reformation made clear that the biblical position as it relates to man's will is not one of freedom but one of bondage. We also see throughout Scripture that God's sovereignty encompasses and overrules the seeming free actions of men. In Acts 2:23 we read that sinful men nailed Jesus to the cross, and we also read that was according to the pre-determined plan and foreknowledge of God. They did it, they were accountable for it, and yet they were doing that which the Triune God determined would happen from all eternity. As theologian Wayne Grudem writes:

There are literally dozens of Scripture passages that say that God (indirectly) brought about some kind of evil. . . . Christians often are unaware of the extent of this forthright teaching in Scripture. Yet it must be remembered that in all of these examples, the evil is actually done not by God but by people or demons who choose to do it.⁴⁰

Very noteworthy is Romans chapter 9 (if you're familiar with that chapter). The apostle Paul explicitly addresses evil but does not explain away evil on the basis of man's so-called free will. Rather, he engages in an uncompromised defense of God's absolute sovereignty. Rather than human free will, Paul asked the question, "Who can resist His will?" We could spend a lot more time in this but it's time we don't have.

So where we go from here? We go to what I am calling (follow me here) *A Multidimensional Approach to God and Evil*, A Multidimensional Approach, or Perspective on God and Evil. Theologically—this is your word for the day—theologically, this has been termed “compatibilism.” In other words, the existence of the God of Scripture, a holy, good God, and the

⁴⁰*Systematic Theology: Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 322–23.

simultaneous existence of evil, wickedness, suffering, those two things that seem at odds are ultimately *compatible* one with another. D. A. Carson defines compatibilism:

The Bible as a whole . . . presupposes or teaches that both of the following propositions are true: 1. God is absolutely Sovereign, but his sovereignty never functions in such a way that human responsibility is curtailed [or] minimized. . . . 2. Human beings are morally responsible creatures—they significantly choose, rebel, obey, believe, defy, make decisions, . . . and they are rightly held accountable for such actions; but this characteristic never functions so as to make God absolutely contingent.⁴¹

In other words, God is not bound by the actions of the creature.

Four Considerations as it Relates to God and Evil

God's decree is not simple, it is complex

Now I'm going to give you four considerations as it relates to God and evil. The first of those four considerations is this: God's decree (I'll explain this, so hang with me those of you that don't like thinking in theological terms), *God's decree is not simple, it is complex*. When we talk about God's decree we're talking about that which He has from eternity determined would happen; no doubts, no "ifs," "ands," or "buts." God decreed, God determined, for example, that He would create the universe. He determined that from eternity. God decreed or determined that He would permit man's fall into sin. God the Creator determined that Jesus Christ would be sent to earth on a mission to redeem fallen humanity.

Yet God's decree is not flat, it's not simple. There's a complexity to it—and this is important for us to grasp—there is what has been called a permissive or passive decree. Sometimes it's referred to as God's permissive will. When we talk about that which God permits

⁴¹*How Long O Lord? Reflections on Suffering and Evil* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006), 179.

we're talking about that which He allows to happen, even though it may not be in keeping with His revealed will. In other words, it is not God's revealed will for a gunman to enter a school and murder a bunch of children. Yet God permits that to happen. We know He could step in, we know He could change it, but He permits it. He permits it for His purposes and for the sake of our living in a fallen world.

We see God's permissive decree in the book of Job. He gave permission to Satan to afflict Job, even though Job had done nothing to deserve it (“to afflict him without cause”). Another example is found in Luke 7:30 which states that the Jewish leaders “rejected God's purpose for themselves.” Or Acts 14:16 where we read that God permitted, He allowed, “the nations to go their own way.” I also think of Luke 22:31-32 where Jesus informs Peter that Satan has demanded “permission” to sift him like wheat. The word “permission” is not actually found in the text, but it's implied and supplied by many of the translations.

So there is a permissive aspect of God's decree, what God allows. This understanding of a permissive will, a permissive decree, helps us make sense of things that happen around us that we know God hates. Homosexual behavior is always in the news. There is “pride month” in that regard. Well, God hates pride and He hates the sin of homosexuality. Yet God allows it to happen. He allows people to engage in such things, giving them over to the banquet of their sin. This also affirms that their disobedience is real without logically denying His sovereignty.

God's will is not simple, it is complex (God's revealed vs secret will)

Secondly, in theology we talk about God's secret versus His revealed will. God's revealed will is that which either commands or forbids. In 2 Timothy 2:22 Paul says to Timothy, “Flee from youthful lusts.” In other words, “God forbids the indulgence of youthful lusts, Timothy, and

rather pursue righteousness, that which God commands.” So God's revealed will is that which He either commands or forbids, and God's revealed will can be violated. If I don't pursue righteousness, I'm violating God's revealed will. If I covet my neighbor's wife, I am violating the 10th commandment and disobeying God's revealed will. Ephesians 5:18, “Do not [God forbids it] be drunk with wine, which is dissipation, [but rather what God commands] be filled with the Spirit.” Don't do this, don't be drunk; do this, be filled, be controlled, by the Holy Spirit. This is God's revealed will.

Even with that, God is not rendered powerless. He does change situations; He changes hearts. Proverbs 21:1 tells us that “The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes.” And Genesis 50:20, a classic passage, Joseph tells his brothers, “You meant evil against me,” that is, “You broke God's will, His revealed will, by selling me into slavery,” “but God ordained it for good, in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.” That's God's revealed will.

What about God's secret will? Well, as the title suggests, it's that which we do not know or understand. Why are some, and not all, chosen for salvation? We don't know; that's part of God's secret will. Acts 13:48 “. . . as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.” Who believed? Who responded? “As many as were ordained to eternal life.” Why some, not all? Why certain ones and not others? This is part of God's secret will. But we do know that God has commanded us to evangelize. That is God's revealed will, to go out and share the gospel. You are ultimately powerless to convert the heart, to bring about the new birth; that is God's secret will. But His revealed will is that we share the good news of Jesus to all who are lost. We see those two things, for example, in 2 Timothy chapter 2:10. The Apostle Paul says, “For this reason I

endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen” (those who are chosen for salvation). He’s saying, “I endure all things on their behalf. I evangelize, I minister to the churches.” That's God's revealed will. Why? That’s the second half of the verse, “so that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, and with that eternal glory.” That's God's secret will.

So God's will is not simple; it's complex. We understand that there is a revealed aspect and a secret aspect to God’s will. We see in Job 1:12 that God allowed Satan, within certain limitations, to put forth his hand upon Job and afflict him. And yet what does Job later say? “The LORD gave, the LORD has taken away. Blessed be His name.” Job attributes that which came through the secondary agency of Satan to the primary agency of God. So God may be spoken of as the final, or ultimate cause of all happens when it comes to evil. Secondary agents (men, demons) serve as the efficient or blameworthy cause. This is an essential distinction. You have to understand this distinction, chew on it, meditate on it. God uses secondary causes, Satan was a secondary cause. Secondary causes are blameworthy causes. Yet God is sovereign over all.

Scripture leaves these things side-by-side. We don't see an attempt to explain these things in a way that might satisfy us; they’re simply declared. Look at Acts 4:27-28: “For truly in this city [in Jerusalem] there were gathered together, against your holy servant Jesus whom you appointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, *to do whatever your hand and your purpose predestined to occur.*” You see human responsibility and God's sovereignty. Yet these people gathered against Jesus were accountable for what they did. God didn't cause them to do what wasn’t already in their hearts, but ultimately they were doing what God's purpose dictated.

Again, note the words of Shedd, the great theologian: “By reason of His permissive decree, God has absolute control over moral evil, while yet He is not the author of it and forbids it.”⁴² The Westminster Confession of Faith adds that God “neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin.”⁴³

So understand that God's *decree* is complex (there's a passive decree that goes along with His permissive will). And God's *will* is also complex (there's God's revealed will and God's secret will). And we see in Deuteronomy 29:29 a statement that is classic when it comes to understanding different aspects to God's will, these two aspects of revealed and secret. Deuteronomy 29:29 “The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed [Where? For us, in the Bible] belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.” We're not told everything. There some things that God alone knows. But we have the things revealed that we are to heed. When it comes to God's relationship with evil, we ought not go beyond what is revealed to us in sacred Scripture.

And let me give you a caveat: don't lose sight of the fact that God interacts with us on a personal level. It's easy for us—especially those who like to think in theological terms, and think on the grand scale, and ponder God's absolute sovereignty, and how He knows the beginning from the end—it's easy for us to think, “Well, God knows it all. Does God really care?” Don't go in that direction, because the Bible presents the truth that He does care. Don't give in to impersonal fatalism. God commands our worship, sincere worship. God enjoys our prayer. He desires our fellowship. He is pleased when our joy is made full in Him. He is displeased, on the

⁴²*Dogmatic Theology*, 319.

⁴³5.4.

other hand, when we neglect our holy calling. Scripture takes it seriously when we grieve the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30). Scripture takes it seriously when it commands us to share the good news with those who are lost and hell-bound. So we must never, never adopt the attitude—because by doing so you're going outside of Scripture—by adopting attitude that God has decreed everything, so why bother. Or God knows everything, so why bother. That is the heterodox teaching of hyper-Calvinism; bad theology.

The existence of evil is really a problem for those who reject the Bible as God's Word

Third, *the existence of evil is really a problem for those who reject the Bible as God's Word*. If you're out there sharing your faith, which I hope you are, you're going to run across people that say, “Oh, I can't believe the Bible. I can't believe in God. I mean, look at all the suffering and evil in the world.” And what's our first reaction? We go on the defensive and we try to come up with some explanation. There are times to give explanations, but there is also a time to remember that the existence of evil is really a problem for the unbeliever. So we go on the offensive, because the skeptic has to demonstrate that good and evil can truly exist apart from God. Because by claiming categories of evil and categories of righteousness, the unbeliever is making an absolute distinction. You can't have an absolute distinction without absolutes. And you can't have absolutes apart from the great capital “A” Absolute: God (the Triune God of the Bible).

The brutal clubbing to death of baby seals for fun is not evil if God is not. If the Bible isn't true, it's not evil. You may say, “Well, it's it's sad. It pulls at my heartstrings.” But how is it ultimately, absolutely, evil? *There's something my heart tells me that it is*. Yes, that's because you are created in the image of God; because God exists. Listen, atheism reduces man to the level of

mere animal living in a random naturalistic universe. For the naturalist, biology is destiny. A man goes out and shoots his family and kills them all, his wife and his kids, it was just a biological occurrence of certain chemicals in his brain that were working this way or that way that ultimately caused him to do it. It's not evil if God doesn't exist. It may be a disappointment, it may be anguish, it may be sadness, but there is no absolute right or wrong apart from God.

John Frame, one of my favorite theologians and philosophers, said this: "Thus, the Christian may turn the tables on the unbeliever who raises the problem of evil: The non-Christian has a problem of good. Without God, there is neither good nor evil."⁴⁴ The late Dr. Francis Schaeffer adds:

If there is no absolute moral standard, then one cannot say in a final sense that anything is right or wrong. By absolute we mean that which always applies [to all people], that which provides a final or ultimate standard. There must be an absolute if there are to be morals, and there must be an absolute if there are to be real values. If there is no absolute beyond man's ideas, then there is no final appeal to judge between individuals and groups whose moral judgements conflict. We are merely left with conflicting opinions.

A biblical and comprehensive compatibilism offers the best understanding of the relationship between God and evil.

To summarize, we must remember that:

1. God is perfectly holy, sovereign, and hates evil.
2. While God permits evil for His purposes, He is not the author of it.
3. There are aspects of God's sovereignty as it relates to evil that are beyond our understanding.
4. God's relationship to evil is not simplistic; it is multifaceted.
5. We live in a fallen, sinful universe that contains moral and natural evil.
6. God has a good reason for creating a universe that contains evil.
7. God entreats us to simply trust Him.

⁴⁴John Frame, *Systematic Theology*, 292.

Gordon J. Spykman cautions us to be mindful that:

Every pursuit of a more original and ultimate “explanation” is bound to come up empty. The origin of evil remains forever that ultimately inexplicable “mystery of ungodliness.” Calvin therefore advocates approaching this issue in the spirit of humble and pious ignorance. Seeking to break the bounds of Scripture is “a kind of madness.”⁴⁵

The secret things belong to the Lord our God, the things revealed belong to us.

We must keep in mind that God is not required to offer us any explanations

Lastly, *we must keep in mind that God is not required to offer us any explanations.* Think about it: It's something when fallen man approaches God and says, “You need to defend yourself about this! You need to explain to me why this happens!” Stop and think about that. If you really knew who God is, in light of who you are, isn't that ridiculous? Nowhere in Scripture does God defend His actions beyond reminding us of the Creator-creature distinction. It is God's right to be trusted and believed, regardless of the questions and accusations of fallen humanity. To borrow a well-known metaphor: When we sit in judgment on God, we are like a little child sitting in his father's lap while slapping him indignantly. So keep in mind that God is not required to offer us any explanations. That someone loses his or her faith over anything, much less the problem of evil, only serves to demonstrate they were never really converted (1 John 2:19).

Yes, these issues may bother us. We may have questions. That's okay, but there are answers that have been given throughout the history of the church, answers given by much greater minds than ours. That isn't to say that every question is ultimately going to be ultimately answered. No, “the secret things belong to God.” He is simply to be trusted. So regardless of your

⁴⁵Gordon J. Spykman, *Reformational Theology: A New Paradigm for Doing Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 304.

intellect, you can do this one thing, and that is to trust. Proverbs 3:5-6, “Trust in the LORD with all your heart. Do not lean on your own understanding.”

And I want you to remember this: all suffering, all evil, and all goodness, and all righteousness points to the Cross because it is at the Cross that all of these things ultimately have their meaning and perspective. The Cross is like a dagger plunged into the ground; it's planted into the earth at Calvary. And it was also planted deep in history. It was there that good conquered evil. It's there that the deepest questions of life, friends, are answered.

A great evil struck my family back on December 24, 2015. While I struggled to make sense of it all, I never really wavered on the fact that God was, God is, sovereign, and that the Bible is true, and ultimately it alone has the answers of life. And, therefore, I merely trust Him.

The problem of evil may be a big question, but there's another big question: Where will you spend eternity when your heart beats for the last time? Don't put it off thinking that, “Oh, life will just continue, continue, continue.” People of all ages die every day. When your heart beats for the last time and you're taken out of this earth and you're face-to-face with eternity, time without end, where will you go—and why?

God's revealed will shows us that He is holy. And we're separated from Him because of our sin; and that God cannot overlook that. God's revealed will, the revelation of Scripture, shows us that the only hope we have is faith in Jesus Christ, turning from our sin, trusting in Jesus as our Lord and Savior. New allegiances; a new life.

So Father I pray for each one within the sound of my voice. And I pray Lord that as we wrestle over this problem—not a problem for you, Lord, but an issue that we struggle with—of the existence of evil, and included with that sin and suffering, Lord we pray that you will equip our

hearts to greater appreciate your majesty, your sovereignty, as well as your purity and your holiness, in your goodness. And I pray Lord, for anyone within the sound of my voice who is just playing games. I pray Holy Spirit that you will turn their hearts to you, because apart from your work in the heart they will play games until they find themselves in eternal hell. That is no game. Oh, I pray Lord for those that are in the darkness of unbelief, that you would start a flame in their hearts to believe, simply believe, and love Jesus Christ, turning from their sin, embracing Him as their Lord and Master, embracing the Bible is your Word. Thank you Lord that you are still saving lost men, women, and young people. We pray Lord that we may see around us more and more added to the hallelujah chorus. We ask these things in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Weep With Those Who Weep
Job 2:11-13
September 29, 2019
Christ Church of Clarkson
0919Job2.11-13(6) | Audio Length: 42:27

If you haven't already, go and open your Bibles to the book of Job, Job chapter 2. We'll be looking at verses 11-13. Go ahead and stand as I read this passage, Job chapter 2, beginning in verse 11. Follow along as I read:

11 Now when Job's three friends heard of all this adversity that had come upon him, they came each one from his own place, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite; and they made an appointment together to come to sympathize with him and comfort him. 12 When they lifted up their eyes at a distance and did not recognize him, they raised their voices and wept. And each of them tore his robe and they threw dust over their heads toward the sky. 13 Then they sat down on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights with no one speaking a word to him, for they saw that his pain was very great.⁴⁶

Father, we are humbled to be before you. We are grateful, Lord, to gather together, for the week that you have brought us through, and here as we commemorate the resurrection of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. We gather together in corporate worship to hear from your Word. Oh Lord, I pray for each heart that's here. I pray, Lord, for those who may be here, and those within the sound of my voice, whose hearts are not right with you. And I pray, Holy Spirit, that you would work in those hearts, bringing repentance, bringing faith, doing so for the glory of Jesus Christ our Lord, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Going back to chapter 2 verse 11, I want you to note how that verse begins: **“Now when Job's three friends heard of all this adversity that had come upon him . . .”** (and stop there). You have three friends—more on them in a bit—you have three friends who heard about trouble,

⁴⁶Scripture citations are taken from the NAS95 unless otherwise noted.

about adversity, about calamity, but not just any adversity or calamity, but that which came upon a good friend, their friend Job. What happened to Job? We have been out of the book for several weeks so it might be a good idea to revisit what we have seen so far in the first two chapters.

Three things about Job from chapter 1

Three things we noted about Job in chapter 1 really sum it all up. We said *Job is a converted man*, he is described as being “blameless, upright, one who fears God, one who turned us away from evil.” He is a good man who knows and who serves our Triune God. *Job is also a prosperous man*. And we saw how God had blessed Job materially (1:3) with land, livestock, many workers; but beyond that God had blessed Job with sons and daughters (verse 2 of chapter 1): seven sons and three daughters. And so Job is described as “the greatest of all the men of the east” (v. 3). He is a converted man, he is a prosperous man, but he is also *a spiritually sensitive man*. We would expect that being that he was described as being blameless and upright, one who fears God and refrains from evil. And so he was spiritually sensitive, he was spiritually alive. He put his money where his mouth was. And so we see in verse five, Job would consecrate his sons and daughters. He would he would offer sacrifices on their behalf, fearing that perhaps they had, in their hearts, cursed God. And we’re told in verse five that Job did this continually. Job, a converted man; Job, a prosperous man; Job, a spiritually sensitive man.

The Four Horsemen of Doom

Job was also a man like us, a man who is not immune from suffering. Satan is permitted to afflict Job in verses 14 through 19. We called this “The Four Horsemen of Doom.” As this calamity unfolds upon Job, four disasters that alternate between human attacks and those things

that insurance companies refer to as “acts of God” or natural disasters—even though God is sovereign over all of it (but that's the tenor of how this unfolds).

And so we see the first horseman, raiders (Sabeans) who attack in verses 14 and 15. All of this unfolds on a day, according to verse 13, when all of Job's children were gathered together at the home of the oldest son. And a messenger, verse 14, comes to Job and tells a story, a story of calamity. He says that “the oxen were plowing, the donkeys feeding beside them.” This was a normal day. But then the Sabeans, this nomadic group, comes, attacks, takes them, and also kills the servants with the sword. The messenger came and said, “I alone am escaped to tell you.” Before he could finish speaking, the second horseman arrives, natural disasters (what we call this, but there's nothing that's completely natural in the providence and universe of God). So, lightning strikes (verse 16). Another comes and says, “The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them. And I alone am escaped to tell you.” And then, like dominoes falling—boom, boom, boom, boom—another one falls in verse 17. Again we have raiders, this time the Chaldeans. “While he was still speaking” (that is, the previous man) another messenger comes and says, “The Chaldeans formed three bands, made a raid on the camels, took them, slew the servants with the edge of the sword. I alone am escaped to tell you.” Then that last domino falls, the most painful one, the fourth horseman. Here comes a great wind and it hits the house, while Job’s sons and daughters were eating and drinking. (Verse 18 bookends what we see in verse 13.) Verse 19 says, “And behold” (that word, “behold,” is only used in reference to this event; it's marking it as the most climactic), “And behold, a great wind came from across the wilderness.” It hit the house and it collapsed. Job lost every one of his kids.

As parents we know that it's one thing to lose a job; it's another thing to be bankrupt. But it's another thing altogether to lose children.

Satan is not satisfied. Remember, this was all a test. Job passed the first test. But we have another round of suffering coming. And so we saw a repeat in chapter 2: Job is now afflicted physically with chronic sores from head to toe. Verse seven, Satan departs the Lord's presence "and smote Job," afflicted Job, with these sore, oozing boils. They become maggot infested, painful, all over his body. And Job takes a potsherd (a piece of broken pottery) to scrape himself while he is sitting among the ashes. In other words, Job is now at the town dump, a place where you found broken utensils, a place where you found spent ashes. Job is there scraping himself with a potsherd, probably applying the ashes to the sores on his body.

We see that Job loses his possessions. But then, oh there's no emotional grief like losing your children (and then on top that the miserable physical torment). Afflicted emotionally and now afflicted physically (and, no doubt, all of this comes together in a great, holistic spiritual distress). And yet, would did Job say in verse 10? It's one thing to accept good from God. We do that, willingly. But should we not accept adversity from Him?

Who caused Job's suffering?

We asked the question more than once: "Who caused Job suffering?" From one perspective we say that Satan did, and we saw that aspect in chapter 2 verse seven, the first instance of Satan directly afflicting Job, in that case with the physical affliction of sore boils. But philosophically and theologically we call Satan *the secondary agent*. God is *the primary agent*. That is, He is the one who stands sovereign and in control of everything. And that's why Job

declared, as he did in verse 21 of chapter 1, “The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD.”

True worship survives the fires of affliction

And so we noted that *true worship ultimately survives the fires of affliction*. That is, when suffering who will you worship? Will you get off track (and you might). I certainly have gotten off track. But we get back on track when going through calamity and suffering. Who will you worship? Who do you serve?

God affirms His own sovereignty in chapter 2 verse 3, “Job still holds fast integrity, although you [Satan] incited me against him, to ruin him without cause.” Remember, we noted that the same word (“ruin”) is used in Jonah chapter 1 verse 17, “God appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah.” We have the same Hebrew word here in chapter 2 verse 3: “Job still holds fast his integrity, although you incited me against him to *swallow* him, and to do that without cause.” There was nothing that Job was doing in which he was reaping evil because he was sowing evil. No, Job was, and continued to be, blameless and upright. He was one described in verse 8 as being unique on the earth, blameless, upright. And in verse 22 of chapter 1 we’re told that through all of this, throughout this calamity, Job did not sin nor did he blame God.

The great Geneva reformer, John Calvin, preached on this verse. John Calvin said this:

Here, then, is the summary of this passage, namely, whenever we think of the goods of this world we should remember that we hold everything from God. . . . [I]f it pleased Him to put it in our hands, it is on the condition that He may take it back when it seems good to Him. . . . May God always retain such superiority over us that He can dispose of His own as seems good to Him. . . . Seeing then how God ought to have mastery not only over what we possess but also over our persons and over our children, we ought to humble ourselves before Him by subjecting ourselves entirely to His holy will . . . God

has given us what is in our hands, He may claim it back and take it back when He wills...
[W]e must be persuaded that God does nothing without reason.⁴⁷

That takes eyes of faith. Those of you that have gone through intense suffering, know that it takes the eyes of faith to say, “You have given, You have taken away.” It may be your health, it may be a relationship, it may be a family member. “Blessed be Your name!” We’re so thankful that God, as the psalmist says, “knows our frame; knows that we are but dust.” We struggle, we battle, we come back—we come back toward God—to profess that He knows best and that He is sovereign.

I still grumble and complain. I was just grumbling, complaining, the other day. I was struggling with grief, thinking about our daughter. I was thinking about how we prayed for one specific thing that was bothering her, that was afflicting our daughter while she was in rehab; that one little thing, that it would go away.⁴⁸ And I looked toward Heaven, I said, “But You would not!” I was angry! But I came back around, and I said, as I say now, “the Lord gives, the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name Lord.” What I want to impress upon you is that this is not some sort of romantic, idealistic life that Job led, that the saints in the past, whether known or unknown, have led, or that we lead. We struggle. We sin. Sometimes we get angry with God. Sometimes we may even feel “I just want to chuck it all! I want to run away and go hide somewhere!” The question is, where do we ultimately go? The genuine believer is going to come back, because there's nowhere else that any truth, any hope, anything can be found.

⁴⁷*Sermons from Job, 27-28, 30.*

⁴⁸The “one thing” I reference here was that God heal her of the affliction she had of pressing her chin down against her chest. We do not know if it was an involuntary movement or something she did to relieve discomfort, but it was significantly impeding her rehabilitation. We prayed that God would answer this one simple request. He did not.

John Calvin. We just quoted him. You know how many sermons John Calvin preached in his series on the book of Job, 42 chapters? John Calvin preached 159 sermons. How would you like to sit through 160 sermons on the book of Job? I thought about this. And I thought, “I preached 100 messages in 1 Peter (that's not ideal, but there were reasons for that). 1 Peter is 5 chapters; Job is 42. And so I figured, if I go at the pace that I went in 1 Peter that’s something like 800 sermons. John Calvin, no need to worry. Your record (if that is a record) is not in jeopardy. We are not going to go with the pace that I went in 1 Peter. In fact, were going to pick up the pace next time as we hit chapter 3. We’ll see how it goes.

As I’ve said, it's with fear and trepidation that I preach through this book. It's a challenge. I’m so much more comfortable as a New Testament expositor, dealing especially with the epistles. This is way outside my comfort level. And covering big chunks is not something that I'm comfortable doing. But we will see how it unfolds, by God's grace, but we want to finish up chapter 2. That leaves us with verses 11, 12 and 13. So let's go back to those verses. Follow along as I read them again:

11 Now when Job’s three friends heard of all this adversity that had come upon him, they came each one from his own place, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite; and they made an appointment together to come to sympathize with him and comfort him. 12 When they lifted up their eyes at a distance and did not recognize him, they raised their voices and wept. And each of them tore his robe and they threw dust over their heads toward the sky. 13 Then they sat down on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights with no one speaking a word to him, for they saw that his pain was very great.

“Weep With Those Who Weep”

My title for this message is “Weep With Those Who Weep.” I think of Romans 12:15 where we are told to do just that. To not only rejoice with those who rejoice, but also to cry with

those who cry. Yes, enter into the joy of others: when a baby is born; when a wedding celebration takes place. We enter into that joy. But we're also enjoined to enter into other's pain, to weep with those who weep, to enter into their suffering when a child dies or when a marriage is fractured. You see, this is Church Life 101. In our culture, Christians all too often flock to a church where they can be anonymous. They sit before the show and say, "Bless me. I want to be entertained. I want to leave happy." Thousands of churches specialize in just that sort of "blessing." But to really be part of a local body is to immerse yourself into its life. In 1 Corinthians 12:25-26, Paul says, "Let there be no division in the body" [the church]; "Let there be no division in the church, but that the members may have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it. If one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it." Does that not sound like, "Weep with those who weep; rejoice with those who rejoice."?

And so we ought to be a people who are always rejoicing and suffering. There are always those who are rejoicing and suffering around us, and we enter into that. In the same church, in the same week, someone gets good news from the doctor, another gets bad. You can have one mother who gives birth, another who miscarries. And we enter into that rejoicing, into that weeping. Why? Because we're all part of the same body. You've rejoiced with us the past few months pending the arrival of these two girls, even as you have cried with us the past few years. And I find myself still sorrowing, still spending time crying, even as Lois and I spent time rejoicing. My life is sort of in miniature what Romans chapter 12 verse 15 commands us to do.

True friends care enough to simply be there

If we could sum all this up as to what it means to share in each other's joys and sorrows, and what this means as it relates to our passage for today, verses 11 through 13, I would sum it up this way: *True friends care enough to simply be there*. True friends care enough to simply be there. Focus your attention, again, at verse 11, **“Now when Job's three friends heard of all this adversity that had come upon Job, they came each one from his own place.”**

When Giana and I were hospitalized after the crash, there were friends who heard and friends who came. We had several friends who traveled from other states just to be with us. The news spread fast, within hours if not minutes. My good friend Reid Ferguson who serves as preaching elder at our sister church across town, was in Texas at the time. And he didn't find out by phone call or email. It was a story that was covered by the local Dallas-Fort Worth television stations. He found out about it on the news all the way from Rochester, New York to Dallas, Texas. This is the power of modern communication.

Three Comforters Arrive

Job's adversity is made public (v. 11a)

Well, Job's wife didn't call these three friends. There was no social media notification. I take it that the news of what happened, what happened to Job, spread throughout the region simply by word of mouth (that would've taken weeks). But Job was the greatest of all the men of the east (1:3) and when bad things happen the word gets out. Job's adversity was made public.

Three friends arrive from afar (11b)

And so he has three friends, secondly, that arrive from afar. They came, each one from his own place, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. And they made an appointment together to come

sympathize with Job and comfort him. This isn't to imply that Job only had three friends (four if you count Elihu who appears in chapter 32). But these are three noteworthy friends that heard the news.

What's a friend? I have quite a few friends, hundreds of them on social media. When I say “friends” I put quotes around that word, because, frankly, I don't know who many of them are. We use that term “friend” in our culture very loosely. But in the Old Testament, and especially in the wisdom literature of which Job's a part, a true friend is as close as a blood relative. Proverbs 18:24 speaks of “a friend who sticks closer than a brother.” And we're told in verse 11 that these three friends “made an appointment together to come sympathize with Job and comfort him.” Word got out; they heard about it. They contacted each other to schedule a time to visit him.

Now, I take it that these three friends had good intentions. They were well-intentioned ; they really did care. And it's easy for those of us who know the story of Job to use them as examples of bad friends, as the “Three Stooges of friendship” (that's Job's three friends). But that's because we know the rest of the book. But maybe, just maybe, I'm going to suggest, like Job's wife, we cut them a little slack. Maybe we're being a little bit too harsh. Yes, Job refers to them later as “miserable comforters” (16:2)—and they were. But I do believe that they intended to be helpful. And there's a lesson there, that friends, even good friends, are going to let us down. Forgive; be gracious. We as good friends are sometimes going to let our friends down.

Their names (v. 11b)

And these three, their names include an associated place, a moniker that tells us where they're from. We have “**Eliphaz the Temanite**” who came from Teman, which was a prominent city in the area of Edom southeast of the Dead Sea. Edom was known for its wisdom. Jeremiah

49:7: “Concerning Edom. Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘Is there no longer any wisdom in Teman? Has good counsel been lost to the prudent? Has their wisdom decayed?’” There may be a connection there. Scholars, last I read, are not sure that we know exactly where each of these towns was. But it seems that this Teman was related to that of Edom southeast of the Dead Sea. So we have Eliphaz the Temanite. And we have “**Bildad the Shuhite**” A “Shuhite” describes not a short person who’s only the height of the shoe, but someone from ancient Shuah, apparently named after Shuah a son of Abraham by Keturah according to Genesis 25. And then the third is “**Zophar the Naamathite.**” He came from Namaath, possibly a connection to Naamah in Genesis 4 who was the daughter of one of Lamech’s wives.

Their reaction (v. 12)

Look at verse 12: “**When they lifted up their eyes at a distance and did not recognize Job, they raised their voices and wept. And each of them tore his robe and they threw dust over their heads toward the sky.**” From a distance, anyway, they did not recognize Job. Remember Job right now is residing at the town trash heap. I picture Job sitting on a pile of rubbish at an elevation where he can be more easily seen from a distance. But he was unrecognizable. Have you ever seen somebody for the first time who is going through tremendous suffering? Maybe a cancer victim? Maybe somebody who lost a family member and who's not been eating? And you see them, and you can see it in their body, and you can just sense about them their anguish, their distress. You can see their mental and spiritual suffering. And this was Job. They certainly didn't recognize him from a distance. But I take it that he was hardly recognizable in that he wasn't the “same ol' Job” when they saw him up close! I remember telling a good friend who, within months of our losing our daughter, mentioned about getting

together. And I said to him, “I’m not the same person anymore” (when we’re going through suffering we’re not the same person).

As I read this, that they didn't recognize him, I thought of Isaiah chapter 53. I thought of Jesus, Isaiah 53, a prophecy of our Lord who was:

. . . despised and forsaken . . . A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; . . . like one from whom men hide their face . . . He carried our sorrows; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. . . pierced through for our transgressions . . . crushed for our iniquities; oppressed . . . Like a lamb that is led to slaughter . . . the LORD was pleased To crush Him . . .

You’ve got to see Job's suffering, you've got to see your own suffering, through that of Jesus. The apex of suffering is at the Cross! The victory over suffering is at the Cross!

And Job's friends, verse 12, as they saw Job, **“they raised their voices, they wept. They threw dust in the air.”** A Sign of great anguish, of entering into someone else's sorrow. Dust speaks of mortality and death. God says to cursed Adam, “You are dust and to dust you will return” (Genesis 3:19). Joshua and the elders of Israel tear their clothes, fall to the ground, and put dust on their heads after the disaster at Ai (Joshua 7:6). The Israelite who reports the capture of the Ark by the Philistines comes to Shiloh with his clothes torn and with dirt on his head (1 Samuel 4:12). One writer says, “To throw dust in the air (toward heaven) so that if falls on their heads is vividly to identify themselves in their grief with Job’s dead children and probably also with Job himself, who has been grasped by death and is already being dragged down into the realm of the dead.” [Ash, 61]

See the picture, see the suffering, see the three friends who heard of Job’s calamity. They look at Job and hardly recognize him. They get closer and they begin to wail, and even throw dust in the air and tear their clothes. In the prophet Jeremiah's lament over Jerusalem, recorded in

Lamentations chapter 2 verse 10, we see something similar: “The elders of the daughter of Zion sit on the ground, they are silent. They have thrown dust on their heads; they have girded themselves with sackcloth. The virgins of Jerusalem have bowed their heads to the ground.”

This is entering into the grief of another.

Their compassion (v. 13)

And we see their compassion in verse 13: “**They sat on the ground** [with Job] **seven days, seven nights.**” This is, as I understand it, sort of a typological period of mourning: seven days and seven nights (we see that in other accounts in the Old Testament). No one speaking a word to him, “**for they saw his pain was very great.**” Seven days, seven nights of silence. Ecclesiastes chapter 3 verse seven tells us that there's a time to be silent. The silence is taken in different ways by different commentators. Most take this to be a good thing. Maybe the only good thing his friends did in the entire book. But listen to what some different writers of said about the silence.

- “If for the most part Job’s friends got things wrong . . . here, at the beginning, they do it right.”
- “Here is genuine friendship. Here is deep ministry.”
- “The compassion of silent presence.”
- “Their silence is a further evidence of their genuine empathy.”
- “They do honor by profound silence to his vast grief.”
- “They are true friends, bringing to Job’s lonely ash-heap the compassion of a silent presence.”

True friends care enough to simply be there.

I’m going to share something very personal with you. I think it was in June or July, 2017. Giana had passed the year before, June 2016. And then in April, 2017 my dad passed. We were in Arizona where my parents lived. We were left to pick up the pieces and I was at my lowest

point, suffering from posttraumatic stress disorder: rages, flashbacks, anger, violent grief. One bad day, when I was struggling, I took my rage out against the metal hood of my dad's pickup truck – with my fists. A neighbor heard all the commotion and called the police. Lois called one of my best friends, a man I've known since we were teenagers, a fellow believer in Christ. I was totally spent by the time he arrived and he found me in the backyard, laying on my back. He stooped down, he took my hand in his, and he said, "I want you to know I love you." For the most part he was silent, but that's what I needed at that time. Sometimes you just need someone to be there and say "I care; I can't fix this; I can't say something that I think is going to help right now, but I can be there to tell you I love you." I can't express with words how much that has meant to me and my wife. *True friends care enough to simply be there.*

But there's another even greater Friend who was there that day. He's there for every child of his, those who have been born again to new life. My Friend is more than my "friend," He's my God, Jesus Christ. Commentator Christopher Ash, in his very helpful book on Job, writes this:

Job in his awesome aloneness foreshadows another believer, an even greater man who endures an even deeper suffering. This believer too was with his dearest friends, in a garden outside Jerusalem. He told them to sit and wait while he prayed. He took with him his three closest friends 'and began to be greatly distressed and troubled.' He said to them, 'My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch.' He went on a little farther, fell on the ground, and prayed 'with loud cries and tears.' But when he came back he found them sleeping. 'Could you not watch one hour?' he asked sadly (Mark 14:32-42; Hebrews 5:7). He prayed and wept alone. And the next day he suffered alone, stripped of his clothes, robbed of his friends, with even his mother having to keep her distance from the cross. He had said to his friends that although they would leave him alone, he was not alone, 'for the Father is with me' (John 16:32). But in the deepest intensity of his suffering he cried out in anguish, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' (Mark 15:34). As the old hymn puts it, 'He bore the burden to Calvary and suffered and died alone.'

There is a deep sense in which the lonely sufferings of Jesus Christ mean that no believer today is called to enter Job's loneliness in its full depth.

Then, quoting another author, he adds:

‘Suffering encloses a man in solitude. . . . Between Job and his friends an abyss was cleft. They regarded him with astonishment as a strange being But they could no longer get to him. Only Jesus could cross this abyss, descend into the abyss of misery, plunge into the deepest hell.’

Ash concludes:

However alone the believer in Christ may feel today, the reality is that he or she is not ultimately alone as Job was.⁴⁹

And so, Lord, give us the eyes of faith to see that we are never alone. Jesus Christ, our Lord and our Savior, the son of God, as God is with us always and forgive us. When we act in keeping with how we feel, when we don't feel as if he's there, may our heads meet our hearts, may what we know, that is the truth of your Word, impact our lives and give us the grace to walk by faith during those times of darkness: “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, you are with me.” I pray, Lord, for those that are apathetic in heart. Maybe those that have sat through this message and found it to be a big yawn. Maybe those, Lord, who are lost. I pray, Holy Spirit, that you would bring revival; I pray that you would bring faith; that you would grant repentance. We thank you for Jesus, dear Lord. We thank you for one another that we can excel far more in rejoicing with those who rejoice—and what's often more challenging—to weep with those who weep. We long for that time when we will be home; no more tears, no more sorrow, no more pain. Until that time we continue to run the race with endurance to the glory of our God we pray. Amen.

⁴⁹Ash, *Job*, 63-64.

The Solitude of Sorrow
Job 3:1-26
October 27, 2019
Christ Church of Clarkson
1019Job3.1-26(7) | Audio Length: 49:31

Job chapter 3, beginning in verse one:

1 Afterward Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth. **2** And Job said, **3** “Let the day perish on which I was to be born, and the night which said, ‘A boy is conceived.’ **4** “May that day be darkness; let not God above care for it, nor light shine on it. **5** “Let darkness and black gloom claim it; let a cloud settle on it; let the blackness of the day terrify it. **6** “As for that night, let darkness seize it; let it not rejoice among the days of the year; let it not come into the number of the months. **7** “Behold, let that night be barren; let no joyful shout enter it. **8** “Let those curse it who curse the day, who are prepared to rouse Leviathan. **9** “Let the stars of its twilight be darkened; let it wait for light but have none, and let it not see the breaking dawn; **10** Because it did not shut the opening of my mother’s womb, or hide trouble from my eyes. **11** “Why did I not die at birth, come forth from the womb and expire? **12** “Why did the knees receive me, and why the breasts, that I should suck? **13** “For now I would have lain down and been quiet; I would have slept then, I would have been at rest, **14** With kings and with counselors of the earth, who rebuilt ruins for themselves; **15** or with princes who had gold, who were filling their houses with silver. **16** “Or like a miscarriage which is discarded, I would not be, as infants that never saw light. **17** “There the wicked cease from raging, and there the weary are at rest. **18** “The prisoners are at ease together; they do not hear the voice of the taskmaster. **19** “The small and the great are there, and the slave is free from his master. **20** “Why is light given to him who suffers, and life to the bitter of soul, **21** who long for death, but there is none, and dig for it more than for hidden treasures, **22** who rejoice greatly, and exult when they find the grave? **23** “Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden, and whom God has hedged in? **24** “For my groaning comes at the sight of my food, and my cries pour out like water. **25** “For what I fear comes upon me, and what I dread befalls me. **26** “I am not at ease, nor am I quiet, and I am not at rest, but turmoil comes.”⁵⁰

Dear Lord, as we come to this chapter, a difficult chapter, we pray that you would teach us from the sorrows of this man of history, a man named Job, a fellow believer. And we pray that you would use his sorrows to encourage us. We are thankful for that which Job anticipated, the Cross, and that which we look back on in history and that which is made real in our lives in this new

⁵⁰Scripture citations are taken from the NAS95 unless otherwise noted.

covenant age. So we thank you, we thank you for this time. We pray that you would bless you each heart. In Christ's name.

I would like you to hear just a few of some verses I selected out of chapter 3. Once again, verse one: "Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth." Verse three: "And let the day perish on which I was to be born and the night which said a boy is conceived." Verse four: "May that day be darkness. Let not God above care for it, nor light shine on it." Verse seven: "Behold let that night be barren. Let no joyful shout enter it." Verse 11: "Why did I not die at birth; come forth from the womb and expire?" Verse 20: "Why is light given to him who suffers and life to the bitter of soul." Verse 23: "Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden, in whom God is hedged in?" Verse 25: "What I fear comes upon me and what I dread befalls me." Verse 26: "I am not at ease, nor am I quiet. I am not at rest, but turmoil comes." Here is a man who is in anguish of soul. His very soul has been eclipsed by suffering.

We remember Job's wife in chapter 2 verse nine. In the midst of their suffering (no doubt she entered into suffering with him), she says to him in verse nine of chapter 2: "Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die." That's what Satan predicted Job would do in chapter 1 verse 11. In chapter 2 verse five, if Job should suffer great loss, if all of those blessings that God had showered upon him were to be removed, Satan predicted that Job would curse God to His face. Quite the opposite. As we saw Job's response was worship (1:20) and a profession of faith in a good, sovereign God (1:21). There he says, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall return there. The LORD gave, the LORD is taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD." No, Job does not curse God. But he does, as we see here in chapter 3, curse the day he was born (in Hebrew, literally "his day"). Verse one: "Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth." Verse three: "Let the day perish on which I was to be born." See folks, this is chapter three: the gut

wrenching reality of Job. Chapter 3, a chapter that's been called “one of the darkest of the entire Bible.” Robert Alden writes:

The third chapter of Job must be one of the most depressing chapters in the Bible. While some might be as depressed as Job was and use these verses to give vent to their feelings, few sermons are made from this chapter, few verses are claimed as promises, and few are remembered for the warmth of their sentiment. It is the lowest of several low points in the book.⁵¹

Chapter 3 is what we might refer to as raw reality. It stands in an dark contrast to Job's responsive worship in the face of suffering that we saw earlier. Job's complaint in chapter 3 almost seems inconsistent with his words in chapter 2 verse 10 where he exhorts his suffering wife: “Should we not accept good from God as well, as evil (or calamity)?

Job chapter 3 is also a *lament*. That is an old-fashioned word, “lament.” We are more familiar with the word “complaint,” and while lament is complaint it's more than mere complaint, as in complaining. Philippians chapter 2 verse 14 we're told to “do all things without grumbling or disputing” (that is, without complaining). We're not to be complainers, we're not to be grumblers. And I picture here people who complain about their jobs, who complain about their kids, who complain about their church, who complain about their spouse, or even the weather. I think of malcontents. I'm going to suggest you that there is a type of complaint, specifically on lament, that is very Christian (and at times is called for).

Biblical lament is a complaint of faith that moves one from despair to hope. Biblical lament is being real with God. Biblical lament is expressing honestly, your pain, your frustrations, the shadows of your dwindling hopes. As one author puts it, “Lament stands in the gap between pain

⁵¹Cited in Swindoll, *Job*, 61-62.

and promise.”⁵² We have an entire book about lament, it's called “Lamentations.” The Psalms are filled with laments. We have a category of “Lament Psalms.” Just listen to a few samples out of some various Psalms:

Psalm 10:1 Why do You stand afar off, O LORD? Why do You hide Yourself in times of trouble?

Psalm 22:1 My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? Far from my deliverance are the words of my groaning.

Psalm 42:9 I will say to God my rock, “Why have You forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?”

Psalm 44:23 Arouse Yourself, why do You sleep, O Lord? Awake, do not reject us forever.

Psalm 74:1 O God, why have You rejected us forever? Why does Your anger smoke against the sheep of Your pasture?

Psalm 88:14 O LORD, why do You reject my soul? Why do You hide Your face from me?

One common feature of lament is that word that came up so often through those Psalms I just read, that is the word “why.” We see it here in Job verse 11: “Why did I not die at birth, come forth from the womb and expire? Why is light given to him who suffers and life to the bitter of soul?” Verse 23: “Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden, and whom God has hedged in?”

It actually takes faith to lament. Lament is brutal and honest. Lament believes that God *is*, even when He feels distant. As James Montgomery Boice said, “It is better to ask them [hard questions of God] than not to ask them, because asking them sharpens the issue and pushes us toward the right, positive response.” In other words, be honest with God, with your questions. Alexander MacLaren put it this way: “Doubts are better put into plain speech than lying diffused and darkening, like poisonous mists in the heart. A thought, be it good or bad, can be dealt with when it is made articulate.”

During one of the many dark periods in my life following the tragedy that unfolded on Christmas Eve of 2015, a time when I was feeling especially guilty for my complaints, my

⁵²Mark Vroegop, *Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy*, 26.

complaining to God for what happened, for how things unfolded, a friend wisely reminded me that “God has big shoulders.” He knows what I feel. He doesn't shy away from my or your honest complaints, laments.

Oh how I dislike sanitized Christianity. So-called “Christian obligations” that we feel, to act like we're happy even when we're miserable. You especially feel that pressure (I hope you don't here) but Christians especially feel that pressure when they're around other Christians, when they go to church service on Sunday. Oh I so grieve for fake smiles that are painted on suffering faces. And some of this is reflected—even encouraged—in our worship music that we choose, sappy marshmallow-fluff choruses about how happy we are and how all our problems disappear with a single glimpse of the One who calms life storms. I'm sorry, I am often not very happy, especially over these past three years. Sometimes I'm quite miserable and I refuse to walk around with a fake smile on my face. Christopher Ash, in his excellent commentary on this chapter, talks of this when he writes that:

There is a version of Christianity around that is shallow, trite, superficial, ‘happy clappy’ (as some put it). It is a kind of Christianity that, as has been said ‘would have had Jesus singing a chorus at the grave of Lazarus.’ We have all met it—easy triumphalism. We sing of God in one song that, ‘In his presence our problems disappear.’ In another that ‘my love just keeps on growing.’ Neither was true for Job in chapter 3, and yet he was a real and blameless believer.⁵³

Is there joy? Yes. But joy in the midst of calamity can be elusive (and joy isn't immune from sorrow). Listen folks, it's okay to sing in the minor key. That's where we often live our lives. We are real people who not only rejoice, we also (we the church) should be a place where we feel safe when life hurts. I hear people who were going through suffering, say, “Well I didn't go to my church. I just couldn't. I just couldn't put on that happy countenance.” And I thought, “I hope that no one ever

⁵³Christopher Ash, Job, 68.

feels that way about Christ Church.” When you're hurting, when you're suffering, you don't have to feel like you're obliged to act as if everything is okay, because we endeavor to weep with you. So with those things in mind you can see the distinction between complaints that are God honoring and those that are not. And so we see that in Job chapter 3: a righteous, blameless man who brings forth his honest complaints before his God.

As we come to Job chapter 3, as far as the literature is concerned, we move from prose to poetry. Prose is narrative (Job chapters 1 through 2 are historical narrative). And now we move into Hebrew poetry, a form of writing that dominates the rest of the book, and that's why Job is considered a poetic work. This dialogue by Job in chapter 3 is also a soliloquy. That means he's basically talking to himself. I think he's still sitting in the town dump (chapter 2). I think his friends are still there, but he's speaking to himself (knowing that God hears), he's thinking to himself and asking hard questions. He's with three friends, he's in the company of his God; yet he feels so alone. I call this *the loneliness of lament* or *the loneliness of sorrow*. Maybe you've experienced this if you've experienced acute trials, tragedy. What a lonely time that can be.

Perhaps the most lonely time in my life came following the death of our daughter. I could be in a room full of people and feel as if I was the only one there. During that time that I took up writing poetry and one of the poems I wrote just a couple weeks after the Lord took Giana home was called “The Solitude of Sorrow.” I asked the question,

Why is it so
That a singular delight
Can be shared by others?
They experience the same feeling;
The same happiness.

But the sorrows and agonies I face,
Ring within the lonely hollows of my soul.
The grief, the tears, the fears
Imprisoned within the walls of that
Which is uniquely me;

Those walls resound with my appeal:
'Do you know what I feel?'
The echo fades and all is still,
For no one else is there.⁵⁴

Is that a true biblical perspective? No one else is there? We know theologically that's not true, but it certainly feels true when you find yourself sucked into an abyss of darkness. You know that God is good, yet you feel so abandoned and so alone. With brutal honesty, C.S. Lewis touched on this while suffering from the loss of his wife. In his book, *A Grief Observed*, he writes:

This is one of the most disquieting symptoms [of loss]. When you are happy, so happy that you have no sense of needing [God]. . . . If you remember yourself and turn to Him with gratitude and praise, you will be—or so it feels—welcomed with open arms. But go to Him when your need is desperate, when all other help is vain, and what do you find? A door slammed in your face and the sound of bolting and double bolting on the inside. After that, silence. You may as well turn away. The longer you wait, the more emphatic the silence will become. There are no lights in the windows. It might be an empty house. Was it ever inhabited? It seemed so once.

I know those words will offend some Christians, but I think you have to appreciate the honesty. And it may not be how every Christian feels when suffering great loss, but it is certainly how many feel—even the psalmist (Psalm 10:1) “Why do You stand afar off, O LORD? Why do You hide Yourself in times of trouble?” (*the door closed, double bolted*). Psalm 22:1, “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? Far from my deliverance are the words of my groaning.” This, folks, is where Job finds himself. This is where we probably will find ourselves at some point in our journey through life. Thomas Wolfe, in his “The Anatomy of Loneliness,” writes: “The most tragic, sublime, and beautiful expression of loneliness which I have ever read is the Book of Job.”

For the sake of our outline, you can frame this passage around three points representing three questions, “why?” questions. Number one, “Why was I born?” (vv. 1-10); number two, “Why did I live?” (vv. 11-19); and number three, “Why am I alive now?” (vv. 20-26). Note the first word of

⁵⁴*The Solitude of Sorrow*. Written by Tony A. Bartolucci on July 5, 2016.

verse one under that first outline point: “Why was I born?” (“Why was I ever born?”). The first word, however, is “afterward” or something like that. Depending on your translation, “afterward.” or “after this.” And we ask, “after what?” We go back to the context, all that we've seen so far in chapters 1 and 2 where Job was described as a righteous, a prosperous man who is struck by tragedy. Job loses his wealth and all 10 of his children in a single day. And if that wasn't enough, Satan is also permitted to afflict him physically with painful skin lesions that cover his entire body. Here we have the greatest of the men of the east now dwelling in the town dump, scraping his oozing sores with broken pieces of pottery. Hearing of his calamity, three friends schedule a visit. When they see Job at a distance they hardly can recognize him. The three friends join Job in his tears as they rend their garments and toss dust in the air, and they sit with Job in silence for seven days, seeing, as the last words of chapter 2 state, that “his pain was very great.” It's after this that the silence is broken by Job himself.

“Why was I born?” (vv. 1-10)

The question, “Why was I born?” Again, verse one: “**Afterward, Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth, and Job said, ‘Let the day perish on which I was to be born, and the night which said a boy [literally in Hebrew it's ‘a man’] is conceived.**” Note in these verses we see “day” and “night.” Job not only curses the “day” of his birth, but he curses the “night,” the night of his very conception. Verse four, “**May that day [day of Job’s birth] be darkness; let not God above care for it, nor light shine on it.**” Verse five, “**Let darkness and black gloom claim it; let a cloud settle on it; let the blackness of the day terrify it.**” And then verse six, “**As for that night, [what night? the night he was conceived, goes back to verse v. 3] let darkness seize it; let it not rejoice among the days of the year; let it not come into the number of the months.**” Verse seven, “**Behold, let that night be barren; let no joyful shout enter it.**” No

joyful shout of conception; just barrenness. That which was considered a blight in the Old Testament, Job would see as a blessing.

You see, this is Genesis 1 in reverse. Genesis chapter 1, in the first couple of verses, we're told that "the earth was formless and void; and darkness was over the surface of the deep." But then God says, "Let there be light," and there was light. Job was conceived and it was in the dark where God knit him together in his mother's womb. When Job was born he saw the light for the first time. But now Job wishes all of that were put into reverse, that it never happened; a life that never progressed beyond its first moments. **"Let those curse it who curse the day, Who are prepared to rouse Leviathan."** What is "Leviathan?" We don't have the time to spend on this. But it may be a reference to an ancient near east mythical creature, which we know from other ancient near eastern writings of the time. The Leviathan stood for destruction. To rouse the Leviathan was to bring forth ruin—and that's what Job is crying out for. And if that's the case, this doesn't mean that Job believed in mythology, just that he was referring to a familiar figure. We do that, when, for example, we say somebody has the strength of Atlas. That doesn't mean we believe Atlas exists; we're using that familiar figure as an example. It may refer to that or it may refer to a sea creature of some kind, a literal sea creature. We'll see Leviathan again in chapter 41. But the point remains. The thought is crystallized by one writer:

[Job wants to] stir up from the depths this chaotic, evil, supernatural sea monster whose design is always to bring disorder in place of order, death in place of life, darkness swallowing life. It is rather like in *The Lord of the Rings*, when those making up the Fellowship of the Ring are passing through the mines of Moria, and one of the hobbits accidentally stirs up the monstrous Balrog, with terrible consequences.⁵⁵

⁵⁵Ash, 73.

That darkness theme continues in verse nine with, **“Let the stars of its twilight be darkened; let it wait for light but have none, and let it not see the breaking dawn.”** Why? The reason is in verse 10: **“Because it did not shut the opening of my mother’s womb, or hide trouble from my eyes.”**

Once we are born and our eyes open we face a life of distress. We don't know that specifically, at that time, even though we cry, we fuss, we have tantrums. We think tragedy is when another child takes our toy. We are born into a sinful world. And from the time that our eyes are open trouble comes. Job chapter 5 verse seven, “Man is born for trouble as sparks fly upward.” Peter says “it's necessary that you encounter various trials.” To live in this life is to face trials, face suffering; at some points, calamity.

I was talking to my 78-year-old mother the other day about her struggles living alone in Arizona. And I said, “Well mom, you’ve been through, we've been through, the Bartolucci family has been through, so much. And you've not only lost your granddaughter, your only grandchild, but 10 months later you lost your husband of 55 years.” And I remarked, “You know, here you are at this point in your life, in your late 70s . . .” (and she has never, in seven or eight decades, never faced calamity like this). All the suffering you go through—but you can only imagine what it would be like to go through what she went through, what we went through. To lose your child, or lose your grandchild, and then less than a year later, lose your husband. “Man is born for trouble as sparks fly upward.”

From the time we enter life we’re faced with a world of sin and suffering. And as believers we force ourselves to have an eternal perspective, and I say “force” because I have found that sometimes that is what I’ve had to do. And there were times when I wanted none of it, that I wanted to just wallow in my own misery. But eventually I come around and I say, “I’ve got to take on an eternal perspective; see this in light of the cross, see all of this suffering in the light of heaven and

hell and in the hope of the gospel.” We have an eternal perspective even as it relates to what God is doing in our lives. A sovereign God working out His will, ultimately, for our good and His glory.

Chuck Swindoll touched on this. He said:

Don't doubt for a moment that circumstances of suffering are used of God to shape you and conform you into the image of His Son. Nothing enters your life accidentally—remember that. There is no such thing as 'luck' or 'coincidence' or 'fate' to the child of God. Behind our every experience is our loving sovereign Lord. He is continually working things out according to His infinite plan and purpose. And that includes our suffering. When God wants to do an impossible task, He takes an impossible individual . . . and crushes him. Being crushed means being reshaped—to be a vital, compassionate, useful instrument in His hands.⁵⁶

And ultimately, it brings us back to the Cross, it brings us back to the gospel.

“Why Did I Live? (11-19)

But in the midst of suffering, Job is moving in the series of questions from: “Why was I born?” (vv. 1-10) to “Why did I live?” in verses 11-19 (much the same theme). **“Why did I not die at birth, [verse 11] come forth from the womb and expire?”** And the progressing, verse 12 (beginning of the verse), **“Why did the knees receive me . . .”** Those “knees” may refer to the posture of the mother. As soon as a child is born, she would take that child upon her knees to feed that child. Or it may refer to a patriarchal blessing that the father would give the infant shortly after birth to place a family blessing upon the child. Regardless, you see the progression: “Why did I come forth from the womb? Why did I not die? Why did the knees receive me? Why the breasts that I should suck?” *Why? why? why?*

It’s a question children ask all the time. I once knew a young boy whom we used to joke about, that his response to most anything you said was one word: “why?” It was comical. Anything anyone said, 8 times out of 10, was followed by a question: “why?” We grow up to asked that same

⁵⁶Swindoll, *For Those Who Hurt*.

question, specifically when tragedy strikes. A powerful illustration that goes back to February 1947 when an Avianca Airlines Douglas DC-4 crashed into Mount El Tablazo en route from Barranquilla to Bogotá, Colombia, killing all 53 people on board. Mount El Tablazo was shrouded in fog when, at 12:18 local time, the aircraft crashed into it at an elevation of about 10,500 feet. The DC-4 disintegrated with a metallic scream, flamed crazily down the mountainside into a deep ravine. What was left of the one awful moment illuminated a cold Colombian mountain in the night, then the darkness returned. And the silence.

But there's a background story in all of this. A young man who flew on that plane, a young man from New York named Glenn Chambers, scribbled a note (before boarding the aircraft) on a piece of paper he found on the floor of the terminal. The scrap was part of a printed advertisement that had the word “Why?” in the middle of it. And he wrote his note to his mother around those words, quickly folding his last-minute thought that he wrote on there around that word “Why?” which he ignored. He stuffed his note in an envelope and dropped it in a box. There would be more to come, or course. More about the budding of a lifelong dream to begin a ministry with the "Voice of the Andes" in Ecuador. But there was no more to come. Between the mailing and the delivery of Chambers' note, El Tablazo snagged his flight and his dreams were extinguished from the night sky.

The envelope arrived later than the news of his death. His mother opened up that note, and you can only imagine, as her eyes focused on the center seeing that single word: “Why?” It's a question that hits first; it's the question that lingers longest in the face of tragedy: *Why? Why me? Why now? Why this?*⁵⁷

⁵⁷Adapted from story cited by Haddon Robinson in *Biblical Preaching*, 162.

You might note that at the end of the book, Job does not get his “why” questions answered; he gets the answer of Who. Capital W H O. The “Who” is the God who stands behind all of the unanswered questions. But Job, in the midst of his suffering, wishing that he had never been born, or never continued to live, in verse 13 says, **“I would be lying down in peace.”** If I did not live much beyond birth, I would be asleep and at rest. I would be, note this, **“with kings and rulers of the earth, who built for themselves places now lying in ruins; with princes who had gold, who filled their houses with silver.”** And another “why” in verse 16, **“Why was I not hidden away in the ground like a stillborn child, like an infant who never saw the light of day?”** Verses 17-19: **“There the wicked cease from turmoil, and there the weary are at rest. Captives also enjoy their ease; they no longer hear the slave driver’s shout. The small and the great are there, and the slaves are freed from their owners.”**

What is Job saying? He's pointing out the fact that from one perspective death is the great equalizer. You come with nothing, you leave with nothing. And that's true of the great and truth of the small. It's true of *captives who no longer hear the shouts of the slave driver*, as well as (verse 14) the *kings and rulers of the earth*. And what is Job thinking, logically? Death is the great equalizer as far as earthly life is concerned. You can be an arrogant, multi-million-dollar Hollywood celebrity, of which there is no lack, or you can be a skid-row bum when you die; you die the same.

What about eternity? What of eternal life? That wasn't something that was as much at the forefront of the Old Testament believers thinking like it was of the New Testament believer. Not that it's absent, but it wasn't something that was quite as prominent, typically back in this patriarchal age, and it's certainly not Job's focus here, thinking about eternal life. What we have is “the loneliness of lament.” A sufferer asking the question, “Why did I live?” Yes, “Why was I ever born?” And once born, “Why, why did I live much beyond that? Why did I live past my infancy?”

Job's not alone in these sorts of laments. The prophet Jeremiah, Jeremiah chapter 20 verses 14 through 18; Jeremiah says much the same thing. Jeremiah, who also wrote the book of Lamentations ("lament"). Jeremiah in that 20th chapter of the book named after him says,

14 Cursed be the day when I was born; Let the day not be blessed when my mother bore me!
15 Cursed be the man who brought the news To my father, saying, "A baby boy has been born to you!" And made him very happy. 16 But let that man be like the cities Which the LORD overthrew without relenting, And let him hear an outcry in the morning And a shout of alarm at noon; 17 Because he did not kill me before birth, So that my mother would have been my grave, And her womb ever pregnant. 18 Why did I ever come forth from the womb To look on trouble and sorrow, So that my days have been spent in shame?

Oh, this is this is the heart of the sufferer! But I have to confess I never went there. Because in my mind the thought was, if I had never been born, or if I had died at a very young age, then what about all the people that I have come to know and love? In my family and my extended family? What about my daughter? Had I died she would've never been born.

"Why Am I Alive Now?" (20-26)

But I can identify with the third point "Why am I alive now?" That's verses 20 through 26. You see, Job is moving along: "Why was I ever born? Why did I live after I was born? And now that I did live after I was born and grew to adulthood (and now as someone who has felt the weight of calamity), why am I alive now in the midst of my suffering?"

"Why is light given to him who suffers? [That is the light of life] and life to the bitter of soul, [those, verse 21] who long for death, but there is none, and dig for it more than for hidden treasures, [those, verse 22] who rejoice greatly and exult when they find the grave?" "Why am I allowed to live? I long for death, but it does not come;" that's what Job is saying.

Oh, believe me, I felt that way many times. I cried out for God to take my life. There's no thought of suicide here; that was foreign to the Old Testament believer. But with the idea of the one who sovereignly gave life, please, sovereignly take it back!

Maybe I told you this. One time, and the midst of my deepest struggles, there was a thunderstorm. And I parked my chair under a tree and said, “Lord, I’ll make it a little easier.” Stupid and irrational? Yeah, but you know that when you’re in the midst, when you’re in the midst of excruciating, gut-wrenching suffering, you’re not thinking rationally, logically.

Verse 23 so resonates with me: **“Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden [and note this] whom God has hedged in?”** C.S. Lewis said, “No one ever told me that grief felt so much like fear.” And how many times I have felt like I was literally trapped in my own skin. And I would tell people, “I don’t know? I just I feel trapped. I feel stuck. I feel like I’m being pressed against an invisible wall.” And there were times when (and it still happens), times when I think of the tragedies that struck our life, and I think, *even to use those words “death” and “Giana” in the same sentence*, and it hits me. And I want to literally get up and run, just run down the street. Why? I don’t know; but there’s a feeling that I need to escape somehow, like I can run faster than the cloud that I’m in. Oh, how I felt that God had hedged me in.

And there’s an ironic twist here. Note that again, verse 23, “whom God has hedged in.” Job includes himself in that. Go back to chapter 1 verse 10. What was Satan’s accusation? “Had you not made [a what?] about Job.” A Hedge. “You’ve hedged Job in with blessing.” It’s all taken away. Now Job says, “You, Lord, *hedged me in* suffering!”

Verse 24, **“My groaning comes at the sight of my food”** (when you’re really suffering, you don’t want to eat). **“My cries pour out like water, for what I fear [verse 25] comes upon me, and what I dread befalls me.”** This is almost, as one writer describes it, a “what next” paranoia. You ever feel that way? *Oh man, what next? When is the other shoe going to drop?* The NIV puts it this way, verse 25: “What I feared has come upon me; what I dreaded has happened to me.” With all of us there’s that thought, *Well, what if this happened to me?*

I remember as a high schooler, my dad had a business. And he had a relatively young man that was working for him at the time. And this man ended up having a sore spot in his hand that ended up being bone cancer, and he died in less than a year. You know what happens to me when I get sore in my hand, or when I get a headache? It's like, "Oh what is happening to me!?" This is why don't I don't read those, "if you have these symptoms you have this terrible disease." Do you read those? There's hardly anything I can read that I don't say, "I've got two-thirds of those symptoms." And sometimes it's even stuff that's unique to women and I have the symptoms! I don't know! *What I feared is come upon me, what I dreaded has happened to me.*

Did Job, while things were good, have this thought? "These blessings, this material prosperity, these children, could be taken from me." I think wisdom lives with an eye toward the temporal nature of those things that we have in this earthly life. We've had people say to us, in light of our tragedy, "It makes me think, what if that happened to me?" And I think, if we are wise, we do think, "what if." Maybe you have a friend like my dad's employee, but maybe it wasn't a pain in his hand or arm. Maybe it was a pain in his side. And he ends up being diagnosed with liver cancer and is dead in three months. And you think, "Man, what if that happened to me?"

It's a sovereign God who gives life and takes life. So we need to live with an eye toward the temporal nature of all that we have on this earth. The one thing we have that is forever is the truth of the Word of God. The one thing that we have that is forever is the gift of eternal life in the gospel. Really, everything else is on loan. Steward it well.

The last verse in the chapter, verse 26, "**I am not at ease, nor am I quiet, and I am not at rest, but turmoil comes.**" This closes a dark chapter, a dark time in Job's life. And so Job laments.

I think of another lament, that of Jesus from the Cross. Citing Psalm 22:1, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Talk about the loneliness of sorrow. How lonely did Jesus feel

when He was forsaken of the Father and took upon Himself the Father's wrath for our sin. "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" The loneliness of lament; the loneliness of sorrow.

But after darkness, light. That's a phrase in Latin: *post tenebras lux*. It was used of the Reformation when there was so much darkness in the institutional church, and out of that, through that darkness, came the light of God's Word, the revival of the Reformation. After darkness, light.

I think of Job's life. After darkness, the darkness of chapter 3, the darkness that we see in the rest of the chapters that follow; but ultimately there was light for Job, a believer in God; Job, one whom, even though he lived 2000 years removed, one for whom Christ died. And I think of Jesus, the darkness of the Cross was followed by the light of the resurrection. The darkness of the Cross, for us, that our darkness could become light. Always remember that the light of the Cross has the power to pierce through the darkness of our lives, the darkness of our souls.

And so, Lord, we pray that you would encourage us with this hope, the hope of the gospel, the hope of sins forgiven solely by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, the One who died for sinners. Oh, we will still lament in this life. We will struggle in our humanness. We will struggle in our sinful frame. But that flame within the light of a believer will not be extinguished. That hope will not be jettisoned by you. Oh, Lord, may we, when we suffer trials, afflictions, as we suffer them, may we hold fast to the light of the gospel of Christ. Something we can do that Job could not: pray, cry out, plead, in the name and authority of Jesus Christ our Lord. And it is in that precious name that we pray as we close this morning.

The First Address of Eliphaz: Bad Things Don't Happen to Good People
Job 4:1-5:27

November 10, 2019
Christ Church of Clarkson
1119Job4.1-5:27(8) | Audio Length: 55:26

Big Picture Overview

I will begin by giving you a big picture overview, and here is where the outline might come in handy. And that is, I want to focus primarily on the meat of the book that happens in the middle chapters (4 through the beginning of chapter 26). We've looked at Job's circumstances which were put in historical narrative (chapters 1 and 2). We've looked at Job's lament last time, the entirety of chapter 3. But what follows are three rounds of dialogue, cycles of speeches, between Job and his friends. Remember, he has three friends: Eliphaz Bildad, and Zophar; and so we have three rounds.

Three Rounds of dialogue between Job and his friends: Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar (4:1-26:14)

You can almost picture a boxing match: “ding, ding” round one, but it's Job against three. So you have around one where the bell rings in chapter 4 and runs through chapter 14. That beings with Job versus Eliphaz—and that's what we're looking at this morning. Eliphaz addresses Job the first time. This is round one; that's chapters 4 and 5. And then in chapters 6 and 7, Job gives his reply. Bildad addresses Job for the first time, chapter 8, and Job replies to Bildad in chapters 9 and 10. Zophar steps up to the plate; he addresses Job the first time in chapter 11. Job replies to Zophar, chapters 12 to 14. End of round one.

Well, the bell rings; now it's time for round two, chapters 15 to 21. Again, the same order. Job versus Eliphaz. Eliphaz addresses Job the second time in chapter 15. Job replies to Eliphaz. Then again it's Job versus Bildad who addresses Job for the second time in chapter 18. Job

responds to Bildad in chapter 19. Then Zophar is up once more. He addresses Job for the second time in chapter 20, and Job replies to him in chapter 21.

That brings the third and last round, round three, chapters 22 to 26. Job again versus Eliphaz who addresses Job the third and last time, chapter 22. Job replies to him in chapters 23 and 24. Then Job versus Bildad who addresses Job the third time, chapter 25. Job replies to Bildad in Chapter 26. But interestingly Zophar does not appear in this round; he sort of drops out and we're not sure what happened (if he gave up, if he left the premises), we don't know.

And then what follows: Job gives his last reply to his friends (this isn't in your outline, but just so you know where things are going), Job gives a five chapter reply. Then a new face, a young man named Elihu speaks. God then speaks in chapters 38 to 42. Job then has his confession and repentance, also in chapter 42. God admonishes Job's friends by way of Eliphaz, chapter 42 verse seven through nine. And then we see Job's restoration at the end of chapter 42.

But the part I want you to focus on is the part that I hope, by God's grace, we will make our way through over the next several weeks and months, and that is the three rounds, or cycles, dialogue cycles between Job and his friends Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. Three rounds (4:1 - 26:14).

No one is impressed

So there's lots of dialogue. And for the most part it's in Hebrew poetry, framed in that way. There's lots of dialogue, but interestingly, no one is really impressed. No one is impressed with the other. Job is not impressed with his three friends and he calls them "sorry comforters" in chapter 16 verse two. Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar; they're not impressed with Job. And chapter 8 verse two is representative of their attitude: "How long [Job] will you say these things and the

words of your mouth be a mighty wind?” (“You’re just blowing hot air, Job.”) Most importantly, and most relevant, God is not impressed with Job's three friends. Chapter 42 verse seven, the Lord says to Eliphaz, “My wrath is kindled against you, and against your two friends.” Why? “Because you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has.” It's one thing to misrepresent yourself; it's another thing to misrepresent God, which is what they were doing. And here’s the tricky thing, because this is not to say that everything Job's three friends say is in error. There’s a mix of truth and error in what they say. The errors largely are in how they apply what they're saying. Some things, again, were true at face value, but applied incorrectly.

Three basic premises

They’re operating, Job's three friends, are operating out of three basic premises. 1) God is absolutely sovereign; 2) God is absolutely just, or righteous; 3) because God is absolutely sovereign and absolutely just, he punishes wickedness and blesses righteousness. So what's wrong with that? Let’s look at it a little bit at a time. God is absolutely sovereign, and that we would say is absolutely true. God is absolutely just, again, we would say yes, that is absolutely true. God is absolutely sovereign, in control of all things at all times. He is the King and He's absolutely righteous. He's perfectly holy. But note the third, the conclusion: therefore, God punishes wickedness and blesses righteousness. Well, that is a truism, but we have to unscrew it a little bit to figure out what we mean by what were saying. It has to be qualified. What does it mean, for example, to be wicked? What does it mean to be righteous? Can a man be righteous apart from Jesus Christ? And when is wickedness punished? When is righteousness blessed? In this life, always in this life? In the next life? Both? How does all of this work? You see, if you don't qualify the proposition “God punishes wickedness and blesses righteousness” you can

absolutize it into a bad application. And the bad application, in this instance: *Job's suffering, he's not being blessed. Therefore, he is being punished for not being good.* This is a perverted “you reap what you sow” theology. In other words, if you are sowing it, you must have reaped it. “Job bad things happen you because you did something to deserve it.” That is a basic summary of their bad theology.

We could put it this way: “bad things don't happen to good people.” They look that as almost an unwritten law of the universe, *bad things just don't happen to those who are good.* I want you to note that as we go into chapter 4 and meet Eliphaz. He argues largely from personal experience. This is the person who argues anecdotally. “Well from what I've seen, this is how it is.” “Well, my experience leads me to believe . . .” And that's not to say that all experiences are groundless. The apostle Paul recorded some wonderful experiences, such as his encounter with the risen Christ on the Damascus Road. But even with that, the course of his ministry was guided and grounded in Scripture. As a general rule, friends, don't base facts on your experience, base your experience on facts. Personal experience has to be grounded in truth. And for us on this side of the Cross, it's the truth of God's Word that forms the basis for what we believe, and frames that which we experience.

The Observations of Eliphaz (4:1 - 5:7)

Two main points as we come to chapters four and five: The Observations of Eliphaz, (4:1 to 5:7), and then The Opinions of Eliphaz (5:8-17). He has observations. That is, he has experiences. And he says, “Job, this is what I've experienced.” And then he gives opinions in chapter 5: “On the basis of what I've seen, this is what you need to do.” There are four observations of Eliphaz in these two chapters: 1) His experience as it relates to Job; 2) His

experience as relates to nature; 3) His experience as it relates to a vision he had; 4) His experience as relates to fools.

His experience as it relates to Job (4:1-6)

So beginning in the chapter 4 verses one through six. This is Eliphaz, his experience as it relates to Job. Remember they're friends. He knows Job. He knows about Job. And Eliphaz breaks the silence in chapter 4 verse one: **“Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered.”**⁵⁸ We were introduced to Eliphaz back in chapter 2:11, “Now when Job’s three friends heard of all this adversity that had come upon him, they came each one from his own place, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite; and they made an appointment together to come to sympathize with him and comfort him.”

So Eliphaz, (as it's mentioned here, as it was in chapter 2:11), was a Temanite. That is, he was from Teman, a prominent city in the area of Edom southeast of the Dead Sea. And remember, we noted this in our introduction, Edom was known for its wisdom. Eliphaz came from a place known for its wisdom, so he should be wise. We think he was also the oldest of the three, and this is why he speaks first in each cycle; Eliphaz talks first. And then when God chastises the three in chapter 42:7 He speaks directly to Eliphaz as representative of the three. So all this would indicate that Eliphaz is the eldest, and as the eldest, he should be the wisest.

So he breaks the silence. But I want you to note this: he does so with the measure of meekness. We see that in verse two: **“If one ventures a word with you, will you become impatient? But who can refrain from speaking?”** Eliphaz is trying to be sensitive, he’s trying to find a way to get his point in what may feel like an awkward situation. He has good intentions.

⁵⁸Scripture citations are taken from the NAS95 unless otherwise noted.

We ought not question the intentions of these three. We can question their *praxis*, their practice, but don't question their intentions. They came a long way to see Job. They knew he had lost most everything, his wealth, his health, all 10 of his children. Job is sitting in the midst of the town dump covered head to toe with oozing sores. And they sit with him in silence for a week. And then Eliphaz, the eldest, breaks the silence, and he speaks up—and you gotta imagine how all this unfolds—how awkward that would be. *We don't know what to say; sit here in silence, but somebody ought to say something.* So Eliphaz does.

One thing we'll see as we move along: the speeches of the three friends grow shorter, along with their patience. Eliphaz begins here with some measure of compassion, but we'll see that quickly fades and gets worse as we move along in this middle section.

He begins by pointing to Job's reputation as a counselor to others. Verse three, **“Behold you have admonished many and you have strengthened weak hands.”** Verse four, **“Your words have helped the tottering to stand and you have strengthened feeble knees.”** You get the picture? He comes to Job and he says, “Job you’re suffering. You have helped other sufferers; you've admonished them and even strengthened those that were weak. You've helped those that were tottering, about to fall. You've helped them to stand.” *You’ve strengthened feeble knees*—but here comes that word; it’s hard to begin a sentence with it. Here comes that word: B-U-T, “but.” We've been on the receiving end of this, haven't we? Someone's talking to you and has an agenda, maybe even a well-meaning agenda like Job's friends, but they can't just drop the hammer, so they begin on a positive note: “I you to know, you’ve been such a blessing. People think so highly of you, and I appreciate you so much.” But you know in your mind, when somebody's talking to you this way, you know it's coming, right? That three letter word, “but.”

You almost want to say it to them, “*Buuuuuuuu? What’s the other side of the coin?*” And that's what happens here, verse five: “**But now it [suffering] has come to you, and you are impatient; It touches you, and you are dismayed.**”

And I take verse six as sarcasm—and this is one of the tricks, especially in the book of Job, and that is, what is the tone? Are things being said in a humble way, an encouragingly way? Or in a sarcastic way? And you just have to take clues from the context. I take it that verse six is sarcasm: “**Is not your fear of God your confidence, And the integrity of your ways your hope?**” This is the person says “You know, I thought you were a Christian. Where is your faith? Yeah I know your suffering, but do you believe it or don't you?” Don't get me wrong, there's a time sometimes to challenge people as to their faith. But not in that way, not beating them over the head with it. And that's what Eliphaz is doing. He’s accusing Job of not practicing what he preaches. “C’mon, Job, you’ve encouraged others. Why can’t you just believe what you've taught them in their suffering? Job, what's the matter with you?” I think of the accusation leveled against Jesus on the Cross. Matthew 27:42, “He saved others, He can't save himself.” *Job, you’ve encourage others; you can’t even encourage yourself? You're being a bit of a hypocrite here.*

His experience as it relates to nature (4:7-11)

And, secondly, Eliphaz goes on from his experience as relates to Job, to his experience as it relates to nature (or the nature of things) in verses 7 through 11. And verse seven really sums up the argument of all three friends. It's really the argument of these middle chapters in miniature: “**Remember now, who ever perished being innocent? Or where were the upright destroyed?**” In other words, bad things don't happen to good people, bad things happen to bad people. Most everyone in antiquity operated out of this assumption. Turn the clock forward from

the time of Job to the apostle Paul. The latter part of the book of Acts, Paul's on his way to Rome. He boards an Alexandrian cargo ship bound for Italy, and while crossing the Mediterranean Sea they're shipwrecked. By God's mercy, 276 people are spared. They reach solid ground on the island of Malta. They make a fire, no doubt, to keep warm. And Paul reaches to put more wood in the fire, and what happens? There's a viper, a poisonous snake, in the midst of the wood around the fire, and escaping the heat, latches on the arm of the apostle Paul. And what does everybody think? Acts 28:4, "When the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they began saying to one another, 'Undoubtedly this man is a murderer, and though he has been saved from the sea, justice has not allowed him to live.'" This is just karma folks. The assumption was, if you were a bad person, bad things would happen to you. And you can turn that around: if bad things happen to you then what? You must be bad person. That's the mind set of Eliphaz as we see in verses eight and nine.

Note how verse eight begins (again you've gotta love this): "**According to what I have seen . . .**" There are times that that's very relevant. There are times when people say that to me and I think, "I don't care. What's true? It doesn't matter what you've seen." And here's what Eliphaz says, "**According to what I have seen, those who plow iniquity and those who sow trouble harvest it.**" "**By the breath of God they perish, And by the blast of His anger they come to an end.**" You see, Eliphaz is just telling Job, "You are reaping what you have sown." It's like gravity: toss an object in the air, it's going to come down; just a law of nature, a law of God. And the same thing with suffering. If bad things happen to you, you must've done something to deserve it.

Eliphaz gives an interesting illustration in verses 10 and 11, **“The roaring of the lion and the voice of the fierce lion, and the teeth of the young lions are broken. The lion perishes for lack of prey, and the whelps of the lioness are scattered.”** Lots of folks have read that, and scratch their heads, and said, “What in the world does that have to do with anything?” What is he talking about? Well, back in those times, people used lions as a figure of speech meaning “the wicked.” “Lion” here stands for someone who's wicked, a sinner, and there's several passages I could go to, but I'll give you one. Speaking of the wicked, the psalmist cries out in Psalm 58:6, “O God shatter their teeth in their mouth, break out the fangs of the young lions, O Lord.” But here we have, verse 10, **“The roaring of the lion and the voice of the fierce lion”**—and this is the wicked—they roar, they're fierce, they're puffed up, they're proud. But look what happens to them, **“The teeth of the young lions** [those who were in the height of their strength, the prime of their life] **are broken.”** Well, that sounds like what we just read in Psalm 58:6 and 11: “The lion perishes for lack of prey.” Then shameless Eliphaz, knowingly or not, says something that would've felt like a punch in the stomach; second half of verse 11: **“And the whelps of the lioness are scattered.”** This proud, majestic beast, who represents the proud, puffed up wicked, loses out because of his wickedness. Can't find something to eat; his offspring, children scattered and die. What happened to Job? “. . . a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on [your children Job!] . . . and they died . . .” [1:19] You see, this is a law of nature. The wicked are punished and sometimes even lose their children.

His experience as it relates to a Vision (4:12-21)

Then, third point, his experience as relates to a dream or a vision. Eliphaz buttresses his argument by claiming to have had an inspired dream. Beginning in Chapter 4 verse 12:

12 “Now a word was brought to me stealthily, And my ear received a whisper of it.
13 “Amid disquieting thoughts from the visions of the night, When deep sleep falls on men,
14 Dread came upon me, and trembling, And made all my bones shake.
15 “Then a spirit passed by my face; The hair of my flesh bristled up.
16 “It stood still, but I could not discern its appearance; A form was before my eyes;
There was silence, then I heard a voice:”

There are some interpretational issues here. The biggest question, if you've read this, maybe even reading it now, you're asking, “Was this vision from God (or to come from somewhere else)?” Is this a legitimate revelatory dream? Remember at this time there is no Bible, there is no Old Testament, there is no Mosaic Law; Job predates all of that. And God did reveal Himself in dreams. Not true of all dreams, or even most, but it did happen. And to support the idea that some have that this was a legitimate vision from God, we can compare Genesis chapter 15 verse 12. Speaking of Abraham and his dream his vision that form the basis of the Abraham covenant, Genesis 15:12: “Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, terror and great darkness fell upon him.” That's similar, but I think if you read the account of Genesis 15 and you read the account here you'll see that the similarities sort of end with that.

Was this a dream or vision from God? Here is a three word theological answer: “I don't know.” Scholars are divided. If I had to take a position I would say, “no it's not” for one reason: there's no claim by the Spirit, the apparition, that he is speaking for God or is God. And while Eliphaz's dream reveals some things that are unquestionably true, we'll see that other things that

come out of the mouth of this spirit are hard to interpret; the application to Job's situation is troubling. But we need to let the point stand.

So what is the spirit of the dream say? Look at verse 17 (and this is a truism): **“Can mankind be just before God? Can a man be pure before his Maker?”** Now if you're any kind of a theologian, no doubt you're smiling inside. And you're thinking of one New Testament book, aren't you? The book of Romans with answers that question: righteousness by faith alone, in Christ alone, to the glory of God alone. All five petals in my Tulip! Hallelujah!

If you're using an NIV or King James in reading along, you're little puzzled because there's a translation issue here. I read out of the New American Standard (and the ESV reads the same), but listen to the NIV (and if you're using a King James Version it reads like the NIV); here is how the NIV goes—and note the difference: “Can a mortal be more righteous than God? Can a man be more pure than his Maker?” Get the difference? One asks, “Can man be *more* righteous than God?” The other ask, “Can a man even *be* righteous before God?” One is *more than*; one is *in the presence of*. Both translations are possible.

This relates to little Hebrew word *min* (m-i-n). This gets complicated and I'm not even going to go there, lexically. But I think translating *min* as “before,” that is, “Can man be righteous *before* God?” is the better of the two choices (and there's contextual reasons as well). After all, there's no question that man isn't *more* righteous than God. The way the NIV frames that (“Can a mortal be more righteous than God? Can a man be more pure than his Maker?”), that sort of goes without saying. That we know; that Job knew. But *can a man be righteous before God?* That's a good question; and we see this question repeated throughout Job.

9:2 “In truth I know that this is so; But how can a man be in the right before God?”

14:4 “Who can make the clean out of the unclean? No one!”

15:14 “What is man, that he should be pure, Or he who is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?”

25:4 “How then can a man be just with God? Or how can he be clean who is born of woman?”

The same here in Job 4:17: “Can mankind be just before God? Can a man be pure before his Maker? That's a relevant question. It's one we'll come back to. Verse 18, another difficult verse (still part of Eliphaz's dream): **‘He puts no trust even in His servants; And against His angels He charges error.’** So, again, this is the spirit, according to Eliphaz, that is still speaking out of that dream state that he was in. And what does that mean? “He [that is, God] puts no trust even in His servants, and against His angels He charges error.”

We have Hebrew parallelism going. “Servants” and “angels” refer to the same thing. So this isn't “earthly servants” (He puts no trust in his *earthly servants*); and as far as angels are concerned, He charges *them* with error. No, they're the same thing: verse 18 is talking about angelic beings. But the question I had to ask myself: “Which angels does God charge with error?” Not the holy, elect angels; they're pure they're holy before God. In my mind it's either “this is mistaken” (it's a false spirit speaking falsely). In other words, “against His angels He charges error;” well, *no He doesn't, not against His holy elect angels*. Or, more likely, it refers to the fallen angels, those whom God cast out of heaven. He puts no trust in them; against them He charges error. Those were then spirits that were banished, Satan among them, confirmed in their depravity.

But the point from Eliphaz's perspective is one of comparison. If God puts no trust in, and judges, angels, even fallen angels, what about man? What hope does man have? That's a comparison that unfolds in verse 19: **“How much more** [that ought to tell you there's a comparison going on here] **those who dwell in houses of clay,** [who dwells in houses of clay?

Man] **whose foundation is in the dust** [who is created out of dust? Man], **who are crushed before the moth!** Frailty. Then there's mortality: 20 **'Between morning and evening they are broken in pieces; Unobserved, they perish forever.** This is like saying, "life is a vapor, you're here then you're gone." Life is fragile. 21 **'Is not their tent-cord plucked up within them?** [breaking camp; a figure of death] **They die, yet without wisdom.'**

This is a bleak picture that Eliphaz is painting by way of this apparition. It ends with what seems to be a fruitless search for wisdom. *Is it fruitless?* That's a theme Job explores in great detail in chapter 28. He asks a question in verse 20: "Where then does wisdom come from? And where is the place of understanding?" And after playing with that question and exploring it in the futility that some men have in trying to find true wisdom, Job comes around, (28:28): "And to man [God] said, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.' No, not all men die without wisdom.

And I don't know if this was a divine vision, but speaking from the perspective of the completed canon, speaking from the perspective of the New Testament, beware of those come to you with a "word from the Lord." Maybe you've had people who have done that. *The Lord gave me a word for you brother.* Somebody says that to you, tell them, "I've got my Bible; show me." *Oh no, I don't mean the Bible.* Unless it's right out of this book, you need to be very skeptical. As a general rule, I put no faith, no trust, in mystical experiences, dreams and visions, etc. I've not had any, but I've talked to plenty of people who claim that they have. I had one man who told me that Jesus just appears personally to him, in reality, not just out of his imagination. But he's portraying this legitimate thing: "Jesus appears to me in bodily form, in my living room, and talks with me." Jesus appears to you and you don't fall on your face and plant your nose into the

floor in the presence of holy God? Mystical experiences have been the breeding ground for all sorts of bad theology and heresies throughout the history of the church—and that is especially true today. The extreme charismatic, Pentecostal groups, the Word of Faith movement. You see, this goes back to basing truth on experience, and that's where Eliphaz is coming from, his observations. “Here’s my experience as it relates to you, Job; here's my experiences as it relates to nature; and here's my experiences as it relates to a vision.

His experience as it relates to fools (5:1-7)

And lastly, His Experience as it Relates to Fools (chapter 5). Look at verse one: **“Call now, is there anyone who will answer you? And to which of the holy ones will you turn?”** That actually goes back to the preceding section, the angels, the untrustworthy angels God charges with error. And “if God charges angels with error,” Eliphaz is saying, “where are you going to turn; who’s going to help you? To whom will you make your appeal?” And there's some legal language used here. But again, not only do bad things happen to bad people, but Eliphaz is implying that bad things happen to stupid people! **“For anger slays the foolish man [verse two] and jealousy kills the simple.”** Note again, experience, verse three: **“I have seen the foolish taking root and I cursed his abode immediately.”** That could mean that either Eliphaz wished a curse, declared a curse, or he observed the fool’s house was cursed. Then more words that would have really been painful for Job to hear:

4 **“His sons [the children of a fool] are far from safety, they are even oppressed in the gate, and there is no deliverer. 5 “His harvest the hungry devour and take it to a place of thorns, and the schemer is eager for their wealth. 6 “For affliction does not come from the dust, nor does trouble sprout from the ground, 7 for man is born for trouble, as sparks fly upward.”**

Do you see what he's saying here? This kind of suffering is the realm of fools. Fools lose their children. Fools lose their livestock. Fools lose their crops.

Verse seven is true enough, we're born into a fallen world and therefore are going to face all sorts of troubles in life. But the nuance that seems to be here is that Job deserved what he got. Verse six, "For affliction does not come from the dust." Affliction comes from somewhere. It doesn't appear out of the air. Trouble doesn't sprout out of the ground like plants. No, "a man is born for trouble as sparks fly upward." In other words, "If you have trouble, it didn't come out of the air. It came because you did something to deserve it." These are the observations of Eliphaz.

The Opinions of Eliphaz (5:8-27)

As you can imagine, he is also a man who has opinions. And so here are three things Eliphaz counsels Job to do (5:8-17). Remember, based on his observations, including a vision that for him points out the fact that Job may just be a foolish sinner who needs to repent. Three opinions; *here's my counsel, Job*. Number one, Seek God. Number two, Accept His discipline. Number three, Believe our Report.

Seek God (8-16)

Verse eight, Seek God: **"But as for me, I would seek God,** ["In my in my opinion, if it were me, I would seek God, Job] **and I would place my cause before God;"** All this implies that Eliphaz really thinks that he knows what's going on in Job's heart and life, that Job hasn't been doing that; he's assuming that he hasn't because he is suffering. "But seek God; He does great things." Verse 9: **"Who does great and unsearchable things, wonders without number."** 10 **"He gives rain on the earth and sends water on the fields, He exalts the humble and humiliates the proud,** verses 11 and following: 11 **So that He sets on high those**

who are lowly, and those who mourn are lifted to safety. 12 **“He frustrates the plotting of the shrewd, so that their hands cannot attain success.”** Verse 13, quoted by Paul in 1 Corinthians 3:19, **“He captures the wise by their own shrewdness, and the advice of the cunning is quickly thwarted.”** 14 **“By day they meet with darkness, and grope at noon as in the night.** 15 **“But He saves from the sword of their mouth, and the poor from the hand of the mighty.** So there's hope for you Job: 16 **“So the helpless has hope, and unrighteousness must shut its mouth.”** So Job, you need to seek God. Humble yourself before Him.

Accept His discipline (17-26)

Verse 17, **“Behold, how happy is the man whom God reproveth, so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty.”** Verse 17 left on its own is certainly true. We read the same thing in Proverbs 3 which is cited in Hebrews chapter 12. Proverbs 3:11: **“My son, do not reject the discipline of the Lord, or loathe His reproof.”** That's true. Eliphaz isn't saying anything here in verse 17 that's not true. Again, his problem was with the application. He's applying this to Job's situation and he has no idea what's happened behind the scenes, all that we've seen in chapters 1 and 2. He's speaking out of ignorance. Verse 18 is also true, but misapplied: **“For He inflicts pain, and gives relief; He wounds, and His hands also heal.”** Eliphaz would have done well to stop with this verse, but he unfolds, in rapid fashion, absolute promises that Eliphaz makes on God's behalf in verses 19 through 26. Just as listen to verses 19 to 23:

19 **“From six troubles He will deliver you, even in seven evil will not touch you.**

20 **“In famine He will redeem you from death, and in war from the power of the sword.**

21 **“You will be hidden from the scourge of the tongue, and you will not be afraid of violence when it comes.**

22 **“You will laugh at violence and famine, and you will not be afraid of wild beasts.**

23 “For you will be in league with the stones of the field, and the beasts of the field will be at peace with you.

In other words, verse 23, *your fields won't be filled with stones; you'll have good crops.* And one of the ways you could curse a big piece of land in ancient times, and enemies often did this to one another, you could salt the earth and nothing would grow in it, or you could dump stones in the field. And you see that in 2 Kings chapter 3 where God tells Israel to come against Moab and “. . . strike every fortified city and every choice city, and fell every good tree and stop all springs of water, and mar every good piece of land with stones.” Verse 23 “If you accept God's discipline, if you seek Him, you will be in league with the stones of the field. Your fields will be clear and the beasts of the field will be at peace with you. Your crops, your herds, will prosper. Job, you won't fall victim to raiding Sabeans and Chaldeans again.”

Verse 24: **“You will know that your tent is secure, For you will visit your abode and fear no loss.”** And then how verse 25 must have stung: **“You will know also that your descendants will be many, And your offspring as the grass of the earth.** Saying this to a man who lost all 10 of his children, who has no descendants? Eliphaz implicitly lays the blame at Job's feet. As for a long profitable life? Verse 26 **“You will come to the grave in full vigor, Like the stacking of grain in its season.** What a picture this is! A little like an ancient version of the modern health-wealth heresy: “Have faith, live righteously.” He doesn't put in the part about sowing your money to the televangelist. “God will heal you and deliver you from all trouble. Famine won't touch you, war can't harm you, you will prosper in your business and live a long, fruitful life.” This is the heterodoxy of “your best life now,” in the words of Eliphaz. And if that doesn't happen, whose fault is it? What do the “word of faith” people say? Whose fault is it? *It's your fault; you didn't have enough faith you didn't sow enough money.* And that's what

Eliphaz is saying, not necessarily you didn't have enough faith, or you didn't sow any money, but certainly you must've failed in some way. This false gospel does great disgrace to Christ and the truth of the Word of God—and a reason why word of faith proponents have such a hard time with the book of Job. Here's a man who was blameless, a man of faith, and Job serves God simply because God is, because it's written within his heart. I know God because of who He is, because of His grace and His mercy. I will serve him, not for the stuff, but because of who He is as God. And Satan is allowed to afflict him, and Job loses his stuff, his children, his wealth; and he worships God regardless. “The Lord gives, the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name the Lord” (1:21). Job even confesses that it is God who has afflicted him. Well, that doesn't fly in the Word of Faith movement.

Don't miss the irony here. Eliphaz is telling Job to fear God, serve God, repent before God for the very reason Satan claimed that Job always did so, because God blesses him with stuff. That was Satan's accusation in chapter 1, “You God have made a hedge around him and his house and his every side, and you blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased.” And it seems to me that Eliphaz is telling Job, “Job, clean up your act! You're receiving bad because you do bad. Do good and you will receive good.” Job is all about demonstrating that righteous people suffer and serve God because of who God is, not because of material blessing.

Believe our report (27)

So the opinions of Eliphaz, we said there are three: Seek God (verses 8-16), Accept His Discipline (verses 17-27), and then, you've gotta like this, Believe our Report (verse 27).

“Behold this!” In other words, pay attention. **“We have investigated it, and so it is. Hear it**

and know for yourself.” That strikes me: “We looked into this. We found it to be true. This is our experience; know it for yourself.” The upshot of it is that bad things just don't happen to good people. That closes the door on Eliphaz's first speech.

Closing Thoughts

Leave room in your theology for innocent suffering

But I want you to give you some closing thoughts. What do we do with all this? Number one: Leave room in your theology for innocent suffering. Don't so straightjacket your theology, especially reformed theology, that you don't leave room for the suffering of innocent people, or chafe at the idea that anyone can even be innocent in any sense. Yes, all suffering is a result of sin, but not all suffering is a result of *personal* sin. You've got to understand the difference. All suffering is due to are living in a fallen, sinful world, but don't follow Eliphaz in making a direct connection between someone's calamity and their individual sin. “Well, you were in that bad car accident because you probably were doing this (and I saw how you have been missing church lately and that's probably why this happening). Don't do that! There is such a thing as undeserved suffering.

Leave room for imperfection

Number two: Leave room for imperfection. Leave room for people to be imperfect. Remember Eliphaz, in chapter 4 verses one through six, accused Job of not living up to what has taught others. And no, we don't need to be blatant hypocrites. But if we are honest, aren't we, at some level or another, hypocritical? Don't we do things, don't we say things, sometimes in secret, sometimes in the secret of what we think (of the pea that's between our two ears), that we would tell others is wrong and shouldn't be? Well, isn't that hypocrisy? We're all at some level

hypocrites. None of us perfectly practices what we preach. And that is especially true when we are suffering.

Don't make general principles absolute

Number three: Don't make general principles absolute. Very important, don't make general principles absolute. Like Proverbs 22:6, "Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he won't depart from it." That is not meant to be absolutized. This is a proverbial saying; it's a truism, but it's not absolute. So don't go take your Bible to someone whose children are wayward and have departed from the faith and say, "Well, it must be your fault, because this is a promise. If you had raised them right they would be in the faith." That is a mishandling of that verse. Don't absolutize; don't make general principles absolute. Galatians 6:7 "What a man sows, he will reap." We see that throughout Scripture. It is a general truth, if you sow wickedness you reap the same. But that doesn't mean that ungodly, Christ-rejecting people don't have success from an earthly perspective. this is an absolute principle (*wicked people are just going to have lives of calamity*). No, wicked people have successful businesses, they have boats, they have families, they laugh, they think life is great. You see, this is the dilemma of Asaph in Psalm 73. Why the wicked seem to prosper is a big picture thing.

Be patient with sufferers

Number four: Be patient with sufferers. Be patient with sufferers. Oh how I know how important this is. Sufferers say and do the wrong things. Sufferers sin. H. Wheeler Robinson said this, "A man suffering the torment of physical and mental pain does not think logically . . . His thoughts are instinctive. They fly out like sparks struck from the iron as it lies between the

hammer of God and the anvil of life.”⁵⁹ How often I've had actions, especially in that first year after the Lord called Giana home, that first year, how often I had actions, attitudes, and words that were like sparks, wicked sparks flying off the handle of life. Be patient with sufferers.

Eliphaz's contention in 4:7 is flat out wrong

Number five: Eliphaz's contention in 4:7 is flat out wrong. This is an instance where all the Bible records is recorded truly, but not everything that the Bible records is true at face value. Chapter 4 verse seven: “Remember now, whoever perished being innocent. Where were the upright destroyed?” And you wonder *what kind of world are you living in?* Again, this was just sort of the underlying current of the time. Even in Jesus' time, John chapter 9, Jesus sees a man born blind from birth and his disciples ask him what? *Who sinned?* Here is a man who was born blind and man's born for trouble as sparks fly upward. This doesn't just sprout out of the ground; somebody must've done something wrong. Jesus answered that it wasn't that this man sinned, or his parents, but was so that the works of God might be displayed in him. 1 Peter 2:19 addresses undeserved, unjust suffering. The contention that the innocent never perish, or the upright never destroyed is flat out wrong. What about those suffering persecution for the faith? What about the martyrs? It's estimated that every year upwards of 100,000 professed believers in Jesus Christ die around the world. One hundred thousand. With about those who die untimely deaths, who suffer disease, who die in car crashes? What about Jesus, the innocent son of God? You can just take your pen and write a “cross” in the margin next to chapter 4 verse seven.

⁵⁹Cited by Talbert, 86.

Sometimes bad things do happen to good people

Number six: Sometimes bad things do happen to good people. Now I say that with full awareness of Romans chapter 3 verse 10, which says that “no one is good.” I haven't lost my theological acumen. I've not gone under the Pelagian bandwagon or something. I certainly understand that. And it is true that no one is good. Everyone is ultimately wicked as it relates to inherent depravity, but again don't absolutize that to mean that people, even unregenerate people, can't do good things. They can't do anything that's going to save them. They can't do anything that's going to be glorifying in God's sight. But they can, as people created in the image and likeness of God, love their children, sacrifice their lives for others. And sometimes bad things do happen to these people that do good things.

The Cross answers the question of chapter 4 verse 17

And then last. The Cross answers the question of chapter 4 verse 17. The Cross answers the question of 4:17: “Can mankind be just before God? Can a man be pure before his Maker?” Job's words in 9:33, so relevant, so Gospel-saturating, when Job says, “There is no umpire between us, who may lay his hand upon us both.” No umpire, no arbiter, who can lay his hand on me, reach out and take the hand of God. Job now knows there is such person. One mediator between God and man; one umpire between God and man, Christ Jesus. The Cross answers that question. In the Cross ultimately Job found hope and redemption. What a blessing to live in the New Testament era, to have the reality of those things that were shadows and those things that were unknown. And with with that blessing comes great accountability. We have great accountability as it relates to the Gospel. We have great accountability as those who have been

born again, given new life in Christ. Great accountability to glorify God in all that we do and to be thankful for His ministry to us when we suffer.

And so Lord, we thank you for these two chapters. It's been a whirlwind. I pray Lord that you will take what we study in this book and implanted in our hearts. Use it in the lives of your people. May it continue to bring forth fruit in lives and souls. I pray Lord for anyone listening that is outside of Christ, that is looking at their good works, their innate goodness (which they have none), their religiosity, to save them. Their hope of of heaven, like so many, is that, "Well, I'm basically a good person." No, from that perspective, no one is good. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. But that question, "How can we be just before You? How can we be pure before You?" was answered, two words: Jesus Christ (and faith in Him). So Lord, I pray that you minister to each heart. Thank you for this. We pray in Jesus name. Amen.

Job's Reply to Eliphaz: My Hope is Dim But I Endure (Part 1)

Job 6:1-30

May 24, 2020

Christ Church of Clarkson

0520Job6.1-30(9) | Audio Length: 53:24

In listening to expository sermons it helps a lot if you're following the text. If you are just listening and not following along the Bible, it's like watching a movie with your eyes closed. You miss a lot that you are to be engaging with. And so yes, if you're able, open your Bibles to Job chapter 6. And I'm not going to read this entire passage, just parts of it. So if you can follow along beginning in verse one:

6:1 Then Job answered, 2 “Oh that my grief were actually weighed and laid in the balances together with my calamity! 3 “For then it would be heavier than the sand of the seas; therefore my words have been rash. 4 “For the arrows of the Almighty are within me, their poison my spirit drinks; the terrors of God are arrayed against me.

8 “Oh that my request might come to pass, and that God would grant my longing! 9 “Would that God were willing to crush me, that He would loose His hand and cut me off! 10 “But it is still my consolation, and I rejoice in unsparing pain, that I have not denied the words of the Holy One.

14 “For the despairing man there should be kindness from his friend; so that he does not forsake the fear of the Almighty. 15 “My brothers have acted deceitfully like a wadi, like the torrents of wadis which vanish,

24 “Teach me, and I will be silent; and show me how I have erred. 25 “How painful are honest words! But what does your argument prove? 26 “Do you intend to reprove my words, when the words of one in despair belong to the wind?

30 “Is there injustice on my tongue? Cannot my palate discern calamities?

7:1 “Is not man forced to labor on earth, and are not his days like the days of a hired man? 2 “As a slave who pants for the shade, And as a hired man who eagerly waits for his wages, 3 so am I allotted months of vanity, and nights of trouble are appointed me. 4 “When I lie down I say, ‘When shall I arise?’ But the night continues, and I am continually tossing until dawn. 5 “My flesh is clothed with worms and a crust of dirt, my skin hardens and runs. 6 “My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle, and come to an end

without hope. 7 “Remember that my life is but breath; my eye will not again see good. 8 “The eye of him who sees me will behold me no longer; Your eyes will be on me, but I will not be.

17 “What is man that You magnify him, and that You are concerned about him, 18 that You examine him every morning and try him every moment? 19 “Will You never turn Your gaze away from me, nor let me alone until I swallow my spittle? 20 “Have I sinned? What have I done to You, O watcher of men? Why have You set me as Your target, so that I am a burden to myself? 21 “Why then do You not pardon my transgression and take away my iniquity? For now I will lie down in the dust; and You will seek me, but I will not be.”⁶⁰

May God add His blessing to the reading and hearing of His Word. Pray with me.

Lord, we come up before you confessing our sin, confessing our need, knowing that we do not live, our hearts do not beat any more than those numbers that you have allotted to us. Our next breath is a gift of your grace. And it's a treasure, Lord, to be able to come together as your people, even if by internet; and we long for that time when we can again join fully together in person. Lord, we pray that you would bless the preaching of your Word. We pray that you would bless the hearers; give them endurance, give them insight. O Holy Spirit, work in the hearts and lives of your people. We pray these things to the glories of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Much time has passed, friends, since we have been in this book, or at least have forged ahead. We left off, technically, with chapters 4 and 5, and that was November of last year. Much has changed in that time. Of course we had changes of seasons; fall and winter, winter and spring.

⁶⁰Scripture citations are taken from the NAS95 unless otherwise noted.

All of that brings us back to Job. There's been a lot of suffering in the world. We've all experienced suffering. Even the light trials and inconveniences of having our lives disrupted.⁶¹ But Job is a book about a man by that name, a man who lived in a place called Uz.. And as we've noted, we don't know, scholars don't know for certain, we can only speculate where Uz was. But that's not important to the overall tenor of the book, a book that's about suffering, a book that's about a sovereign glorious God, and a book about why a true believer in God worships. Does the true believer serve the Lord because of the material and spiritual blessings that he or she gets? Is it simply a mercenary, selfish equation? Or does the believer serve God because he knows, she knows, who God really is? The Westminster Catechism says “The chief end of man” (you know it) “is to worship God and enjoy Him forever.” That, I believe, is written into our spiritual DNA as born-again believers. We worship Him in spirit and in truth; and we enjoy him. Yes forever, but we enjoy Him now, we have joy in Him now.

There's no greater test of true faith and faithfulness in this life than that of intense suffering. Think about it. To suffer involves loss, doesn't it? It involves the loss of something you value: the loss of health, physical or mental; the loss of wealth; and perhaps most painful of all, the loss of a loved one. To suffer, to really suffer, involves the loss of something of value. And Job experienced that kind of loss in just about every sense of that word. He, yes, lost his health. He, yes, lost his wealth. And then he lost, on top of all of that, all 10—every single one—of his children.

⁶¹This sermon was delivered to a largely empty sanctuary during the height of the lockdowns which took place in the midst of the COVID19 pandemic.

And remember back with me. Satan issues a challenge before Job lost anything of value. The Satan—and we noted that the definite article “the” that is always before the word “Satan” in Job—the Satan had Job in his sites. And it was God that pointed Job out to him as a blameless man, a man who feared Him. And Satan looking at the situation said, paraphrasing, “Sure Job serves you, God, look at how he has been blessed by you. He's got health, he's got a wife, he's got 10 kids, he has a big estate, he has lots of workers. Yeah, life is good for Job. But just take all that away, strip it away, and that will transform him from a God worshiper to a God hater. In fact, God, Job will curse you to your face.”

God agrees to the deal. He permits Satan to afflict Job. And yes, Job loses his estate, his reputation, his workers; his children were killed in what we call a “natural disaster.” Job loses his health; he's afflicted with painful pus-oozing sores all over his body. He makes his way to the local town dump and scrapes his sores with broken pieces of pottery. Yet through it all, Job's confession of God's glorious sovereign grace stands. Remember chapter 1 verse 21? How could you forget it? Job said, “Naked I came from my mother's womb, naked I will return there.” *I was born with nothing. I will leave with nothing.* “The Lord gave, the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.” Satan predicted cursing; Job responds with blessing.

True worship survives the fires of affliction

And we asked the question: When calamity, brothers and sisters, when calamity strikes, do you run to God or do you run away from Him?” Do you bless Him or do you curse Him? No, *true worship survives the fires of affliction.* That's a lesson we learned early on in this study: true worship survives the fires of affliction.

Comfort can give way to calamity without warning

And secondly, something we ought to always be mindful of: *comfort can give way to calamity without warning*. In chapter 2 we were introduced to Job's three friends. Follow along with me, chapter 2 verses 11 through 13:

11 Now when Job's three friends heard of all this adversity that had come upon him, they came each one from his own place, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite; and they made an appointment together to come to sympathize with him and comfort him. 12 When they lifted up their eyes at a distance and did not recognize him, they raised their voices and wept. And each of them tore his robe and they threw dust over their heads toward the sky. 13 Then they sat down on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights with no one speaking a word to him, for they saw that his pain was very great.

The man is in anguish of soul. His soul is been eclipsed by suffering. And remember Job's wife in chapter 2 verse nine? In the midst of their suffering, she says him, "Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!" This is what the Satan predicted (1:11, 2:5). Should Job suffer great loss so that he loses what he values, he would do just that: he would curse God. But quite the opposite. *His response was worship* (1:20); his response was a profession of faith in a good, sovereign God (1:21). No, Job doesn't curse God. But as we get to chapter 3 we see that he does curse: he curses the day that he was born. That's verse one of chapter 3: "Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth."

Chapter 3 encompasses life and death

Chapter 3 encompasses life and death. Those are the two themes that swirl around in that chapter. And we framed it this way back when we were in this chapter: 1) Why was I born? (that's verses 1 through 10). 2) Why did I live? (verses 11 to 19). And, 3) Why am I alive even now? (verses 20 through 26). Job wishes he had never been born. And then Job wishes that had

he been born that he not have lived. And then Job wishes that he would die. It's a chapter that's been called one of the darkest of the entire Bible. Chapter 3 (follow along with me):

3:1 . . . Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth. 3 “Let the day perish on which I was to be born, And the night which said, ‘A boy is conceived.’ 4 “May that day be darkness; Let not God above care for it, Nor light shine on it. 7 “Behold, let that night be barren; Let no joyful shout enter it. 11 “Why did I not die at birth, Come forth from the womb and expire? 20 “Why is light given to him who suffers, And life to the bitter of soul, 23 “Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden, And whom God has hedged in? 25 “For what I fear comes upon me, And what I dread befalls me. 26 “I am not at ease, nor am I quiet, And I am not at rest, but turmoil comes.”

Our last message in Job was back in November (other than review), and in that message we covered chapters 4 and 5. Those two chapters encompass the first address of Job's friend Eliphaz, who very likely was the oldest of the three as he speaks first. And the main theme of that first addresses was this: *Bad things don't happen to good people*. Bad things just don't happen to good people (and we will explore that little more later).

Three friends

But remember with me. In the book of Job, as we look at the book as a whole, there are three rounds of dialogue between Job and his three friends. Pretty easy to remember: three rounds with three friends. You have Eliphaz who replies to Job; Job replies back to Eliphaz. You have Bildad; same thing. Zophar; same thing. Three cycles. And that covers chapter 4 verse one to chapter 26 verse 14. And you could really sum up the argument of Job's three friends, as they try to *quote unquote*, “console him:” *Bad things don't happen, Job, to good people; bad things don't happen to those who really know God*. Therefore, if you suffer calamity, you did something to deserve it. You must be sinning and God is responding to your sin with judgment.

These are three friends that live in a totally black and white world. These three friends have no nuance in their theology. Everything is cut and dry. The three friends think that truth

must be told, regardless of the consequences. The three friends have no room for demonic attack in their theology. The three friends have no room for *innocent* suffering. The three friends have no appreciation for eternity. In fact, the three friends have no room for delayed justice. What happens now is what you deserve now, and if it's good then you deserve good; if it's bad, then you deserve bad. No, God, to the contrary, will ultimately judge in righteousness, and He will do so on that final day. Psalm 1:5, "The wicked will not stand in the day of judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous."

An argument from experience

As for Eliphaz, he brings his first argument to Job in chapters 4 and 5. He bases his words, his expectations, largely from personal experience. "Job, this is what I've seen. Job, this is what I've experienced. Job, this is the way it works as I see it; therefore, it's true." He argues anecdotally, and we ought to always be aware of anecdotal arguments because they can be very, very bad arguments. We don't base facts on experience, right? We base our experience on facts. Personal experience has to be grounded in truth. And for us on this side of the Cross, what do we have? We have the written Word of God as a light unto our path. Well, that was Eliphaz's argument.

Lament and the reality of pain

And now we come to chapters six and seven. Here's new territory as we forge ahead. Here's Job's first reply to the argument that Eliphaz offers in chapters 4 and 5. These two chapters, six and seven, express the reality of pain. Pain is real. Suffering is acutely, painfully real. It's not illusionary like in the false religion of Christian Science.

One article from the Christian Science Journal had this to say about pain (and the author was writing the response about how he was “healed from a burn”). And he writes,

In this healing, nothing was done physically. I didn’t use lotion or even run my hand under cold water. The only thing that I applied was the spiritual truth of being—which I affirmed through prayer, or Christian Science treatment. As I perceived specific spiritual truths more clearly, these truths corrected the specific fears I was struggling with, until fear gave place to spiritual understanding and the sense of myself as a material mortal yielded sufficiently to the realization that I was a spiritual, harmonious child of God. This change of thought brought a change to the body, and the pain disappeared.⁶²

You see, within the teaching of Christian Science, things like pain and suffering—and even death—they’re just an illusion. No, pain is real. Suffering is real. Death is real. Job and the honesty of living in a fallen world make that plain.

What are chapters 6 and 7 about? They’re about honest complaining. More specifically, what the Bible refers to as “lamenting.” And we talked about that several months ago. *Lament is a type of complaint that God accepts*. Biblical lament is a complaint of faith that ought to move the sufferer from despair to hope. Lament is being real with God; expressing your, praying your frustrations, your hopes. And it's based on real pain, not ordinary inconvenience. As one writer notes, “Lament stands in that small gap between pain and promise.” Lament struggles for faith. And one common feature of lament is that it asks the questions (because lament generally involves suffering of some kind) it asks those questions that are so common to sufferers, such as “why” questions: *Why is this happening? Why has this happened? Why me? Why now?* And also, “what if” kinds of questions. For me, “What if I would've known the way to the tree farm. What if we decided on Christmas Eve of 2015 not to get a tree.” We ask those questions because, as

⁶²D. Kennedy, Christian Science Journal, August 14, 2011.

James Boyce says, “Asking them sharpens the issue and pushes us toward the right positive response.” Honest complaints hold on to faith, and we see that with Job. They hold onto faith—even if by a thread. You see, that's chapters 6 and 7.

Job's Reply to Eliphaz: “My Hope is Dim, but I Endure”

This morning we're just going to cover chapter 6. The title is part one of “Job's Reply to Eliphaz: My Hope is Dim, but I Endure.” *Job's Reply to Eliphaz: My Hope is Dim, But I Endure*. From his perspective, it's about extinguished. Yet in the midst of that he says (look at 6:10, this is a key verse to these two chapters): “But it's still my consolation, and I rejoice in unsparing pain, that I have not denied the words of the Holy One.” *I am holding on. I complain; I lament, but I have not denied my God.*

The light of the gospel cannot be extinguished by the despair of hopelessness

And so my big thought in the midst of this, as it applies to us (and I'll come back to this a couple of times); here's the big thought: *The light of the gospel cannot be extinguished by the despair of hopelessness* (not ultimately). Again, the light of the gospel cannot be extinguished by the despair of hopelessness. There's two main port points to our outline. *I. Horizontal: Job Complains to his Friends; II. Vertical: Job Complains to his God* (that's chapter 7). In chapter 6, Job is dealing this way (with his friends) for the most part. Chapter 7, he is for the most part dealing with God.

Horizontal: Job Complains to his Friends

So again, here's for you who are taking notes. The first main point, Horizontal: Job Complains to his Friends. That's chapter 6. And under that main point, we have a series of “if only” questions. Remember, we said that one of the one features of lament and suffering is that

we ask “if only” and “why” questions. Here we have a series of four “if only” questions that unfold in chapter 6. Number one, “If only you knew my suffering” (and by “you” we’re talking about Job speaking to Eliphaz and by extension his two other friends). “If only you knew my suffering,” number one. “If only my life would end,” number two. Number three is, “If only you were loyal.” Number four, “If only you, that is, the friends, were compassionate” (again, specifically Eliphaz).

If only you knew my suffering (6:1-7)

So go back to that first sub point, *if only you knew my suffering*. That's chapter 6 verses one through seven. “If only you would realize what I'm going through! If only you were walking in my shoes, you would know that suffering is suffocating!” Many of you know from experience how suffocating suffering can be, how heavy the burden is, and Job says in verse two, **“Oh that my grief were actually weighed And laid in the balances together with my calamity! 3a “For then it would be heavier than the sand of the seas.** Job is telling Eliphaz, “Take all my losses: my 10 children gone; my health gone; my livelihood gone” (who knows where his wife was) “and put it on one side of the scale, and then put all the wet sand of the seas on the other side, and guess which way the scale tips? That scales is going to flip over!”

As I told my mom the other day when I was talking to her, I said, “Yeah, you know I have a hard time dealing with stress. And right now I just feel like I'm under the weight of wet sand.” And I intuitively said that. And then my mind thought, “This is heavier than the sand of the sea, wet sand; it's suffocating, it's immobilizing.” *So is grief*. The calamitous grief of losing a child. Take a moment and reflect. Reflect on what kind of anguish this is like. Suffering is suffocating.

And sufferers are rarely silent. They tend to speak out in their agony. And sometimes what they say isn't pretty. And so, in the second half of verse three, Job says. **"Therefore,** [because of his great calamity] **my words have been rash."** His words have been careless, impetuous, like those he said in chapter 3—cursing the day of his birth (verse one). "But let the day perish in which I was to be born" (verse three). "Why did not die at birth?" (verse 11). "I long for death, but it doesn't come" (verse 21). You might say, "What happened?" What happened to the Job of chapter 1? *The Lord is taken away . . . Blessed be the name the Lord.* What happened to the bright, believing Job of chapter 2, responding to his wife's "curse God and die," who declared, *Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?* (or calamity). What happened to those Spirit- engendered words resonating with the truth of God's sovereign sweetness?

I think the Spirit was still there with Job. But with the passing of time comes the crushing pressure of the reality of calamity. After time passes depravity seems to steep like tea in the heart. And I can relate to that. As I thought about this, I thought of the time after Giana's last surgery. We knew she wasn't going to make it. I called my dad and I said, "Dad, Giana is going to be with Jesus." And I think of the words we requested to be read, Lois and I, before the surgeons removed some of Giana's precious life giving organs for transplant. And they read this in the surgery room, someone read it, and in part this is what I said:

Giana was home-schooled, dearly loved her mom and dad (though she was a "daddy's girl"). She was articulate, musically gifted, athletic, and smart.

Giana was raised in a Christian home and came to saving faith in Christ at a young age—a faith she lived. Helping others was her joy, which is why we know she would want to make this gift: life emerging from death, joy springing from sorrow.

She was our only child. To say that we are devastated is an understatement. Devastated, but not without hope in knowing that she is now with Christ and we will be reunited together with Him.

I think of her memorial service at Spenceport Bible where I repeated Job's words, "The Lord gave (Giana), the Lord has taken away (Giana). Blessed be the name of the Lord." There were those difficult times before news camera crews, giving interviews, and afterward people saying, "Wow, you were so strong; you are so encouraging."

You glorify the Lord. But then reality came crashing in on me and after a month or two my words became rash for quite some time. My words were often impetuous. Sometimes—I hate to say it—sometimes profane. *If only you knew my suffering.* Suffering is suffocating and sufferers are rarely silent, and often rash.

Job felt, as I have, the stinging darts of God. Verse four, "**For the arrows of the Almighty are within me. Their poison my spirit drinks.**" Job affirms the sovereignty of God, that He is ultimately in control; and sometimes providence is painful, it's bitter. And for Job it was as if God were shooting poison arrows at him. In chapter 7 he asked, "Why have you set me as your target?" (verse 20). He says, verse four, "**The terrors of God are arrayed against me.**" The only other place we find this Hebrew word is in Psalm 88:16, "terrors." Psalm 88:16, "Your terrors have destroyed me." Gerard Manley Hopkins, a 19th century English poet, said this in the midst of suffering:

I am heartburn; I am gall.
God's most deep decree,
Bitter would have me taste—and the taste was me.

If only you knew my suffering . . .

Verses five and six are so difficult. There are several verses in these chapters that are very difficult and debated as far as their translation. Verses five and six are difficult as far as what Job means. Verse five, **“Does the wild donkey bray over his grass, or does the ox low over his fodder?”** Verse six, **“Can something tasteless be eaten without salt, or is there any taste in the white of an egg?”** Verse seven, **“My soul refuses to touch them. They are like loathsome food to me.”** What Job seems to be saying here is that a donkey doesn't bray (or complain) when he is well fed. And oxen don't low (complain) when he has food. And Job is saying, “My food, my life, has been denied me, and that's why I complain. In fact, my life is like the white of an egg; loathsome, tasteless. So he cries out that death would come.

If only my life would end (6:8-13)

And that's the second point, the second “if only,” *If only my life would end* (verses eight through 13). Job longs for death to come. We see that in chapter 7 verse 15, “My soul would choose suffocation, death rather than my pains.” And here in chapter 6, verse eight, Job cries out, **“Oh that my request might come to pass, And that God would grant my longing! (*What's that, Job?*)** 9 **“Would that God were willing to crush me, That He would loose His hand and cut me off!** The verb translated “loose” carries the idea of setting prisoners free. Its used that way in Psalm 105:20. “Loose me! Set me Free!” The verb “cut off” in Hebrew pictures a weaver cutting thread. “My life Lord is hanging by a thread. Please snip it.” Oh it's a sad estate when the hope of death seems to be the only hope there is.

And I've been there. Job doesn't contemplate taking his own life. I never seriously considered taking mine, but how I wished my life would be taken from me. I shared with you before, that one miserable day when I sat under a tree during a thunderstorm. I got the lawnchair

out and sat right next to the tree trunk. There were times when I looked to heaven and screamed, “God, kill me!” Rash, impetuous words. And isn’t it the sweet goodness of God that He is wise enough not to give us everything we ask for? But there's a little light left in Job's soul. (*The light of the gospel cannot be extinguished by the despair of hopelessness.*) Again, verse 10, that key verse, **“But this still my consolation, and I rejoice in unsparing pain that I have not denied the words of the Holy One.”** What did Job's wife encourage him to do in chapter 2? “Curse God!” And Job would not do that.

Now there are a few different ways this can be understood, verse 10. This is another one of those difficult verses. And if you look at different translations you get sort of different nuances of meaning. The New American Standard connects his joy seemingly to the fact that he hasn't denied the words of God. Some translations imply that if Job were to die, then his joy would be that he had not denied God. In other words, *kill me so that I don't deny you in the future.* I'm going with the New American Standard translation here; the light of the gospel cannot be extinguished by despair (hopelessness). This was Job's consolation, that he could find joy in unsparing pain, that he had not crossed the line into abject apostasy.

That, I told you, is one of the things that I've seen over the course of my ministry and life as a Christian: people who profess the faith, and often look very much like Christians, who show that they were never born again when they encounter suffering. Job is pretty hopeless, but is not going over. And we see the despair of weariness that he has in verses 11 through 13:

11 “What is my strength, that I should wait? And what is my end, that I should endure? 12 “Is my strength the strength of stones, Or is my flesh bronze? 13 “Is it that my help is not within me, And that deliverance is driven from me?”

“Well, Eliphaz, *if you only knew my suffering; if only my life would end.*”

If only you were loyal (6:14-23)

Third point: “If only you were loyal.” Job longs for loyalty from his friends, particularly Eliphaz at this point. But note the first part of verse 14, **“For the despairing man, there should be kindness from his friend.”** That word kindness—I don't know, some translations render it differently—that word kindness in the New American Standard is the Hebrew word *chesed*, one of the great Hebrew words of the Old Testament. *Chesed* means “kindness, mercy, steadfast love, loyalty, unfailing love;” and as the New American Standard consistently translates it “lovingkindness.” More than half of its over 200 occurrences are in the Psalms where they are used of an attribute (or as an attribute) of God, translated by the New American Standard “lovingkindness.” This is what Job wishes from his friends, this *chesed* loyalty.

And if you look at the Psalms, the earliest occurrence of this word is in Psalm 23. And it's interesting that the New American Standard has “Surely goodness and . . .” (you memorized this, probably from the King James, “Surely goodness and mercy”). Well, the New American Standard translates it—and it's the word *hesed*—translates it “lovingkindness.” “Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life.” It's used of God's compassion for our sufferings, and that's appropriate for Job. “I will rejoice” (the psalmist in Psalm 31:7) “and be glad in your lovingkindness because you have seen my affliction, you have known the troubles of my soul.” It's associated with worship in Psalm 63:3, “Because your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips will praise you.” Psalm 145:8 (very familiar), “The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and great in in lovingkindness.” It's interesting that this word is often associated with the words “truth” and “everlasting.” Lovingkindness and God's truth are often found together. Lovingkindness and everlasting (God's lovingkindness is everlasting) is often found

together. You see, this is loving, merciful, patient, compassionate loyalty. And this is what makes a good friend, and what Job expects from his friends: loyalty. For the despairing man there should be *hesed*, there should be kindness, loyalty from his friend.

There two things that I'm really big on when it comes to other people. Other people that are friends, other people I minister with, other people in the church. One is loyalty and the other is reasonableness. Be reasonable and be loyal. These are marks of a good friend. And I'll take a church a 50 spirit-filled, Word driven disciples who are loyal and reasonable over 500 malcontents any day—even 5000!

Look at the second half of verse 14, again, another difficult verse. Look at it with me. Verse 14, **“For the despairing man there should be kindness from his friend so that he does not forsake the fear of the Almighty.”** That's the New American Standard. The question is, what is the antecedent of “he”— so that *he* does not forsake the fear of the Almighty? Well, it could be translated this way: “For the despairing man [that is, Job] there should be kindness from his friend [that is, Eliphaz] so that I [Job] do not forsake fear of the Almighty.” In other words, *by not showing me lovingkindness I might forsake the fear of God.* Or this way, “For the despairing man [Job] there should be kindness from his friend [Eliphaz] so that you [Eliphaz] do not forsake the fear of the Almighty.” *If you're not faithful, if you're not loyal, you will be forsaking the fear of God.* And there is even a third option: “For the despairing man there should be kindness from his friend, even if I [Job] would forsake the fear of the Almighty.” In other words, *even if I were to become an apostate, you should still be kind to me.* Is your head spinning? My head was spinning like a top as I sorted through this. Well I'm going with the NIV translators on this one. It seems like most of you probably use the ESV, that's popular. But you

know, the NIV is not a bad translation. It's a little bit more dynamic, but sometimes they really nail it. And they translate it this way: "Anyone who withholds kindness from a friend forsakes the fear of the Almighty."

It's pretty clear. If you withhold loyalty from someone you consider a friend, you're forsaking the fear of God. Turn it around: True friends demonstrate their fear of God by being loyal, especially to those who are suffering ("weep with those who weep"). One Old Testament scholar translates the verse this way: "A friend who does not refuse his loyalty does not forsake the fear of the Almighty."⁶³ It's proverbial. Proverbs 14:21, "He who despises his friend sins." To sin is certainly not to fear God.

Here's an illustration of how his friends were acting in verses 15 through 20: 15 **"My brothers have acted deceitfully."** Job is now going beyond Eliphaz and is talking to the other two friends, and maybe even other people who have left him (at least the three friends were there; we give them that much credit). But he says, **"My brothers have acted deceitfully like a wadi, like the torrents of wadis which vanish."** Well, what in the world is a wadi? A wadi is a stream that's dry in the summer. In spring time, they would run wild with water in torrents, and much of it coming from the snow melting off the mountains. And you see that here: verse 16: **"Which are turbid because of ice, and into which the snow melts. 17 When they become waterless, they are silent, when it is hot [when summer comes] they vanish from their place. 18 The paths of their course wind along, they go up into nothing and perish."** And then verse 19, **"The caravans of Tema looked, the travelers of Sheba hope for them. They were disappointed, for they had trusted, they came there and were confounded."**

⁶³Clines, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Inc., 1989), 177.

What's that about? Well, these are tired, dusty, hot travelers. And they see the promise of a stream, and they make their way to the stream filled with hope, and that stream is empty.

There's nothing in it; just a dry riverbed. Like thirsty travelers searching for water and finding none, Job, in his time of need, is painfully disappointed by his friends. As one writer notes:

Job uses similar terminology in 19:13-19 to describe the desertion of every conceivable companion. Everywhere he turned, people scattered from him. You wouldn't want to be caught comforting God's enemy. Only a fool could look at Job and not read the handwriting of divine judgment. It wasn't safe to be one of Job's children; they were all dead. It wasn't safe to be one of Job's servants; most of them were gone too. It wasn't even safe to be one of Job's animals. Whatever Job did to bring all this on, they're not having any part of it. Only a fool stands near a tree in a storm.⁶⁴

I chuckled when I read that last part: “Only a fool stands near a tree in a storm.” Yes, it's a foolish thing to do. I don't recommend it. And it is good that God does not grant sometimes the thing we ask for (like a lightning strike).

May the satisfying sweetness of our friendships—the satisfying sweetness of our fellowship—not be like dry streams: to be there during good times, but absent when things get tough. That's not the kind of love God has for his elect, and it ought not to be the kind of love we have for others, especially those of the household of faith.

Job points the finger directly at them: Verse 21, “**Indeed, you have now become such. You see a terror and you are afraid.**” Job is a terror to them. Why was he a terror? He went through some terrifying circumstances. It was written on his face. The disease was written all over his body. *And what do you say during those times?* I've had many people during our ordeal say that. You know, it's so hard when people are going through intense suffering to know what to

⁶⁴Talbert, *Job*, 101.

say. It can be really awkward. What do you say? What do you do? Sometimes the best thing is to say nothing more than “I love you. I’m praying. I’m here for you.”

I think of my friend back in Arizona. At one of the lowest points of my suffering, having lost Giana and my dad in the space of 10 months. Having destroyed a few things, laying exhausted in the backyard of my mom's house, this dear friend whom I've known since we were teenagers, just showed up, knelt down next to me, took my hand, held my hand, and said, “I love you Bart.” I can't tell you how much that meant.

He was a terror to them. They didn't know how to respond. They opened their mouths and they should've kept them shut. And Job goes on to defend his innocence in verses 22 and 23: 22 **“Have I said, ‘Give me something,’ or, ‘Offer a bribe for me from your wealth,’** 23 **or, ‘Deliver me from the hand of the adversary,’ or, ‘Redeem me from the hand of the tyrants’?** “I'm not trying to beg, borrow, or steal from you to recover all of my losses!” Job is saying. “I'm not asking for the impossible. All I'm asking for is loyalty; faithful rivers, not dry stream beds.” *If only you knew my suffering. If only my life would end. If only you were loyal. If only you were compassionate*

And then lastly, the last point. Fourth, *If only you were compassionate*. “If only you had a little compassion.” This point is much like the previous one. I'm just going to skip over, or skim over I should say, these last six or so verses. But look with me—hang on—look with me at verse 24: **“Teach me, and I will be silent; And show me how I have erred.** “Give me something other than speculation or anecdotal evidence. Teach me something true. Show me where I've sinned.” Yes, verse 25: **“How painful are honest words! But what does your argument**

prove? “It's going nowhere. It's hurtful!” And then verse 26 is so appropriate: **“Do you intend to reprove my words, When the words of one in despair belong to the wind?”**

Here's a little lesson we can learn. Remember chapter 6 verse three? “My words have been rash.” Here, “My despairing words ought to just fly away in the wind.” In other words, don't take the words of someone who is hurting too seriously. They may say something that hurts you, that offends you. They may say something as a Christian that you think is inappropriate (about the circumstances). Let it go. Say, “Windy words; to the wind!” So with that said, don't take it personally. Don't come down on the person: “ I thought you were a Christian, how can you say that? That is just so disrespecting to my God?” Windy words. Windy words, let them go to the wind.

Verse 27: **“You even cast lots for orphans and barter over your friend.”** In other words, “Are you so empty of compassion that you would take a child in pledge for a debt, or sell a friend as a slave? Is that how cut and dry and heartless and mercenary you are? The way you're treating me is heartless; you're like one who gambles for orphans and trades away a friend to settle a debt.” Verse 28: **“Please look at me and see if I lie to your face.”** What Job say in verse 21: “You see a terror and you are afraid.” And now he's saying, “Look at this pathetic sight; look me in the eye. Look at the pain it's written on my face. Look at the disfigurement all over my body. And I'm looking at you; I'm looking at you eye-to-eye and I am not lying.” 29 **“Desist now, let there be no injustice; Even desist, my righteousness is yet in it.”** In other words, “Stop your injustice, my integrity is at stake.” Verse 30 (last verse): 30 **“Is there injustice on my tongue? Cannot my palate discern calamities?** Yeah, I know what it tastes like. I've swallowed it and it goes down hard.

Job's reply to Eliphaz. *My hope is dim, but I endure.* Remember, the main point:

Horizontal: Job Complains to his Friends (chapter 6). Chapter 7: Vertical: Job Complains to his God.

But these four subpoints bring us back to the Cross. In one way or another they marked the ministry of Jesus. *If only you knew my suffering.* Jesus knows our suffering. Does not Isaiah call him the suffering Servant? 2 Corinthians 1:5, "For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ." The sufferings of Christ are ours. He suffered, He tasted death for all of us. *If only my life would end.* Well, we have no need to fear death, or consider it our only hope during difficult times. Hebrews chapter 2 verse 15, "He has delivered us from the fear of death." Spiritually, we *have* died. We have been crucified with Christ so that we may live with Him (Romans 6). *If only you were loyal.* But who demonstrated that concept of loyalty and lovingkindness and faithfulness any more than Jesus? No one. He who will never leave or forsake you. Never. Ever. *If only you were compassionate.* Well, He changes not. His compassions, they fail not. As He has been, forever He will be. Great is His faithfulness.

No, *the light of the gospel cannot be extinguished by the despair of hopelessness.* It seems that way sometimes. It seems very dim. But we know a smoldering flax He will not put out. And that's the hope: He sustains us.

So Lord, we thank you for this time that we could spend going through this chapter, chapter 6. There's so much there and so much to wade through. And I'm grateful for the patience of my hearers. I pray, Lord, for any within the sound of my voice who are not born again. They will face much greater suffering unless they believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior,

confessing their sin, their inability to stand before a holy God, and the need for the Lamb of God who takes away sin, the Lamb that was slain for sinners trusting in Him as the one who took their sin that they might have His life.

For we who believe and we who suffer, may we suffer well. And may we recognize that when we don't suffer well it is grace. You know; you're patient with us. And no, thankfully you don't give us everything we ask for, especially during those times of windy words. We thank you for Jesus. We pray these things in His name.

Job's Reply to Eliphaz: My Hope is Dim But I Endure (Part 2)

Job 7:1-21

June 7, 2020

Christ Church of Clarkson

0620Job7.1-21(10) | Audio Length: 56:05

If you would, stand and go ahead and open your Bibles to Job. We're in Job chapter 7, but I want to do what I did last week and that is I want to read selected portions out of chapters six and seven; selected portions because these are so long. I don't want to take the time to read every single verse in these two chapters, so I will begin, again, in the passage that we covered two weeks ago, starting in chapter 6, verse one (and I'm reading from the New American Standard):

6:1 Then Job answered, 2 "Oh that my grief were actually weighed and laid in the balances together with my calamity! 3 "For then it would be heavier than the sand of the seas; therefore my words have been rash. 4 "For the arrows of the Almighty are within me, their poison my spirit drinks; the terrors of God are arrayed against me.

8 "Oh that my request might come to pass, and that God would grant my longing! 9 "Would that God were willing to crush me, that He would loose His hand and cut me off! 10 "But it is still my consolation, and I rejoice in unsparing pain, that I have not denied the words of the Holy One.

14 "For the despairing man there should be kindness from his friend; so that he does not forsake the fear of the Almighty. 15 "My brothers have acted deceitfully like a wadi, like the torrents of wadis which vanish,

24 "Teach me, and I will be silent; and show me how I have erred. 25 "How painful are honest words! But what does your argument prove? 26 "Do you intend to reprove my words, when the words of one in despair belong to the wind?

30 "Is there injustice on my tongue? Cannot my palate discern calamities?

7:1 "Is not man forced to labor on earth, and are not his days like the days of a hired man? 2 "As a slave who pants for the shade, and as a hired man who eagerly waits for his wages, 3 so am I allotted months of vanity, and nights of trouble are appointed me. 4 "When I lie down I say, 'When shall I arise?' But the night continues, and I am continually tossing until dawn. 5 "My flesh is clothed with

worms and a crust of dirt, my skin hardens and runs. 6 “My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle, and come to an end without hope. 7 “Remember that my life is but breath; my eye will not again see good. 8 “The eye of him who sees me will behold me no longer; Your eyes will be on me, but I will not be.

17 “What is man that You magnify him, and that You are concerned about him, 18 that You examine him every morning and try him every moment? 19 “Will You never turn Your gaze away from me, nor let me alone until I swallow my spittle? 20 “Have I sinned? What have I done to You, O watcher of men? Why have You set me as Your target, so that I am a burden to myself? 21 “Why then do You not pardon my transgression and take away my iniquity? For now I will lie down in the dust; and You will seek me, but I will not be.”⁶⁵

And so, Father, we just ask your blessing on this time. We’ve got a lot to cover— some of it quite technical. I pray for my hearers that you will give them insight, that you will give them endurance. I pray, Holy Spirit, that you will work in the hearts the minds—the lives of every believer in Jesus Christ that hears my voice. And I pray, Lord, for any that are not born-again, that you might call them to account. And we ask these things in Jesus name. Amen.

Lament

But once again, what we see here in Job chapters six and seven is Job's response to the lecture that Eliphaz has directed at him. Chapters 4 and 5 were Eliphaz’s words directed toward Job, his chastening. Six and seven, are Job's reply back to Eliphaz, and it's what we called “Job's lament,” for the most part a godly complaint, a complaint of the heart, similar to what we saw in Job chapter 3. And think about it: lament is a natural response of the believer who lives in a fallen world—the natural response of the believer living in a fallen, cursed, sinful world. It's a response to sin. It might be a response to immoral, evil riots; looting. For Job, Sabeans and Chaldeans raiding him and killing his servants (chapter 1). It might be a response to natural evil,

⁶⁵Scripture citations are taken from the NAS95 unless otherwise noted.

wind storms that kill (like the one that claimed Job's 10 children), or even in our day, tornadoes, earthquakes, diseases, pandemics. Lament is the natural response of the believer to suffering: the suffering of others; our own suffering. We lament. And one common feature of lament is that it ask questions, specifically as it relates to our passage, “why” and “what if” kinds of questions.

On February 15, 1947, an Avianca Air DC4 bound for Bogotá Columbia crashed in dense fog into a mountain at 10,000 feet, killing everyone on board. And as is so often the case, it's the back stories of tragedies that are so thought-provoking. And one such story involved a young man preparing for ministry who was on that flight. And before leaving the airport earlier that day, he hastily scribbled a note to his mother on a piece of scrap paper that he found on the airport floor. It was part of an ad with the word, “Why?” emblazoned across the center with blank space around it. And so he wrote his note—and that makeshift note was mailed from the airport. His mother received the envelope from her son *after* the news of his death. And when she opened it the question printed on the scrap of paper around which he wrote his words, that question burned up at her: “Why?”

That's the question that's asked in times of lament, times of suffering: “Why?” “Why me?” Lament is an honest complaint that holds on to faith—even if by a thread. And that's one thing, perhaps, that distinguishes lament from bare-bones complaining. There's some faith in lament, even if it's very small. And that's Job in chapter 6 and 7.

Chapters 6 and 7 stand as a unit, and we looked at chapter 6 last time. The key verse in these two chapters, in Job's reply, is verse 10 of chapter 6 where Job says, “But it is still my consolation, and I rejoice in unsparing pain, that I have not denied the words of the Holy One.” In other words, “Yes, I'm in misery. Yes, I'm questioning. I'm in unsparing pain. But I can rejoice in

this, that I have not denied God's Word, God's law, those things that relate to God's nature.” Yes, *lament holds on to faith, even if by thread.*

The light of the gospel cannot be extinguished by the despair of hopelessness

And so the main idea for these two chapters—and I've entitled this “Job's Reply to Eliphaz: My Hope is Dim, But I Endure”—the main idea for these two chapters is this: *The light of the gospel cannot be extinguished by the despair of hopelessness.* For the believer, the light of the gospel, the hope of the gospel, the truth of the gospel, can never finally be obfuscated, it can never finally be shrouded in blackness. There will always be a little bit of a glimpse of hope—even dim—that will cut through to the heart of the believer.

Horizontal: Job Complains to His Friends (6:1-21)

Reviewing chapter six

And so as we looked at chapter 6 we said our main outline point was this: Horizontal: Job's Reply to his Friends. In chapter 7 we said, no, it changes. Now it's vertical. Vertical: Job's Reply to his God (and that's what we will look at this morning). But go back to chapter 6 with me, since this is part two and it's been two weeks since we've been in Job. I should at least review the series of “if only” questions, and that's what we have in chapter 6, we have “if only” questions (in chapter 7 we have “why” questions). But here is the first main point: *If Only . . .* (the perspective of Job) *If Only you Knew my Suffering* (vv. 1-7). And we noted back then that *suffering is suffocating*. It can just suck the life out of you. And Job's is telling his friend Eliphaz, “If only you knew how heavy this burden really is!” And he says in verse two, “**Oh that my grief were actually weighed and laid in the balances together with my calamity** [my grief and my calamity on one side] it would be heavier than the sand of the seas.” In other words, take

all my losses, my 10 children gone, my health gone, my livelihood gone, take all of that and put it on one side of the scale, and put all the wet sand of the sea is on the other side, and my calamity will outweigh all of the multiple tons of the sand of the seas. And so we noted that suffering is suffocating.

And we also noted that *sufferers are rarely silent*. They speak out in their agony. And sometimes what they say isn't true. Sometimes what they say when they're suffering isn't what they really believe deep down. And so Job, in verse three, says, **“Therefore, [because of the weight of my suffering] my words [what I have said] have been rash.”** *Yes, I've spoken irrationally. I've been impetuous. Oh, if only you knew my suffering.*

And then verses eight through 13: *If only my life would end*. Job longs for death. I don't know if you've ever suffered to the point where you wish death would come. I know what that's like. And Job longs for that; we see that in chapter 6. We also see it verse 15 of chapter 7, where he says, **“My soul would choose suffocation death rather than my pains.”** And here in chapter 6, verse eight, Job cries out, **“Oh, that my request might come to pass and that God would grant my longing.”** What request Job? **“Would that God were willing to crush me, that He would loose his hand and cut me off.”** (Cut the string of my life; snip it and let me go.)

And then third, verses 14 to 23 of chapter 6, Job asked, *If only you were loyal*. Job longs for loyalty from his friends. And he says in verse 14, **“For the despairing man there ought to be kindness . . .”** We noted that word “kindness,” *hesed*, one of the great Hebrew words of the Old Testament. Some translations render it “lovingkindness.” Some render it “loyalty,” “kindness.” It's a word that drips of love and faithfulness. And when it's used of God, God's lovingkindness toward his own, It refers to God's *covenant faithfulness*. God has made a

covenant with the believer (the Old Testament believer; the New Testament believer) and that covenant includes *hesed*: faithfulness, loyalty, covenant faithfulness. And that's what Job hopes to get from his friends. But he's so disappointed.

The last thing we looked at, the last point: *If only you were compassionate*. And so he says in verse 24, **“Teach me and I will be silent; show me how I've erred.”** That is, “Give me something worthwhile, give me something that's true, rather than telling me all about what you've experienced and what you've investigated, Eliphaz, and found to be true. No, don't give me anecdotal arguments, give me something substantive that relates to me.” Yes, **“Honest words are painful,”** verse 25 **“but what does your argument prove?”** In other words, “What does your specious, false argument demonstrate? Nothing.” And verse 26 is so appropriate, **“Do you intend to reprove my words when the words of one despair belong to the wind?”** Job is asking, “So are you going to take me, in the midst of my suffering, and pin me to the wall with every word I spoke, every rash word (6:3), words that belong to the wind?” No, you have to have enough loyalty and enough compassion to let those words that speak out of a heart of despair and anguish, to just let those fly away; ignore them.

We said not to take the words of the sufferer too seriously when they speak out of pure desperation and hopelessness. *To the wind*. You can say that when you hear someone say something that you think is hurtful to you or another person; or even something that isn't right, or isn't true, of God. There are times you just, in your mind, say: “To the wind.” And this was something that Lois and I found applicable over the last couple weeks, times when things were said, and our reply was, “Windy words, let them go.” So Job complains to his friends. That's horizontal (chapter 6).

Vertical: Job Complains to His God (7:1-21)

Chapter 7, Job's lament. Job's complaint goes vertical and he starts to address God. In chapter 6, Job is asking “if only” questions. In chapter 7, he's asking the “why” questions. In chapter 6, Job is talking to his friend. In chapter 7, Job is talking to his God.

Why is life full of so much vain suffering?

There are three questions that will guide our outline this morning (out of chapter 7). The first one is this: *Why is life full of so much vain suffering?* Why is there so much suffering that seems so needless, so empty? What does it accomplish anyway? Job asked the questions; he doesn't get the answers until the end of the book. But it's a relevant question. It's a question that people have been asking ever since the fall of man, ever since sin entered the world. “This seemed so needless.” “This seemed so contrary.” Listen to the words of New Testament scholar D.A. Carson in that regard. He tells a few stories:

A pastor is cutting his front lawn. He looks up from his task just in time to see a heavy dump truck back out of his neighbor's driveway—right over the neighbor's eighteen-month-old son, who had been squatting behind the huge tires. The pastor accompanies the hysterical mother and ashen father to the hospital in the ambulance. There is no hope for the little boy; he has been crushed almost beyond recognition.

Where is God?

After five years of marriage, Jane wakes up in the night to find her husband Dan poking her, and pointing to his mouth. As she hauls herself out of sleep, she realizes that her husband has awakened to find he cannot speak, and is badly frightened. A quick phone call to the doctor issues in a swift trip to the hospital. The next day, the surgeons operate for cancer of the brain. They cannot get much of it. The trauma of the surgery is worse: it wipes out all learned memory. Dan no longer knows how to read and write; he cannot recognize his infant son. Yet somehow the operation has administered such a shock that the cancer stops growing. Dan's personality, however, has been altered; he is frustrated, angry, irritable, and needs someone to watch him twenty-four hours a day. After three years of minimal recovery, the cancer starts its insidious growing again, and kills Dan four months later.

Where is God?

A rural family with six children, four of them hemophiliacs, serves the Lord with joy and discipline. Then the AIDS crisis hits. Unknown to doctors and patients alike, the nation's blood supply is contaminated.

The four hemophiliacs must constantly tap into that supply. Two contract AIDS and are dead within three years. The third has tested HIV-positive; it is only a matter of time before the patient exhibits clinical symptoms, suffers, and dies. The fourth, age thirty, himself the father of three, has refused to be tested, but he knows that the chances are overwhelming that he too is a carrier, and that he will shortly leave his wife a widow and his children fatherless. He has almost no insurance, and no insurer will now give him the time of day.

Where is God?

I wish I could say I made up these stories. I didn't; they are about people I know. Only names and minor details have been changed. And all of us could tell our own stories. A colleague of mine and his wife served as foster parents for close to three decades. At one point they took in twin boys, just eighteen months old. This was the twins' sixth home. They were judged irremediably impaired (wrongly, as it turned out). They had been battered for crying in at least two homes, with the result that when they went to bed the first night in their new home they wept themselves to sleep without making a sound.

Where is God?

And then of course there are highly public catastrophes. Terrorists fly airplanes into the World Trade towers and into the Pentagon. The deaths of almost three thousand people are somehow made more shocking by the sight, on television, of people leaping from the ninety-fifth floor to escape the flames fed by jet fuel, by the spectacle of hundred-floor structures collapsing on themselves. A tsunami of gigantic proportions, caused by shifting plates in the ocean floor off the coast of Aceh in northwest Indonesia, causes horrific damage in several countries, and kills about 300,000 men and children.

Where is God? Carson repeats.

The truth of the matter is that all we have to do is live long enough, and we will suffer. Our loved ones will die; we ourselves will be afflicted with some disease or other. Midlife often brings its own pressures—disappointments, sense of failure, decreasing physical strength, infidelity. Parents frequently go through enormous heartache in rearing their children. My own mother was mugged at the age of 72. As a result, she fell and hit her head on the curb. Her family noticed mental deterioration and personality change within weeks; she was diagnosed with Alzheimer's and went through all the predictable

stages of that wretched disease. She died nine years later. Live long enough and the infirmities of old age eventually catch up with you, compounded by the fact that all your friends have gone and left you alone.

And these things represent the suffering that takes place in relatively stable societies. Add war, racism, genocide, grinding poverty, starvation.

Even television does not adequately portray the reality.

The first thing to assault me on my first trip to a really poor Third World country was the stench.

There is now a vast literature on the Holocaust, in which 6 million Jews were systematically exterminated. Much of this literature treats the Holocaust as an aberration, a singularity that we must never permit to happen again, a horrific brutality that destroys meaning. We are told that we must not compare it with other orgies of violence lest we trivialize it. Yet the sad truth is far worse: in the twentieth century alone it is only one of a string of similar holocausts. . . . Twenty to 50 million Chinese died under Chairman Mao. The same percentage of Cambodians died under Pol Pot as Jews under Hitler. We do not know how many Soviet citizens died under Stalin, but most historians put the number of Ukrainian deaths alone at about 20 million. . . .

What shall we say about "natural" disasters? Each year hundreds of thousands die of starvation; millions suffer from malnutrition. Twenty-five thousand died in the earthquake in Mexico City; two hundred thousand perished in a similar disaster in China.

. . .

In any and all of these tragedies, in all of this pain, where is God?

Carson Concludes:

It is a question frequently asked in the Bible itself. The psalmists, Jeremiah, Job, Habakkuk, Elijah—all find the apparent triumph of evil more than they can handle.⁶⁶

Back to Job chapter 7: *Why is life full of so much vain suffering?* The 19th-century German philosopher Nietzsche said “It is not so much the suffering as the senselessness of it that is unendurable.” This is a question Carson answers in his book (you have to get the book to find out), but it's also a question we devoted an entire hour to when we looked at God and the

⁶⁶D.A. Carson, *How Long O Lord? Reflections on Suffering and Evil*, 15-17.

existence of evil back in week five (you can always go to the website and download that message if you're interested). But this is where Job is, this is how he sees that—at least in chapter 7 and 8. He sees it on two levels. First sees suffering as it relates to everyone, all mankind. Look at verse one, **“Is not man forced to labor on earth? And are not his days like the days of a hired man, as a slave who pants for the shade, and as a hired man who eagerly waits for his wages?”** This is the lot of mankind: toil, work, sweat of the brow. And that goes back to the fall in Genesis chapter 3. To Adam, God said:

Cursed is the ground because of you. Though through painful toil you will eat from it all the days of your life, it will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken. For dust you are and to dust you will return.⁶⁷

This is the universal lot of life for humanity: labor, hard labor. And for those living in an agrarian society, pretty much everyone before the Industrial Revolution, it was drought, hard work, uncooperative soil, weeds, sore muscles, sweat. This day after day after day. And then you die! For most of us today, it's the struggle of work. An angry boss, jobs—tasks that go south when you want to go north. You doing your job and the computer crashes causing you to lose hours—maybe even days of work. And you say to yourself, “thorns and thistles.” You're a mechanic and strip a bolt and break one of your tools ripping open the skin on your knuckles. “Thorns and thistles.” Even the homemaker encounters her own thorns and thistles when the washing machine breaks down, or any number of other things that can go wrong in domestic chores. Solomon, in the opening verses of Ecclesiastes, “Vanity of vanities, says the preacher. Vanity of vanities; what advantage does man have in all his work which he does under the sun?”

⁶⁷Genesis 3:17a-19, NAS95.

Then Job looks inward. (First he looks outward: The lot of man, a hired man, slave, forced to labor on the earth.) Then in verse three he says, **“So I am allotted months of vanity and nights of trouble are appointed me.”** Job is resigned to the fact that this is his appointed lot in life: tragedy and despair. Well, who appointed this for Job? We saw in the early chapters that only God is sovereign. He gives and takes away, that's true, but Job went beyond picturing God as loving to someone hitting him with *poisoned darts* in chapter 6, verse four. Back in chapter 3 verse 18, Job unfairly refers to God as a *taskmaster*. He's going a little too far here. And he says, **“So I am allotted months of vanity”** (verse three). “I am allotted, in my life, months of emptiness.”

I came across this quote, relevant to so many. The author, Layton Talbert, writes:

I cannot read Job 7:3 without thinking of my mother. Her months of vanity . . . have multiplied, under the slow erosion of Alzheimer's disease. She has lived with us for over twelve years. I know no more apt description of that thief of memory and mind than Job's expression 'months of vanity and wearisome nights,' and no more biblical resolution to this mystery than Job's conviction that 'months of vanity and wearisome nights are appointed' to her. Job understood that there is Someone in charge. So must we.

'Months of vanity' may describe the experience of the one suffering from Alzheimer's disease or similar long-term, debilitating illnesses. It should not describe the experience of the caretaker who sees the larger picture. I once wondered why God would leave His child to linger so helplessly and uselessly. A friend who had been down the same road before us cleared it up. 'There is a reason the Lord leaves them here,' he said, 'and it's not for their benefit.' God appoints 'months of vanity' to our loved ones to polish us. Such appointments are not obstacles or inconveniences but equally God's appointment for us. Parents or siblings or children who require our care become the Lord's tools to shape our character, to sculpt in us a likeness to Christ, to reorient our personal ambitions and even our service. All rests on our submission to the providence of God in the lives of those around us as well as in our own lives. It is easy to resent these appointments as obstructions to a 'higher' calling, interruptions to our efforts to serve the Lord. My mother is God's will for us right now; she is our service, our ministry, our calling. If God calls you to that kind of situation, it is not a setback to fulfilling God's will; it is the means to living out God's will for you and in you.

God arranges such circumstances because His primary purpose is not for us to accomplish great things for Him but for Him to accomplish great things in us.⁶⁸

Talbert wrote that back in 2007. No doubt his mother's "months of vanity" have run their course.

But in a not to dissimilar fashion, Job sees his own physical torment, verse four: **"When I lie down, I say, 'when shall I arise?' But the night continues and I'm continually tossing until dawn."** He can't sleep, no doubt because of his physical affliction. Remember chapter 2 verses seven and eight: "Satan smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his feet to the crown of his head," and Job "took a potsherd to scrape himself while he was sitting among the ashes." (that is, in the town dump). Inflamed, painful, ulcerous, maggot-infected sores all over his body. We see the worms, we see the pain, in verse five: **"My flesh is clothed with worms and a crust of dirt. My skin hardens and runs."** In other words, "I developed these scabs. And then when I move they crack, and out comes blood and pus." That's the physical torment.

But there's also emotional torment. These are the Siamese twins of pain that can't be separated, right? Physical and emotional torment. When you're afflicted physically you feel it emotionally. When you're afflicted emotionally, you feel it physically (not to mention the spiritual dynamic that's intertwined in all of that for the believer). We are physical, emotional, spiritual beings. When I was in anguish, such deep anguish, 2016/ 2017, I was in anguish *emotionally*, I was in anguish *spiritually*, I was in anguish *physically*. The same thing with Job.

And so in verse six he says, **"My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle and come to an end without hope."** What's that about? "My days are swifter, my days go by more quickly than a weaver's shuttle." I thought about that, and it seems to me that sometimes when we are

⁶⁸Talbert, 102-03.

under stress, under trial, the days drag on. And that's often we you have some sort of hope. You're facing—picture it—you're facing a major surgery. You fear; you suffer. The results of the surgery could be good, or they can be bad—maybe very bad. In fact, you may not survive the surgery itself. Waiting for that surgical date may seem like months and months even if it's only days away. But there are other times when you're suffering, when you're depressed, and your hope seems to be extinguished. (And the only thing Job was waiting for was death. His hope was about gone.) And it's during those times when every day seems like the day before. And I thought about this, and I thought, “You know, it's like that when I suffer those pangs of the seasonal (and often unexpected) depression, when I'm just really down and really struggle, like I did so much during the first part of this year.” And when I'm struggling with that, with no hope, no end in sight, the days just go *boom boom boom boom boom boom boom boom*—every day just like the day before. You get up, drag around, try to do a few things, eat, wait for bedtime, go to sleep, wake up. Every day flips by like fanning a deck of playing cards.

I think that's what Job was experiencing. Every day just like the day before, a dull existence of pain and turmoil that never ends, like a weaver darting her needle in and out of the cloth. The days shuttle by. You see, that's where Job was. And we also see that in verse seven. He says, “*Remember that my life is but a breath.*” We're told in the Bible that even the best of life, even the longest of life, is just a puff of smoke in light of reality (and certainly in light of eternity). We are here one day, we're gone the next. We were young and strong, then we're middle-aged, fading, and we're old—if the Lord grants length of days—old, weary, broken-down. And then we die.

You see how the Bible likens our lives to flowers. And we see that with trees (but trees out often outlive us). But flowers—even in the spring we see flowers around our house, we see them start to sprout and bud, like early life, and then come to flower, like the strength of youth, and then they start to get a few age-spots, they start to wilt a little bit; and then they die. All in a matter of months. Later, Job refers to that, his life as a “fleeting shadow” (8:9); “a runner,” sprinter (9:25). And the analogy I used, “a flower that withers” (14:2). That there seems to be no good outcome of “test results” as far as Job can see it, at this point in the narrative. There's no optimism about a successful surgery. There's no hope that his children will return to him, or that his health will return for that matter.

And so he says in the second half of verse seven, **“My eye will not again see good.”** I know what it's like to feel that way. Life was over for me; I lost the apple of my eye, my daughter. Things will never be the same (well, that's true). There will never be any more happiness. It's over (well, that's not true). These are the depths of despair that Job is under. “I will never again see good.” What did Eliphaz say, remember, toward the end of chapter 5? “God is disciplining you, Job, and that's a good thing. And God will heal you from your suffering, if you repent of your sin, the sin that caused your suffering in the first place. Job, you will have more kids, you will have the restoration of your wealth— if you repent. You will live to a ripe old age. In fact, we know this from *experience* (remember that was Eliphaz's spin, *We've investigated this and we've seen it to be true*). You will have good things coming, if you if you repent.” And Job says, “I have nothing from which to repent—and my eye will never again see good.” Job will have none of it.

No, He says, 8 **“The eye of him who sees me will behold be no longer; Your eyes will be on me, but I will not be.”** Job seems to be talking about death at this point. He didn't feel like he was very long for the world. But who is Job talking about here? (These are some of the challenges at times in these narratives.) What were the antecedents of the pronouns? “The eye of *him* who sees me will behold me no longer; *your* eyes will be on me, but I will not be.”

Remember, Job has shifted from horizontal (complaining, lamenting to his friends) to vertical (Job's complaint before God). Job is talking to God here. “God, I’m as a hired laborer, a slave existing in a never-ending cycle of work. I’m allotted months of vanity from you, God. God, you know my physical pain, my emotional anguish. God, remember that my life is but breath, my eye will never again see good.” **“Your eye will behold me no longer; your eyes will be on me, but I will not be.”** Oh, the “why” questions that we ask. The rash words that we utter. And for Job, “Why, God, is life full of vain suffering?”

Why don't you leave me alone?

And then the second point, *Why don't you leave me alone?* “God leave me alone.” We get that point at the end of verse 16 where Job says those words, **“Leave me alone for my days are but a breath.”** Sometimes we hear that from our kids, “leave me alone.” Sometimes we hear that from our spouse, maybe even a friend. But it's one thing to say that to a fellow, fallen, human being. It's quite another thing to say it to a holy God: **“Leave me alone for my days are but breath.”** Again, Job likens his life to a vapor, a cloud; when the cloud vanishes, it is gone. Verse nine, **“So is he who goes down to Sheol, he does not come up.”** Well, that's in verse nine (“he who goes down to Sheol does not come up”).

What is this talking about? What is Sheol? Some of your translations may have *translated* this *transliterated* word and rendered it “grave.” If you're using the ESV or the New American Standard, at least, it *transliterates* the word. In other words, it takes the Hebrew word *sheol* (SHEOL) and it gives it a phonetic equivalent in English. So what you're looking at is the actual Hebrew word *sheol*. It's used 65 times in the Old Testament, this word *sheol*. Every single one of those 65 uses the New American Standard, at least, does not interpret it, it transliterates it, so it leaves the interpretation to the reader. Sometimes the word means “grave,” like a cemetery grave. But there's a range of meaning beyond that. Of the 65 times (this is just one example) that the word is used in the King James Version, they translate it 31 times, “grave;” 31 times, “hell;” and 3 times, “pit.” And the answer, of course, Bible students, is it depends on the context. What was Job talking about here? The grave? A place of dirt where the body goes? Or it could be the place where the wicked go? Like we might think of hell (or Hades)? Or it can be like Psalm 16:10, the place from which the righteous are delivered.

So, in the Old Testament, the unrighteous and the righteous alike go to *Sheol*. Well, in one sense they do in that they all go to a common grave. But beyond that, what does that mean, what does that mean as far as the soul is concerned? Well, follow me here. This might be a little challenging, but follow me—you will learn something; it's always good to learn something. The Septuagint—what was the Septuagint? It was the Greek translation of the Old Testament that was around during the time of Christ and the apostles that they often used and quoted from. The Septuagint, which is Greek, translates this Hebrew word *sheol*, with the Greek word, *hades*. *Hades* is another transliterated word. It's the Greek word given an English phonetic equivalent. But the difference between *hades* and *sheol* is that only the wicked descend into New Testament

Hades, while the righteous and wicked alike go to Old Testament Sheol upon death. In the New Testament, only the wicked go to Hades. In the Old Testament, both the wicked *and* the righteous go to Sheol. What's the difference? How can that be? Well, listen to one of my favorite contemporary theologians, John Frame (short quote). He writes:

The Old Testament teaches that after death, people go to a place called Sheol, a shadowy abode awaiting the coming of Christ. . . . [T]here is biblical evidence that after His death, Jesus took the inhabitants of Sheol [Old Testament saints] with him to the very presence of God.⁶⁹

I think that's what we see in passages like Ephesians 4:8 which quotes Psalm 66:18, "When He [that is, Jesus] ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives." There may be (and this is what a lot of theologians think, and kind of where I'm landing right now) that in the Old Testament, when we look at Sheol, there were two compartments referred to as "Upper Sheol and Lower Sheol." Upper Sheol is the same thing as New Testament "Paradise." Jesus said to the thief on the Cross, "Today you will be in paradise." "Lower Sheol is Hades, a place of torment and suffering for those awaiting final judgment. Dr. Herman Hoyt, once president at Grace Theological Seminary, puts it this way:

[T]here may be two compartments within Sheol-Hades separated from each other by a great gulf (Luke 16:22-26). The upper part is referred to as "Abraham's bosom" (Luke 16:22) or "paradise" (Luke 23:43). The lower part of Sheol-Hades is referred to as "lowest Sheol" in the O.T. (Deut. 32:22; Ps. 86:13 ASV) At any rate, it seems quite evident that the lower compartment of Sheol-Hades is a place of torment. . . . The fact that Hades is finally merged w/the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:14-15) suggests that its usefulness as a separate place for the temporary confinement of the lost is no longer needed.⁷⁰

⁶⁹John Frame, *Systematic Theology*.

⁷⁰Herman Hoyt, *The End Times*, 37-38.

So when an unbeliever dies, somebody dies outside of Christ, they don't go to the Lake of Fire, they go to Hades. Death and Hades, at the final judgment, will be cast *into* the Lake of Fire. And so when Jesus conquered death and sin he released those in Upper Sheol into the presence of God. Those in Lower Sheol, or Hades, are imprisoned there until they are cast in the Lake of Fire.

So back that to Job. He says, “Why don't you leave me alone?” He says the same thing in chapter 10, “Would He [that is God] not let my few days alone? Withdraw for me that I may have a little cheer before I go—and I shall not return [note this] to the land of darkness and deep shadow, the land of utter gloom and darkness itself.” Well, he doesn't use the word “Sheol” here, but that's what he's describing; he's describing that concept. He's not talking about his soul being in Paradise. He's simply talking about the grave. A dead lifeless body. And that's the same thing here in chapter 7. He's not thinking in terms of, “I'm going to go be with God.” He's just thinking in terms of, *I'm going to take dirt nap*. “I want to die; I want to go to the grave.” And that's explained in verse 10, because it's there that the person **“will not return again to his house, nor will his place know him anymore.”** Note this: “When I'm dead, I'm dead. When I'm dead it's not about coming back to this house, not coming back to this existence.”

This is not, my friends, a denial of life beyond death, or denial of the resurrection. It's just that that's not what Job is looking at right now. Later in chapter 19 verses 25 and 26, we see a more sensible Job when he says, “As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh I shall see God.” In chapter 19, Job's talking about the resurrection, he's talk about that hope.

And so look at verse 11 (“windy words?”): **“Therefore, I will not restrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.”** In verse 12 he says, **“Am I the sea monster, or the sea, [talking to God] that yet set a guard over me?”** The sea monster here is an allusion to a mythical creature that comes from ancient Ugaritic or Babylonian mythology. “Oh, Tony's teaching that Job believes in mythology. Are you saying the Bible has myths?” No, to say that Job used an illustration *from* mythology doesn't mean he believes it to be *true*. He is using a well-known story to illustrate how he felt. It would be like me crying out to God, “God, what are you doing? Do you think I’m Hercules?” Does that mean I believe in Hercules? That is what Job is doing.

And verses 13 through 16 speak for themselves: 13 **“If I say, ‘My bed will comfort me, My couch will ease my complaint,’”**— and how I longed for sleep during those times of suffering, what a relief sleep was; not for Job—14 **“Then You frighten me with dreams And terrify me by visions.”** I am so thankful that I did not, and have not, suffered dreams of the crash. I don't have dreams of the torment, of seeing Giana in the hospital, broken. The torment of seeing her so disabled in rehab. I have daydreams, and I used to have flashbacks from PTSD of a lot of those things. But at least I was able to escape when I went to sleep and get some peace for my soul. Not so with Job. Job has these dreams, these visions, when he goes to bed. And he says, 15 **So that my soul would choose suffocation, Death rather than my pains.** 16 **“I waste away; I will not live forever. Leave me alone, for my days are but a breath.**

Why is this happening to me?

Why is life full of pain, suffering? Number two, *Why don't you leave me alone?* Lastly, *Why is this happening to me?* Hang on. Five more verses, and we’re going to get through them

real quick. There are two sub-questions that Job asks. The first one is this: *What is man?* Verse 17, **“What is man,”** again, he's talking to God, **“What is man that you magnify him, and that you are concerned about him, that you examine him every morning and try him every moment?”** “You’re God! You created everything by your will; created all things out of nothing. You’re eternal, you’re omnipotent, you’re holy (no beginning, no ending). Why are you concerned about us finite, fallen, sinful creatures? **“What is man,”** verse 17, **“that you magnify him and that you're concerned about him?”**

Well, if Job could see the Cross! *If only Job could see the Cross.* He does now, praise God. Job sees the Cross now. But this question, “what is man?” is one that David takes up in Psalm eight:

When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you’ve ordained, what is man that you take thought of him, and the Son of Man that you care for him? Yet, you made him a little lower than God, and you crowned him with glory and majesty. You make him to rule over the works of your hands; you put all things under his feet.⁷¹

The writer to the Hebrews quotes Psalm 8 and places it within the context of the saving benefits of Christ. *Oh, if only Job could see the Cross!* The light of the gospel cannot be extinguished by the despair of hopelessness!

In verse 19 he says, **“Will you never turn your gaze away from me, nor let me alone, until I swallow my spittle.”** I didn’t get a chance to look and see how other translations render this. I’d be curious to see that. But the New American Standard has, **“You will not let me alone until I swallow my spit.”** And what's interesting is this is an idiom, it's an ancient idiom still

⁷¹Psalm 8:3-6, NAS95.

used by Arabs that means “give me a moment,” similar to what you see in chapter 9 verse 18 where Job says, “He will not allow me to get my breath.” It's kind of like somebody asks you something, and you're busy, and you say, “Just let me catch my breath first before I answer. Give me a moment; let me swallow my spit.” That's what Job is saying here.

So first, “What is man (first question). Second question, “What about my sin?” Verses 20 and 21. Again, talking to God, “**Have I sinned? What have I done to you, O watcher of men? Why have you set me as your target, so that I am a burden to myself?**” *Oh, the arrows of the Almighty are in me* (6:4). And then the last verse, the last verse of chapter 7, “**Why then do you not pardon my transgression and take away my iniquity? For now I will lie down in the dust, and you will seek me, but I will not be.**” One writer says this:

If [Job] seems defiant, it is the daring of faith. [In other words, he still has faith; he's talking to God, he's recognizing God's existence.] All Job has known about God he still believes. But God's inexplicable ways have his mind perplexed to the breaking point. Job is in the right; but he does not know that God is watching with silent compassion and admiration until the test is fully done and it is time to state His approval publicly (Job 42:8).⁷²

The light of the gospel cannot be extinguished by the despair of hopelessness.

What a blessing that we live on this side of the Cross. And so we can look at suffering in a fuller perspective, because all suffering finds its meaning in the Cross of Christ and the sufferings of our Lord and Savior. The great hymn writer William Cowper, himself no stranger to intense suffering,

2. Ye fearful saints fresh courage take, The clouds you so much dread,
Are big with mercy, and shall break, With blessings on your head.
3. Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, But trust him for his grace.
Behind a frowning providence, He hides a smiling face.

⁷²Anderson, cited in Talbert, 104.

Job asked the question, the last verse of chapter 7, **“Why then do you not pardon my transgression, take away my iniquity?”** Well, God in his sovereign compassion did just that. For Job, like the rest of the Old Testament saints. Job came to know that in it’s fullest, grandest sense, with the coming of Christ as Redeemer, whom he knew lives. That Redeemer has come. Job now knows that.

Loving Lord, we have covered so much. We pray that all of this will coagulate in the hearts and minds of my hearers. You are the Lord of the universe. For reasons, ultimately in their fullness, only known by you, you have ordained that sin enter the world. You actively or passively ordain everything that happens in your creation. And yet our choices make a difference. We have choices to make: to glorify you, to hold onto the hope of the gospel during those times of suffering. There's one choice that no one can make on their own and that is to be born-again. That's something that the sovereign Spirit does. And so I pray, Lord, for any of my hearers that are not born-again, that know not Christ, that you would turn their hearts and grant them the eyes of faith to believe. And in believing to have the fullness of joy in the unending beauty of knowing and serving the Savior. We ask these things in His name.

The Black and White World of Bildad
Job 8:1-22
July 12, 2020
Christ Church of Clarkson
0720Job8.1-22(11) | Audio Length: 56:05

Here in chapter 8 we see the first address of Bildad the Shuhite. We met Bildad back in chapter 2 verse 11, with the arrival of Job's three friends, and we read in chapter 2 verse 11 that, “. . . when Job’s three friends heard of all this adversity that had come upon him, they came each one from his own place, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite; and they made an appointment together to come to sympathize with him and comfort him.” He’s called “Bildad the Shuhite” not because he was very short! No, but because he came from ancient Shuah, a place we think was named after a man of that name (Shuah) who was the son of Abraham, according to Genesis chapter 25.

And so here we have, in chapter 8, the first speech of Bildad. Here is his first attempt to try to correct what (he thinks) wayward Job. Remember most of the book, chapter 4 verse one to chapter 26 verse 14, centers on three rounds, or three cycle, of dialogue between Job and his friends Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. There are three cycles of conversation whereby each friend addresses Job, who then replies to each in turn. The one exception is Zophar, the youngest, who foregoes his third speech altogether. So no final speech of Zophar. Maybe he was exasperated and just thought he would give up. But when it's all over, after all these cycles of speeches, we see that God is not impressed. Chapter 42 verse seven: “. . . LORD [says] to Eliphaz the Temanite [God addresses him because he's the oldest], “My wrath is kindled against you [Eliphaz] and against your two friends, [why?] because you have not spoken of Me what is right as My servant Job has.” *You’ve not spoken of me what is right.* And it's not that everything they

said was in error; not at face value. But it's how they applied that—that was the problem. And that's true with what we see here. As it relates to Bildad's starting point, he's spot on. You can't argue with where he starts. But it's where he goes from there that's the issue.

The black and white world of Bildad

So we called this, “The Black and White World of Bildad.” There's no room for living color in his life. And I want to be careful here because I don't want to be seen as a relativist. Are there truths, are there things in Scripture that are black and white? Absolutely, without question. But it's what we do with those things that becomes the issue because the application of these truths isn't always as cut and dry as we think.

Theological nuance

As I've said many times, to be a good theologian you have to be able to handle nuance. Everything isn't always binary, either/or, sometimes it's both/and. Is Jesus man? Is Jesus God? Both. Jesus is both fully God and fully man. Is God sovereign? Yes. Is man responsible? Yes. These are truths that have to lie in tension with one another.

And when we absolutize the application of certain truths we get into trouble. And I see it all the time. I've heard of a family that was so convinced that God only loves the elect that they would not tell their own children that God loves them. After all, they would say, “We don't know if our children are elect or not. They haven't made a profession of faith, so were not going to tell them that God loves them.” This is built on a faulty premise that God *only* loves the elect. Does God love the elect with a peculiar love? Yes He does. But that doesn't mean He doesn't love the non-elect in any way. And that's the problem when we absolutize passages like Psalm 5:5: “God

hates all who do iniquity.” So we say, “Well the workers of iniquity God hates”—and we wrongly figure that He can't hate and love at same time, in any sense. Well, that's bad theology.

We believe in justification by faith alone in Christ alone. But what about those with no capacity to believe? What about babies that die? There are those who think babies go to hell because salvation comes by faith and they don't have faith, so they go to hell. That's just bad theology.

We believe in perseverance of the saints, that true believers will be kept by God and continue in the true faith. What about suicide? Can a true Christian commit suicide? I may have shared with you the story of a gal, a biblical counselor who was a solid believer, a like-minded believer who would fit into our church. She was counseling my mother. And we learned one day that she had hung herself in the garage. Her husband found her dead hanging in their garage. She had gone through a tremendous depression and just was unable to apply the truths she shared with others to herself. What was going on there? We don't know. They even wonder if there was something organic, a brain tumor or something, because she was acting so out of character. Well, I know people that would say that's just proof that she wasn't elect. Really? What about the great hymn writer William Cowper who died in the year 1800. William Cowper, the friend of John Newton, the author of Amazing Grace. William Cowper, the hymn writer, who attempted several times suicide but was unsuccessful. So should we say that Cowper, he was elect because he wasn't successful? So should we say that if he *had* been successful he was not elect? You see, this is the type of black and white bad theology that's quite common out there.

And even that is related to the perseverance of the saints and the doctrine of assurance. I knew man years ago back in Arizona who was so black and white on the issue of perseverance

(and he would define perseverance as the true believer will continue on in the faith and will not end on a sour note). Suicide? I would think that he would say suicide is proof that you did not persevere. But my point is this individual was so doggedly black and white on the doctrine of perseverance that he believed you couldn't have assurance of salvation. Why? Because you don't know if you're going to persevere. Maybe five years from now you will reject the faith. You don't know that. So since you don't know that, you can't have any assurance that you're truly a Christian. And amazingly this individual told me the Apostle Paul didn't even have assurance! Well, that type of bad theology just weaves itself into a works-salvation. If I think that I have to always be on a high note in order to prove that I'm saved, then I will be about doing works in order to keep myself saved.

In a black and white world there is no room for the living color of the Gospel

Well, welcome to (and here's our title) The Black and White World of Bildad. And the main idea for us is this: In a black and white world there is no room for the living color of the gospel. *In a black-and-white world there's no room for the living color of the gospel.*

Truism: The Immutable Character of God (vv. 1-3)

As I said, Bildad starts with a truism, and that's our first main point, The Immutable Character of God—and he's spot on here. Yes, God's character is immutable (that's the theological term for unchangeable). He does not change. And under this main point we have two sub-ideas: 1) Hello, I'm Bildad; 2) Here's my axiom. And that brings us back to Job chapter 8 verse one.

Hello, I'm Bildad

First point, *Hello, I'm Bildad*. **“Then Bildad the Shuhite answered,”** verse one, **“How long will you say these things . . .”** [and he’s talking to Job here] **“How long will you say these things and the words of your mouth be a mighty wind?”**⁷³ It seems quite obvious to me, and most others, that Bildad is being nasty. But I was amazed to find some writers who thought that he's actually more kind than Eliphaz was. But I don't see that (Eliphaz in chapters 4 and 5). It seems that Bildad—having listened to Job's words, then Eliphaz, then Job's reply to Eliphaz—it seems like Bildad has been simmering. It seems like he's loaded for bear, so to speak. As one observer notes, quoting:

We may suppose him to have been younger than Eliphaz and older than Zophar. He does little more than repeat the arguments of Eliphaz, stating them, however, more bluntly, and with less of tact and consideration. The chief novelties of his discourse are an appeal to the teaching of past ages (vers. 8–10), and the employment of new and forcible metaphors (vers. 11–19).⁷⁴

Welcome to the black and white world of Bildad.

Bildad asked series of questions he begins with three questions one in verse two, and two in verse three. We saw the first question in verse two: **“Job how long will you say these things and the words of your mouth be a mighty wind?”** I take that as one, I count that as one question (“How long will you say these things and the words of your mouth be a mighty wind”). Bildad seems be playing off the fact that Job himself admitted that the words of those in despair belong to the wind (remember that? Chapter 6, verse 26, we talked about “windy words”). But

⁷³Scripture citations are taken from the NAS95 unless otherwise noted.

⁷⁴H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., *Job, The Pulpit Commentary* (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 139.

Bildad here uses the adjective “mighty” before the noun “wind.” It’s not just any wind, but a mighty wind, a blustering wind. The Hebrew word is rather unusual meaning “strong” and “abundant.” To Bildad, Job's words in expressing his misery were akin to an unrelenting windstorm.

The Holman Christian Standard Bible translates it this way, “Your words are a blast of wind.” Think about that. “Well, your words are a blast of wind.” What does that remind you of? What might that have brought to Job's mind? *A blast of wind*. Chapter 1 verse 19, “A great wind [a blast of wind] came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house and it fell on Job's children, and they died.” Even here, Bildad as being very insensitive. What if someone would've said to me during my time of grief and “windy words” over losing our daughter, “Tony, your words are like those of a thoughtless drunk.” Insensitive; and Bildad even gets more so.

Here's my axiom

Hello, I'm Bildad and Here's my Axiom. Now remember, what's an axiom? It's a foundational proposition. It's a truism. That's why we say, and I teach you, that the Bible, the Word of God, is our axiom. It's our foundational proposition. Well, Bildad actually begins with a good axiom, with a truism: The immutable character of God.

Now here are questions two and three. The first question we saw in verse two. The next two questions, two and three, we see in verse three. **“Does God pervert justice? Or does the Almighty pervert what is right?”** These are rhetorical questions that go to the very character of God. There's no doubt here. Obviously, Bildad's not saying, “Well is this true, or is this not?” No, he's emphasizing a truism: **“Does God pervert justice? Does the Almighty pervert what is**

right?" *Nay, nay, a thousand times nay! Never!* Moses said as much at the end of Deuteronomy: "The Rock! His work is perfect, For all His ways are just; A God of faithfulness and without injustice, Righteous and upright is He." [Deuteronomy 32:4] Elihu, whom we will meet later on, a fourth friend, in chapter 34 verse 12 says, "Surely, God will not act wickedly, and the Almighty will not pervert justice." Listen to that again, 34:12, "God will not act wickedly, and the Almighty will not pervert justice." There we have two words used for God: The Hebrew word *El* and the Hebrew *Shaddai*. *El* is a generic term meaning God/god. It's used of the true God, the one God, our God. It's used of false gods, false deities. And it's even used of human rulers when it's in the plural. And then we have the word *Shaddai*, meaning "Almighty." And sometimes those two words are brought together resulting in one of the most fitting names of God used in the Old Testament: *El Shaddai*, "God Almighty" (it could also mean "God the over-powerer," "God, our fortress"). It speaks of God's omnipotence, His unlimited power. And this word *Shaddai* is common in Job.

But the first time we come across that word in the Old Testament is in the book of Genesis, Genesis 17:1. And we read of Abraham (called Abram at this point): "Now when Abram was 99 years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, I am El Shaddai, I am God Almighty. walk before me and be blameless." And we read later in the book of Exodus chapter 6 verse three where God speaks to Moses, "I appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as El Shaddai, but by my name Yahweh (or LORD), I did not make myself known to them."

But I want to emphasize to you those two words: *El* (God) and *Shaddai* (Almighty). *El Shaddai*, "God Almighty." And whether those two words are used together, or they're separated by a few other words, the idea is the same: we see a truism, the immutable character of God.

And we see the same thing in verse five as in verse three. Look at verse five, **“If you [Job] would just seek God . . .”** (there we have the Hebrew *El*). **“And implore the compassion of the Almighty”** (and there we have *Shaddai*). Well, go back two verses, what about verse three? The truism: **“Does God . . .”** (there we have *El*) **pervert justice, or does the Almighty** (there we have *Shaddai*) **pervert what is right?”** No, God does not pervert justice. The Almighty does not pervert what is right. That word “pervert” that’s used twice here in verse three, Hebrew *avath*, means “to bend,” “to distort,” “to twist.” Amos (translated in Amos 8:5) as “cheat,” and it’s used in that context of Israel’s sin in *cheating* the poor and using unbalanced scales (cheating). God is no cheat. He doesn’t twist justice. How could He? God is the standard; God is the plumb line of what’s right and wrong, good or evil, true and false.

I mentioned Amos and I mentioned plumb line. Amos brings that together in chapter 7, verses seven and eight, where he says:

7 Thus He showed me, and behold, the Lord was standing by a vertical wall with a plumb line in His hand. 8 The LORD said to me, “What do you see, Amos?” And I said, “A plumb line.” Then the Lord said, “Behold I am about to put a plumb line In the midst of My people Israel. I will spare them no longer.

What’s a plumb line? A plumb line was used in antiquity. It was a cord with a lead weight used by builders to make sure that walls were constructed straight, that they were “plumb.” When I was in high school I took metal shop one year. This was the type of academic I was in high school: One year I took metal shop, wood shop, industrial design (which is another shop class), driver’s ed, and PE. That was my semester! That was probably the only time I got all A’s. I never had any inkling that I would enter the world of academia; I had no plans for college or anything like that. But when I took metal shop, one of the projects we did was we made a plumb bob. Not that I needed it. Not that I ever saw one used. But it was a project that brought lots of

metalworking techniques together. You cut off a piece of metal, you put it on the lathe, you narrow it down on one, and drill a hole. You knurl one end. And so you're getting all of these little metal shop sort of techniques down in making this one little project.

Well, a plumb line was an ancient version of the modern plumb bob (and I kept mine for years; I don't know whatever happened to it). God is the standard, and we know what the standard is because we have His Word, we have the Bible. This is the believer's plumb bob, this is our axiom. This is the plumb line that reveals God's mind as to what's right and wrong, true or false, straight or crooked. And as far as that goes, Bildad is starting off in a good place. We said this is the truism: the immutable character of God.

In chapters 38 to 41 God confronts Job and asks him some hard questions related to His immutable character, especially His righteousness and His omnipotence. In chapter 40 verse eight God asks Job, "Will you really annul My judgment? Will you condemn Me that you may be justified?" Well, that's what people are all about today, isn't it? They stand in judgment over God. They condemn Him in order to justify themselves. No, God's character is immutable. Genesis 18:25, "Will not the Lord of all the earth judge rightly?" Justice. And Bildad affirms the same here in chapter 8 verse three, "**Does El (God) pervert justice? Or does [the Shaddai] the Almighty pervert what is right?**"

But you see, Bildad takes that plumb line and he starts building crooked walls with it; crooked walls. And those crooked walls consist of several "if/then" statements, the first of which is in verse 4 (if you want to talk about insensitive, well here's the black and white world of Bildad the insensitive), verse four, "**If your sons sinned against Him, then He delivered them**

into the power of their transgression.” Bildad is in so many words trying to be a little less blunt.

Crooked Wall Number One: Bad Things Happen to Bad People (v. 4)

Crooked Wall Number One: Bad Things Happen to Bad People. This is the world of Bildad: Bad things always happen to bad people. No exceptions. End of argument. This was the black and white fixed rule of heaven. This is the other side of Eliphaz in chapters 4 and five. For Eliphaz it was bad things don't happen to good people. Here it's bad things happen to bad people— and he applies it to Job's children: **“If your sons sinned against Him, then He delivered them into the power of their transgression.”** Remember chapter 1 verse five? “Job would rise up early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all [his children] for Job said, ‘perhaps my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.’ This Job did continually.” Job offered sacrifices for his children, for their sin. Now Bildad is suggesting that Job's 10 children died because of their sin. You see, for Bildad sin equals retribution and retribution equals sin. Get that? Sin equals retribution and retribution equals sin.

The old scholars Keil and Delitzsch write this:

Bildad explains the sudden death of Job’s children as a divine judgment. He could not have sent a more wounding dart into Job’s already broken heart; for is it possible to tell a man anything more heart-rending than that . . . his children have died as the direct punishment of their sins? . . . and least of all to a father already sorely tried and brought almost to the grave with sorrow. Bildad, however, does not rely upon facts. . . . He does not know that Job’s children were godless; the only ground of his judgment is the syllogism: Whoever dies a fearful, sudden death must be a great sinner; God has brought Job’s children to such a death; ergo . . .⁷⁵

⁷⁵Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 4 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 322.

What about grace? What about sacrifice for sin (1:5)? Well, in a black and white world there is no room for the living color of the gospel. Bildad has no room in his theology for either; for him all suffering is retributive. It's the direct judgment of God and cannot be avoided (or satisfied) by someone or something else. Bildad, and those like him, live in a very hard black and white world, with no give between the black and between the white, no room for redemptive suffering, no room in this world for mercy. Ultimately, no room in this world for the Cross.

As born-again believers we're so thankful for those two powerful theological words, expiation—biblical words—expiation and propitiation. Expiation, as it relates to our sin, expresses the removal of its guilt, and propitiation is the satisfaction of God's wrath against sin. But how did those things happen? Believer, *how was your sin expiated and propitiated?* By the innocent suffering of Another, the sinless Son of God.

So Crooked Wall Number One: Bad Things Happen to Bad People. For Bildad, sin equals retribution and retribution equals sin. And if that sin is bad enough, if the sinner does not repent, in Bildad's world what happens? Untimely Death. You see, as Bildad sees it, Job still has a chance to live. He's suffering, but He's not dead like his 10 kids, so he must not have been as bad a sinner as his children were. If Bildad were around on June 18 of 2016 he may have said to me, "If Giana sinned, God merely handed her over to the power of her own transgression. But you, Tony, you can be restored. You must not have been as bad a sinner she was; you're still alive."

Verses five and six, two more "ifs." We have another "if/then" or conditional statement by Bildad. **"If you would seek God and implore the compassion of the Almighty . . ."** So again we see *El* and *Shaddai*: **". . . seek God and the compassion of the Almighty. If you are**

pure and upright,” and here's the “then,” **“then now He would rouse Himself for you and restore your righteous estate.”** *Seek God, Job, that's what you need to do. You need to seek God, you need to repent. You need to seek His mercy.*

The word “seek” literally in Hebrew means “go early.” It comes from a the word for “dawn” or “morning.” It gives a sense of urgency, kind of like how we might say “first thing in the morning I'm going to do this.” *Do it right now! Plead your case before God!* And it's not like Job hadn't done that. In chapter 7 verse 21, Job crying out to God says, “Why then do You not pardon my transgression And take away my iniquity?” Job has already been seeking God's face.

And then you have verse six: **“If you are pure and upright, Surely now He [God the Almighty] would rouse Himself for you [the word means “wake up”] and restore your righteous estate.”** “Pure and upright”—isn't that ironic? The very first verse in the entire book of Job establishes Job's righteousness, chapter 1 verse one, “There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job; and that man was blameless, upright [the same Hebrew word Bildad uses in verse 6] fearing God and turning away from evil.” *If you are pure and upright, God will rouse himself for you and restore your righteous estate.*

And then we have verse seven which is a little puzzling because he says, **“Though your beginning was insignificant, yet your end will increase greatly.”** I came across that and I said, “What does that mean?” We see in chapter 1 verse three where it says, “Job is the greatest of all men in the East.” So he didn't seem like an insignificant person. This may be comparable—may be the comparative. In other words, “Your end will be so great that in comparison your former blessings will seem insignificant.” Or maybe Bildad was talking about the beginning of Job's suffering that “that time was insignificant, but your future will be bright.” But whatever Bildad

meant in the first part of verse seven, the second half ends up being quite prophetic, **“Yet your end will increase greatly.”** Chapter 42 verse 12, “The Lord blessed the latter days of Job [the end days of Job] more than his beginning.” The same Hebrew words again used: “end/beginning.” And it wasn’t that the blameless and upright Job had to jump through Bildad's hoops to get there, either.

Crooked Wall Number Two: Tradition Says (vv. 8-10)

This brings us to our third point (and our second crooked wall). Crooked Wall Number Two: Tradition Says. Here we see that the *black and white Bildad* was also *Bildad the traditionalist*. And so he asks in verse eight, **“Inquire of past generations and consider the things searched out by their fathers.”** Verse nine, **“For we are only of yesterday and know nothing, because our days on earth are as a shadow. 10 Will they . . . [that is, the ancients], Will they not teach you and tell you and bring forth words from their minds?”** Again, there is a bit of truth here. We should not base truth on what we alone think is right. *Me, the individual, I live in a vacuum, and I see what's true, and I see what's false, and I don't give any thought to what anybody else thinks.*

Throughout history that's the error of what we call *solō scriptura*. We believe in *Sola Scriptura*, Scripture alone. But we don't believe in—no reformed theologian believes—in *solō scriptura*, that it's just me and my Bible in a closet, and I come up with whatever I come up with. And if it's contrary to what the scholars think, or what the ancients think, with what the creed say, so be it. That's dangerous. There's value in looking at what others say—and even things like the ancient creeds. They don't dictate our understanding, but they guide our understanding. And as I've said many times, if I come up with some novel doctrine, some weird doctrine that nobody's

ever thought of before, maybe it's time that you pat me on my head and say, “Tony, take a month off. You need some time away.” We don't just rest in our individualism. That's true for an individual, it's true for a group, it's true for an entire culture.

But what does our culture do? It goes with the consensus. Everyone seems to be jumping on the virtue signal ship of moral relativism. Like the Titanic that ship will sink. So we live in a culture that says, “Don't look at history.” In fact, we see a statue or something, we will knock it down. So, yeah, there's there's something to be said—and we're not to think we're the measure of all truth.

Let's not forget how transient our generation is. That's Bildad's point in verse nine: **“For we are only of yesterday and know nothing, Because our days on earth are as a shadow.”**

So Bildad has some truth there; but we say, “What's he hanging that on?” What is the objective standard for what he's saying? It's an argument from an unnamed historical source. It's like, how often do you hear someone say, “Well, *they* say that you shouldn't . . .” (fill in the blank), or *they* say you should always . . . (fill in the blank). You've heard that; you've probably said it. And what do we say in return? “Who are *they*?” That's what Bildad's doing here: “They say . . . and they will tell you. . .”

Remember, the book of Job predates the Old Testament canon. It wasn't like they could point to the book of Exodus for a grounded truth reality. They would have had oral traditions (after all, Job knew the one true God). So they would have had oral traditions, but that would've been a mixture of worldviews. And the dominant cultural worldview would *not* have been a good worldview. In fact, we know that retributionism—what people today call bad karma (must be bad

karma; you must have done something bad in life, that's why this bad is coming at you now)—that was the prevailing thought of Job's day.

Marvin H. Pope, an ancient documents scholar from a generation or two ago, writes that “Bildad’s assertion that the wisdom of the ancients is in accord with his doctrine and counsel is quite correct, as confirmed by much of Mesopotamian Wisdom Literature.”⁷⁶ This was the thought of the day. Bildad could say, “Well look at the past generations. They all believed that you reap what you sow, and if you're sowing suffering, you've reaped that without exception.” Like 2+2 = 4, calamity equals sin; sin equals calamity.

Bildad, the traditionalist stands on what the people of the past, say, without giving consideration that *they could be wrong*. Maybe think of the legal doctrine of precedents. You hear that a lot in the news: *stare decisis* (let the decision stand). “Well, we figured this was true in the past. Therefore, it has to be true now.” Not necessarily. Look up the Dred Scott case.

So crooked wall number one: Bad Things Happen to Bad People. Crooked Wall Number Two: Tradition Says.

Crooked Wall #3: Lessons from Nature (vv. 11-19)

That brings us to Crooked Wall Number Three: Lessons From Nature. Bildad attempts to prove his point with four illustrations: three from plant life and one from the insect world. The first two are in verse 11: “**Can the papyrus grow up without a marsh? Can the rushes grow without water?**” Here we have two more rhetorical questions (assuming a “no” answer). Papyrus grew in swampy areas such as around the Nile River in Egypt. It was used for making an

⁷⁶Cited in David J. A. Clines, *Job 1–20, vol. 17, Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1989), 206.

early form of paper. The word “paper” comes from “papyrus,” and both papyrus and the related reeds need water to survive. And both of these plants were subject to an unexpected or early demise.

Verse 12, **“While it is still green and not cut down, Yet, it withers before any other plant.”** So what's Bildad's point here? What's he trying to say? What he's saying is, *if you want good results in life you have to meet certain conditions*, and that goes back to this idea that sin caused Job's suffering. “Job, you want to stop suffering? Stop sinning; seek God and He will restore you. And if you don't you'll die an untimely death—just like these water plants.” That's what Bildad is saying.

In verse 13 he drives the point home; screws it into Job's heart: **“So are the paths of all who forget God; and the hope of the godless will perish.”** Well, that's true inasmuch as it stands. But again, Bildad is misapplying this; he's applying this to Job: “Job, you must've forgotten God; Job you're godless and your hope will perish.”

And then his third nature illustration: *the web of the spider*. Verse 14: **“Whose . . .”** That's the first word . . . **“Whose [he's talking about the man of verse 13, hypothetically Job] confidence is fragile and whose trust a spider's web.”** Verse 15: **“He trusts in his house, but it does not stand; he holds fast to it, but it does not endure.”** Well, why does his house not stand? Because it's fragile, like the web of the spider. Literally, in Hebrew, “like a spiders house.” This metaphor, the fragility of a spider's house, was common in the Ancient East. As far as I know it's still used; it's still a proverbial saying. Interestingly, it's used in the Quran: “Those who take for themselves a protector other than God are like the spider that builds a house for

himself; surely the spider's house is the weakest of all houses."⁷⁷ And that's what Bildad is saying here. Those who forget God, their hope will perish; their confidence is fragile; their trust like a spider's house, a spider's web. It will not stand. It will not endure.

Then the last illustration, one of the seemingly well-grounded plant. He's talking about the same person here. He's switching metaphors, but he's talking about the same person. Again, Job is in his crosshairs. **"He thrives [verse 16] before the sun, and his shoots spread out over his garden. 17 His roots wrap around a rock pile, He grasps a house of stones."** In other words, the wicked often look like they are being blessed. The picture here is of a well-grounded plant. He thrives before the sun. His shoots spread out over the garden. His roots wrap around the rock pile; strong. He grasps the house of stones.

But look at verse 18: **"If he is removed from his place, then it will deny him, saying, 'I never saw you.'"** This seems to be a *certain* "if," another certain "if." I like how the New International Version renders this verse, verse 18, "But when it is torn from its spot, the place disowns it and says 'I never saw you.'" You see the picture, again, is of a man who appears to be prosperous, he appears to be blessed. This is Job in chapter 1, "The greatest of all the men of the East." But suddenly destruction comes. That strong grounded plant, that person, is without warning ripped out of the ground. You see, Bildad is applying this to Job. Verse 18, that place, that ground, disowns it, disowns the plant and says, "I never saw you." In other words, the memory of that person is gone. And that's Bildad's warning to Job. "Job, this could be you. You're on the cusp of this, like what happened to your children. You're being ripped up. And if you don't repent, the memory, your memory, will be forever gone, forever extinguished." As one

⁷⁷29.40.

commentator puts it, “The godless man’s fate is to be exterminated; not only will what is dear and meaningful to him . . . forget him, it will forget that it has forgotten him.”⁷⁸ This is a pretty stark picture!

But then we come to verse 19 (and this has puzzled people for millennia): **“Behold, this is the joy of his way, and out of the dust others will spring.”** Well, the second half of the verse, “out of the dust others will spring,” seems easy enough. In other words, others will take the place of the one who is forgotten.

When I was in college I sold women's shoes part-time. And I once set the store record for a single sale—over \$1200 in shoes—to one woman. These were shoes that averaged probably \$35 or \$40. She had a caseload of shoes. I still remember, she wore a 9AA (an older gal) and she did have a hard time finding shoes. And I don't know what it was; everything I brought out in 9AA, she said, “I'll take that!” That feels good; I'll take that.” And the other salesman were watching me and marveling. I had that store record for a sale, but I wasn't the best salesman in the store. That honor went to a man, an Indonesian middle-age man, named Harry Hum. Harry could sell shoes to a snake, I kid you not. And he knew it. And at times the manager would get frustrated with Harry. And he once told him, “You know what, Harry? You are replaceable. Don't get too big for your britches. You can be replaced.” And Harry, in his broken English, was telling me about it. And he said that the manager likened it to putting your hand in a jug of water, a big jar of water, and you take it out, and what happens? All the water rushes back in. It's forgotten that the hand was ever there. And that was the illustration he used, no memory of it ever having

⁷⁸David J. A. Clines, *Job 1–20, vol. 17, Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1989), 209.

been there. You're replaceable. And that's what Bildad is saying here: **“Out of the dust others will spring.”** The man who, humanly speaking, lives a very un-notorious life; doesn't know many people; doesn't have many friends; maybe has no children—and he dies and what happens? Maybe he gets a headstone; and people walk by—his memory is forgotten. Other people have taken his place in society.

But the first part of the verse is the issue. It doesn't seem to fit. Because we're talking about misery, and yet we have the word “joy” used in the first part of verse 19: **“Behold, this is the joy of his way,”** and that just doesn't seem to make sense in the context. And so, throughout history, commentators and scholars have have given three solutions. 1) Some think that this can be solved contextually, and by that they change the entire metaphor. The one of the plant with the roots wrapping around the rocks, that becomes not a negative metaphor, but a positive metaphor. They make it describe the righteous person, not the unrighteous person. Well, that doesn't work for me. 2) Some think (second option), some think this can be solved textually. That is, out of the ancient languages. If you drop one consonant from the Hebrew word that's used for “joy” you get a different word, “rotting” or “withering.” But I don't know that there's any textual evidence to support that. It's just an assumption. But the New English Bible seems to follow this proposal and translates the second half of verse 19, “This is how his life withers away.” 3) Well, others think this could be solved by looking at what is called in literature *tone*, and that's where I land on this issue. *Tone* is what makes communication by text or email tricky (maybe I should say, the lack of tone makes it tricky). And we all know that if it's a sensitive subject you're best not to send email, because anything that can be taken negatively probably will. And we do the same thing which is why I don't like dealing with sensitive issues over a written media because you

don't have *tone*. And we take that into account all time. I could write to you and say, "I really love it when that happens." Or we could talk about something else, and I could say, "I really love it when *that* happens." You see how the tone changes the meaning? And that's what I think we have here: "Behold, this is the joy of his way." The Today's English Version translation follows that sort of thought, and they render it, "That's all the joy evil men have."

And the more astute among you may be wondering, "Gee, I wonder what the Septuagint says? I wonder how the Septuagint translates this?" What is the Septuagint? It's the Greek translation of the Old Testament that was around—and predates—Christ and the apostles. Well I looked it up and it uses the word (you'll like this) *katastraphē* (cata-stroph-ē, catastrophe). It was an issue even with the Septuagint translators! They said that "joy"—that this doesn't seem to make sense, so it must mean something negative, so we will put *katastraphē* there. Well, again, I go with, "Behold, this is all the joy evil men have."

Crooked Wall #4: A Faulty Conclusion (vv. 20-22)

That brings us to the last crooked wall, Crooked Wall Number Four. Interesting because Bildad started with a good premise: The immutability of God. He starts with a good premise. He starts with, what for him would be a straight plumb line, but then he starts misapplying it and building crooked walls all over the place. He supports his contention by referring to people of the past: "This is what others have said. This is tradition"—and then he gives some badly used illustrations. Well now he comes to his conclusion in verses 20 through 22. Crooked Wall Number Four: A Faulty Conclusion. Three parts (we'll go through real quick) beginning in verse 20.

God will not reject a blameless man.

Number one, the first part, *God will not reject a blameless man*. The New American Standard has “integrity:” 20 **“Lo, God will not reject a man of integrity, nor will He support the evildoers.”** Literally, though, in some of your translations you have this: “God will not reject the blameless man.” It's the same adjective God used of Job in 1:8, 2:3. God's *not* rejecting Job—Job *is* the blameless man! But what Bildad means is that God will not allow calamity to touch the blameless man. Because we could say that verse again, verse 20, “No, God won't reject a man of integrity, and He won't support evildoers.” And of course this side of the Cross we talk about those that are in Christ; God will not reject those who are in Christ. God will not support those *outside* of Christ. But that's not what Bildad means. He's talking about practical life. *God will not allow calamity to touch you, and if he does, then you're an evildoer.* So God will not reject the blameless man.

God will bless the blameless man

Number two: *God will bless the blameless man* (verse 21). But again, Bildad is thinking temporally, in this life (like the Word of Faith proponents): 21 **“He will fill your mouth with laughter, and your lips with shouting.”** (Implied idea: “If you repent, Job. It's not too late!”)

God will curse the blameless man's enemies

And then, last: *God will curse the blameless man's enemies*. Verse 22: **“Those who hate you will be clothed with shame, and the tent of the wicked will be no more.”** It was common in antiquity, and it still occurs today, to rejoice over the downfall of one's adversaries. The Germans had a name for it (and I like pronouncing German names). I don't know German, but when I was looking to do a Ph.D overseas, they said I had to learn German. I said, “Man, I had a

hard enough time with English—not to mention Greek and Hebrew. I don't think I'll learn German.” But they had a word, *schadenfreuden*, that means being overjoyed at the calamity of your enemies, of the downfall of your enemies. This is what we're warned against in places like Proverbs 24:17, “Do not gloat when your enemy falls; when he stumbles, do not let your heart rejoice.” And Jesus in Luke chapter 6: 27 “. . . love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.” Get that? “Pray for those who mistreat you.”

Look at Job 42 (at the end the book), Job, chapter 42, starting in verse seven:

7 It came about after the LORD had spoken these words to Job, that the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, “My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends, because you have not spoken of Me what is right as My servant Job has. 8a “Now therefore, take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, and go to My servant Job, and offer up a burnt offering for yourselves, and My servant Job will pray for you. . . .

It is interesting, especially in light of Bildad who had no room for innocent suffering—and what's a sacrifice, even an animal sacrifice: the innocent suffering for the guilty. And yet, in the end, burnt offerings, sin offerings, were offered up for them; and Job prayed for them, his friends (that all-too-often acted more like enemies). No, the black and white world of Bildad leaves no room for the living color of the gospel.

A Straight Wall: Our Closing Application

Understand the difference between retribution and discipline

Our last main point is: A Straight Wall. Three points, real quick, A Straight Wall: Our Closing Application. What would we do with all of this. Well, number one: *Understand the difference between retribution and discipline*. Note that distinction; it's very important. Believers *never* get retributive justice. Retribution is judicial punishment. It's the logical result of God's

justice. And for those who die outside of Christ, it means the judicial punishment of hell. Believers never get retributive justice because an innocent One suffered and died and rose again on their behalf, taking away their sin, the guilt of their sin (expiation) satisfying the wrath of God (propitiation). No, believers never get retributive justice, but believers *always* get discipline. Every child of God is disciplined by Him. Hebrews chapter 12 says that if you are not disciplined, then you're an illegitimate child. And discipline, listen, discipline doesn't always mean calamity. It's not like, "Well Tony, you suffered a big calamity, so God must really love you that He would be disciplining you to straighten you out (or whatever)." We think of disciplining our children. Is that all you do is punish? It's guidance, lessons learned, and that's what God does for us, and certainly there the harsher aspects of of discipline which the writer of Hebrews says are not joyful, but sorrowful, and bring forth great fruit, the fruit of Christ likeness. So yes, sometimes that training takes the form of suffering. But God weaves those trials in our lives to make us more useful for Him and to hone us more and more into the image of His Son. So understand the difference between retribution and discipline. Believers *never* get retributive justice, believers *always* get discipline.

There is no necessary correlation between personal sin and suffering

Number two: *There is no necessary correlation between personal sin and suffering.* Just because someone suffers doesn't mean they're getting what they deserve, or that it is a penalty for some sin. We touched on this before and we will come across it again since it colors so much of the bad theology of Job's friends. It was even a common thought in the days of Jesus—well even today. People often will assume, Christians often assume, that if something really bad happens to someone, "Well, maybe you're getting punished for something." But in Jesus' day, John chapter

9, the disciples asked “Who sinned?” (this blind man) “Who sinned? His parents that he should be born blind?” But Jesus said, “Neither. It’s so that the works of God be manifest.” So there's no necessary correlation between personal sin and suffering. Of course we can look no further than the life of Jesus in that regard. 1 Peter 2:21-22, “. . . Christ suffered . . . He who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth.”

If there's no undeserved suffering, then there's no redemptive suffering

And the last point: *If there's no undeserved suffering, then there's no redemptive suffering.* If there's no undeserved suffering, then there's no redemptive suffering. It took the undeserved suffering of the sinless Second Person of the Trinity to expiate and propitiate our sin. He had to be perfect. He had to be God. He had to be man. He had to suffer. The sinless Lamb of God, He had to die, be resurrected. But in a black and white world there's no room for the living color of the gospel. And so, believers, aren't we thankful that the pallet of heaven has more than two colors on it?

And so, Father, we thank you for again for this time. It was a lot to cover. I pray, Lord, that we can take in these truths and also to be thankful for the fact that you color with lots of colors. Lord, I pray for any within the sound of my voice that does not know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. They will face retributive justice—justice in hell. And it's only through the undeserved suffering of another, the undeserved suffering of Jesus Christ on the Cross 2000 years ago; it's only through that sacrifice—and believing in Him in His atoning death—that anyone is forgiven. And so Lord, we thank you for that life that was lived for us, that death which was given for us, for the resurrection which was the firstfruits of all that would follow Him. We

thank you, Lord, for this, for this Word, and for this time. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.

In the Courtroom with God (Part 1)
Job 9:1-24
August 9, 2020
Christ Church of Clarkson
0820Job9.1-24(12) | Audio Length: 53:52

I'm not going to read the entirety of this section; I'm not even going to read the entirety of what I plan to cover this morning. But I just want to read a few verses (I'm going to read verses one through eight and then verses 32 and 33). I'm reading out of the New American Standard. Job chapter 9, beginning in verse one:

1 Then Job answered, 2 "In truth I know that this is so; but how can a man be in the right before God? 3 "If one wished to dispute with Him, he could not answer Him once in a thousand times. 4 "Wise in heart and mighty in strength, who has defied Him without harm? 5 "It is God who removes the mountains, they know not how, When He overturns them in His anger; 6 Who shakes the earth out of its place, and its pillars tremble; 7 Who commands the sun not to shine, and sets a seal upon the stars; 8 Who alone stretches out the heavens and tramples down the waves of the sea.

32 "For He is not a man as I am that I may answer Him, that we may go to court together. 33 "There is no umpire between us, Who may lay his hand upon us both."⁷⁹

Father, we come before you as those on the other side of the Cross from Job. We come before you as those who have that Mediator, that Umpire. And we pray, Lord, thanking you for the great salvation that is ours in Christ, for the sufficiency that He is for our lives, for the mercy that is poured out upon us, and the strength and encouragement of our Comforter. And so we thank you, our Triune God, for your ministry in our lives. May you glorify yourself. And we ask that you would do that even now in the preaching and hearing of your Word. For Christ's sake we pray. Amen.

So this next section that will spend at least two weeks on covers Job chapters 9 and 10. There is a total of 57 verses, 57 verses that comprise Job's first reply to Bildad, one of Job's three

⁷⁹Scripture citations are taken from the NAS95 unless otherwise noted.

friends who came to minister to him in his calamity of losing his wealth, his health, and his family. That's the background to the book of Job that we saw in chapters 1 and 2.

We were in chapter 8 the last time we were in this book, a chapter that consisted of Bildad's first address to Job (Bildad the Shuhite) and his first response to Job, following Eliphaz. Job the blameless man of God who suffered, having lost most everything dear to him. And remember his three friends heard of his calamity and they traveled a great distance to see him. That's something, again, that we saw in chapter 2. And once they arrived, Job the blameless man of God, expresses his lament, his complaint over his situation (that's chapter 3). Chapters 4 and five, friend number one, Eliphaz, responds to Job. Chapters 6 and seven, Job, in turn, responds to Eliphaz. Chapter 8, friend number two, Bildad, takes his turn. And here in chapters 9 and 10, Job replies to Bildad. And so all of this builds upon what has preceded. And I always encourage you, if you missed any message, or want to get back up to speed since it's been a while since we started, go to GroundedInGrace.com and those messages are there.

So the three friends bring forth their arguments, and they have different perspectives, but overall there under one rubric, they are under one umbrella, and that is, they argue for the worldview that believes, yes, God exists, yes, God is sovereign, yes, God rewards righteousness and punishes evil. So far so good, and Job would agree with that. However, they push that axiom to the extreme belief that if something bad happens, someone did something to deserve it. Bad things happen to bad people. *Ergo, Job experienced bad things, Job must be a bad man.*

Now the reader (us), we know better. Not only is our theology, more informed but the book of Job tells us right at the start that Job is blameless (1:1): "A man in the land of Uz whose name was Job; and that man was blameless, upright, fearing God turning away from evil." But we know. Job now knows that, his three friends now know that, but from the perspective of when this

was happening, they're not so sure living under this worldview that so infiltrated their culture. Job buys into this twisted cause-and-effect worldview and that's what is driving Job to the point of insanity. He also believes that yes, bad things happen to bad people, but he says, "You know what I'm a believer in the God of the universe. I'm a believer in the true God. And bad things are happening to me. I tried to live in purity, I've tried to live according to His dictates. And yet, bad things happen to me; that doesn't seem to make sense." And we noted that Job lived before any of the Old Testament was written. He didn't have the benefit of passages like Psalm 73. In fact, I'm going to ask you to turn there, Psalm 73 (right in the middle your Bibles). Psalm 73, which is a Psalm of Asaph. Psalm 73 verse one:

1 Surely God is good to Israel, To those who are pure in heart! 2 But as for me, my feet came close to stumbling, My steps had almost slipped.

Why?

3 For I was envious of the arrogant As I saw the prosperity of the wicked. 4 For there are no pains in their death, And their body is fat.

The wicked live long lives and they're well-fed, they're prosperous. Verse 5:

5 They are not in trouble as other men, Nor are they plagued like mankind.

6 Therefore pride is their necklace; The garment of violence covers them. 7 Their eye bulges from fatness; The imaginations of their heart run riot. 8a They mock and wickedly speak of oppression . . .

And note verse 9; they act like they are gods:

8b . . . They speak from on high. 9 They have set their mouth against the heavens, And their tongue parades through the earth.

That sounds familiar, doesn't it? Doesn't that sound like our powerful, prominent, wealthy people today? Those that we see that have millions of followers on social media. Those that we see on TV who know better than the rest of us.

Verse 11:

11 They say, “How does God know? And is there knowledge with the Most High?” 12 Behold, these are the wicked; And always at ease, they have increased in wealth.

And like Job, Asaph writes (verse 13):

13 Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure And washed my hands in innocence;

Why do I this when the wicked look like they're prospering?

14 For I have been stricken all day long And chastened every morning.

In other words, “I walk in the light of God's Word. I’ve kept my heart pure – but why? Verse 16:

16 When I pondered to understand this, It was troublesome in my sight 17a *Until* I came into the sanctuary of God . . .

Until I aligned my thinking with God’s thinking (which we do by virtue of His Word).

17b . . . Then I perceived their end. 18 Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction. 19 How they are destroyed in a moment! They are utterly swept away by sudden terrors!

And yes, that often happens in this life. But not always. But it does always happen in judgement – in the next life. And so Asaph concludes in verse 28:

28 But as for me, [good counsel for us] the nearness of God is my good; I have made the Lord GOD my refuge, That I may tell of all Your works.

So keep on pursuing hard after our holy God. Keep walking by the light of his Word, and then keep testifying to a fallen, dying world about His greatness and the goodness of Jesus Christ. Yet, in the context of this life alone, things do not seem fair.

Solomon saw this. In Ecclesiastes chapter 7 verse 15, “I have seen everything during my lifetime of futility; there is a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness and there is a wicked man who prolongs his life in his wickedness.”

Yeah, there are blessings for right believing and living. You do *reap what you sow* (to use a biblical metaphor). However, that doesn't mean that the child of God is going to live a trouble-free life, or that the Christ rejecter won't appear to be outwardly blessed in this life.

Now go back to Job. Christopher Ash sums up Job's complaint, chapters 9 and 10, with these very helpful words. He writes:

It is possible to be wrong and to be right at the same time. God will say that Job has spoken rightly about him (42:7). And yet Job says a great many things about God that are not right. How are we to reconcile this apparent contradiction? When we listen to Job's speeches, we need to bear in mind the distinction between Job's perception and Job's heart. His heart is the heart of a believer, which is why the Lord commends and affirms him at the end. but his perceptions are partial and flawed. We hear in these speeches the honest grapplings of a real believer with a heart for God as he sees what he thought was a secure worldview crumble around him. This is why we will hear Job say some things that are plain wrong, and yet we hear him say them from a heart that is deeply right.⁸⁰

Keep that in mind.

In the Courtroom With God: How Can Job Possibly Be Exonerated? (9:1-35)

And what we are thankful for, as believers, is that the windy words of a sufferer – and sufferers bring forth windy words; impetuous speech – the windy words of the sufferer won't leave the believer condemned in the courtroom of God. The believer, truly a believer, trusting in God, on the side of the Cross, is trusting in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, God will not expel him from His courtroom no matter how ugly our words may be in times of suffering.

And that's what this is about. The main point that covers chapter 9, is this: In the Courtroom with God, How Can Job Possibly be Exonerated? Chapters 9 and 10 picture Job in court, that he's playing plaintiff. And he has God playing defendant. And so we see a lot of courtroom, judicial language in these chapters.

⁸⁰Ash, *Job*, 139.

Job's agreement: I know this is so! (vv. 1-2a)

And it begins – if you will bring your eyes back to chapter 9 verses one and two – it begins with *Job's agreement*, Job's agreement. Job answers, **“In truth, I know that this is so.”** Now who is he talking to? Who is he answering? What was the context? Who just got done speaking? Bildad, right? **“In truth, I know that this is so.”** And Job uses the term that's used in legal settings, it has the force of an oath, **“in truth.”** The Hebrew word is *‘omnam*, an adverbial form of the word we're all familiar with, *‘amen*. In principle, to paraphrase, Job is saying, “Amen! Truly! Yes! I know that this is so.” Well, what is Job affirming as being true? All the words of Bildad? No, I think it goes back to what we called “Bildad's axiom” in chapter 8 verse three: “Does God pervert justice? Or does the Almighty pervert what is right?” And Job would answer emphatically to that, “No, God does not pervert justice. God does not pervert that which is right. Far from it. God is perfectly holy.”

Job's argument: how can anyone dispute with God? (vv. 2b-24)

And so we go from Job's agreement, **“I know this is so,”** to Job's argument, which will take up the bulk of our time today. Job's argument, 2b **“How can anyone dispute with God?”** In other words, “I know God is righteous. I know He is sovereign. But I want to argue my case before Him. Why is this happening to me? Why is this happening to me when I've tried to live in purity before my God and serve Him? But beyond that, How can I argue my case before the Almighty God of the universe?” How can fallen man argue and win a case against God? That's Job's dilemma. And so he says in verse two, **“How can a man be in the right before God?”** The Hebrew word *tsadaq* is translated here, **“in the right,”** and is to be understood in the context as being acquitted in a legal setting. But note this, Job is not using the term “right” in a Pauline

soteriological sense. In other words, he's not talking about being declared righteous, being justified before God (salvation). No, Job is talking about *vindication*. He's talking about *before men being shown that he is innocent in his conduct*. That's what Job is talking about. And he says, **“How can a man be in the right [be vindicated] before God?”**

God's wisdom and power (vv. 3-10)

And Job cites that he can't win a court case with God by naming His sovereignty, along with His wisdom and power. God's sovereignty, His wisdom, and His power.

Wisdom demonstrated in cross-examination (v. 3)

Now look at that last part, God's wisdom and power. First, we see that in verses three and four. And we see the wisdom, first of all, *demonstrated in cross-examination*. And as I said again, Job is playing the role of plaintiff. God is seemingly playing the role of the defendant. We've got a courtroom setting. That's the language. And Job says, verse three, **“If one wished to dispute with Him, He could not answer Him once in a thousand times.”** Literally, from the Hebrew, “With Him he cannot answer Him once in a thousand times.” Well, that's a lot of third person pronouns. And the question is, *who's asking and who's answering?* Who's being referred to here with each of these “he's” and “Him's.” The Holman Bible really smooths that out and has it right. They translate verse three, “If one wanted to take Him to court, he could not answer God once in a thousand times.”

You see, Job is now undergoing cross-examination. God could ask Job thousands of questions – or a thousand questions – and I think that stands for myriads. Job could be questioned by God forever and Job would not be able to bring forth an answer against God one time. In court that means “you lose.” And so Calvin, John Calvin, says, “[T]he natural sense of this passage is that we shall be so impeded when we come before God [that is, to combat against Him] that we

shall not be able to answer a single charge out of a thousand which He will have made against us.”⁸¹

What happens at the end of the book? What happened? Remember chapters 39 through 41? God asks Job 77 questions! Not quite a thousand but I think He got His point across. 77 questions. Job's response, he admitted his ignorance and shut his mouth. And that's sometimes what we need to do as well. Job says in chapter 42, “I know that you can do all things and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. I retract and repent in dust and ashes.” No charge we lay against God – no charge anyone lays against God – man or devil, is going to stick!

John Gotti was an American gangster who became boss of the Gambino family in New York City. And what was he known as? Remember? *The Teflon Don*. They seemingly could not get any criminal charges to stick against him. But he was far from blameless, and eventually the law caught up with him. Gotti's under boss, Salvatore “Sammy the Bull” Gravano aided the FBI who finally convicted Gotti in 1991. He then almost 10 years later died in prison.

While God is no “Teflon Don,” He is the perfect, holy, sovereign over all. Verse four, **“Wise in heart, mighty in strength. Who has defied Him without harm?”** No, God is no *Teflon Don*. But He is, I guess we could say, a Teflon God; not because He gets away with things, but because He's perfect, because He's holy. He sets the standard for what's right and wrong, and anything else is just arbitrary guesswork.

“Wise in heart,” (verse four) **“mighty in strength.”** And note this, **“Who has defied Him without harm?”** Who has defied Him without paying the penalty? Boy we are, again, so thankful for the Cross of Jesus Christ. We defied Him. We defied Him in our ignorance; we

⁸¹Calvin, *Sermons from Job*, 51.

defied Him in our unbelief; we defied Him in our sin – and yet we’re kept from harm (“no condemnation for those who are in Christ”). And even our *windy words* when suffering will not leave the believer condemned in the courtroom of God. No, He is wise in heart, mighty in strength. He is gracious and merciful. We see His wisdom demonstrated in cross-examination. When He starts asking me questions I will not be able answer him once in a thousand– or beyond.

Power demonstrated in creation (vv. 5-10)

And then we see His *power demonstrated in creation* (verses five through 10). Verse five, **5 “It is God who removes the mountains, they know not how, When He overturns them in His anger; 6 Who shakes the earth out of its place, And its pillars tremble;”** The picture here of an earthquake. And beyond the earthquake the picture is one of chaos, of damage. And when we look at creation, most of the time – this is true of me – most the time we marvel. I love sitting on the back patio (which I can't do in the winter when I retreat to my man cave). But in the nice warmer months I can sit on my back patio, look back over the lawn at the trees, the squirrels, and I marvel at God's creation. I look up at the clouds, and while I don't stare at it, I look at the sun. And I marvel at God's creation. We see God's creation and we marvel. There's this *anthropic principle*, how everything, from our human bodies to the furthest stars, operates as a miraculously designed, well-oiled machine.

That parallels Job's life before tragedy struck. Job's life was kind of like a well-oiled machine. He had wealth, he had a good reputation, family, friends. What happened to that? What happened to the well-oiled machine, the creation of Job's life? Earthquake struck: chaos, pain. In Romans eight, Paul says that the creation *groans*. Here we see Job *groans*.

Job knows that God is wise and powerful. I'm not so sure at this point he could joyfully say, “God is good.” Oh, how I can relate! After my release from the hospital back in February

2016, My hopes centered on her daughter, Giana's, recovery. I pleaded with God constantly – and I had so much hope with her going into rehab. I just had this expectation that things were going to turn around and we'd have this wonderful testimony of God's goodness. I thought (as I was thinking about this the other day) about a memory that came to me of how right before Giana was released from Strong to go to Galisano, a neurological institute, we were out in the hallway heading toward where Giana was at the children's section of the hospital. And I saw, as we walked by the entry to the cancer area, I saw a woman sitting there crying. I just felt so filled with the Spirit and so emboldened. And I went to her and I introduce myself and I said, “I don't know what you're going through, but I'm sorry.” And I laid my hand on her shoulder and I prayed for her. I went off and I just was like I was on top of the world. This was all going to turn out fine. Then it fell through. The real earthquake struck and Giana passed from her injuries the following June. It is still kind of hard (I'm confessing my sin to you, brothers and sisters), it is still kind of hard for me to say, “God is good.” I still feel a little hesitant. I can say without hesitation that God is great – and I know He's good. It's just my own obstinacy in my own heart that struggles with that.

This is where Job was. Like mountains, who as Job sees it, shake under the wrath of God. Verse five says, “**He overturns them in his anger.**” Job's life is been shaken. And Job interprets it as God's anger in shaking his life. And Job interprets all calamity, rightly, to the sovereignty of God, but wrongly to the anger of God. Verse seven, It is God “**Who commands the sun not to shine** [some versions have “rise” and it could be translated either way], **and sets a seal upon the stars.**” And so Job sees God's sovereignty, His sovereignty in creation. But when he sees something like mountains overturned by an earthquake he interprets it as God's anger. God's transcendence, verse eight, “**Who alone stretches out the heavens and tramples down the waves of the sea.**” You see His transcendence, *stretching out the heavens*, and His imminence,

trampling down the waves of the sea. Similar words are used in Isaiah 44:24, “Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, and the one who formed you from the womb, ‘I, the LORD [Yahweh], am the maker of all things, Stretching out the heavens by Myself and spreading out the earth all alone.,”

But note that last part: *stretching out the heavens by Myself.* What do we see in verse eight? Who stretches out the heavens? We’re told God does that. In Isaiah 44 we’re told that Yahweh does that.

Yahweh, God, note this, *is the creator of everything that is not God.* If it's not God, God created it. Tremendous implications for the divinity of Christ, for Christ's deity. When we see in Colossians chapter 1 verse 16, “For by Him [by Christ] all things were created, both in the heavens and on the earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, all things have been created through Him and for Him – and by Him.” Yahweh created all things we read (*Yahweh* being the Hebrew word for the covenantal, personal name of God). Yahweh created all things. Here we’re told in the New Testament, not only in Colossians 1:16, but in the other places where we read that Jesus Christ is the creator of all. *Ergo*, who is Jesus Christ? Yahweh! He is not the Father, He is not the Holy Spirit, the Father isn’t the Son, the Father isn’t the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit isn’t the Father. But the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all God, all one God. One God.

And Job, In contrast to the culture around him, was a monotheist. We see that here as well as in verse nine, “**God makes the Bear, the Orion, the Pleiades, and the chambers of the south.**” Constellations. Who made them? Different gods that are over these different . . . ? That’s what the culture taught. No, God created everything from the deepest depths of the sea to the

farthest reaches of the heavens. It's one God who did it. Robert Alden, in his *New American Commentary*, writes that:

All these references to the world around—sun, stars, sea, heaven, and earth—attest to Job's monotheism. Unlike the neighbors of ancient Israel who attributed each of these domains to separate deities, Job and all the Bible's authors believed that God "alone" was responsible for their creation and regulation.⁸²

That includes these constellations that we have described here.

Now I'm no astronomer. Several of you probably know more about this than me. But from what I read, the *Bear* may refer, in Job's time, to the Big or Little Dipper. *Orion* is a constellation located in the winter skies toward the north. The *Pleiades* is a small cluster of stars located in the shoulder of the Bull in the constellation Taurus. The *chambers of the south*? Well, scholars aren't so sure about that. It may be a place from which the south winds blow, or maybe a general term for the southern stars – and other commentators suggest the *chambers of the south* could refer to the very bright section of the sky from Argus to Centauri that would've been visible on the southern horizon in Israel. It could also refer to the Zodiac.

It is God, verse 7, **“Who commands the sun not to shine, and sets a seal upon the stars; 8 who alone stretches out the heavens and tramples down the waves of the sea.”** (And who makes the constellations of the heavens.) This is God's power demonstrated in creation.

Job sums up, verse 10, **“Who does great things, and unfathomable wondrous works without number.”** Eliphaz said back in chapter 5 verse nine, God “. . . does great and unsearchable things, wonders without number.”

⁸²Robert L. Alden, *Job, vol. 11, The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 125.

I've been reading through (I finished it this past week) Ecclesiastes in my Bible reading program. And I came across chapter 11 verse five, which just caused me to marvel: "Just as you do not know the path of the wind and how bones are formed in the womb of the pregnant woman, so you do not know the activity of God who makes all things." Yes, He does great and unsearchable things, wonders without number. So this is Job's argument. How can anyone dispute with God? And he cites God's wisdom and power (verses 3 through 10).

God's Sovereignty (vv. 11-24)

Then he turns to God's sovereignty (verses 11 through 24). What is God's sovereignty? And we have talked about that many, many times over the years – and even as we have been in the book of Job – we talk about that: We believe in a good, sovereign God. I came up a little definition that I think will help us: "*God's sovereignty means that He is the King who is in complete control of His creation. His Kingship encompasses the doctrines of predestination and providence.*"

God is King; He has the right to predestine, to predetermine, what He will. We see that throughout the Bible, cover to cover. And in His creation He has the right toward providence, that is, to work as He will.

There are three areas I want to look at here under God's sovereignty – that kind of sovereign God – three areas: 1) God is free to move and act (v. 11-15); 2) God is awesome in power and righteousness (vv. 16-21); 3) God is in control over the wicked (22-24).

God is free to move and act (vv. 11-15)

First, verses 11 through 15: God is free to move and act. Specifically free to move, verse 11, "**Were He to pass me by, I would not see Him; were He to move past me, I would not perceive Him.**" In other words, God is imperceptible in His Person as a spirit (God is spirit and

you can't see a spirit unless it takes a visible form, like the *theophanies* of the Old Testament, or the Person of Christ in the New Testament). The Westminster Shorter Catechism in answering the question, "What is God" states that, "God is spirit, infinite, eternal, unchangeable, in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth." Job, later in chapter 23 verses 8-9: "Behold, I go forward but He is not there, and backward, but I cannot perceive Him; when He acts on the left, I cannot behold Him; He turns on the right, I cannot see Him." God is spirit; He's imperceptible, but yet He is there.

God is free to move; He's also free to act, verse 12, "**Were He to snatch away, who could restrain Him? Who could say to Him, 'What are You doing?'**" *If He were to snatch away*, that is, if He were to snatch *someone* away. If He were to snatch *10 someone's* away. Who are the 10? Job's kids. For my wife and me, He snatched one away. And ultimately what could we say? Could we say, "What are you doing?" No, not ultimately, not finally. It's like when Nebuchadnezzar came to his senses in Daniel 4:35 and said, "All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth [a *merism*, "heaven and earth" meaning everywhere]; and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, 'What have You done?'" Job puts it, "**What are you doing?**"

And then the puzzling statement of verse 13. The first part is puzzling, "**God will not turn back His anger . . .**" We saw that in verse five, which talked about God overturning mountains in His anger. No, it's the other side of verse 13 that's puzzling, "**Beneath him crouch the helpers of Rahab.**" What does that mean, "Beneath Him crouch the helpers of Rahab?" Some scholars identify *Rahab* with the *Leviathan*, the sea monster, or the mythical creature that stood for destruction, that Job talked about in chapter 3 verse eight (may be that). Rahab was also a symbol of the sea in general, but particularly the Red Sea. Later on, Egypt is referred to twice in

the Old Testament as *Rahab* (Isaiah 30:7; Psalm 87:4). But the point is that God is free to move and act. He demonstrates His power over creation. He moves mountains. He controls constellations. He subdues the beasts of the sea. Therefore, how can Job (or any man) stand before Him, much less in a courtroom setting? **“How can I answer Him,”** verse 14, **“and choose my words before Him? For though I were right,”** verse 15, **“I could not answer. I would have to implore the mercy of my Judge.”** Amen to that. There are times we just have to cry “mercy!” I remembers as a kid sometimes wrestling with a buddy, “Cry mercy! Cry mercy!” About break my arm off before I would cry mercy. With God, well, sometimes metaphorically, He has to twist our arms under the pain of our not walking as blamelessly as we ought. *I implore the mercy of my Judge.* Yes, God is free to move and to act.

God is awesome in power and righteousness (vv. 16-21)

God, secondly, is *awesome in power and righteousness* (verses 16 through 21). 16 **“If I called and He answered me, I could not believe that He was listening to my voice.** 17 **“For He bruises me with a tempest and multiplies my wounds without cause.”** God bruises me with a storm! What killed Job's children? A storm, a tempest. For Job the tempest that killed his 10 kids was representative of his entire existence. And, ironically, when we get to the end of the book we'll see that it's out of a *tempest* that God addresses Job (38:1, 40:6).

Job says in verse 18, **“He will not allow me to get my breath . . .”** Remember chapter 7 verse 19? “Will You never turn Your gaze away from me, nor let me alone until I swallow my spittle?” This was an Arabic idiom meaning, “Gimme a second to catch my breath!” No, verse 18, **“. . . But He saturates me with bitterness.** Job is *saturated* with bitterness. That’s a bad place to be, isn’t it? Have you ever been bitter? Have you ever been *really* bitter. I’ve been more bitter than a radish; disillusioned. We've all been there. *It's the frustration of a total lack of control.* It’s

the frustration of, “I am suffering and I can't undo this. I've lost something dear to me and I can't bring it back.”

Remember Naomi in Ruth 1:20? She used a variation of this word *bitterness* when she said, “Do not call me Naomi, call me Marah, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.” I know that. In the months that followed from June 2016, I was a very, very bitter man. I could not fix my broken daughter – and I was “Mr. Fix-it.” Some of you, if you're stuck in the 80s like I am, remember the show “MacGyver.” Well, MacGyver could fix anything with a coat hanger and a pair of pliers, some duct tape and a few other things (some gum off the bottom of his shoe). Well, I'm kind of a MacGyver. I can't build a house, but I can I can repair things: toys and whatnot. And so Giana was always bringing me her toys or things, and I would say, “Yeah, I can fix that.” What she had, her injuries, I couldn't fix; it was out of my control. After she passed, I wrote several poems. One I didn't finish is entitled, “Daddy Can't Fix it Anymore.”

He's stuck. Losing something dear, not being able to restore that which is lost, whether it be health, whether it be a person. Yes, Job is saturated with bitterness. And what do bitter people do? They act out of their bitterness and they speak out of their bitterness. *Windy words*. The windy words of the sufferer don't leave the believer condemned in the courtroom of God.

Note the courtroom language Job uses in verse 19, “**If it is a matter of power, behold, He is the strong one! And if it is a matter of justice, who can summon Him?**” *He is the strong one*, as we saw in chapter 8. He is God Almighty. One writer notes: “If it were a legal matter, Job felt that no one could issue God a summons to appear in court. God is, as it were, above the law.”⁸³ Well, in theology we have a term in Latin, *ex lex*, which means “above the law, beyond the

⁸³Alden, *New American Commentary*.

law.” God is *ex lex*, He’s above and outside the law. After all, nothing is over God. So He’s over the law. Jesus demonstrated that what He said, that He was Lord of the Sabbath. “Jesus, you’re not keeping the Sabbath.” Jesus said, “No, I created the Sabbath. *I’m ex-lex.*” That doesn’t mean God acts contrary to His very nature, that would be an impossibility. It does mean that God is above and beyond any law.

Verse 20, **“Though I am righteous, my mouth will condemn me; though I am guiltless, He will declare me guilty.”** Job says, “I don’t know. I can’t win. I am a think I’m righteous, but I’m going to be condemned anyways. I may think I’m guiltless, but He will declare me guilty.”

Verse 21, **“I am guiltless; I do not take notice of myself; I despise my life.”** In other words, I think he saying, “As far as I know I’m guiltless, but there may be some secret sins, or maybe some things that I have done. I don’t know.”

So where are we up to this point? Before we look at verse 22, I want you to hear the words of D.A. Carson, the New Testament scholar, because he sums up Job’s argument to this point concisely (which I’m not so good at doing):

Job’s problem is not that God is simply too distant, but that Job could not win—even though he is quite certain he is suffering innocently. (And, again, his readers know he is right on the latter score!) Job himself surveys some of the evidence that attests God’s greatness and concludes: ‘How then can I dispute with him? How can I find words to argue with him? Though I were innocent, I could not answer him; I could only plead with my Judge for mercy’ (9:14-15). Indeed, all the references to Gods power can be read another way, Job argues. ‘Even if I summoned him and he responded, I do not believe he would give me a hearing. He would crush me with a storm and multiply my wounds for no reason. He would not let me catch my breath but would overwhelm me with misery. If it is a matter of strength, he is mighty! And if it is a matter of justice, who can challenge him?’ (9:16-19).

The evidence of Job’s misery suggests that God is sovereign, all right—and cruel. God is so sovereign that even Job’s speech would be constrained in any trial: ‘Even if I were

innocent my mouth would condemn me; if I were blameless, it would pronounce me guilty' (9:20).⁸⁴

Job outlines God's power, Job outlines God's sovereignty. Under God's sovereignty, God's freedom to move and act. God is awesome in power and righteousness.

God is in control of the wicked (vv. 22-24)

Number three (this brings us to verses 22, 23, and 24). The third aspect of that sovereignty: *God is in control of the wicked*. Look at verse 22: Job says, **“It is all one . . .”** (that's the way the New American Standard renders it). **“It is all one.”** In other words, nothing matters. It's like saying, “It's all the same.” **“. . .Therefore I say, He destroys the guiltless and the wicked.”** Job is attributing to God capriciousness: *You're being capricious! You destroy the guiltless, the blameless, and the wicked alike*. And Job gives three more examples of God's sovereign will in verses 23 and 24, the first one being *sudden disaster*. Verse 23, **“If a scourge [that is, a disaster] kills suddenly, He [that is, God] mocks the despair of the innocent.”**

What did Job just say in verse 22? **“He destroys the guiltless and the wicked.”** Well, if a disaster kills suddenly, He mocks the despair of the innocent. One translation renders this, “God will laugh at the suffering of the innocent.”⁸⁵ Is that true? Does God laugh when people suffer? This is another example of having to hermeneutically sort through Job. All that is said in the Bible is truly recorded, but not everything that is said is true. That is, there are words (concepts) that are in error, but they are recorded truly. Does that make sense? And so you gotta sort through Job. And you have to ask, “Okay, what is he saying? There's truth here, but he is kind of off-base there.” But it's accurately rendered; it's inspired and inerrant as it is rendered.

⁸⁴D.A. Carson, *How Long O Lord*, 144-45.

⁸⁵New Century Version.

And so when Job says that, “He laughs at the suffering of the innocent,” he overstates his case. Badly. He is accusing God of relishing in the suffering of the innocent. What was Job thinking about? About himself? He may think of others, but he is really thinking about himself. “God, you are laughing at my suffering.” Job sees himself, and other sufferers, as some sort of voodoo doll. God just sticking pins in them, gleefully. Again, Robert Alden observes:

Job was more angry and bitter in this section than any other place in the book. At v. 24 in particular he came closer than anywhere else to charging God with injustice. He walked, as it were, very close to the precipice but stepped back to safer ground and thus avoided catastrophe. Just as Job voiced doubts about God’s justice with rhetorical questions, so in 40:6 God demanded of Job: “Would you discredit my justice? Would you condemn me to justify yourself?”⁸⁶

More examples of God's sovereign will. First, sudden disaster. Second, the free reign of the wicked. Beginning in verse 24, “**The earth is given into the hand of the wicked . . .**” “God, you have surrendered the world to the schemes of wicked men.” And one result of that (this is the third point): judicial injustice. This is interesting, the second half of verse 24, “**He covers the faces of its [that is, the world's] judges . . .**” *He covers their faces*. In Exodus chapter 23 verse eight God commands the people of Israel, saying, “You shall not take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the clear-sighted and subverts the cause of the just.”

We’re familiar with Lady Justice, the picture, the image of a blindfolded woman holding a scale in one hand and a sword in the other. The blindfold in that image suggests that justice should be without prejudice. If Job could paint a picture it would be of a blindfolded judge holding two swords in her hands with no eyes to see in order to impart justice. Job comes close to his wife's request here. In chapter 2 verse 10, “Curse God and die.” *He covers the faces of judges*.

⁸⁶Alden, *New American Commentary*.

Like the Greek myth of Icarus, Job flies close to the sun and is in danger of disaster. His wings are singed, but he manages to avoid calamity. *The windy words of a sufferer don't leave the believer condemned in the courtroom of God.*

Sudden disaster; free reign of the wicked; judicial injustice. Job, who earlier admitted he could not answer God 1000 times, now seems to be laying sin at the Almighty's feet. And so he concludes in verse 24, **“If it is not He [who does all these things] then who is it?”** The windy words of a sufferer don't leave the believer condemned in the courtroom of God.

You might wonder, “Boy, I’ve thought some bad things. I’ve said some bad things as a believer.” Bless God for His forgiveness; He is merciful. One more point in this chapter, and I hoped to finish chapter nine, but there's some really good stuff here in the second half (and chapter 10 is a little skinny). Hopefully we get that all in the next message. But that last of point, the main point under “In the Courtroom with God: How can Job Possibly be Exonerated,” is this – we looked at Job's Agreement; we looked at Job's Argument – well, then there's Job's Affliction: I am Most Miserable (verses 25 to 35).

But what do we do with all this? We don't have time to cover it this morning (we will next time). But look at verses 32 and 33 of Job chapter 9, “For He is not a man as I am that I may answer Him, that we may go to court together. There is no umpire between us, who may lay his hand upon us both.” I know what you are all thinking.

To live in Job's day, to long for that mediator who could be both man and God and could represent both sides, laying hands on both. You see, that brings us back to the Cross, the Cross of Jesus Christ. Job ultimately had that Mediator in the plan of God. He was justified by faith, but the grounds of his justification is the Cross; the means is faith, the grounds is the Cross. Job knows.

How much better are we? How much more thankful should we be that we have that Umpire between us, a mediator and an advocate? Do you have that Advocate? You're a heartbeat away from standing before the Almighty God of all. You will stand before Him either clothed in your sin, or clothed in the righteousness of Christ, by faith.

Oh I Pray for anyone within the sound of my voice that knows not Christ as Lord and Savior. I pray that the Holy Spirit would bring light, regeneration. That he or she might say, "Wretched man that I am. Who will free me from this body of death? Thanks be to God; there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus!" Amen! And so, Lord, we thank you for this time. A lot to cover; but still so much of it resonates with the truth of the Cross. Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, we are mindful of your graciousness, that the windy words that we utter when we undergo trials don't leave us, we who believe, condemned in the courtroom of God, because of Jesus. Impress these truths in our hearts, writes them in our souls. In Christ's precious name we pray. Amen.

In the Courtroom with God (Part 2)
Job 9:25-35
August 23, 2020
Christ Church of Clarkson
0820Job9.25-35(13) | Audio Length: 45:00

If you haven't already, please open your Bibles to the book of Job, and if you would stand. We've been endeavoring to look at chapters 9 and 10. We have just been in chapter 9 so far. And so I just want to read a few verses out of chapter 9 and the first three verses of chapter 10. Follow along with me – chapter 9 beginning in verse 32 – Job cries out these words:

9:32 “For He is not a man as I am that I may answer Him, that we may go to court together. 33 “There is no umpire between us, Who may lay his hand upon us both. 34 “Let Him remove His rod from me, And let not dread of Him terrify me. 35 “Then I would speak and not fear Him; but I am not like that in myself.

10:1 “I loathe my own life; I will give full vent to my complaint; I will speak in the bitterness of my soul. 2 “I will say to God, ‘Do not condemn me; let me know why You contend with me. 3 ‘Is it right for You indeed to oppress, to reject the labor of Your hands, and to look favorably on the schemes of the wicked?’⁸⁷

So Lord, we come before you, asking that you quiet our hearts from the things that would distract us. And that you would implant the Word as we have been working our way through the book of Job. Plant that Word into our hearts. May we, Lord, especially as we face trials, suffering – which we have experienced, will experience, or are now experiencing – may we, Lord, learn from this blameless man named Job and the words that you have in Scripture, inscripturated in eternity. Thank you, Lord, for this time. O Holy Spirit work in the hearts and minds of everyone that hears my voice, that hears the Word. It's in Christ name we pray. Amen.

⁸⁷Scripture citations are taken from the NAS95 unless otherwise noted.

Despondency and despair

Think about the word *despondent*. This word comes from the Latin *despondentem* ("to give up, lose heart"). One 19th century dictionary gives this definition of despondency: "Despondency is a loss of hope sufficient to produce a loss of courage and a disposition to relax or relinquish effort, the despondent person tending to sink into spiritless inaction."⁸⁸ Have you ever been there? No doubt, you've been despondent; sucked into the vacuum of spiritless inaction. And think about those times that you have been despondent, or have been in despair; inevitably those times relate to some kind of loss.

This past week has been a despondency in miniature for me. I say, "in miniature" because the last 4 1/2 years or so I've experienced waves of despair in the loss of our daughter (the great tempest of those waves coming the first few years after she passed). And I say, "this week" because I've had two days in which that despair was aggravated. The first time was when I was compelled to go into her bedroom – and it was the first time I'd been deep in the heart of her bedroom alone since the crash 4 1/2 years ago; that set me up for a bad evening. Then there was Friday, few days later, Friday which would be her 19th birthday. I thought about the last time we celebrated a birthday with Giana. It was her 14th, just months before the crash that would ultimately claim her life. She wanted an iPhone and we got one (only for use on Wi-Fi). And as we had done, as I had done from the time she was little, I hid the gift. This time I hid it outside and I played "hot / cold" with her. (Have you ever done that? "You're getting warmer, you're getting warmer, oh you're getting colder.") And I did that until she found her prize. I thought about that day, still vividly inscribed in my mind, of that birthday. Little did we know what would happen a

⁸⁸*Century Dictionary*, 1897.

few months later. Those are two days that were microbursts compared to the F5 tornado I've been through. I try to maintain faith in a biblical perspective, knowing that she, as a young believer in Jesus Christ, is with the Lord. She's safe. I'll see her again.

But I ask the question. "As born-again believers why do we despair?" It's true, as one author states, that "despair is like irritated children, who when you take away one of their playthings, angrily throw the rest into the fire." [Charron] Is being despondent sinful? To put it another way, John Piper asks the question, "Is unbelief the root of that experience of despondency?" He goes on to say, "Yes," unbelief is the root of yielding to despondency." He goes on:

It's unbelief that puts up no resistance. It's unbelief that doesn't take the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit and fight. That much I think we can say with clarity from Scripture. "My body is shot, my heart is almost dead, and for whatever reason I will not yield. I will trust in God though my strength is gone."

Then with words that apply to Job's situation:

It's like a bomb. Satan drops bombs on the peaceful sea of our lives. And if it's an atomic bomb, there is, as soon as it explodes, a massive shockwave that hits before the deadly rays begin to make their way over people's lives.

"Take up the shield of faith," he writes, knowing that:

Every cave that you're in — wandering along, feeling the rocks, stumbling, stepping, bumping your head — every cave that you are in is a tunnel that opens into glory. It opens into a day like today in heaven, with the sun shining, and the grass green, and the waters flowing — as long as you don't sit down in the cave and blow out the candle of faith.⁸⁹

The good news, brethren, is that when the candle of our faith is flickering and seemingly about to go out, we have a good God who fans it back into a flame again. Matthew, in his Gospel, sees Jesus in that role, fulfilling Isaiah 43:3, "A battered reed He will not break, and a smoldering

⁸⁹www.desiringgod.org/messages/battling-the-unbelief-of-despondency.

wick He will not put out.” Christian, when you have been battered about, He will not break you. When your wick, your hope, your faith, is smoldering, He will not extinguish. That's the hope we have.

Think about despair again. Jesus Himself, the sinless Son of God, suffered despair. I can't think of any other word to call it. At least two times in the Garden of Gethsemane we read that His soul was deeply grieved to the point of death. And on the Cross He cried out, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?” So there is a despondency, there is a despair, that comes short of being sinful.

Common struggles

We appreciate Jesus in His perfections. But we identify with other pilgrims in their failures (not moral failures per se, but failures nonetheless). I'm talking struggles; losing battles, yet staying in the war. We don't admire their sin, but we relate to their struggles – when they struggled and lapsed at times in their faith, and yet continued to seek after God, continued to get up when they're down, and pursue the prize. That we can identify with. That we can appreciate.

I think of the 18th-century hymn writer William Cowper who tried, I think, three times to commit suicide. And God providentially overruled each of those attempts. In a letter to John Newton, written in 1784, Cowper wrote:

Loaded as my life is with despair, I have no such comfort as would result from a supposed probability of better things to come, were it once ended. . . You will tell me that this cold gloom will be succeeded by a cheerful spring, and endeavor to encourage me to hope for a spiritual change resembling it — but it will be lost labor. . . . God's ways are mysterious, and He gives no account of His matters . . . There is a mystery in my destruction, and in time it shall be explained.

There's a man in the midst of despair. He didn't stay there, however, and that's the point. He's also the author of these words that I love so much:

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.

So when I read about William Cowper, my heart goes out to him. I know what depression feels like. It's something I've battled from the time I was a little boy, but not to the depths that Cowper did. But I certainly know what despondency is like, having suffered the events that unfolded on Christmas Eve of 2015 when Giana and I were hit head-on by that drunk driver. My heart goes out to him and to people like him. And my heart naturally goes out to Job, although he lived so long ago (roughly a contemporary of Abraham). And yet the human experience doesn't change, does it? We can read about people like Job, just as we can read about people like Cowper, and we can say “Wow! You know, I can identify with that. I can identify with the struggling soul, Job.”

Job, who, chapter 3 verse 20, said this, “Why is light given to him who suffers, and life to the bitter of soul.” There's actually a double parallelism that's going on in that verse: “Why is light given to him who suffers, and life to the bitter of soul.” “Life,” parallels “light.” Life is light. And then “suffering,” parallels “bitterness of soul.” A few chapters later, in the 11th verse of chapter 7, Job said, “Therefore, I will not restrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit, I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.” This is a despondent man. A man who lost children, livelihood, reputation, health. A man who felt he was abandoned by his friends – and his God.

The last time that we were in the book of Job, two weeks ago, we were in chapter 9. My hope was to get through chapters 9 and 10 in one sitting (that was my hope in my study leading up to the sermon two weeks ago). But we only made it through verse 25 last time (and we will go short again today). I had basically an option, and that was go very long or go a little bit on the

short side, and so I am going to go a little bit on the short side. And, Lord willing, the next time we will finish chapter 10 and be done with Job's first reply to Bildad.

In the Courtroom With God: How Can Job Possibly Be Exonerated? (9:1-35)

The main point that covers chapter 9 is this: In the Courtroom with God: How can Job Possibly be Exonerated. That's the picture in these verses. Job is metaphorically taking God to court. That's not wise – Job sees that – yet the overarching theme for both chapters which encompassed Job's reply to Bildad is this, *The windy words of the sufferer won't leave the believer condemned in the courtroom of God*. In other words, Job says some things that are windy words, words that you just let go to the wind, and we looked at that. And how when we are suffering, when we're not doing well, when we're afflicted, we often say things (and we certainly think things) that are not right, or not true: *windy words*. And Job is doing that – here, again, metaphorically, in the courtroom of God, before God. Job is plaintiff, seeing God as defendant. And Job says some things that are not true (that's putting it mildly). And yet when we do that we're not condemned in God's court because there's no condemnation for those who are in Christ. So, *the windy words of the sufferer won't leave the believer condemned in the courtroom of God*. That's true for Job and for us.

Job's agreement: I know this is so

And there were two points under that main point, *In the Courtroom with God: How Can Job Possibly be Exonerated* – there were three points under that (we got through two last time). Very briefly, number one, *Job's agreement: I know this is so*, verses one and two where Job answered, “In truth, I know that this is so.” Well, who's he answering? Who's he replying to? Bildad; chapter 8. And he says, “In truth, I know that what you said is so.” He's agreeing, I believe, with what we called *Bildad's axiom* (8:3), “Does God pervert justice? Or does the

Almighty pervert what is right?” And Job says, “I agree. God doesn't pervert justice, God doesn't pervert what is right.” But while Job agrees, he can't understand how this truth, this axiom, the thing that is so basis basic to Yahweh worship, *how does this equate, how does this fit with my life experience. I'm not seeing this in my life.* That's because Job doesn't understand, of course, what's going on behind the scenes.

Job's argument: How can anyone dispute with God

And we went from *Job's agreement: I know this is so*, to the second point that covers the bulk of chapter 9: *Job's argument: How can anyone dispute with God.* In other words, “I know God is righteous. I know that God is sovereign. But why am I being punished?”

Job knows he can't win against God. We see in chapter 9 verse two, “How can a man be in the right before God?” Verse three, “If one wished to dispute with Him, he could not answer Him once in a thousand times.” *Yeah, I may have God playing defendant, but I'm going to get cross-examined and I will not be able to answer Him one in a thousand.*

v. 3 “If one wished to dispute with Him, he could not answer Him once in a thousand times.

v. 4 “Wise in heart and mighty in strength, Who has defied Him without harm? [He] shakes the earth (v. 6)

“Were He to snatch away, who could restrain Him? (v. 12)

v. 14 “How then can I answer Him . . .

v. 15 . . . I would have to [beg for His] mercy . . .

v. 19 “If it is a matter of power, behold, He is the strong one! And if it is a matter of justice, who can summon Him?”

Job's agreement: I know this is so. “Yes, I know that God is righteous, He does right, He doesn't pervert justice.” *Job's argument: How can anyone dispute with God* (the sovereign Almighty of the universe)?

Job's affliction: I am most miserable

And then, this brings us to new ground in our trek through chapter 9, *Job's affliction: I am most miserable*. Job's affliction: I am most miserable. I have several sub-points under this. The first one is *hopeless days*, hopeless days. Verse 25, look what he says, **“Now my days are swifter than a runner; they flee away, they see no good.** That’s something that we saw in chapter 7 verse six, “My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and come to an end without hope.” So what Job is saying is that *every day is like the day before, it comes and goes just like that which preceded it with the same unrelenting pain*. He’s saying that his days flit by like a deck of cards; fan the cards – each card representing a day – and that's how his life feels in the midst of this suffering, the dull existence of pain and turmoil that never seems to end. And here in chapter 9 verse 25-26, he says, **“Now my days are swifter than a runner; they flee away, they see no good. They slip by like reed boats, like an eagle that swoops on its prey.”**

There are three images that Job gives: one from the land, one from the water, one from the air. He gives the image of *a runner*, like the professional runners that delivered the mail and messages of the day. Or like the men who ran to Job's house to inform him of the calamity that struck – the greatest of which was the death of all his children. And then *reed boats*. in the English Standard Version we read “skiffs of reed.” These boats were renowned for how quickly they moved over the water: In sight one moment, turn your head and then they're gone. And then *the Eagle*. Eagles which can reach speeds of 100 plus miles an hour, here pictured is swooping down on its prey, on its victim. And you wonder, did Job have in mind himself as the prey of God? But all of these are images of speed. *Job's affliction: hopeless days*.

Number two, *a meaningless existence*. Three difficult verses, read them with me, beginning with verse 27, **“Though I say, ‘I will forget my complaint, I will leave off my sad**

countenance and be cheerful,’ 28 I am afraid of all my pains, I know that You will not acquit me. 29 “I am accounted wicked, why then should I toil in vain?” What is Job saying here? I’m going to paraphrase it. Job seems to be saying, “Even if I were to forget my misery, put on a happy face – you know, ‘don’t worry, be happy, I’m going to grin and bear it – but new sufferings will arrive at my feet, because God won’t acquit me. So why even bother? Why toil in vain, in this meaningless existence?”

Number three: *helpless cleansing*. Verse 30, **“If I should wash myself with snow”** – some translations have soap – **“If I should wash myself with snow [or soap] and cleanse my hands with lye . . .”** [lye, a strong cleansing agent still in use today]. The point is, “I can wash my maggot-infested body clean, but verse 31, **“Yet You would plunge me into the pit, and my own clothes would abhor me.”** There may be – and scholars are divided on this – there may be a custom that dates to Job’s time that Job has in view, and that is when a criminal was acquitted in a court he was given fresh clothes to wear as a sign of his forgiveness before the court. We see this in a vision that Zechariah has in Zechariah 3:3,4,5. You may be familiar with this, Zechariah beginning in verse three (Zechariah has a vision):

3 Now Joshua [who was High Priest] was clothed with filthy garments and standing before the angel [that is, the Angel of the Lord]. 4 And he spoke and said to those who were standing before him saying, “Remove the filthy garments from him.” Again he said to him, “See, I have taken your iniquity away from you and will clothe you with festal robes.”⁵ Then I said, “Let them put a clean turban on his head” [something signifying his role as High Priest]. So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments, while the angel of the LORD was standing by.

Job says I can put soap to my body, something as strong as lye. I can scrub my body until it’s white. Yet, verse 31, **“You will plunge me into a pit and my own clothes would abhor me.”** Like Jeremiah (2:22), “Although you wash yourself with lye and use much soap, the state of your

iniquity is before Me, declares the Lord God.” Job's affliction: *hopeless days, meaningless existence, helpless cleansing.*

And then we come to our fourth point: *nameless mediator*. Nameless mediator. Job, in the courtroom with God, knows that he must have miraculous mediation, an attorney, if he's to find peace. But that mediator for him is elusive, he is nameless. Look closely at verses 32 and 33. Job says: **“For He is not a man as I am that I may answer Him, that we may go to court together. There is no umpire between us, who may lay his hand upon us both.”** Job turns here from speaking to God to addressing his friends. “God is not a man [as I am] that I may answer Him, that we may go to court together.” One translation has, “If God were human.” When I read that I thought of this song, a 1985 hit by Joan Osborne, *What if God Was?* Have you heard that? What if God Was? Interesting:

What if God was one of us?
Just a slob like one of us
Just a stranger on the bus
Tryin' to make his way home?

We consider those words blasphemous, but they ask a genuine question: “What if God were one of us?” In the words of the old British preacher and prolific author, Dr. G. Campbell Morgan, talking about Job, talking about Job's situation crying out in these verses, Morgan says this:

[This is] the cry of a man who knew God, and was overwhelmed by the sense of His greatness. . . . Over against that was the sense of his own comparative smallness. He felt he could not get to this God. He was altogether too small.

It is as though Job had said: “There is no umpire, there is no arbiter, there is no one who can stand between us, interpreting each to the other; me to God, and God to me. There is no one to lay his hand upon us. . . .”

Here then was Job crying out for some one who could stand authoritatively between God and himself, and so create way of meeting, a possibility of contact.

We now turn from the elemental cry of Job, and from the Old Testament, to consider the apostolic word concerning Jesus. “There is one Mediator between God and man.” That is the Gospel in brief. That is Christianity fundamentally.⁹⁰

Of course, the verse Campbell alludes to is 1 Timothy 2:5, “There is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” 1 Peter 3:8, “For Christ also died for sins, *once for all* . . .” – never to be repeated, totally efficacious, totally suitable, add nothing to it – “the Just [Jesus] for the unjust [you and me] in order that He might bring us to God.” That is the gospel. Jesus is the one who can lay hands on us both. Amen! As God, He represents the Godhead; as man, He represents sinful men, as the sinless God-man, who alone, He alone, could be the perfect eternal final sacrifice for sin. Isn’t it wonderful to live on this side of the Cross?

What about Job? Does that mean there’s no hope for those, like Job, who lived during the time that we refer to as the Old Testament? Was there no hope for Job? The psalmist could rightly plead (and so could Job) Psalm 51:7, “Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean, wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” Not wash me with soap, with lye. No, wash me spiritually, forgive my sins, cleanse my heart. And that plea when genuinely uttered is answered, by faith. That’s Paul’s point in Romans four. Abraham, a contemporary of Job, was justified by grace alone through faith alone, to the glory of God alone. As Charles Ryrie once wrote: “The basis of salvation in every age is the death of Christ. The requirement for salvation in every age is faith. The object of faith in every age is God.” [Charles Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, 123] The basis is the death of Christ – even before it happened. That’s been the basis for Old Testament saints, forgiveness; the requirement is faith.

⁹⁰G. Campbell Morgan, cited in Swindoll, *Job*, 104-05.

Now, to be accurate, Job was looking past what we would call *eschatological salvation* (that is, justification) to a more temporal acquittal. In other words, Job wrongly believe that his suffering was due to God's punishment. Again, Job is blind to the events of chapters 1 and 2, of those behind the scene meetings in the Council Chamber of God; the challenge of Satan, who hoped to prove that the blameless Job served God for selfish reasons. Job doesn't know that.

And not having that desired mediator in his earthly life, Job was faced with, our fifth point, *relentless discipline*. At least he thought it was discipline, maybe better would be *punishment*. So he pleads to his three friends in verse 34, ultimately looking at God, he says, **“Let Him remove His rod from me, and let not the dread of Him terrify me.”** “Let Him remove His rod, staff, stick” (often used in the Old Testament for discipline or punishment). “Let Him remove that from me.” Quite a contrast to Psalm 23, where the rod was pictured as a *comfort*: “Thy rod and Thy staff, they *comfort* me.” Here it’s the rod of discipline, or as Job sees it, a rod of anger. And we’re familiar with that, those terms, as reformed believers. The Puritans often spoke of the Christian’s discipline under God as being “subject to the rod.” In my library I have a book by Thomas Brooks, *The Mute Christian Under the Smarting Rod*. But that kind of discipline is born out of love. It’s the kind of discipline that God metes out on His own, born out of the love of God. Job isn't there. Job doesn't see that, and so he says, **“Let Him remove His rod from me, and let not dread of Him terrify me.”**

Then, the last verse of this chapter, verse 35, **“Then [once God removes His hand of discipline] I would speak and not fear Him . . .”** This isn't *the fear the Lord* in this case. This is *terrified*, being terrified. The “terrified” that we see in verse 34, “Let Him remove His rod from me, and let not dread of Him terrify . . .”

Then, the last sentence of the verse, the second half of verse 35, is difficult, “. . . **But I am not like that in myself.**” That's hard to understand. What does that mean? “**I am not like that in myself.**” It's a difficult phrase in Hebrew and we see how all over the board the various English translations are. The ESV has, “. . . for I am not so in myself.” The Holman Christian Standard has, “. . . I am on my own.” And curiously, the NIV, in typical fashion – not always bad – interprets it for you, “. . . but as it now stands with me, I cannot.” *As it stands with me, I cannot. I cannot speak, I cannot not fear.*

If you're interested in this, sharpen your minds to hear this short paragraph by David Clines in his *Word Biblical Commentary* (an in-depth critical commentary). Clines writes:

Difficult though v 35b is, the most straightforward reading of “for I am not so in myself” is “I am aware of nothing to make me afraid of Him, if He acts not in might, but in right” . . . What has made Job lose his nerve is not a fading of his conviction of his innocence, but the sheer terror induced by God's anger—of which this chapter has been full.⁹¹

Again, Job *interprets it* as God's anger. But we know the story, we know the backdrop, we know what's going on – what's really going on. And at this point Job does not.

So, In the Courtroom with God: How Can Job Possibly be Exonerated. That's the cry of his heart, chapter 9. And then, again, Lord willing, next time: In the Courtroom With God: Job Resigns Himself to a Sentence of Death, that's chapter 10.

Some Lessons From the Despondent Life

The windy words of a sufferer won't leave the believer condemned in the courtroom of God

But before we quit, I wanted briefly look at Some Lessons From the Despondent Life, a few lessons we can take out of this. Briefly, I have five of them. Number one has been our theme:

The windy words of a sufferer won't leave the believer condemned in the courtroom of God.

⁹¹243-44.

That's the overarching principle we see in these two chapters. Job says some hurtful things in the face of his God. I don't think it's inaccurate in New Testament terms to say that Job would be grieving the Holy Spirit with some of the things that he says. God's, however, big judicial decision stands for the believer: "There's no condemnation for those who are in Christ."

During times of despair we will, like Job, vacillate in our faith

Number two: *During times of despair, we will, like Job, vacillate in our faith.* Despair breeds doubt and the seeds of doubt grow wild in the soil of despair. Listen, friends, distrust the messages despair sends to your heart and focus on what you know to be objectively true, the truth of God's Word, the promises of God. Focus there. Meditate on passages of Scripture like Proverbs 3:5-6, "Trust in the Lord with all of your heart and lean not on your own understanding." (Or your own despair.) "In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight." Or the familiar Romans 8:28, "We know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, those who are called according to His purpose." I'm not saying that if somebody is suffering you quote that to them. That may not be the right time to do that. I'm saying when you're suffering meditate on verses like these, minister them to your hearts. Romans 8:38-39, how I love what Paul says: "I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, or any other created thing . . ." This is kind of a merism gone wild – merism being a figure of speech. It's like saying "from A-to-Z" which is a merism encompassing all things. So, ". . .nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Fight for faith before you fight for joy

Three: *Fight for faith before you fight for joy.* Fight for faith before you fight for joy. In other words, joy cannot be separated from faith. Joy springs from belief. Fight for that faith. Trust

in a sovereign God who loves you and who has a good purpose for your life. Believer (I'm speaking to believers here) that faith – even if wavering – will still endure your fight for joy. So fight for faith before you fight for joy.

Let's encourage the fainthearted

Number four, brothers and sisters: *Let's encourage the fainthearted*. We read that in 1 Thessalonians 5:14, where Paul says: “We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone.” When hearts grow faint, when souls are weak and suffering ravages, come alongside in encouragement, come alongside in love.

I've said it so many times and I'll say it to the day I die: It has been your love, your genuine concern, your being there, your prayers, your support, that sustained us so many times and continues to sustain us. This is one reason why we absolutely adore this church (as I adore you).

Be thankful for that Mediator and let's relish in a Savior who suffered for us

Lastly, be thankful for that mediator. Number five: *Be thankful for that mediator and let's relish in a Savior who suffered for us*. One of Jesus' titles is “Suffering Servant.” Think about that. That's the Second Person of the Trinity, God, Almighty God, known as “Suffering Servant.” Believer, He walked this earth for you. He suffered for you. He died for you. He now lives for you.

We talked about William Cowper earlier. There were two things that brought Cowper to saving faith. In 1764, while reading John 11, he (quoting his own words), “Saw so much benevolence, mercy, goodness, and sympathy with miserable men, in our Savior's conduct, that I almost shed tears.” Then, on that decisive day, he said, “I saw the sufficiency of the atonement He had made, my pardon sealed in His blood, and all the fullness and completeness of His

justification.” T.S. Eliot said: “Christ is the wounded surgeon who operates on people’s hearts.”⁹²

Has He operated on your heart? Has He?

Christianity isn’t putting a Band-Aid on an old heart that's religion (mere works righteousness, of which there is none). No, Christianity is God removing a dead heart, replacing it with a new one, resulting in faith, repentance, and eternal life. Have you been there? Have you felt the sting of the law, that is, the sting of God's demands showing you that you’re sinful and that you cannot live up to the perfect standard of God? Have you, then, in anguish of soul reached out to the Cross of Christ, the Son of God, trusting in Him alone; His perfect righteousness? His death, His burial, His resurrection? If you haven't I can only give you the gospel; I can't change your heart. But I can pray that the Holy Spirit does – because that's the work the Holy Spirit has been about.

If you're a believer, there’s so much to be thankful for isn’t there? The Mediator we have. That when we utter *windy words*, when we think *windy thoughts* during times – especially of suffering – when we question (we may not outright say it, but when the tugs in our heart question God's goodness), God is not going to condemn us because of Christ who stood in our place. Amen? Brothers and sisters, be encouraged. Be challenged to walk worthy.

Father, we thank you in this time, brief time we have been able to spend in Job chapter 9 finishing up that chapter, and I pray, Lord, that you would encourage all of our hearts. It's been a tremendous whirlwind of study for me, and I really need help with chapter 10. That has been most difficult, and I'm going to trust that you will see me through. Not to any praise or accolades for me, but solely to the praise and glory and honor of you and what you do. And so, I thank you for

⁹²T.S. Elliot, cited in World Magazine, April 24, 2004.

these friends. Encourage their hearts, challenge their hearts. If there's anyone, Lord, within the sound of my voice who is not born-again I can only pray, Holy Spirit, that as it pleases you, you would open up that dead heart putting in a new heart, replacing doubt and disbelief and wrong belief with true faith. Thank you, Lord, that we can pray these things to you in Jesus name. Amen.

In the Courtroom with God (Part 3)
Job 10:1-22
September 6, 2020
Christ Church of Clarkson
0920Job10.1-22(14) | Audio Length: 48:20

Job chapter 9, reading verse 32 through chapter 10 verse 3. Job cries out:

32 “For He is not a man as I am that I may answer Him, that we may go to court together. 33 “There is no umpire between us, Who may lay his hand upon us both. 34 “Let Him remove His rod from me, and let not dread of Him terrify me. 35 “Then I would speak and not fear Him; but I am not like that in myself.

10:1 “I loathe my own life; I will give full vent to my complaint; I will speak in the bitterness of my soul. 2 “I will say to God, ‘Do not condemn me; let me know why You contend with me. 3 ‘Is it right for You indeed to oppress, to reject the labor of Your hands, and to look favorably on the schemes of the wicked?’⁹³

And, Lord, as we leave off with that question that Job asks, we come before you to plead your mercy upon us. Give us eyes to see and ears to hear the nuances of your Word as we have been working our way through this book, the book of Job. And as I’ve confessed to the congregation, chapters 9 and 10 have been most difficult in the study, so I pray, Lord, that you will help my hearers to glean truth. Build them up to encourage their hearts; some that are in the midst of suffering, in the midst of trials. And may, Lord, all of us, when we go through those times, when we go through those dark, dark waters, may we fight for joy and proclaim the goodness of our God – and the greatness of our Savior. And it’s in His name we pray. Amen.

In my yearly read through the Bible I found myself going through the Old Testament book of Jeremiah. And in one of the passages I was reading out of Jeremiah, I thought of the book of Job. Namely, I was reading in Jeremiah chapter 2: Jeremiah, writing to an apostate Judah. God speaks through the prophet and warns (this is in chapter 2 verse nine): “Therefore, I will yet

⁹³Scripture citations are taken from the NAS95 unless otherwise noted.

contend with you, declares the Lord, and with your son's sons I will contend.” That's chapter 2 verse nine. A little bit later in the chapter God asks (verse 29): “Why do you contend with me? You have all transgressed against me, declares the Lord.” And what caught my attention was this word *contend* (the Hebrew word *rib*) – and it's a legal term – it's a term from the courtroom. It means “to contend legally” – and that's the language as it relates to Jeremiah. Judah felt that she could bring charges against God. An ironic reversal, compared to chapter 2 verse nine, where God brought charges against Judah. And we see this language, we see that same Hebrew word *rib*, in Job chapter 9 verse three and chapter 10 verse two. Again, this is courtroom language. And so we read in chapter 9 verse three where Job says, “If one wishes to dispute . . .” (or contend – there is the word *rib*) “. . . with Him [with God] he cannot answer Him once in a thousand times.” In other words, “If I contend with God, God is going to then asked me questions and I won't be able to answer Him one in a thousand.” And then later, chapter 10 verse two, “I will say to God, let me know why you contend with me” – again, that same word. So we're talking about the language of the courts, courtroom language, which is frequent in Scripture.

It made me think of a story I heard many years ago. It's an apocryphal story about the legendary lawyer Clarence Darrow. And it was said that it circulated among law students (I don't know if it still does), but in the story, Darrow had a defendant who was an especially reprehensible client. He had a very difficult case to try to make, and as the prosecutor before the jury ranted and raved about the heinous nature of the crime, and the suffering victims, Darrow sat there paying him close and courteous attention while puffing distractedly on a large cigar. The ash on the cigar grew 1/8 of an inch, half an inch, 2 inches, and more. Yet, the ash would not fall – and Darrow didn't seem to notice. He politely concentrated on the prosecutor as he puffed on his cigar. But the problem was, the jury noticed, and it took their attention away from the prosecutor

to look at Darrow and the magically lengthening ash. It was all by design because before Darrow had pulled out his cigar he had inserted a thin long piece of wire. I don't know if that story is true, but it's interesting. It has a lesson somewhere on distraction. But it made me think about the book of Job in these chapters, where we have the idea of (the title): In the Courtroom with God.

In the Courtroom with God: How Can Job Possibly be Exonerated

This is part three of *In the Courtroom with God*. We have two main points – one main point covers chapter 9, the second main point covers chapter 10. Chapter 9 In the Courtroom with God: How Can Job Possibly be Exonerated; that's the idea. Job is standing before God in a mythical courtroom setting, and Job is realizing, “How can I be exonerated before this holy God?” We saw in chapter 9, *Job's agreement* where Job says in verse one, “In truth, I know that this is so.” Job affirms a truth, and that goes back to chapter 8 verse three, what Bildad had said when Bildad asked, “Does God pervert justice? Does the Almighty pervert what is right?” Remember, Job in chapters 9 and 10 is answering Bildad from chapter 8. That begins with what we called an “axiom.” And Job’s answer is, “In truth, I know that this is so.” *I know that God would not pervert justice. I know that the Almighty would not pervert what is right.* And yet, as Job goes on he’s demonstrating his dilemma. *I know this is true. I know about the character of God. But why, why am I suffering. Why is he taking it out on me?* And we went on in chapter 9 verses one from *Job's agreement* to the second point, that covers the bulk of chapter 9, *Job's argument: How can anyone dispute with God?* And so he says, verse two, “How can a man be in the right before God?” Verse three, “If one wished to dispute with Him, he could not answer Him once in a thousand times.” Verse four, “Wise in heart and mighty in strength, who has defied Him without harm? He shakes the earth.” Verse six, “Were he to snatch away, who could restrain Him?” Verse 12, “How then can I answer Him?” Verses 14 and 15, “I would have to beg for His mercy.” Verse

19, “If it's a matter of power, behold, He is the strong one; and if it is a matter of justice who can summon Him?” And then, the last time, two weeks ago, we looked at *Job's affliction*. He spoke of his “hopeless days” (verses 25 and 26). He spoke of a “meaningless existence” (in 27,28,29), and “helpless cleansing” (in verses 30 and 31).

But then we spent quite a bit of time on that wonderful section, verses 32 and 33. Job realizing that he must have miraculous mediation if he's going to find peace. If he can have any standing before God, he needs a mediator. And we called this, as far as Job is concerned, “a nameless mediator.” Look at verse 32, “For He is not a man as I am that I may answer Him, that we may go to court together.” *He's not a man that we can go to court together*. And then he says in verse 33, “There's no umpire between us, who may lay his hands upon us both.” What a wonderful picture! We spent quite a bit of time looking at that, the picture of who Jesus Christ is; He's that mediator. He is that *umpire*; He is the one we read about in 1 Timothy 2:5, the mediator between God and men. And that's the gospel, that's what we hope for. That's what Job hoped for. And that's ultimately how Job was redeemed, on the grounds of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. So, In the Courtroom with God: How can Job Possibly be Exonerated? That's chapter 9.

In the Courtroom with God: Job Resigns Himself to a Sentence of Death

I said the second big point covers all of chapter 10: In the Courtroom with God: Job Resigns Himself to a Sentence of Death. Job seemingly gives up. He's at the end of his proverbial rope. He asked, “How can I possibly be exonerated?” in chapter 9, then he realizes that he can't. But he not only goes to that depth of despair, he's at the depths of pessimism. And so many of us, we tend to think the worst, don't we? Are you like that? I like to joke that I don't read or listen to any symptoms of a deadly disease because if they give five symptoms I can guarantee you I have

at least three – if not all five. So I have to keep away from webpages that describe some dreaded disease! We tend to think the worst.

Several years ago (this will surprise some of you), I was contacted by a seminary professor who taught homiletics (homiletics is the science and art of preaching). And he had been listening to the Grounded in Grace broadcast, and he wanted me to come and share with his class about preparing and delivering expository sermons. And I thought the worst. I first asked for assurance that he didn't want me to come as an example of how *not* to do it, but how to do it. He assured me that was the case. Well, Job has become the consummate pessimist, and we see that especially in chapter 10.

I really wrestled with the idea of how to outline this and I am still not one hundred percent satisfied with my outline, but I decided to flip it around and a look at Job chapter 10 from the other side of the coin. Job speaks and thinks negatively, falsely, so we're to say, "Don't do it like this." These are the dangers to avoid.

If you're a little bit older like me, you might remember the phrase, "Be like Mike." There was a little jingle that went with it: "Like Mike, I want to be like Mike . . ." That came out in 1992 and was sponsored by Gatorade – and, of course, featured Michael Jordan, arguably the greatest basketball player of all time. And it made millions of dollars for Gatorade. While you may want to be like Mike as it relates to the basketball court, as it relates to Job in chapter 10, you don't want to be like him; so, therefore, points the despairing sufferer is not to emulate. That's my outline.

When suffering resist the temptation to complain

As for my sub points, there are four points the despairing sufferer is not to emulate. And I'm going to confess to you, that in my suffering, I have fallen prey to all four of these. And that's why we're thankful that in the courtroom of God there is grace and there is mercy. So number one,

when suffering resist the temptation to complain. This is what we see Job doing – in the first two verses in particular: **“I loath my own life; I will give full vent to my complaint. I will speak in the bitterness of my soul. I will say to God, ‘Do not condemn me. Let me know why you contend with me.’”**

We talked a little bit in the past about the difference between lament and complaint. Job chapter 3 is a lament. Well, what's the difference between lament and complaint? Number one, we tend to talk about complaining. Your friends would look at you kind of oddly if you said, you know, “I need to lament for a while.” *Have you been reading Shakespeare or something?* I mean, it's not a word we tend to use. But it is a biblical word. It transcends mere complaint, as in *being a grumbler or a complainer*, something warned against in Philippians chapter 2 verse 14, that we're not to be malcontents. But there is a type of complaint, namely a lament, that is common to believers and acceptable before God. A biblical lament, as opposed to mere complaint, is an expression of faith. It's an expression of belief. It includes fighting for joy in the midst of suffering. As one writer said, “Lament stands in the gap between pain and promise.” *Yes, I have pain, but I'm fighting to hold onto those promises.* And remember, we have an entire book of this godly sort of complaint entitled Lamentations.

The Psalms are filled with *lament Psalms*, that's a category. For example, Psalm 10:1, “Why do you stand afar off, Lord? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?” And I'll remind you that one key feature of lament is the question, “why.” We saw that in Psalm 10:1 (twice). How many times do you hear it in Psalm 44:23? “Arouse Yourself, why do You sleep, O Lord? Awake, do not reject us forever.” Or Psalm 74:1, “O God, why have You rejected us forever? Why does Your anger smoke against the sheep of Your pasture?” Or Psalm 88:14, “O LORD, why do You reject my soul? Why do You hide Your face from me?” And we see the same

thing in Job chapter 3 where he laments, “Why did I not die at birth? Come forth from the womb and expire? Why is light given to him who suffers, and life to the bitter of soul?”

These seem like complaints. But when you look at the greater context of chapter 3, there's still a holding on to faith – because it takes faith to lament. Lament is also brutal and honest, and I appreciate that, I appreciate honesty, I appreciate transparency. Lord deliver us from stained-glass Christians! We want real people; real people that cry, real people that laugh. I quoted James Boyce back when we were in chapter 3, and I'll quote it again: “It is better to ask them [hard questions of God] than not to ask them, because asking them sharpens the issue and pushes us toward the right, positive response.” So we ask those difficult questions, we face those difficult questions. It's okay to sing in the minor key; we live so much of our lives there. So to lament is to express real pain. It's to be honest before God. It's an act of faith, and acknowledges God's sovereign role in suffering. Lament is in pursuit of truth and righteousness.

Well, Job moves in chapter 10 away from lament more toward mere complaint. Remember, we have to be gracious to Job. Job doesn't know what's going on. He doesn't know about the behind-the-scenes deal that's been made as to his testing, as to who he would serve – and why. Job lives in that “cause and effect world” of the day where you attribute bad things to bad behaviors. When bad things happen, you must've done something to deserve it. And Job lived in that culture – and bad things happened to Job. And Job is saying, “What did I do to deserve this? I have tried to live righteously.” Well, when suffering, resist the temptation to complain.

Hurting people say hurtful things, hurting people express what we talked about back in chapter 6 of Job, when he said that, “The words of one in despair belong to the wind.” Somebody is suffering, agonizing, and they'll say things that aren't right, maybe things that aren't true, maybe

accusatory things. And the lesson we learn is to let those words go to the wind – *to the wind* – don't hold them against that person).

I like it when people are honest. And I thought of C.S. Lewis who is indeed a controversial figure within reformational Christianity, for several reasons, but I'm not going there now. (And I've often said Lewis was a better philosopher than he was a theologian.) He was certainly a gifted thinker, arguably a literary genius. And I found his books helpful during that time of my intense grief following the death of our daughter. I appreciate his frankness; he lays it out there.

You may know the story of C.S. Lewis, how the love of his life was a woman by the name of Joy Davidman. They married and were knit together, they were really kindred souls. Lewis's brother Warren wrote about their relationship, ". . . the attraction was at first undoubtedly intellectual. Joy was the only woman whom he had met ... who had a brain which matched his own in suppleness, in width of interest, and in analytical grasp, and above all in humor and a sense of fun." And so they married.

Sometime in the late 1950s, Joy, Lewis's wife, experienced pain in her hip. She was diagnosed with terminal bone cancer. The cancer went into remission and they thought that God had healed her through the prayers of the saints. So many were praying; God had brought healing. But the disease came back with a vengeance and she died on July 13 of 1960. Lewis went into a spiritual tailspin (you see how I could appreciate his writings because I went into a similar tailspin after the death of Giana). And, as Lewis would describe it, he practically lost his faith. In painful honesty, he writes these words in his book, *A Grief Observed*:

This is one of the most disquieting symptoms [of loss]. When you are happy, so happy that you have no sense of needing [God]. . . . If you remember yourself and turn to Him with gratitude and praise, you will be—or so it feels—welcomed with open arms. But go to Him when your need is desperate, when all other help is vain, and what do you find? A door slammed in your face and the sound of bolting and double bolting on the inside.

After that, silence. You may as well turn away. The longer you wait, the more emphatic the silence will become. There are no lights in the windows. It might be an empty house. Was it ever inhabited? It seemed so once.

You say, “That just seems wrong.” Well, have you ever been there?” You read the words of the psalmists when, during their darkest days, they despair (“Why do you stand afar off O Lord?”). I know that feeling. And then words relevant to Job's judicial battle with God in chapters 9 and 10, Lewis writes:

God has not been trying an experiment on my faith or love in order to find out their quality. He knew it already. It was I who didn't. In this trial He makes us occupy the dock, the witness box, and the bench all at once. He always knew that my temple was a house of cards. His only way of making me realize the fact was to knock it down.

Your faith is tested during those times of agonizing trial. And we are thankful that the windy words of the sufferer won't leave the believer condemned in the courtroom of God, because, ultimately, we have that mediator, we have that umpire, Jesus Christ was propitiation for our sins; He satisfied God's wrath. So when suffering, resist the temptation to complain

When suffering, resist the temptation to question God's purposes

Number two *when suffering, resist the temptation to question God's purposes*. The same Job who declared in chapter 9 verse one, “I know this is so” – *I know God does not pervert justice* – then turns around and says in chapter 10 verse three, “**Is it right for you, indeed, to oppress, to reject the labor of your hands, and look [note this] favorably on the schemes of the wicked?**” “Favorably” is a Hebrew word that means “to have a glowing face, to be radiant, to smile.” Job is accusing God of oppressing his own while smiling down on the schemes of the wicked, as if God somehow enjoys their wickedness. When suffering, resist the temptation to question God's purposes.

Many are familiar with Jeremiah 29:11. Christians often cite Jeremiah 29:11 as a “life verse.” I get asked every once in a while, “What is your life verse?” And I really don't have a life verse, I have a “life Book,” and it's all about this entire Book from cover to cover. And that's not to demean anybody who has a life verse, but I don't. But Jeremiah 29:11 wasn't written specifically to Christians. It was a promise of restoration given to Israel. Remember the familiar words? “I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for calamity, to give you a future and a hope.” Well, does this not apply to believers? Why I suppose in some ways it applies. We could say, “Yes, God has plans for his elect, plans for their ultimate welfare.” And you, as an individual believer, have a future and a hope. But that does not *exclude* suffering in this life. All of that speaks to God's purposes for the life of the believer. And when you're suffering affliction, when tragedy strikes, it is easy to question what God is doing.

We believe in the sovereignty of God. It would be one thing if we could say that God was as surprised as we are when tragedy strikes. That's the heresy of open theism. No, God's not surprised by anything. In fact, God either actively or passively (permissibly) ordains all things that happen in the universe. And Job sees that and he asks, questioning God's purpose, in verse four:

4 ‘Have You eyes of flesh? Or do You see as a man sees? 5 ‘Are Your days as the days of a mortal, or Your years as man’s years, 6 That You should seek for my guilt and search after my sin? 7 ‘According to Your knowledge I am indeed not guilty, yet there is no deliverance from Your hand.

There are words reminiscent of chapter 7 verse 20, “Have I sinned? What have I done to You, O watcher of men? Why have You set me as Your target . . .”

I thought this through (I don't know if any of you have): Why doesn't Job see his utter depravity? It seems as though he is looking at Yahweh worship as a religion whereby one views his outward life and sees no sin, like Paul in Philippians 3:6 where he claims his pedigree as an

unconverted Jew, including the fact that he was found blameless before others as to his law keeping. And it seems that Job doesn't see that. He's looking at the externals. We, under the New Covenant know it goes a lot deeper than that.

One of my favorite quotes (you've heard me say it) is from John Bunyan, the author of *Pilgrim's Progress*: “There's enough sin in my best prayer to condemn the entire world.” And as I read Job I think, “You know, I could not stand before God and claim the good I have done because I know of all too many things that I have done wrong, or sinfully thought.” As I pondered this, I think the answer, at least in part, is the nature of New Testament salvation. Certainly in the Old Testament men were justified by faith (see Romans 4). That was true for Old Testament saints as well as New Testament saints. And certainly there were times in the Old Testament where the saints saw their depravity. David complained that he was conceived in sin, that he was sinful from his conception. But the New Testament believer has a bit of a different dynamic, much of this attributable to the indwelling Holy Spirit who convicts the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment. I think we have a greater appreciation – not only because of the role the Holy Spirit and being under the New Covenant – but also because there's completed revelation; so we have this greater appreciation for the depth of our sinfulness. But Job is looking more externally, he's looking at outward sin what he does, rather than indwelling sin, what he is. In other words, while not totally discounting his sinful nature, Job is looking for major failures of obedience in his life that would *disqualify* him from God's blessing. Indeed, as he sees it, “What I do, what qualifies me for your cursing?”

We know the story, we know how Satan comes to God and God ask, Have you seen my servant Job; there's no one like him, a blameless man.” Satan asks, “Why does he serve you, God, because you have blessed him all this stuff.” The whole book of Job is about the fact that Job (or

any believer) serves God because God is, because it's written within our spiritual DNA to serve Him and to worship Him, not because of what He gives us, or blesses us with in this life. But Job is saying that he has done nothing to deserve the suffocating tragedy he experienced. Speaking of this section in the book of Job, one writer says, "It is at the same time a beautiful and a pathetic passage."⁹⁴ *Beautiful and pathetic*. You see, the only purpose Job sees God having for him at this point is destruction. God created Job, now God is going to destroy him.

Look at verse eight, **"Your hands fastened and made me altogether. And would you destroy me?"** Verse nine, **"Remember now that you have made me as clay, and would you turn me into dust again?"** Genesis 3:19, "By the sweat of your face you will eat bread until you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; *for you are dust and to dust you shall return.*" Job says, "You made me as clay and would you turn me into dust again?" And look at how Job describes God's creative act in verses 10 and 11: **"Did you not pour me out like milk, and curdle me like cheese?"** The word *curdle* means *coagulate*. It's translated "congealed" in Exodus 15 verse eight. And also here in verse 11, **"You clothed me with skin and flesh and knit me together with bones and sinews."** A very picturesque view of conception and a baby developing in-utero. Psalm one 39:13, "You formed my inward parts, you wove me in my mother's womb." In verse 12, **"You have granted me life and lovingkindness . . ."** – there's that word we looked at several weeks ago, *hesed*, God's covenant faithfulness and loyalty – **". . . and your care is preserved my spirit."** Is Job, at this point in verse 12, looking back to when life was good, before tragedy struck? This is the photo book of smiling Job with his wife gathered around him with his 10 kids, back before all the affliction came.

⁹⁴Ash, *Job*, 149.

A few days ago I shared with the girls the story of when we pulled a prank on my parents. Several years ago we did this (gotta be close to 10 years ago). We secretly traveled to Arizona (they didn't know we were coming), and I had this great idea: Giana was about eight at the time, and I thought how I would surprise my parents. I got a big box and put Giana in it, labeled it, taped it up and left it at the doorstep. I then called my parents on my cell phone telling them that they've received a package and needed to go out and check outside right away. And I told Giana, "Don't pop out of the box, you'll give them heart attacks, but just stay down there." And we covered her head with some newspapers and stuff, and put the box out. And I'm around the corner, and I told my mom, "You know, go out and check." She comes out with my dad who tries to move the box. I hear him saying, "Man, this is heavy!" (I think he let out an exclamation in Italian, that I can't repeat.) So they decided to open it right there. And I'm just trying to peek around the corner to see what's going on. He reaches in the box, pulls some of the papers away, and he says, "What is this? A monkey?" And then out comes Giana, our little monkey! And they thought at first that we had shipped her out from Arizona! Then I come out from around the corner. That's just a wonderful, wonderful sort of thing. I love doing stuff like that.

A day ago I reminded Lois about that story and got misty eyed as I thought about those days before tragedy struck our family. That's looking back in the photo book for me, that's back when my daughter was around, back when my dad was around. And little did we know at the time that Christmas Eve, 2015 would come, when we would be hit by a drunk driver, then she would succumb to her injuries and pass away six months later in June, 2016. And then my dad would follow her 10 months later in April, the end of April, 2017.

And that's Job in verse 12, "**You have granted me life and lovingkindness. Your care has preserve my spirit.**" Oh, believe me, when you suffer, when you really suffer, you tend to

question God's purposes. Resist that temptation. And I think our turnaround, as far as the Bartolucci family is concerned, has been swifter than Job's – if you know the story of Job, and you know what happens at the end of the book. But we have been blessed with these two new daughters – and that was part of God's plan. And we know that God has used the story of Giana's life, and her passing, in marvelous ways all around the world. We just – I think – we just get a glimpse of that now. I think in eternity we will see how God majestically used this tragedy for our good and his glory.

When suffering, resist the temptation to question God's goodness

Well, third, *when suffering, resist the temptation to question God's goodness*. Resist the temptation to question God's goodness. And those things go together don't they? Questioning God's purpose, and in questioning God's purpose we question God's goodness. We say, “Why are you doing this? It doesn't seem right.” When we say *it doesn't seem right* we're talking about His goodness. Well, verse 13 is the door that opens up verses 14 through 17. A difficult verse, especially in the New American Standard. Look in verse 13 of chapter 10, **“Yet these things you have concealed in your heart; I know that this is within you.”** I'm thankful for other translations, because my Hebrew is not good at all (I had more Hebrew than Greek in college and seminary but I haven't stayed up on my Hebrew). So while I can piddle around in the language a little bit, I tend to look at other good translations. And listen to how the English Standard Version renders this, “Yet these things you hid in your heart; I know that this was your purpose.” The New International Version, “But this is what you concealed in your heart, and I know that this was in your mind.” And a favorite translation of mine, The Holman Christian Standard Bible, “Yet You concealed these thoughts in Your heart; I know that this was Your hidden plan.”

This verse, verse 13, looks forward not backward. Job wasn't saying, "I know this" looking back. No, he's saying, "I know this" looking forward. That's why some translations put a colon after verse 13. Job is about to tell openly the things that God had been keeping secret in verses 14 through 17, those things that God concealed. Look at them: verse 14, **"If I sin, then You would take note of me, and would not acquit me of my guilt."** *You catch me when I sin.* Verse 15, **"If I am wicked, woe to me!" And if I am righteous, I dare not lift up my head. I am sated with disgrace and conscious of my misery.** Verse 16, **"Should my head be lifted up** [that is, "If I'm righteous and I lift up my head, what's going to happen?"], **You would hunt me like a lion; and again You would show Your power against me."** Job is again saying, "I can't win no matter what I do. If I sin I get caught. If I think I'm righteous and I lift my head, like the proverbial deer lifting his head above the bush, and the lion sees it, I will get jumped on. Verse 17 is the capstone, **"You renew Your witnesses against me and increase Your anger toward me; hardship after hardship is with me."** Note the three aspects of verse 17. Job saying to God, 1) **"You renew your witnesses against me, 2) you increase your anger toward me, 3) hardship after hardship is with me."** Wave upon wave of hardship and suffering. *Resist the temptation to question God's goodness.*

One more quote from Lewis:

What chokes every prayer and every hope is the memory of all the prayers [we] offered and all the false hopes we had. Not hopes raised merely by our own, wishful thinking; hopes encouraged, even forced upon us, by false diagnoses, by X-ray photographs, by strange remissions, by one temporary recovery that might have ranked as a miracle. Step by step we were "led up the garden path." Time after time when He seemed most gracious He was really preparing the next torture.⁹⁵

⁹⁵C.S. Lewis. *A Grief Observed*, 34-35.

Resist the temptation to question God's goodness. But when you do, be thankful that the windy words of a sufferer will not leave you condemned in the courtroom of God, if you know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

When suffering, resist the temptation to give up hope.

Our last point, very briefly, *when suffering, resist the temptation to give up hope*. When suffering, hang on to faith, hang on to hope, hang on to Christ. Job questions why he was ever born: verses 18 and 19, **“Why then have You brought me out of the womb? Would that I had died and no eye had seen me! I should have been as though I had not been, carried from womb to tomb.”** *Why did you even let me live? Why was I born?*

I know I never could go there. I could I could wish that I were dead when I was suffering, immediately after Giana passed, I could wish that I were dead, but I could not wish that I had never been born, because I know that if I had never been born, Giana would never have been born (there are a lot of other things go into that, as well).

Job thinks his life is wasted. Warren Wiersbe talks about that, and he says:

Nothing that is given to Christ in faith and love is ever wasted. The fragrance of Mary's ointment faded from the scene centuries ago, but the significance of her worship has blessed Christians in every age and continues to do so. Job was bankrupt and sick, and all he could give to the Lord was his suffering by faith; but that is just what God wanted in order to silence the devil.

When William Whiting Borden died in Egypt in 1913 while on his way to the mission field, some people may have asked, “Why this waste?” But God is still using the story of his brief life to challenge people to give Christ their all. . . .

When the five missionaries were martyred in Ecuador at the hands of Auca Indians, some called the event a “tragic waste of manpower.” But God thought differently, and the story of these five heroes of faith has been ministering to the church ever since.

Job asked, “Why was I born?” In the light of his losses and his personal suffering, it all seemed such a waste! But God knew what He was doing then, and He knows what He is doing now.⁹⁶

Job is despairing and wants God to leave him alone: verse 20, **“Would He not let my few days alone? Withdraw from me that I may have a little cheer 21 before I go—and I shall not return— to the land of darkness and deep shadow, 22 the land of utter gloom as darkness itself, of deep shadow without order, and which shines as the darkness.”**

In the Courtroom of God: Job Resigns Himself to a Sentence of Death. *When suffering, resist the temptation to complain; when suffering, resist the temptation to question God's purposes; when suffering, resist the temptation to question God's goodness. And by all means, when suffering, resist the temptation to give up. When we suffer we will fail in some of these areas, but because of Jesus, the windy words of a sufferer will not leave the believer condemned in the courtroom of God.*

Life is hard. There's so much suffering out there. And it seems that as time goes by I see that more acutely. There's so much pain, so much suffering, so much heartache. Martin Luther talked about his day (16th-century) and he said, “Daily there have to be many troubles and trials in every house, city, and country. No station in life is free of suffering and pain, both from your own, like your wife or children or household help or subjects, and from the outside, from your neighbors and all sorts of accidental trouble.” Daily there have to be many troubles and trials – everywhere.

Where does this leave us? I want to leave you with what I call, “The F Factor. How do you resist the temptation to complain, to question God's purposes, to question God's goodness, to give

⁹⁶Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Patient*, "Be" Commentary Series (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 42–43.

up hope? The “F Factor is this: *faith not fear*. Faith dispels fear. Faith is trust. Everyone trusts something. The naturalist trusts in the fact that he or she believes that the universe is a closed system: there is no God, there is no heaven and hell. The religionist trusts in his or her religion. But no, the Christian has a sure hope. Trust in what has been taught to us, what God has revealed to us in the 66 books of the Big Book, the Bible. We have the hope of Jesus Christ within us, and I pray that you have that hope, that you know Him as Lord and Savior. And that, if you don't, the Holy Spirit will show you your need, that you have sinned and fallen short of God's glory, that God will enact His justice, His judgment on you as He has to do by His very nature – unless He finds you clothed in the righteousness of Christ, which comes by faith and repentance.

And so, Lord, we thank you for this time as we gather together. It's been a difficult couple of chapters to work through. Thank you for the patience of my hearers. I pray, Lord, that when we suffer we will take to heart some of these lessons, to try to resist the temptation to complain, to resist the temptation to question your purposes in your goodness, and above all, Lord, not to give up hope. When we walk in faith dispel the fear from our path as we do so, trusting in the one sure thing that we have in all of the universe: Your Word. I pray for anyone that doesn't know Jesus, and I pray, Lord, that if they feel the sting of the law condemning them, that they will then flee to the Cross, which is the only thing that can acquit them, that by faith; grant that faith in you, please, Lord Jesus. It's in your name we pray. Amen.

Zophar's Zingers: His First Reply to Job

Job 11:1-20

September 20, 2020

Christ Church of Clarkson

0920Job11.1-20(15) | Audio Length: 56:40

Job was a godly man

I thought it timely, for those of you especially that haven't been with us in this study from the very beginning, to do a bit of a review reminding you that the book of Job is about a man of history, a man by the name of Job who lived around 4000 years ago. As such, the book of Job is considered the oldest book in the Bible. The events described in the book happened long before Moses, the Law, and the nation of Israel came into existence. The man, Job, lived in an age of paganism. Yet we find that he is a worshiper of the true God. We see a fourfold description of him given in the very first verse of the book where we're told – not without purpose that it's in the very first verse of the book – we're told that he is, “blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil.”⁹⁷ Job is a godly man.

Job was a blessed man

Job is also a blessed man. We see in verse three that during a time that wealth was measured in livestock he could lay claim to “7000 sheep, 3000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 female donkeys;” along with that, he had very many servants. No wonder he is called, “the greatest of the men of the East.” Job had a wife and 10 children (seven sons and three daughters). Life was good for Job. But little did he know what was brewing behind the scenes and the disaster that would unfold around him. The reader, that's us, is given a look behind the curtain of the

⁹⁷Scripture citations are taken from the NAS95 unless otherwise noted.

reasons for Job's affliction that we see unfold in the book, reasons Job never knew this side of heaven.

Chapter 1 verse six, “There was a day when the sons of God . . .” this is an angelic counsel, *ben Elohim* in Hebrew, “. . . the sons of God came to present themselves before Yahweh . . .” the first use of that covenantal, personal name of God, LORD, “. . . and Satan . . .” and we noted that in the book of Job, when Satan is mentioned, there’s a definite article in front of it; it's never just a statement, it’s “the Satan,” even though that's not necessarily reflected in your translations. “And the Lord,” verse seven, “said to the Satan, ‘From where do you come?’ And the Satan answered the Lord, ‘From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it.’ And the Lord said to Satan [the Satan], ‘Have you considered my servant Job, for there is no one like him on the earth. [and here again, a repeat for emphasis, the fourfold description we saw in verse one] a blameless, upright man, fearing God turning away from evil?’ Then the Satan answered the Lord, ‘Does Job fear God for nothing? Have you not made a hedge about him in his house and all that he has in every side. You blessed the work of his hands and his possessions have increased in the land.’” In other words, “Yes Sir, Job serves you because you have given him so much stuff. You've blessed him with wealth and reputation and family.” But, verse 11, “Put forth your hand and touch all that he has and he will surely curse you to your face.”

God is sovereign. He is in control. Satan comes requesting this calamity to come upon Job. The Lord says to the Satan, verse 12, “Behold, all that he has is in your power. Only do not put forth your hand on him.” *Touch what he has; don't touch him. Not yet; It's not the appointed time.* And at that point the Satan departed from the presence of the Lord.

Job was a suffering man

And what unfolds in verses 13 through 19 are descriptions of tragedy, the likes of few people have experienced: Job loses his livestock, he loses his servants; worst of all, all 10 of his children are killed in what people refer to today is a “natural disaster.” And Job's response? Satan predicted cursing. How does Job respond (1:21): “Naked I came from my mother's womb, naked I shall return there. The Lord gave, the Lord is taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.” Satan predicted cursing; Job, because it was written into his very spiritual DNA, responds with worship. This is not dry-eyed stoicism. As I said weeks ago, you have to hear the words of verse 21 through the tears of verse 20. You hear the tearing of the robe, you watch as Job shaves his head, you hear the sobs as he falls to the ground; but through it all, he recognizes the goodness of a sovereign God. The writer says that in all of this, “Job did not sin nor did he blame God.” Job accrued no error, no wrong to the hand of God. He trusted that somehow God was acting with a purpose. He didn't sin in his tears or in his worship – and he certainly didn't sin in attributing his calamity ultimately to the sovereign hand of God. Nothing comes into the life of a believer apart from God's will.

What do you value as a believer – and why?

Chapter 2 continues to set the stage for the rest of the book. Again, another challenge is issued by the Satan. We have a basic repeat of what we've seen in chapter 1, and again Job's character is confirmed (that's the third time). Chapter 2 verse three, the Lord says the Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job? There's no one like him on the earth; blameless, upright, fearing God, turning away from evil.” But something new is added at the end of the verse: “He still holds fast his integrity, although you incited *me* against him, to ruin him without cause.” The Satan issues another challenge: the Satan says in verse four of chapter 2, “Skin for skin, all that a

man has he will give for his life, however, put forth your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse you to your face.” Touch him in his person, touch his health. On top of everything else, “Job will curse you, God.” The book of Job is about *what you value as a believer and why*. The lesson of Job is that God is to be valued for who He is, period.

And you see who's in control here in verse five: The Satan says, “Put forth *your* hand.” In verse six, God says, “He's in your power, Satan, only spare his life.” God sets the parameters. Satan is on a leash, God's leash, and God pulls it according to His will. 7 “Then the Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.” 8 “And he took a potsherd to scrape himself while he was sitting among the ashes.” Job, the greatest of the men of the East, is now residing at the town dump living among discarded ashes and broken bits of pottery, one of which he uses to scrape the sores on his body. Job's response to his wife who encourages him to curse God and die? Job says, “Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity.” And again, chapter 2 verse 10, “In all this Job did not sin with his lips.” Chapter 1 verse 22, “Job did not sin nor did he blame God.”

Three friends

When the calamity of Job begins to reach far and wide, three friends come from afar to see him. Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar are their names. And they sat (chapter 2 verse 13) on the ground with Job for “seven days and seven nights, with no one speaking a word to him, for they saw that his pain was very great.” As some have said, that was about the best thing that they could've done, to sit there in silence. In chapter 3 Job breaks the silence – we call this “Job's lament,” and it centers around three questions: Why was I born? Why did I live? And why am I alive now?

And what follows Job's lament of chapter 3 is three rounds of dialogue between Job and his friends. We're in the middle of just finishing, Lord willing, this morning, the first round of

dialogue. You have Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. And 83% of the book is dialogue, or conversation, in which there are three cycles of speeches whereby Job replies to each of his friends. That runs from chapter 3 following Job's lament all the way to the end of chapter 37.

“My hope is dim, but I endure”

We heard from Eliphaz in chapters 4 and five. Eliphaz argues largely from personal experience. That is, Eliphaz's argument is, “From what I've seen, this is how it is.” And his main point – and it goes along with the others as well – is that bad things don't happen to good people; and if something bad happens to you, it just proves that you're not good. And Job responded to Eliphaz in chapters 6 and seven. We entitled that, “Job's Reply: My Hope is Dim, But I Endure.” Central in that regard, is chapter six verse 10, where Job says, “This is still my consolation, and I rejoice in unsparring pain, that I have not denied the words of the Holy One.”

And I can relate to that in the calamity that my family went through with the loss of our 14-year-old daughter. I had a lot of questions. I had some accusations. But I did not deny God – I did not deny His Word. And so I can relate to this with Job.

The light of the gospel cannot be extinguished by the despair of hopelessness

And we said the big idea as it related to that section was that *the light of the gospel cannot be extinguished by the despair of hopelessness*. For Job, there was still hope – even in the midst of his despair. The light of the gospel continued to shine: “I rejoice in unsparring pain; I have not denied the words of the Holy One.” That's chapters 6 and seven.

Bildad the traditionalist

We met Bildad (whom we called “the traditionalist”) in chapter 8. Bildad is the one who appeals to tradition. We have people to do that today. “Well, this is what tradition says;” or, “This is the way it's always been done;” or, “This is what one of the church fathers wrote.” So Bildad in

chapter 8 verse eight says, “Please inquire of past generations and consider the things searched out by their fathers.” Consider the past. Consider tradition and the teaching. According to Bildad, that means God does not support those who do evil; He will not reject a man of integrity. Therefore, turn from the sin that brought this calamity upon you, Job, and you will be restored.

The black and white world of Bildad

Bildad also lives in a black and white world. There are no gradients. There's no color in his theology. Job's children sinned, according to him, and that is why they died – regardless of Job's sin offerings on their behalf (chapter 1). No, according to Bildad, everything is binary. Everything is either black or white. And yet, as I reminded you when we were in this section, in a black and white world, a world such as is Bildad's, there is no room for the living color of the gospel.

In the courtroom with God

Job responds to Bildad in chapters 9 and 10. We spent three weeks on those two chapters in a series of messages entitled, In the Courtroom with God. Job pictures himself contending with God in the setting of a courtroom. Legal language is used in chapters 9 and 10; and yet Job knows he can't win. At the end of chapter 10, he resigned himself to a sentence of death. Yet in the middle of his anguish what did we see in chapter 9? “God is not a man as I am that I may answer Him, that we may go to court together. If only there were an umpire between us. A mediator who could lay hands on us both.” That still gives me goose bumps because I live on this side of the New Testament, I live on this side of the Cross, as you do, and you know, if you know your Bible, your mind goes to 1 Timothy 2:5. “There is one God, and one mediator [one umpire] between God and men: the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time.”

Yet Job does say things that I'm sure he later regretted. When we suffer, at times we say “windy words,” but let those words go to the wind. Consider where that come from. We say things that we shouldn't. But even within the courtroom of God, the windy words of a sufferer won't leave the believer condemned – because he has that mediator – he has Jesus Christ.

I hope all that brings you back up to speed. And it brings us to Job's third friend, the only one that we have yet to hear from in our study, Zophar. And that brings us to Job chapter 11. Look at chapter 11 verse one, “**Then Zophar the Naamathite answered . . .**” Zophar, we're told (we saw this in chapter 2 verse 11), came from Naamath which may be connected to a man by that name way back in Genesis chapter 4. But who is Zophar? What is he all about? Listen to these two quotes about him:

So locked into the retributionist dogma is Zophar that he cannot see Job as a sufferer but only as a guilty man. His language to describe what is happening to Job is legal because he has moved instantly from his perception of Job's distress to a theological interpretation of that distress as divine judgment.⁹⁸

Bad things happen? You must have done something to deserve it. Second quote:

Zophar probably was the youngest of the three friends. He was impetuous, tactless, direct, unsympathetic . . . His speeches are the shortest; in fact, he has only two. His opening speech contains three characteristic motifs: rebuke, remarks on God's sovereign justice, and advice.⁹⁹

His speeches are the shortest. In fact, he has only two in the three cycles of speeches by the three friends. Interestingly, Zophar never finishes – and there's a reason for that. Lord willing, we will see that when we get to that passage. Note again: “His opening speech contains three

⁹⁸David J. A. Clines, *Job 1–20, vol. 17, Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1989), 264.

⁹⁹Robert L. Alden, *Job, vol. 11, The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 141.

characteristic motifs: rebuke, remarks on God's sovereign justice, and advice." That's a basic three point outline to Job chapter 11.

The big word for Zophar is the word "repent." This is not unlike his friends, but he really emphasizes it – that word *repent*. This made me think, as I was studying this, about an old T-shirt I had. And it had a picture on it of a sheep holding up a placard or a sign which said, "Repent and be Shaved." And it pictured some of his disciples coming out of a small barn neatly shorn. And the words underneath it said, "Harold couldn't spell well enough to save himself or anyone else." Repent and be shaved.

Zophar's Zingers: His first Reply to Job

We don't know how well Zophar could spell, but when it comes to sarcasm he was a pro. And so were calling this, our main point: Zophar's Zingers: His first Reply to Job. There are three points under that that'll be, for practical purposes, our main points that we will follow. Number one: Job, It Should be Worse (11:1-6). Number two (how do you like this for directness?): Job You Are an Idiot (11:7-12). Three: Job Just Repent Already (11:13-20). When we turn this around, the idea I want us to see (a main idea) is that *God's grace wins even when everything (and everyone) fails*. Job is just confronted with failure after failure after failure by his three friends. He looks like he's down and out – but we know the entirety of the story – and we know that God's grace wins. For the believer in Jesus Christ, you can't out-sin God's grace, you can't out-lament God's grace. God's grace is sufficient, even during those darkest times. Friends, we've got to remember that God's grace wins.

I had a former pastor, one of my very first pastors as a new believer. He used to always say, "The best times for the believer are yet future." No matter how good or how bad it is, you've not reached the best: The best is yet future in eternity with Jesus, surrounding His throne with

those that we know and love – saints triumphant – who have gone before us. I can't imagine what that would be like. I can't imagine what it will be like to see my daughter. I can't imagine what it will be like to see my dad who died 10 months after my daughter. *God's grace wins even when everything and everyone fails.*

Job, It Should be Worse (11:1-6)

The first point (from the perspective of Zophar): *Job, It Should be Worse*. Not *could be* worse – we're used to that: *It's pretty bad, but it could be worse*. How'd you like somebody to point out to you, "Yes, it's pretty bad, but it *should be* worse" (and we will see where we get that when we get to verse six).

Fourfold rebuke (vv. 2-3)

There is a four-fold rebuke in verses two and three. Four questions asked by Zophar, each one assuming a "no" answer. There are two questions in verse two and two questions in verse three. The first two, in verse two, note this: **"Shall a multitude of words go unanswered, and a talkative man be acquitted?"** This becomes a common theme in the words of Job's friends. They accuse him of being, as we would put it today, "a windbag." And that's what Zophar is saying.

Bildad said much the same. Bildad, remember him back in chapter 8? He began his speech there with these words, "How long will you say these things and the words of your mouth be a mighty wind?" Eliphaz, when we go forward to his second speech, speaks the same way. Chapter 15 verse two, "Should a wise man answer with windy knowledge, and fill himself with the east wind?" And we see the same thing here in chapter 11 verse two, **"Shall a multitude of words go unanswered [the implied answer is "no"] and a talkative man be acquitted?"** Implied answer, "no." The word "acquitted" or "vindicated" is the Hebrews *tsadaq*. This is "to be right, to be justified, to be vindicated" before others; vindicated of doing something wrong. And so here we

have Zophar, who we believe is the youngest, who's basically been waiting his turn (people would go in order of age when it came to privilege), so Eliphaz spoke first (we believe he is the oldest, then Bildad, then Zophar). So Zophar is saying, "I've been sitting here waiting my turn, and I'm not going to let you, Job, get away with your windy words."

Two more descriptions, we said there were four, so two more in verse three, two more rebukes: "**Shall your boasts silence men? And shall you scoff and none rebuke?**" We said this was a four-fold rebuke, verses two and three. All four of these relate to Job's speech, what he has said, or what Zophar perceives Job to have said (or the way in which he said it). So here Zophar accuses Job of boasting and scoffing. Boasting translates a Hebrew word that means "empty, idle talk" – even "babble." And the word "scoffed," some translations have "mock." Interestingly, I looked it up and that word is used in 1 Samuel 33:19, of a *stammering tongue that no one understands*. Boasting, scoffing, babbling, stammering. I don't think we have seen this so far, not really, as far as Job's responses. Certainly not scoffing, or mocking. Maybe there was some babbling, some stammering. And I know what that's like when you're suffering and at the end of your rope, and you've got a listening ear and you just kinda end up rambling on and on and on trying to unload what's on your heart.

False accusation (v. 4)

Zophar follows this fourfold rebuke that centers on Job's words with a, number two, a *false accusation* that also relates to something Job is to have said. Verse four, "**For you have said . . .**" – that phraseology in the Hebrew would indicate that Zophar is quoting Job – "**For you have said, 'My teaching [doctrine] is pure, and I am innocent in Your [God's] eyes.'**" My translation puts that little phrase "you have said" in quotes, but nowhere do we see that Job said this. It seems that not only is Job being accused of things he didn't do, but he is also being of

accused of things he did not say. That's one of the most frustrating experiences in life: to be accused by someone of something you didn't do or something you didn't say. Has that ever happened to you? It's a frustrating experience. I've experienced it in ministry. I've experienced that more than once. But even in those times, God's grace wins – even when everything and everyone fails.

Job never claims to be sinless, but it does claim to be blameless (that's how others perceive you), and he claims that in chapter 10 verse seven. And Eliphaz earlier in chapter 4 affirms Job's role as a teacher, and he says, “Behold, Job, you have admonish many, and you've strengthened weak hands. Your words have helped the tottering to stand and you have strengthened feeble knees.” Job does not come across as unteachable. Job himself says (6:24): “Teach me. If I don't understand, give me understanding. Show me how I have erred.” But his three friends are not able to come up with an answer. There is guesswork. But in their cause and effect world Job is suffering – that's the effect – because there must've been a cause, and that cause has to, in their worldview, be individual sin.

Feckless desire (vv. 5-6)

So there's a fourfold rebuke (verses two and three), there's a false accusation (verse four) And you've got to love this: There's a feckless desire (verses five and six). You can not only learn about the Bible, you can expand your vocabulary. “Feckless” (I had to search the thesaurus to find another word that started with “F” that would work) is a word that means “incompetent, irresponsible.” (And Zophar's desire for Job was indeed incompetent and irresponsible.)

His feckless desire, verse five, **“But would that God might speak, and open His lips against you.”** *You been doing all the talking, Job. You're a windbag, Job. But would God open His mouth and address you!* Well, we who know anything about book know that God does speak

in chapters 38 to 42. And while He does correct Job, His main rebuke is for whom? The three friends.

Look at verses five and six again with me (those two verses together). Zophar says (here's my desire, my feckless desire): **“That God would speak, and open His lips against you, and show you the secrets of wisdom** [and some your translations will differ on this second half of verse six], **for sound wisdom has two sides.**” Literally, that's what it says in Hebrew: **“for sound wisdom has two sides.”** There are three views as to what this could mean: 1) It could mean that wisdom is multifaceted, like a diamond (there are many facets to wisdom); 2) It could mean that there is an aspect to wisdom that goes deeper than what man sees (there's one level and then there is another level); 3) Or it can mean that there are two sides to every story. And so your translation may reflect that as they interpret what this “two sides of wisdom” means.

But look at how verse six ends, **“Know then that God forgets a part of your iniquity.”** Very noteworthy. That a key statement as it relates to understanding Chapter 11: **“Know then that God forgets part of your iniquity.”** One English translation renders this quite accurately as, “Know then that God has chosen to overlook some of your sin.”¹⁰⁰ This is a backhanded way of saying, our first main point, “Job, it should be worse.” This is what Zophar is saying: *God has been gracious and if you were really judged as you deserved, Job, you wouldn't have anything at all.* Implication: his wife would be gone, friends would be gone, his home would be gone, even his life would be gone. Job, it should be worse.

¹⁰⁰HCSB.

Job, You Are an Idiot (11:7-12)

Number two: *Job, You Are an Idiot*. Zophar slings several more questions Job's way.

Verses 7,8, and 9 center on God's transcendent greatness. When we talk about God's transcendence, what does that mean? It means His bigness, His far-ness, how He transcends all of creation. That's evident in His being referred to, verse seven, as *Shaddai* (Almighty). And just as we had four questions in verses two and three, we have four questions here in verses seven and eight. There's some poetic parallelism going on here. And they all – like the questions we saw in verses two and three – they all expect a negative answer. Count them with me. We saw verses two and three, now look at verses seven and eight: 7 **“Can you discover the depths of God?”** There's one. 8 **“Can you discover the limits of the Almighty?”** There's two. 8 **“They are high as the heavens, what can you do?”** There's three. **“Deeper than Sheol [the grave], what can you know?”** There's four.

And then you have another merism, a figure of speech, kind of like saying “A to Z” meaning everything in between. Here you have heaven and the grave; heights and depths; what can you know, God is transcendent. Verse 9, **“Its measure is longer than the earth and broader than the sea.”** Big! bigness! And that's that's true. But I reminded you that you have to be careful, because much of what the friends say is true, but it's how they apply it that's false. And that's a good reminder for us. You may say, “What I said was true,” but how did you apply it? Did you apply that truth *truly or falsely*.

Zophar goes from transcendence to the other direction, to God's imminent awareness. Transcendence is bigness; immanence is nearness, closeness. This relates to God's providence in governing and judging every detail of creation. Verse 10, **“If He passes by or shuts up, or calls an assembly, who can restrain Him?”** Again, this is the language of the courts. The English

Standard Version renders verse 10, “If he passes through and imprisons and summons the court, who can turn him back?” The implied answer is “no one.” That’s what Job said in chapter 9 verse 32, “God is not a man as I am that I may answer Him, that we may go to court together.” And then more of the same in verse 11, **“For He knows false men, and He sees iniquity without investigating.”** This is God's immanence. He knows the thoughts and intents of the heart. He knows every single thing you have done, good or bad. And these words, if they just stood alone, are so true. They are so worshipful! I thought of Romans chapter 11 versus 33 through 36 where Paul just exclaims,

33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! 34 For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR? 35 Or WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN? 36 For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

Then we said there's bad application here, and so we see, as Zophar describes it, *Job's sinful idiocy*. Verse 12 is in the form of a proverb, **“An idiot will become intelligent when the foal of a wild donkey is born a man.”** The word “idiot” comes from a word meaning, “to be hollow,” “to be empty.” When it's used of a person, it's calling somebody empty-headed (an air head). Job's sinful idiocy: “An idiot will become intelligent [an “idiot,” implied, “You, Job’] when the foal of a wild donkey is born a human.” In other words, Zophar doesn’t hold out much hope for Job, at this point anyways. Job sinful idiocy. So what have we seen? Zophar’s Zingers: His First Reply to Job; *Job it Should be Worse; Job You Are an idiot*.

Job Just Repent Already (11:13-20)

And our third, last main point: *Job Just Repent Already*. I’m going to teach you a couple more words, if you don't know them already: *protasis* and *apodosis*. The *protasis* is the condition

in a conditional sentence, often expressed by “if.” *If you are hungry, then you can eat.* “If you are hungry” (protasis), “then you can eat” (apodosis).

So we have another group of four, just like we saw in verses two and three, and seven and eight. There are four conditions that form the protasis. “If you do this Job,” then “good things follow:”

<i>The Protasis</i>		
One	“If you would direct your heart right”	Verse 13
Two	“and spread out your hand to Him”	Verse 13
Three	“If iniquity is in your hand, put it far away”	Verse 14
Four	“and do not let wickedness dwell in your tents”	Verse 14

Let's let's go over those again. **“If you would direct your heart right.”** Get your heart right, Job, that’s the first thing you need to do according to Zophar. And then, **“Spread out your hand to Him.”** Lift up your hands in praise (hands representing what you do, and we see that reflected below) **“If iniquity is in your hand . . .”** (a repeat of the word “hand”) – **“If iniquity is in your hand . . .”** (hand representing what you do), **“. . . put it far away”** (repent), **“and do not let wickedness dwell in your tents”** – that is, keep your household in order.

Now where there's a *protasis* there is an *apodosis*. Here are the results, the consequences that follow. Beginning in verse 15 (and note the word “then” (*apodosis*), then . . .

<i>The Apodosis</i>		
One	“you could lift up your face without moral defect”	Verse 15
Two	“For you would forget your trouble, as waters that have passed by, you would remember	Verse 16
Three	“Your life would be brighter than noonday; darkness would be like the morning.”	Verse 17

Four	"Then you would trust, because there is hope; and you would look around and rest securely"¹⁰¹	Verse 18
Five	"You would lie down and none would disturb you, and many would entreat your favor."	Verse 19

Verse 19, **"You would lie down and none would disturb you, and many would entreat your favor."** *Just like the reputation you had as the greatest of the men of the East; you can regain that.*

Zophar gives a concluding warning, the last verse of chapter 11, 20 **"But the eyes of the wicked will fail, and there will be no escape for them; and their hope is to breathe their last."** *Your hope, Job, is to repent. If you don't your only hope is the grave.*

Seven Concluding Thoughts

We'll finish with seven concluding thoughts, seven concluding thoughts. What do we make of all this? What are some of the implications of what we've seen here in chapter 11? Some of these we'll repeat, or have repeated.

1. Be thankful for good friends, especially during bad times

But I want to go back to this: *Be thankful for good friends, especially during bad times.* You want to be a good friend? Be there for someone who's going through a bad time. This is the proof of your love, proof of your devotion, your commitment. Be there. Be there for others. And you don't have to worry about what you are going to say, just be there. Say, "I love you; I'm here for you" – that is so important. God has given us, believers, everything pertaining to life and godliness. God has given us the gift of the church, the gift of one another. That is a gift; and it's a

¹⁰¹That word "securely" translates a Hebrew verb used of *casting molten metal to form a statue*. The form of the verb used here has a sense of being *hard, firm, solid* – not in a physical sense, but spiritually: "Job, you would be solid as a bronze statue."

big gift. Out on the marquee, it says: A Family Church, A Church Family. Where you have family, there ought to be friends. I'm Italian; we're big on the family. You are loyal to the family. You don't turn your back on the family. You don't leave the family, as if you don't care, or you can do without them. No, there's a commitment to the family. Being part of the family costs you something. And I am so thankful for the friends that I have, the many friends I have within this congregation; so dear to me. Something I emphasized coming here to serve as preaching elder was that I'm not a paid professional. If I come here, I come here as a member of the body. Yes I have that role, I may have that title of pastor – but I come here needing the life of the body. I need you guys, and you guys have been there for us through the tragedy that struck our lives on Christmas Eve of 2015 (and beyond). You've been there.

2. There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother

Number two: *There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother*. We read that in Proverbs.

There is also a friend who sticks the knife, don't be that friend that sticks the knife. Swindoll writes about this. He says:

I should warn you that Zophars are still on the loose. If you haven't met one, just wait, he'll come along—with zero capacity to connect the dots. They have no ability even to color by numbers. Though they don't get it, they have a severe message for you. That message is a put-down, because you are not doing what they believe you ought to be doing. Or you are doing what they believe you should not be doing.¹⁰²

3. Beware of the brashness that often comes with youth

Number three: *Beware of the brashness that often comes with youth*. Not always. But if you're a brash middle-aged or senior, shame on you! Yes, there's a good brashness, but there is a negative brashness, an inconsiderate brashness (Zophar). I was there. I could be a bit of a Zophar

¹⁰²Swindoll, *Job*, 110.

– or a Bidad for that matter. Everything was black or white. No gradients in between. Counseling had to be right out of the Bible or you were guilty of denying Christ’s sufficiency. All the miraculous gifts have ceased at the end of the first century; end of story. That was the kind of attitude that I had when everything was either black or white. In my brashness I never shied away from a fight, and would even revert to anger if need be. More than once in my youth I reverted to shouting matches with those who opposed me. But as you get older you learn, or you want to learn. That's why we have that warning not to lay hands on anyone for leadership too hastily. There's something that comes – even with the term elder – it comes with some age. Timothy was in his 30s, so I’m not saying you have to be 50, 60 or 70. But there should be a seasoned awareness. So beware of the brashness that often comes with youth. And I will warn those of you that are younger: Don’t be a know it all (and don’t act like you are). It’s okay be dogmatic about the essentials, but be gracious in the nonessentials, and be loving and caring about everything.

4. Beware of doctrinal legalism

Number four goes along with this: *Beware of doctrinal legalism*. All three of Job's friends are legalists, Zophar especially so. Doctrinal legalism is something that flourishes in youth, especially young Calvinists. I was once one (believe it or not). D.A. Carson gives this warning:

Jesus nowhere says, 'By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you are scintillatingly critical and condescending toward evangelicals who have some things wrong.' I do not mean to hint for a moment that we who teach can afford to duck the responsibility of teaching discernment. I mean only to say that even discernment must be nestled into the bigger 'main thing' of love for the brothers and sisters in Christ.¹⁰³

Calvinists can especially be susceptible to this doctrinal legalism. But we who most relish in the sovereign grace, the sovereign love of God, should we not be the most gracious, the most

¹⁰³D.A. Carson, *The Pastor As Scholar and the Scholar As Pastor*, 101.

loving? That's makes sense to me. I deserve nothing. Well, I deserve something, I deserve eternity in hell. All the good things I have, I have by God's grace. Grace is undeserved.

Our Church Confession speaks about this, this cherishing of our doctrine, but not falling into arrogance or legalism. Paragraph four of our Church Confession under Doctrinal Integrity:

We endeavor to reject all heretical beliefs and practices, using Scripture as our final authority, as we devote ourselves to the study, teaching, and application of the whole counsel of God that we may be equipped for every good work.

Well, two paragraphs down is one on humility:

We endeavor to cherish and defend our historic Christian doctrine and our church while clothing ourselves with humility, and we will refrain from arrogance in regard to other churches with which we may disagree.

That doesn't mean we can't speak the truth. The truth sometimes is blunt. Certainly, I'm not saying that there isn't black and white when it comes to truth, but our hearts ought to weep for the wayward, our hearts ought to weep for false doctrine.

How many of you had a comment about the passing of Ruth Bader Ginsburg – maybe a sarcastic comment? Do you know what I thought? That she faces a holy God and the truth that she has denied during her life. And now, she very well, probably . . . again sometimes people get after you: “You don't know that Hitler didn’t repent!” C’mon! No, I don't know with $2+2 = 4$ certainty. But I think I can pretty much discern the context. It’s highly likely that she did not repent. So she faces a Christless eternity.

5. Be thankful that we don't get what we all deserve

Number five (this is so important): *Be thankful that we don't get what we all deserve.* Yeah Zophar could say, “Know then that God forgets a part of your iniquity,” Zophar could say that Job wasn't getting all he deserved. And Zophar twisted that accusation into a perverse, “Job you deserve worse for your sin . . .” Yes, there is a gradient of truth there, but Zophar misses that.

We should all be thankful, believers should all be thankful that we don't get all that we deserve in our sin, right? God's pure justice demands *death* for all sin. “The day you eat it you will die” (Genesis 2:17); “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). The other side of that is “The free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

There's a lot of talk about justice today. It's a defining word of our culture, social *justice*. And listen, we are to be considerate of justice in this life. In biblical terms, this is working on behalf of the orphans and the widows. Yes, we are not to turn a blind eye to that. But we have to be considerate of what eternal justice looks like. First and foremost, Mark 8:36, “What does it profit a man to gain the whole world [the whole world of justice?] and forfeit his soul?”

I may get in trouble, that's okay, I'll stand by this. While there's a veneer of righteousness in the BLM movement, underneath, I fear, there is a rotten core of godlessness. Certainly it has a Marxist identity along with a moral relativism, a relativism that embraces any supposed oppressed group, even if those groups revel in immorality. That's just the plain fact of the matter. Can you imagine showing up at a social justice rally preaching the gospel, that God's justice demands faith and repentance in Jesus Christ or you will face real justice eternity in hell? Show up and preach that message! See how many pat you on the back. Listen, we glorify Christ-rejecters as martyrs, believing that their unfair deaths – and some of them are unfair – but somehow those unfair deaths magically atone for their sin landing them in heaven. You die outside of Christ you are going to face a Christless eternity.

There is a greater justice we need to be concerned about. What did Jesus say, Matthew chapter 10 verse 28? “Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul.” Do you think that in Jesus' day those who killed the body always did so with perfect justice? Was Jesus death, from man's perspective, just? No, Jesus says, “Fear him who is able to destroy both soul

and body in hell.” For the believer, be thankful that we don't get what we all deserve. That's the message, that's the overarching message that needs to permeate our lives and ministry. Yes, uphold biblical justice. I mean, you have to have truth to hang your justice on – or it just becomes whim, popular opinion. Yes uphold biblical justice: fight for the orphan and the widow. But don't forget the gospel or you short-circuit the only hope anyone has to escape the eternal justice of God's wrath. God's justice, listen, God's justice fell on Christ that we could be spared. That's the only justice ultimately that I'm concerned about for my life. Not that I'm not concerned about other things, the way the government runs, the way we treat one another, but ultimately, from an eternal perspective, that's the justice I want, not at the justice I deserve, but the justice I get by grace.

6. *God's grace wins even when everything and everyone around us fails*

Number six, as we've said a few times, *God's grace wins even when everything and everyone around us fails*

7. *What a Friend we have in Jesus*

And then, number seven (we're out of time) . . . this is when I love to say this (those of you that know me have heard me say this): This is when John Calvin would say, “What a coincidence!” I say that tongue planted firmly in cheek. With that in mind, number seven: *What a Friend we have in Jesus*. Now, I had no idea that was going to be sung today! Frankly, it's not one of my favorite songs. Not that I hate it, but I am always concerned about this idea that, you know, “Jesus is my buddy” – and I've met people who said things, like along the lines of, “You know, when I get up in the morning and when I shave, Jesus appears right alongside with His arm around me.” This begs the question: “You know, if you're shaving and Jesus appears, do you just

say, ‘Hey buddy!’ or to you fall on your face because you're confronted with a holy God? Do you fall on your face and worship in awareness of your sin?”

But all that said, James 2:23 calls Abraham “a friend of God.” John 15:14 Jesus says “You are my friends if you do what I commanded you.” So *what a Friend we have in Jesus*. And in light of what has happened here with Job and Zophar, (and this is inspired Scripture), no doubt it has happened to many, many Christians and others throughout history – when they have had a friend be much less than a friend, they been accused of things that they haven't done, accused of things they have not said – and they wondered.

Job has to wonder; we don't know where his wife is. These three friends are not very encouraging. They don't seem to know about sympathy. But when that happens to us:

What a Friend, what a Mediator or Umpire, we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear.
What a privilege to carry,
Everything to God – everything to Him in prayer.
Are there heavy trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?
Well, let not your heart be discouraged.
Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend (unlike Zophar) who's so faithful,
Who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness,
Take it to the Lord in prayer.

Let's do that.

Thank you for this time that we have been able to spend together. This is been so agonizing for me, working through this passage, and am thankful for the freedom that you have given me – and that is a gift not my own – the freedom you've given me in sharing this morning. I stand with great fear and trepidation before I ascend the pulpit – every single time – and I've been doing this for years. And yet I know that if left to myself, I will speak error, I will speak

poorly, my thoughts will not flow. Lord, we give you the praise for helping me through this very difficult study in Job. Most of all, Lord, we thank you for Jesus Christ, the Friend that never fails us. The one who's always there. The author of the grace that's there when friends and circumstances seem to have gone south on us be. Thank you. In Jesus name, amen.

Job's First Reply to Zophar: Though He Slay Me I Will Trust Him (Part 1)
Job 12:1-13:2

March 14, 2021

Christ Church of Clarkson

0321Job12.1-13.2(16) | Audio Length: 54:30

I'm going to read from Job chapter 13. The passage we will get into today is going to be, for the most part, chapter 12, but I want to read from chapter 13, verses 13 through 16. These verses set so much of the theme and tenor of this section. Job chapter 13 beginning in verse 13 (Job speaking):

13 “Be silent before me so that I may speak; then let come on me what may. 14 “Why should I take my flesh in my teeth and put my life in my hands? 15 “Though He slay me, I will hope in Him. Nevertheless I will argue my ways before Him. 16 “This also will be my salvation, for a godless man may not come before His presence.¹⁰⁴

So Father, we ask that You would take this time that we spend looking in this marvelous book, the book of Job; as we look at some difficult things I pray Lord that above all You be glorified, that Your people would be edified and challenged, that we would learn, that we would be better equipped, as we face suffering and affliction, to be able to do it in a way that glorifies You. Bless, Lord, our time. We pray, Lord, for Your mercy and were thankful for it. To the praise of the glory of the grace of our Triune God we pray, amen.

A man of history

We are in Job chapters 12 through 14. Three chapters, 75 verses, consisting of Job's reply to Zophar, one of his three friends that spoke in chapter 11. So chapters 12 through 14 stand together as a unit. We're entitling this, "Job's First Reply to Zophar: Though He Slay Me I Will Trust Him." And that's what we saw in our reading in chapter 13. But before moving forward

¹⁰⁴Scripture citations are taken from the NAS95 unless otherwise noted.

into chapter 12, let's go back to the big picture, being mindful that this is a book about a man of history, a man named Job who lived some 4000 years ago, a man named Job who lived in an age of paganism, yet was a worshiper of Yahweh, a worshiper of the one true God. He's given a four-fold description in the very first verse of the book where he is called "blameless, upright, fearing God, and turning away from evil." We read in that same chapter that Job is a materially blessed man, that in an age when wealth was measured in livestock. He could lay claim to 7000 sheep, 3000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 female donkeys; along with that, he had a great many servants. Indeed, he is called in verse three, "the greatest of all the men of the East." He was blessed materially. He was also blessed with children. A wife and kids, seven sons and three daughters. So when we begin in the book of Job, we see that life is good. This is a blessed man. Life is going well. But always keep in mind as we begin in the book that Job does not know what is going on in heaven and the disaster that would soon afflict him. We, of course, are given a look behind the curtain at the reason for Job's affliction, reasons Job, as far as we know, never knew this side of heaven.

Overview

In Job chapter 1, verses 6 through 12, we're told that, "There was a day when the *bene Elohim* . . ." Here is a Hebrew word meaning "sons of God." This is an angelic counsel that came before the Lord—and there we see the use of the word, *Yahweh* (Anglicized to Jehovah, God's covenant name), "and Satan." And we noted that when Satan is mentioned in Job, it has the definite article: literally "the Satan came among them."

7 The LORD said to [the] Satan, "From where do you come?" Then [the] Satan answered the LORD and said, "From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it." 8 The LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him

on the earth, [here's a repeat of the four-fold description we saw in verse 1] a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil.”

The Satan responds to God and then says, to paraphrase, “Sure Job serves you. Job loves you because you have blessed him so greatly in material things. But (verse 11) put forth your hand, God, touch all that he has and he will surely curse you to your face.” God gives His consent and tells the Satan, “All that Job has is in your power. Only do not put forth your hand on him.” And with that the Satan departed from the Lord's presence. Then what follows is a description of the depths of Job's tragedy. Job, in a matter of hours, loses his wealth. He loses his workers (no doubt, many of them would've been his friends). And then, worst of all, worst of all, a parent's nightmare, he loses not one of his children, not five of his children, he loses all 10 of his children in what people commonly refer to as a “natural disaster” when a windstorm levels the house that they were in. Satan predicted cursing. Does Job curse God? No. Verse 21 of chapter 1, he cries out, “Naked I came from my mother's womb, naked I shall return there. The Lord gave, the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.” Satan predicts cursing; Job responds with blessing. And were told in verse 22 of chapter 1, that “through all this Job did not sin, nor did he blame God.” No wrong could be credited to God's account. Job trusted. At this point we know he wavers, but he trusted that somehow God was acting with purpose. Job didn't sin in balancing grief with worship. It was very real grief. It was tear stained worship. And above all, Job didn't sin in attributing his calamity to the sovereign hand of God.

Chapter 2 continues with another day. Chapter 2, verse one, “Again, there was a day when the sons of God [Hebrew *bene Elohim* referring to angels] came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan [the Satan, a word meaning “adversary”] also came among them to

present himself before the LORD.” We get a repeat of chapter one, verse 2, “ The LORD said to the Satan, ‘Where have you come from?’ Then the Satan answered the LORD and said, ‘From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it.’” It is so important that the author of the book of Job established Job's righteousness. Again, *blameless, upright, God-fearing, turning from evil*. But something new is added to the end of the verse, chapter 2 verse three, (God speaking): “and he still holds fast his integrity [Job still holds fast to his integrity] although you incited Me against him, to ruin him without cause.” Satan issues another challenge, ‘Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. However, put forth Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh; he will curse You to Your face.’ So the LORD said to [the] Satan, ‘Behold, he is in your power, only spare his life.’” We see this so often throughout this book: God is the one who is ultimately in control. We will talk a little bit about His sovereignty later, what that word means that God is in control. Chapter 2, verse 3, God speaking, and he tells Satan that “Satan you incited Me against Job.” God is in control, ultimately. We see in chapter 2, verse 5, where Satan says, “Put forth your hand, God, touch his bone and his flesh; he will curse you to your face.” God agrees: “Behold Job is in your power—only spare his life.” That's why we've said that Satan and the hosts of hell are on a leash, they are on God's leash, and God controls that leash according to His sovereign will. Well, Satan goes out and he afflicts Job with sores, bleeding, pus infected sores, from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. And Job takes a potsherd, a piece of broken pottery, to scrape his sores while sitting among the ashes. The implication is that Job at the town dump. The greatest of the men of the East now living among ashes and broken pottery, scraping his oozing sores with a potsherd.

Job's response to his wife who encourages him to give up, to curse God and die? What does Job say? "Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?"

Three friends hear of Job's calamity and they travel to see him. Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, Job's three friends. And what follows chapter 3 are three rounds of dialogue between Job and his friends. You have Eliphaz speaking as the oldest. Eliphaz speaks trying to correct this blameless man who really needs no correction, but they think that he is in sin. That's why calamity has come upon him because he's sinning. And so you have Eliphaz, and Job replies to Eliphaz. Then you have Bildad, then Job replies to Bildad, and you have so Zophar, and Job replies to Zophar. This happens—3 cycles: one, two, three. We mentioned that in the last cycle Zophar opts out. He is the youngest and he apparently gives up.

We mentioned that 83% of the book is a dialogue. These are conversations in poetic form in chapters 3 to 37. We heard from Eliphaz in chapters 4 and 5. Eliphaz, remember, argues largely from personal experience. "Well, this is what I have experienced, this is what I have seen. Therefore, it must be true." We called this the fallacy of anecdotal evidence. But Eliphaz, as far as the big picture is concerned, believes that bad things don't happen to good people (by "good" we're talking about someone who is righteous by faith in the one true God, as Job was) and so the assumption by Eliphaz is that bad things don't happen to those who are good. He sees that as a fixed rule of heaven for the three friends.

Job replies to Eliphaz in chapter 6 and 7. We summed that up by saying that *the light of the gospel cannot be extinguished by the despair of hopelessness*. Job still held onto faith, even though he was seemingly devoid of hope. It wasn't totally extinguished and he could say in chapter 6, verse 10, "This is still my consolation and I [note the word] *rejoice* in unsparing pain."

He's saying, "I still have some joy; I'm fighting for it." And he adds, "I have not denied the words of the Holy One."

We met Bildad the traditionalists in chapter 8. Bildad appeals to tradition as Eliphaz appeals to experience. Bildad appeals to tradition and he lives in a black and white world, like the other friends, no gradients, no nuances, no color to his theology. Job's children, who died, sinned—and that's why they died. Again, this cause and effect world where, in his theology, everything is binary, black or white, no room for we call what we called "the living color of the gospel." If you sinned then you're going to get punished; if you're being punished, if you're suffering, it's because you sinned.

We saw Job's response to Bildad in chapters 9 and 10. We spent three weeks on those two chapters in a series of messages entitled, "In the courtroom with God." Job pictures himself contending with God in a legal, courtroom setting. Yet Job knows he can't win and he resigns himself to loss (and ultimately to the fate of death). Job, speaking out of his suffering, says things that aren't true; he says things that are not accurate. And yet, we noted that this is what sufferers sometimes do. We said that *the windy words of a sufferer won't leave the believer condemned in the courtroom of God*. There are times when you're suffering and you want to charge God with fault. God knows your heart—even if you don't say it. And yet if you know Him, if you truly know Him, God will not condemn you.

Remember, in the middle of Job's anguish (9:32-33), Job cries out: "God is not a man as I am that I may answer Him, that we may go to court together. Oh, if only there were an umpire between us, who may lay his hand upon us both." 1 Timothy 2:5-6, we have that umpire, we have

that “Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time.”

Job’s Reply to Zophar

In chapter 11 we meet Zophar who’s the youngest. We see Zophar in his first speech, his first attempt to correct Job, and up we called this “Zophar’s Zingers: His First Reply to Job.” Twenty verses, consisting of his, again, attempt to correct this man that he believes is wayward. After all, he must be wayward; he’s suffering. That’s the assumption, remember? And I will review a little bit of chapter 11, but first let’s focus on our outline for chapters 12, 13, and 14. This is Job’s reply to Zophar, chapters 12, 13, and 14, Job’s reply to Zophar. Three points: 1) Job’s complaint against his friends; 2) Job’s confession of God’s sovereignty; and then, 3) Job’s cry to God for deliverance.

Job’s Complaint Against His Friends (12:1–12; 13:1–2)

Let’s look first at *Job’s complaint against his friends*. The very first words we see, the first three words of chapter 12, “**Then Job responded.**” Job responded. He replied. He responds to Zophar who was talking in Chapter 11, but beyond Zophar—and you see this in some the pronouns that are used in chapters 12 through 14—beyond Zophar Job is talking to the other two friends who, no doubt, are standing there and listening to Zophar’s words. This brings us back to the context of Chapter 11, because Job is responding to Zophar. But what did Zophar say in chapter 11? You might remember this quote from Old Testament scholar Robert Alden. He writes:

Zophar probably was the youngest of the three friends. He was impetuous, tactless, direct, unsympathetic . . . His speeches are the shortest; in fact, he has only two. His opening

speech contains three characteristic motifs: rebuke, remarks on God's sovereign justice, and advice.¹⁰⁵

Zophar basically makes 3 accusations against Job: 1) Job is guilty of sin; 2) Job is ignorant of God; 3) Job is stubborn in his refusal to repent. He's guilty; ignorant; stubborn.

Back to our first point back in chapter 12: Job's complaint against his friends. So verse one, Job responded. And what does he say here? We see Job's sarcasm in verse 2: **“Truly then you are the people, and with you wisdom will die!”** Hear those words again: “Truly then you are the people, and with you wisdom will die!” That phrase, **“the people”** relates to those who perceive themselves to be in the upper class of society. We have them today. That's always been the role, the perceived role, of those in charge. They think they're better than the rest of us, right? We call them “the cultural elite.” They know best. They fly around in jets and they tell us that we need to ride bicycles or take public transportation. They have their “values” which have little in common with biblical morality. And frankly, the cultural elite consists largely of narcissistic snobs. Job sarcastically lays this charge at the feet of his three friends, “Truly then you are the people. Wisdom will die with you.”

Job's epistemic equality

And Job goes on from that sarcasm to defend what I call his *epistemic equality*. What does “epistemic” mean? It's a word that relates to knowledge. When I did the worldview message a few weeks ago I talked about epistemology. That's the theory of knowledge: how we know, can we know, what to we know. Well, Job defends his *epistemic equality* when he says in verse three, **“But I have intelligence as well as you; I am not inferior to you. And who does not know**

¹⁰⁵Robert L. Alden, *Job, vol. 11, The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 141.

such things as these?” “I am as smart as you are.” In fact, some think that Job is using a figure of speech, *litotes*, in which he is actually saying, “I’m not just as intelligent as you are, I’m more intelligent than you are!” Remember, it was Zophar who, in 11:12 said, “An idiot will become intelligent when the foal of a wild donkey is born a man.” When a donkey gives birth to a man, then an idiot will become intelligent! But what was the implication? *Job you’re that idiot!* And Job is saying, “No, I have intelligence as well as you, I’m not your inferior when it comes to knowledge.” We see the same thought if you look over at 13:1-2. It’s a repeat of what we see in chapter 12:13. Job says, “Behold, my eye has seen all this, my ear has heard and understood it.” What you know I also know; I am not inferior to you.

Job the joker

Job continues with this sarcasm (back in chapter 12 verse four), **“I am a joke to my friends, the one who called on God and He answered him; the just and blameless man is a joke.”** *Look at me, the just man, the blameless man who suffered the loss of just about everything dear to him, now covered with sores, suffering physically in the town dump. Yes, the just and blameless man is a joke. I called on God and God answered me. Yeah right.”* It sounds like Job has lost all hope; he comes so close. He is the moth that flies so close to that flame of outer bankruptcy, of hopelessness; but he never quite gets there.

I know what that was like. I came so close with the loss of our daughter, so close to utter hopelessness, flying close to that flame. And while my wings would be singed, God would always find a way to pull me back.

Job hasn't lost all hope. In fact he says in chapter 13 verse 15a, “Though He slay me, I will hope in Him. . . .”

I may not know, but I know I may trust

In a sentence, the main idea of these three chapters is this, I may not know, but I know I may trust. *I may not know, but I know I may trust.* We see that in chapter 13 verse 15. It's true for Job. Listen, It's true for us. There's so much in life we don't know or understand. That's true as it relates to the hard things we read in the Bible. The Bible is very upfront when it comes to some things that cause us to wonder, "How could this be right?"

- The wholesale slaughter of the Canaanites by Israel in the Old Testament.
- The eternal torment for those who die outside of Christ.
- The existence of evil in light of a good, sovereign omnipotent God.

I may not know, but I know I may trust. I might not have all the answers, but God simply tells me, God simply tells you, to trust Him. "Trust Me."

You may be struggling right now. Maybe you're struggling with something in life. Maybe you're struggling with your faith. Maybe you have questions, hard questions. Maybe you have questions that you're afraid even bring up to another Christian for fear of what he or she might think. I know what that's like. I still struggle. But you know what? *I may not know, but I know I may trust.*

But we see that questioning, that doubting in Job. Job wonders why he suffers needlessly. And in words that remind me of Asaph in Psalm 73, Job says here in 12:5, "**He who is at ease holds calamity in contempt, as prepared for those whose feet slip.**" In other words, how easy it is for those whose life is good to point to someone who's suffering and say, "Well, they must've deserved it." And that's especially true when it comes to the righteous sufferer, the one who knows God. This side of the cross, one who is in Christ. It's especially true when we look at the prosperity of wicked people, those that hate God, those that mock Him and that seem to be

doing so well in life. Well, that's what this reminds me of Psalm 73, a Psalm of Asaph, He could say in his day in the Old Testament:

3 For I was envious of the arrogant as I saw the prosperity of the wicked. 4 For there are no pains in their death, and their body is fat. 5 They are not in trouble as other men . . .
9 They have set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue parades through the earth. 11 They say, "How does God know? And is there knowledge with the Most High?"
12 Behold, these are the wicked; and always at ease, they have increased in wealth.

In words that sound like Job, Asaph bemoaned:

13 Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure and washed my hands in innocence; 14 For I have been stricken all day long and chastened every morning.

That's Job here in chapter 12:6, "**The tents of the destroyers prosper** [could Job have in mind the *marauders* who plundered his estate and killed his servants in chapter 1?], **and those who provoke God are secure . . .**" [and that sounds like Asaph in Psalm 73]. But note that last phrase of v. 6, "**. . . Whom God brings into their power.**" That's the New American Standard. How does your translation render that last phrase of verse six, "whom God brings into their power"? It may be that Job is affirming that God is the one who blesses even evil men with strength ("whom God brings into their power"). But it's interesting because we have quite a difference in translation as represented, for example, by the English Standard Version, which translates this phrase, "who bring their god in their hand." There's a big difference between "whom God brings into their power" and "who bring their god in their hand." While the ESV translation is quite legitimate. It depends on how you point the Hebrew words, the vowel points; Hebrew was originally written totally consonantal and there were no vowels. The Massoretic scholars added vowel pointing at a later date. Well, if you change some of the vowel pointings you can get "who bring their god in their hand" or you can have "whom God brings into their power." But if it's

accurate, “who bring their god in their hand,” Job is talk about the godless who carry their idols, their gods, in their pockets. But either way, the question remains, why do idolaters prosper and the good people suffer. Why?

Well, back to Asaph and Psalm 73. Unlike Job, Asaph begins to see things from God's perspective. It's always helpful to have an eternal perspective, to have the perspective of Scripture, to have the mind of Christ as it relates to what you're going through, as it relates to your questions, your struggles. And Asaph gets there. And in Psalm 73 beginning in verse 16, he says: “When I pondered to understand this [why the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer], it was troublesome in my sight until I came into the sanctuary of God; Then I perceived their end. Surely You set them in slippery places; you cast them down to destruction.” In New Testament terms, those who refuse to repent: “These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.” (2 Thess. 1:9) Asaph came around. Asaph saw that. Job is not quite there . . . yet. So here is Job's complaint against his friends.

Job's Confession of God's Sovereignty (12:7–25)

The second main point: *Job's confession of God's sovereignty*. We've define this before and I always think it's good to repeat definitions and concepts: “God's sovereignty means that He is the King who is in complete control of His creation. His kingship encompasses the doctrines of predestination and providence.” That's what we mean when we talk about God's sovereignty. He is King; He is Lord. And He is king over all of His creation, and that encompasses that which He predestines, predetermines, which we read about throughout all of Scripture. I know some people don't like it (a lot of people don't; I find great comfort in God's predestinating sovereignty). But it encompasses His predestination, that which he predetermines, and His providence, how He

sovereignly orchestrates the happenings of life, including, believer, your life. Job is big on the sovereignty of God. We saw in chapter 1, verse 21, Job, after being attacked by these marauders, doesn't attribute his loss to them. No, he says, "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." In chapter 2, verse 10, he tells his wife, "Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept *ra*?" The Hebrew word *ra* means "distress, calamity, affliction, adversity." *Ra* is even translated "evil." So, "Shall we not indeed accept good from God and not accept evil?" Not that God *does* evil, but He is sovereign over evil. Chapter 9, verses four, five and six, again, on the sovereignty of God: "Wise in heart and mighty in strength, who has defied Him without harm? It is God who removes the mountains, they know not how, when He overturns them in His anger; Who shakes the earth out of its place, and its pillars tremble." Job knows God is sovereign. He is King. He is the boss. He is in control.

God is sovereign over the animal kingdom

He is sovereign over the animal kingdom, verses seven through nine. Job says, "**But now ask the beasts, and let them teach you; and the birds of the heavens, and let them tell you. Or speak to the earth, and let it teach you; and let the fish of the sea declare to you.**" Beasts, birds, the earth, fish. Let them tell you. Verse nine, "**Who among all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this?**" (I.e. "has brought about my calamity.") This is speaking in hyperbole, much like Jesus in Luke 19. Remember, when the crowds are praising him and the Pharisees say, "tell them to be quiet," and Jesus says, "What if I if I tell them to be quiet? If they quiet down, the stones will cry out!" Hyperbole. And that's what you see here. Even the beasts—hyperbolic language—even the beasts, the birds the earth, the fish, they know that God is sovereign, that he's done it. God is sovereign over the animal kingdom.

God is sovereign over mankind

God is also sovereign over mankind. Verse 10, **“In whose hand is the life of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind?”** In other words, it is God who defines the parameters of life. The Apostle Paul could rightly say to the Greek philosophers in Acts 17 “. . . in Him we live and move and exist. . . .” And then there's one thing that sets mankind apart from the animal creation, it's that God has given us the ability to reason. This is being created in God's image: we can reason, we can reflect on our thinking, we can think logically. And we see that, the rationality of man in verses 11 and 12.

Some commentators think these verses are out of place. Obviously, we don't buy that. We know the Holy Spirit dictated that they would be as He deemed fit. Verse 11, **“Does not the ear test words, as the palate tastes its food?”** And then another aphorism, another proverbial statement in verse 12, **“Wisdom is with aged men, with long life is understanding.”** So the ear tests words. The mouth tests food. You know the difference between the shrieking of a child, and the sound of— the comforting sound of— a symphony Orchestra. And the same thing with taste. You know the difference between something that tastes pleasantly sweet as opposed to something that is repulsive; the bitter or vile. And Job's words, **“Wisdom is with the aged men, and with long life is understanding.”** This may be a little bit of a jab. Zophar, so far as we can tell, is the youngest one; youth speaking. And Job may very well be reminding him that as we grow older we grow wiser, at least we ought to.

And so to sum up this as we transition to God's sovereignty over world affairs (that will bring us the end of chapter 12). Swindoll writes this:

“Job declares, ‘It is all about our God! It is the inscrutable, Almighty God who is in charge of all things. Don’t you think I know that?’ . . . ‘The God I serve takes delight in undoing human activities and in dismantling human enterprises, and in the process, executing His miraculous undertakings. He alone is in full control!’”¹⁰⁶

Some scholars think that verses 13 through 25 of chapter 12 make up a hymn—obviously, it's poetic—but actually make up a hymn, a poetic song reflecting on God's wisdom and power. However, I found it interesting that one commentator accuses Job of describing “an eccentric Deity that cannot be comprehended and cannot be tamed.”¹⁰⁷ Well, I don't know about the eccentric part. Job's words, as we shall see, are strong, but not without biblical parallel. They are strong; they *could* be interpreted as ascribing capriciousness to a sovereign God and divorcing that from God's love. That's possible; you could interpret it that way. I don't think I do. I think there is certainly much more to the picture in Job's words here in chapter 12.

Personal autonomy is worthless

But we see, even with Job statement—and you gotta catch how verses 12 and 13 connect together—verse 12, what does that say? **“Wisdom is with the aged man; with long life is understanding”** And Job says, in verse 13, **“With God are wisdom and might. To Him belong counsel and understanding.”** Thus, any commitment to personal autonomy is worthless. Yet, people can be wise, but their wisdom is ultimately dependent upon God's; we stand upon the foundation of Scripture. We don't say we're autonomous. That's the way the world is. The world says, “I am autonomous and totally independent. I'm rational, and I will think what I will think as I see fit.” No, that's not the worldview of a Christian. There is really is no such thing as totally

¹⁰⁶Swindoll, *Job*, 117.

¹⁰⁷David J. A. Clines, “*Job*,” in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 469.

independent thought. People think there is, but ultimately everything depends on God, and we base what we think on His wisdom. **“With Him** (verse 13 says) **are wisdom and might.”** But to pursue autonomy is the plight of naturalism. Remember the worldview message I gave a few weeks back: five areas of life that inform everyone's worldview (that is, what they think about the world that should impact how they live). Everybody has a worldview. And the five areas that inform everyone's worldview: 1) Knowledge (Can we know? Can you know? How do you know? What is knowledge?); 2) God (what you believe about God); 3) Ultimate reality, or metaphysics; 4) Morality; and 5) Humanity. Knowledge, God, ultimate reality, morality, humanity. These things define your view of life. And as I mentioned, believers need to have a thoroughly biblical worldview, a worldview grounded in the truth of Scripture. And we see in verse 13, **“With Him [with God] are wisdom and might; to Him belong counsel and understanding.”** This is why, brethren, we refer to God's Word as our axiom. Our fundamental, foundational presupposition is that this is inspired, it's inerrant, and it contains the very thought of our God (verbal, verbally propositional) It's the foundation for all truth. The direct words of Scripture, the logical consequences of those words direct our lives.

So Job rightly begins with God's wisdom; that's the standard. We can't function independent of God's wisdom, God's thought. And from the foundation of God's wisdom here in chapter 12, Job moves to God's inscrutable majestic sovereignty. Remember, we said God's sovereignty means He is King who is in complete control of His creation. And that kingship encompasses the doctrines of predestination and providence. That's what we see here in verses 14 and following.

Verses 14-25

We are going to read through these verses. I'll comment on a few of them. But just catch the punch behind the statements. Verse 14, **“Behold, He tears down, and it cannot be rebuilt; He imprisons a man, and there can be no release.”** 15 **“Behold, He restrains the waters, and they dry up; and He sends them out, and they inundate the earth.”** And in the first part of verse 16, which forms an *inclusio* with verse 13 (bookends that thought). Verse 16, **“With Him are strength and sound wisdom . . .”** And what did we see in verse 13? **“With Him are wisdom and might . . .”** So it's reversed. *With Him are strength* first, *sound wisdom*, second. And then he says in verse 16, **“. . . The misled and the misleader belong to Him.”** One writer says, “Deception is everywhere, and it is all under God's control.”¹⁰⁸ **“The misled and the misleader belong to Him.”** Verse 17, **“He makes counselors [like Job's friends] walk barefoot [a sign of poverty or grief] and makes fools of judges.”**

Now, here we come to another translation issue. In verse 18, hear the New American Standard: **“He loosens the bond of kings, and binds their loins with the girdle.”** Compare the New International Version: “He takes off the shackles put on by kings, and ties a loincloth around their waist.” It may be that Job is saying that God removes the authority and the prestige that kings possess, and clothes them instead with a loincloth, symbolic of a mere slave. The United Bible Society Handbook on translation puts it this way, “God takes away the authority of kings, and makes them like slaves.” Well that is what God does. He is sovereign over the nations. He is sovereign over kings. He sovereign over presidents. Daniel 2:21, Daniel says, “It is He who

¹⁰⁸Robert L. Alden, *Job, vol. 11, The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 153.

changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings . . .” And when Nebuchadnezzar came to his senses in chapter 4 verse 35, that King of Babylon said this, “All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth; and no one can ward off His hand Or say to Him, ‘What have You done?’” He is King; He is Lord.

Verse 19, “**He makes priests walk barefoot** [we saw that verse 17, a sign of poverty, a sign of grief], **and overthrows the secure ones.**” Verse 20, “**He deprives the trusted ones of speech and takes away the discernment of the elders.**” *Discernment of the elders*, even those elders that ought to have wisdom and understanding, verse 12. It's interesting that the word translated “discernment” is the Hebrew word for “taste.” And, of course, tasting something is discerning something. “Here, try this pudding, see if you like it.” Or better for me, “try this pizza, anchovy pizza.” Yeah wonderful! Anchovies were devised by Italians so that non-Italians wouldn't like it and there would be more for us! Discern with the palate. And He takes away that discernment of the elders.

Verses 21 through 25:

- 21 **“He pours contempt on nobles and loosens the belt of the strong.**
- 22 **He reveals mysteries from the darkness and brings the deep darkness into light.**
- 23 **He makes the nations great, then destroys them; He enlarges the nations, then leads them away. [Daniel 2:21?]**
- 24 **“He deprives of intelligence the chiefs of the earth's people and makes them wander in a pathless waste.”**

That verse, verse 24, the Psalmist may have had in mind. The Psalmist in Psalm 107:40 (compare this), Psalm 107:40 “He pours contempt upon princes and makes them wander in a pathless

waste.” Similar concept. Verse 25, **“They”** [that is, those of verse 24], **“grope in the darkness with no light and He makes them stagger like a drunken man.”** Wow!

Well, take a deep breath. Check your pulse. Are you still with me? What we do with all this? Well, it sure sounds like God is the one who is in ultimate control—no matter what; who can resist Him then? How can we be accountable if God does what He wants? It's interesting because the Bible answers that question doesn't it? In the New Testament, Romans chapter 9? These are some of the hard things. We go back to *I may not know, but I know I may trust*. Romans 9 says that, “God has mercy on whom He desires and He hardens whom he desires;” that in the context of the Pharaoh. Paul anticipates the response that people have been responding with, this issue of God's absolute sovereignty, for millennia. “You will say to me then,” this is Paul speaking, “You will say to me then why does He still find fault for who resist His will?” What does Paul say? “Well, really it's just foreknowledge. God looks ahead, sees what people will do and He lets them do what they do and that's how He predestined.” Is that what Paul says? No, he doubles down, he doubles down on God's sovereignty:

18 So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires. 19 You will say to me then, “Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?” 20 On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, “Why did you make me like this,” will it? 21 Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use? 22 What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? 23 And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, 24 even us, whom He also called . . . [called to salvation]

God's sovereign; God's merciful. Be thankful if you're a vessel of mercy. Yes, we are created in His image; we are accountable; we still make choices. No theologian would deny that. We're

accountable for those decisions we make, but those choices are going to be consistent with our nature. If we don't know Jesus Christ, if we have not the Holy Spirit, we are what we call in theology *totally depraved*. We will make choices that are ultimately consistent with that depravity. If we have the Holy Spirit we're new creation in Christ. Our choices ought to be according to the new man. God always acts consistent with *His* nature.

Now some of this, as we see the things that men do (kings, for example), and what God does, some of this relates to the theological doctrine of *concuris Dei*. Commonly just called the doctrine of *concurrence*. Dr. Wayne Grudem, research professor of theology at my alma mater, Phoenix Seminary, defines concurrence in his Systematic Theology as “[God’s cooperation] with created things in every action, directing their distinctive properties to cause them to act as they do.” As it relates to us, we make choices. There are choices. But God stands over them to use as He desires to bring about His perfect will. Psalm 135:6, “Whatever the LORD pleases, He does, in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps.” Ephesians 1:11, “Also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will.” He is the one that holds the keys of life and death. He is the one that Job appeal to for mercy. In chapter 13, “Though He slay me, I will hope in Him.” *We may not know, but we know that we may trust*. God simply says, “trust,” and that begins with trusting Him for your eternal destiny. You see, the gospel (*eungellion*) means “good news.” The good news answers the question, “How can a sinful man who is destined for God's wrath be forgiven and restored to peace with God so that he may worship and enjoy Him forever?” The gospel answers that question. It is solely through—this side of the cross—solely through faith in Jesus Christ. Trusting in Him. And as a result of that trust, turning from your sin and disobedience to follow

after Jesus Christ. It comes by grace, God's grace, through faith, belief in Jesus Christ alone, saying, "He took the penalty that I deserved, God's wrath fell upon Him, but it should fall upon me. Wretched man that I am! Where is my hope; who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ." If you haven't come to Him, all I can do is pray that the Holy Spirit will open your heart to see the need, knowing that you will either stand before holy God clothed in your sin or you will stand before Him clothed in the righteousness of Christ. The only way whereby He may say, "Not guilty! Paid for by the Son of God, paid for by the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." As the hymn writer so well said:

"For nothing good have I
Whereby Thy grace to claim.
I'll wash my garments white
In the blood of Calvary's Lamb.
Jesus paid it all,
All to Him I owe;
Sin had left a crimson stain
He washed it white as snow."¹⁰⁹

*So Father, we thank You for this time in this book, which can be challenging; challenging to teach, challenging to read at times, it's certainly challenging to try to preach. I thank you, Lord, for the—hopefully, optimistically—the clarity, that You have given me in the patience of my peers. I pray, Lord, for those that are suffering. If they're not suffering, they have suffered, or they're going to be going into a time of suffering. May we learn from this book, may we know that it is true that, **I may not understand, I may not know, but I may trust.** It behooves us to simply trust You, trust in You with all our hearts, leaning not on our own understanding, but acknowledging You in all of our ways as You direct our paths.*

¹⁰⁹Hymn, "Jesus Paid It All."

I pray for anyone within the sound of my voice who is not in Christ. You are calling out a people for Your possession, and, Lord, it would be such a joy to know that through the ministry of this church, through the proclamation of your Word, that You have brought someone out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of the light of Jesus Christ. To do so to Your glory and to our joy. These things we pray in Christ name.

Job's First Reply to Zophar: Though He Slay Me I Will Trust Him (Part 2)

Job 13:3-14:22

March 28, 2021

Christ Church of Clarkson

0321Job13.3-14:22(17) | Audio Length: 46:57

Job chapter 13. We're actually covering, Lord willing, verses from chapters 13 and 14. So turn to Job chapter 13; we're going to read verses 13 through 16. Follow along with me as I read (Job speaking),

13 "Be silent before me so that I may speak; then let come on me what may. 14 "Why should I take my flesh in my teeth and put my life in my hands? 15 "Though He slay me, I will hope in Him. Nevertheless I will argue my ways before Him. 16 "This also will be my salvation, for a godless man may not come before His presence."¹¹⁰

You're probably familiar with, out of the New Testament, Luke 13:1-5. Luke records that:

1 Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to [Jesus] about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. 2 And Jesus said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered this fate? 3 "I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. 4 "Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem? 5 "I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

In this passage, Jesus cites two historic circumstances about calamity. The first about some Galileans who were killed by Pilate while they were offering sacrifices. The second about 18 seemingly innocent people, bystanders near Jerusalem, who were killed when a tower collapsed on top of them. But what's the point? The point is we live in a fallen world. Therefore, tragedy is no respecter of persons. Living or dying in this life is not a measure of a person's righteousness or lack thereof. So Jesus says, "Unless you repent you will all likewise perish." In other words, there is a greater calamity that will fall upon those who do not repent – in the next life. Yes, we live

¹¹⁰Scripture citations are taken from the NAS95 unless otherwise noted.

in a fallen world; tragedy is no respecter of persons. But that wasn't the worldview of Job and his three friends.

Maybe you've heard that old nursery rhyme:

There was a crooked man, and he went a crooked mile,
He found a crooked sixpence against a crooked stile:
He bought a crooked cat, which caught a crooked mouse,
And they all lived together in a crooked little house.

Job's three friends had a crooked theology, crooked doctrine. It was a perverted “reap what you sow” theology of divine punishment or blessing based exclusively on whether you were good or bad. Bad things happen to bad people, without exception, a fixed rule of heaven for Job and his three friends. And if you're suffering you did something to deserve it. You must have sinned. You see, that's a crooked theology. One writer correctly observes: “Any theology that does not have room for Job’s experience, that of a righteous man who is suffering, is a lie, and it is shocking that lies should be spoken about God.”¹¹¹

Though He Slay Me, I Will Trust Him

Well, Zophar spoke lies about God and about Job in Chapter 11. Job replies to Zophar in chapters 12, 13, and 14. So here we are this morning in part two of Job's First Reply to Zophar: *Though He Slay Me, I Will Trust Him*. That subtitle, *Though He Slay Me, I Will Trust Him* comes almost literally from chapter 13, verse 15: “Though He slay me, I will hope in Him.”
I may not know, but I know I may trust

Our main idea for these chapters is this, *I may not know, but I know I may trust*. That's what it comes down to for Job. I may not know. There are a lot of things we don't know or things

¹¹¹David J. A. Clines, *Job,* in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 469.

we don't understand. When we suffer, for example, we may not know why: “Why now? Why me? Why in this way?” We may have questions. When you have questions about God's Word, about God Himself, questions that we have a hard time answering or accepting, the answer to – and what the bottom line is – *you may not know, but know that you may trust*. God says simply “trust Me.”

As far as our outline is concerned, there are three main points from last time and for this time. We looked at Job's Complaint Against His Friends. Secondly, Job's Confession of God's Sovereignty. And thirdly, Job's Cry for Deliverance. The two points we looked at last time.

The first one was Job's Complaint Against His Friends. And you know how Job begins in chapter 12 with a bit of sarcasm, Job's response chapter 12, verse one, “Then Job responded, 2 ‘truly then you are the people, and with you wisdom will die!’” I read that sarcastically because I believe that was the tone of Job's intent here: *You are the people and with you wisdom will die!* And Job goes on from there to defend his *epistemic equality*, the fact that he was not inferior to them when it comes to knowledge. And he says in verse three, “I have intelligence as well as you.” I'm not inferior to you. “And who does not know such things as these?” And he echoes that same thought in chapter 13 verses one and two, where he says, “Behold, my eye has seen all of this, my ears heard and understood. What you know I also know. I'm not inferior to you.” Job defends his epistemic equality. Job is saying, “I know, I understand.”

And then Job goes on to give his confession of God's sovereignty. We looked at that last time; chapter 12, versus 7 through 25. And we defined God's sovereignty as the fact that He is King, God is King, He's sovereign, in control of His creation. His kingship encompasses the doctrines of predestination and providence. When we talk about God being sovereign we're

simply saying He is Lord, He is Master. As Almighty God, He has predetermined what comes to pass. As Almighty God, He works in time by virtue of His providence in orchestrating the happenings of the universe, the happenings of your very lives. And so verses 7 through 25 are a powerful commentary on God's absolute sovereignty over all His creation.

Job's Cry to God for Deliverance (13:3–14:22)

That brings us to the third point that we'll focus on for the rest of our time: Job's Cry to God for Deliverance. There are four sub-points:

- A. The Elusivity of God (13:3-28)
- B. The Brevity of Life (14:1–6)
- C. The Finality of Death (14:7–17)
- D. The Fragility of Hope (14:18–22)

The Elusivity of God, God is elusive; The Brevity of Life, life is brief; The Finality of Death, death is final; The Paucity of Hope, hope seems to almost not be there, it's in short supply.

The elusivity of God (13:3-28)

So look with me at first, the Elusivity of God. For Job, God seems elusive. And the first thing we see here is Job's desire, he expresses his desire, chapter 13, verse three, **“But I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to argue with God.”** *I would speak to the Almighty and I have a desire to argue, to give a defense of myself before God.*

I want you to note two implications out of this one verse. Number one: *God is personal.* This is very important. The Bible teaches a personal God. Job could say, “I would speak to *Shaddai*,” the Hebrew word for “Almighty.” This is God who is transcendent, God who is Almighty. He is transcendent over all of His creation. Yet even two millennia before the advent of Jesus Christ we see that God is imminent as well. He is personal. Unlike the mindless gods of the pagans, He can be spoken to. We can communicate with God, even after the fall:

8 They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. 9 Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, “Where are you?” 10 He said, “I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself.”¹¹²

A dialogue follows . . .

Even in our fallenness we can communicate with God. We have a personal living God and the way for us is opened by the veil of Jesus Christ. That the veil of the temple that was torn in two shows we can communicate with God, we can fellowship with Him. God is personal.

We also see from this verse that *God is approachable*. Job says, “**I desire to argue with God.**” Remember, Job has just finished expressing his belief in God's absolute sovereignty in the previous chapter (verses 13 to 25), a passage where he says things such as:

- God tears down and it cannot be rebuilt.
- With Him are strength and sound wisdom.
- The misled and the misleader belong to Him.
- He makes the nations great, then destroys them.

Job knows that his argument isn't ultimately with men, not ultimately. He knows that his argument (so-called) is with a sovereign God.

But why argue with God when He does what He pleases? Why pray, asking for things, when He is sovereign? We do so because He is personal, He is approachable. We pray because He is sovereign. In reality, yes, God does what He wills, but He wills to hear from you, believer, to even hear your questions, your hurts, your honest complaints, your laments (like Job in chapter three). God uses our prayers. He hears our pleas. We're told in the New Testament that we can grieve the third member of the Trinity, the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. We're

¹¹²Genesis 3:8–10.

warned against grieving the Holy Spirit by what we do, by what we say. So we interact with God on a personal level. Yes, He works in eternity, but He relates to us in time. He desires a relationship with us, contrary to false religions like pantheistic new age philosophies. God is *personal* and God is *approachable*. And so Job could say, **“I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to argue with God.”** Job is being brutally honest. One writer says: “The language is thoroughly legal and formal, but, as in Israelite legal practice generally, the point of the legal process Job envisages here is not so much the winning of a dispute as the settlement of a disagreement.”¹¹³

The settlement of a disagreement.

Listen to Job. Later in chapter 14, verse 15, he says in his talking to God, **“You will call, and I will answer You; You will long for the work of Your hands.”** Again, God is personal, God is approachable. We have a relationship with Him through Jesus Christ. As St. Augustine said, “You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in You.” It is only in God that our restless hearts can rest. Jesus, in Matthew 11:28, “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.”

This is Job's desire to speak – even argue with God. Yet Job finds himself in a *dilemma*. The dilemma is in chapter 13, verses 17 to 23. For Job there is still a sense in which God is elusive, but in verse 17 of chapter 13, he says, **“Listen carefully to my speech, and let my declaration fill your ears.”** Using courtroom language we have become familiar with, verse 18, **“Behold now, I have prepared my case; I know that I will be vindicated.”** That word “vindicated” in verse 18 is translated “right” in chapter 9, verse 15, “For though I were *right*, I

¹¹³Clines, *Word Biblical Commentary*.

could not answer [Him] . . .” You see, the idea is to be innocent of wrong, to be not guilty, to be exonerated in a courtroom of law. And then as he speaks directly to God. Look at verse 20, **“Only two things do not do to me, then I will not hide from Your face: 21 Remove Your hand from me, and let not the dread of You terrify me.”** Two things Job asked for. And if you're using, as I am, the New American Standard, it almost makes it sound like Job doesn't want God to remove his hand from him. I don't think that's the case. Other versions remove this ambiguity. Listen to the English Standard Version (I know many of you use that version – it's a very good translation of the Scriptures). The English Standard Version has this in verse 21, **“Only grant me two things, then I will not hide myself from your face: withdraw your hand far from me, and let not dread of you terrify me.”** The next verse, **“Then call, and I will answer; or let me speak, then reply to me.”** Job goes on to say (verse 23a), **“How many are my iniquities and sins . . .”** He's not saying that there are many, he is just saying, “You know, where are they?” Verse 23b, **“ . . . make them known to me, my rebellion and my sin.”**

Job accuses God of hiding from him in verses 24 and 25, **“Why do You hide Your face and consider me Your enemy? 25 Will You cause a driven leaf to tremble? Or will You pursue the dry chaff?”** *Why do you frighten me and make me like a dry leaf blown from a tree, and chase me like straw blown by the wind?* Job is saying to God, “You like a judge who keeps a record of my wrongs.” Verse 26, **“For You write bitter things against me and make me to inherit the iniquities of my youth.”** It's as if Job were saying that God was remembering the stupid things he did as a kid. We all have stories of the foolish things we did when we were young. Job says, “No, those things have been forgiven, but it seems like You're bringing them back up.” **“You put my feet in the stocks,”** verse 27, **“and watch on my path. You set a limit**

for the soles of my feet.” Meanwhile, verse 28, **“While I am decaying like a rotten thing, like a garment that is moth-eaten.”**

You know, it's interesting, Job never again directs a word to God until his closing speech in chapter 30. He will accuse God of being inaccessible (23:3), but he will not speak directly to Him again. Apparently, this means that Job has said all he wants to as far as God is concerned.

So we see *Job's desire* to speak with God, to even argue with Him. Chapter 13, verse three, we see *Job's dilemma*, that he can't apprehend this God in chapter 13, verses 17 to 23. And we see *Job's disgust* in chapter 13, verses 4 through 14; Job's disgust with the counsel of his three friends, especially Zophar. Job calls them liars and worthless physicians. In verse four he wishes that they would do as they did when they first arrived: say nothing. Verse five, that would be their wisdom to say nothing. Proverbs 17:28, “Even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise.” Job asks his friends to hear him out in verse six, then asks them a series of questions in verses seven through 11 of chapter 13. Count them:

7 **“Will you speak what is unjust for God, and speak what is deceitful for Him?”**

8a **“Will you show partiality for Him?”**

8b **“Will you contend for God?”** (In other words, you are standing in God's place, misrepresenting Him.)

9a **“Will it be well when He examines you?”** (Talk about “putting the shoe on the other foot.”)

9b **“Or will you deceive Him as one deceives a man?”** (How would you fare under His scrutiny? You think you can trick Him?)

11a **“Will not His majesty terrify you, and the dread of Him fall on you?”**

10 **“He will surely reprove you if you secretly show partiality.”**

And that is what God did, He reproved them, He admonished them. Chapter 42, verse seven, where “. . . LORD said . . . ‘My wrath is kindled against you [Eliphaz] and against your two friends, because you have not spoken of Me what is right as My servant Job has.’”

And then look at verse 12 of chapter 13. Job is sitting among the ashes and broken pottery at the town dump and what does he say? **“Your memorable sayings are proverbs of ashes, your defenses are defenses of clay.”** You can picture Job grabbing a handful of ashes from his perch at the dump, letting them sift through his fingers, or picking up a broken piece of pottery as an illustration of their broken words of supposed wisdom. This is Job's cry to God for deliverance. The elusivity of God, God seems elusive.

The next three points hang together: The *brevity of life*, the *finality of death* and the *fragility of hope*. Think about that: life is brief, death is final, hope is fragile. In other words, if you're suffering under the worst possible conditions you could ever imagine, as Job was, if you realize that life is but a vapor, you're here one day gone the next, and you think that life – this earthly life – is the bitter end (and that's it), then you're going to have a very fragile hope. And that's where Job is right now.

The brevity of life

That brings us to chapter 14. Again, the *brevity of life*. We see this in Scripture, this emphasis. It's even a warning to us that life is short. The span of even the longest of our lives, whether you live to be 70 – even if you make 100 – is very short. It's brief, it's nothing in light of eternity. Job said in chapter 7, verse six, Job in 7:6, “My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle, and come to an end without hope.” Bildad in 8:9, “For we are only of yesterday and know nothing, because our days on earth are as a shadow.” Moses in Psalm 90:10, “As for the days of our life, they contain seventy years, or if due to strength, eighty years, yet their pride is but labor and sorrow; for soon it is gone and we fly away.” David in 1 Chronicles 29:15, “. . . our days on the earth are like a shadow, and there is no hope.” Isaiah in 40:7, “The grass withers, the flower

fades, when the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people are grass.” James in James 4:14, “. . . You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.” Our lives are a puff of dissipating smoke – or a vapor. In our culture, when you're young (unless you witness the death of a young person) you don't understand this. But as you get older you see that life, apart from hope, is dreary, dismal, and depressing. *Life, apart from hope, is dreary, dismal, and depressing.* Life apart from Jesus Christ would be (believer, right?) dismal, dreary and depressing. And so Job says in verse one of chapter 14, **“Man, who is born of woman, is short-lived and full of turmoil.”** Our days are too few and our troubles are many! Verse two, **“Like a flower he comes forth and withers. He also flees like a shadow and does not remain.”** That is quite the picture of a span of life: It's like watching a shadow move across some trees, like watching flowers that bloom one day, but in the span of a few days have withered away and died.

I've said it before; it's a good illustration. It's like we're on a conveyor belt, that we're all lined up and this belt is moving, it's moving toward death. And babies pop up over here and the elderly drop off over there. And you remember when you were young, when you were over here. You remember having grandparents, but you watch them fall off, your grandparents fall off! And we shuttle along. And you notice every so often that while that drop off point is getting closer, every so often somebody gets pushed off prematurely. You don't expect it, but it happens. You lose your parents – and then you wonder, “Am I down to my last 20 or 30 years on this earth?” But it wasn't that long ago that I was over there! I have pictures; I can show you pictures of a cute little Tony, a cute little baby, young boy Tony. So you move along.

The picture from nature is that which is in the Bible: a life cycle of flowers and moving shadows. And that's what we see in verse two. Here in Western New York we see those sorts of things. Even looking at the seasons and the change of seasons that we have here. You look at spring which is like birth. It's like young age. You look at some of the vibrancy of life in summer and fall. And then you go into the winter of life. And you watch how the plants follow that curve.

I love spring because I love seeing the flowers popping up. Watch it this year. Watch the vegetation, watch the corn in the fields, watch the trees, they start to get age spots, don't they? They get age spots and they start to wrinkle up. And frankly, if we live long enough we get age spots and we wrinkle up. And then the leaves fall off and it looks like the tree has died, but then we start that cycle all over again. But each time you see that just think about the brevity of life. Life is a vapor.

Yet God is sovereign over the days that He has ordained for us. And we see that in verses five and six, **“Since his days are determined, the number of his months is with You; and his limits You have set so that he cannot pass. Turn Your gaze from him that he may rest, until he fulfills his day like a hired man.”** Neither you nor I will live one day longer than God has ordained. My daughter, at the age of 14, lived out the days that were ordained for her. We each have an appointment with death, and barring the return of Jesus Christ, it's an appointment we cannot avoid. David in Psalm 139, verse 16, speaking to God says, “. . . in Your book were all written The days that were [past tense] ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them.” God is sovereign over the span of your life. God is sovereign. As Job later says in chapter 23, verse 13, “But He is unique and who can turn Him? And what His soul desires, that He does.” 14

“For He performs what is appointed for me, and many such decrees are with Him.” So we are to live our lives in light of the brevity of life.

In light of the fact that we have an appointment with death, how shall we live well? David in Psalm 39, verse four, “LORD, make me to know my end and what is the extent of my days; let me know how transient I am.” Lord, make me to know my end, to be mindful of the transitory nature of this life. Make me know my end and what is the extent of my days. Let me know how transient I am. We take for granted the fact that we will still be alive tomorrow. Go through the obituaries some time. You see all the lives, mostly older people. But you see middle-age people, you see infants, you see young people.

The finality of death

What follows the *brevity of life* is the *finality of death*. Job draws a contrast between a felled tree and humanity in verses seven and eight. He says, 7 **“For there is hope for a tree, when it is cut down [the implication the others more hope for tree than for Job], that it will sprout again, and its shoots will not fail. 8 Though its roots grow old in the ground and its stump dies in the dry soil, 9 at the scent of water it will flourish and put forth sprigs like a plant.** You've seen that as I have. A tree is cut down leaving the stump and soon sprigs start coming out. Job saying there's more hope for a felled tree than for people who die. David Clines in his critical commentary on Job says this:

There may be some allusion to a practice . . . of cutting down old fig trees, walnuts and pomegranates, as well as vines that have ceased to bear good fruit; the stumps if watered put out new shoots the following year and subsequently bear good crops. [One of the ancient writers] speaks also of the laurel as keeping its life even when the trunk is cut

down (Pliny, Hist. nat. 15.30). For a tree, death brings new life—at least that is the hope.”¹¹⁴

That's a hope that Job waives in for himself.

In verse 10 he says, **“But man dies and lies prostrate. Man expires, and where is he?”** Man is cut down and where is he? His body lies in the ground. Verse twelve, **“... man lies down and does not rise. Until the heavens are no longer, he will not awake nor be aroused out of his sleep.”** It sounds like Job believes that once you're dead, you're dead. That's the end, you just cease to exist. Ecclesiastes 9:5 echoes that, “For the living know they will die; but the dead do not know anything, nor have they any longer a reward, for their memory is forgotten.” Pretty dreary. In verse 21 of chapter 14, he says, **“His sons [the dead man's sons] achieve honor, but he does not know it; or they become insignificant, but he does not perceive it.”** It sounds like the dead, they don't know what's going on.

It's all about context. Job doesn't really think death is the end. Job hopes for a future eternal fellowship with his God. You see that verse 13, *“Oh that You would hide me in Sheol [the grave or the place of departed spirits],* **that You would conceal me until Your wrath returns to You, that You would set a limit for me and remember me!”**

Then in verse 14 I think Job asks optimistically **“If a man dies, will he live again? All the days of my struggle I will wait until my change comes.”** “Until my change comes” is a military metaphor. Job pictures himself standing at his post in Sheol, waiting to be relieved of duty – maybe having the resurrection in mind. He later says in chapter 19 (a wonderful, wonderful statement about future resurrection) chapter 19, verse 26, 26 “Even after my skin is

¹¹⁴Clines, *Word Biblical Commentary*.

destroyed, yet from my flesh I shall see God; 27 Whom I myself shall behold, and whom my eyes will see and not another. My heart faints within me!”

Job is painting a picture back here in chapter 14 that sounds like death is it; when you're dead it's done. He may be longing for that. It's like when we're suffering and we're thinking about getting out of the circumstances we are in. We say, “I'd just like to take a dirt nap.” And you may say that not even thinking about being with the Lord at that time because you're struggling so much you're uttering these windy words. But you know that's not true. Job knows that's not true. He says in verse 15 (he's talking to God), **“You will call, and I will answer You; You will long for the work of Your hands.”**

The fragility of hope

Our last point: *the fragility of hope*. And here we see two important sub-points: We see *Job's despair* and *Job's determination* under *the fragility of hope*. We see *Job's despair* and *Job's determination*.

First. *Job's despair*. Verse 18, catch the picture here in verses 18 and 19, **“But the falling mountain crumbles away, and the rock moves from its place; water wears away stones, its torrents wash away the dust of the earth; so You destroy man's hope.”** This is a picture of erosion; it's a picture of something going from good to bad, optimism and pessimism. And what does Job say in verse 19? **“So you destroy man's hope.”** That is some accusation to say to God, *You destroy man's hope*. Have you ever been there? You feel like, “You know, Lord, You are going to do what You do; and you crush me under Your fingers and destroy my hope.”

I was thinking about the time shortly before the drunk driver hit us taking Giana's life. I had a circumstance where we were gathered in prayer with some other friends over the damage

done to us. And I believed that this humble cry to God would result in peace. I believed that. I was wrong. I think of all the times when Giana was in the hospital and in rehab. I prayed believing, hoping, that God would heal her. We were joined by countless others. He did not heal her – not in this life. Instead, He took her home with Him in June, 2016.

Yet during those down times, those times of excruciatingly painful disappointment, something within us may cry out, “You destroy man's hope.” The windy words of the sufferer. But it's despair. Despair we have shared in, but it doesn't end there, it doesn't end there for me. It doesn't end there for you. It doesn't end there for Job.

So we see *Job's despair*. But go back to chapter 13 and we will see *Job's determination*. Chapter 13, verses 15 and 16. It's a ray of light in the midst of this darkness. Job says, **“Though He slay me, I will hope in Him. Nevertheless I will argue my ways before Him. This also will be my salvation, for a godless man may not come before His presence.”**

Note the first part of verse 15, **“Though He slay me, I will hope in Him.”** There's a translation issue here that you're probably not familiar with, unless you're using the old Revised Standard Version (which I don't know of anybody that uses that). The Revised Standard Version puts it this way, “Behold, He will slay me. I have no hope.” A completely different meaning. Sam Storms writes:

13:15 is a famous verse that may be taken in one of two ways: (1) . . . ‘Though He slay me, yet will I hope in Him.’ In other words, no matter what happens to me, I still remain confident that God will vindicate me. (2) Or it may be, ‘Behold, He will slay me; I have no hope.’ Thus Job anticipated that his self-defense would result in his being killed by God. But he intends to go ahead anyway, firmly persuaded of his innocence.¹¹⁵

I'm sticking with the majority of the translators here.

¹¹⁵Sam Storms, *Biblical Studies: Job* (Edmond, OK: Sam Storms, 2016), Job 12:1–12.

- NASB/ESV “Though he slay me, I will hope in him . . .”
- KJV “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him . . .”
- NCV “Even if God kills me, I have hope in him . . .”
- NIV “Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him . . .”
- HCSB “Even if He kills me, I will hope in Him . . .”

The reformer John Calvin turned it into a rhetorical question in his translation: “Shall I not hope?”

I can’t be overly dogmatic, but I think that the traditional sense is the way we should go, “Though He slay me, I will hope in Him.” And we commonly see these glimmers of hope in Job – even in the midst of his despair. Remember chapter 6, verse 10, “But it is still my consolation, and I rejoice in unsparing pain, that I have not denied the words of the Holy One.” *I rejoice in unsparing pain.* He was still fighting for joy even in the midst of this searing pain of his flesh, and the numbing pain within his heart. *I may not know, but I know I may trust.* You may not know, but know that you may trust.

God is personal and approachable

I want to give you a few closing thoughts, three of them. First, *God is Personal and Approachable.* We can bring our concerns, even are respectfully framed arguments before Him. God is personal and approachable. Be thankful for that.

There are times when God may appear elusive

Second, *There are Times When God May Appear Elusive.* Psalm 10:1, “Why do You stand afar off, O LORD? Why do You hide Yourself in times of trouble?” I remember coming across that verse shortly after we lost our daughter and it rang in my heart. *Why do you stand afar off O LORD? why you hide yourself in times of trouble?* Yes there are times when God may appear elusive, but persevere in faith knowing he's there. And *you may not know, but know that*

you may trust. The same David that accused God of being far off could state in Psalm 23, verse four, “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil for You are with me.” Here with me – even in those dark, dark times.

So number one, *God is personal and approachable.* Number two, *There are times when God may appear elusive.*

The answer is Jesus Christ

And number three, *The Answer is Jesus Christ.* That may sound like some sort of a poorly framed Jeopardy question: “The answer is Jesus Christ; what’s the question? Job said in verse four of chapter 14, “Who can make the clean out of the unclean? No one.” Eliphaz was asked a similar question in chapter 4, verse 17, “Can mortal man be righteous before God? Can a man be pure before his maker?” That is the question. The answer is Jesus Christ.

We sang a song I didn’t know we were going to sing earlier that echoes the words of Paul and Philippians chapter 3 verse nine, “[I want to] be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith.” The answer is Jesus Christ.

In chapter 13 verse 15 when Job says, “I will argue my ways before Him,” he uses a Hebrew word *yakhach*, related to the word translated “umpire” in 9:33 where Job bemoans that “There is no umpire between us [between him and God], [one] who may lay his hand upon us both.” Here in chapter 13, just like we saw in chapter 9, Job feels that he needs to be his own advocate. Well, what do we know this side of the Cross? We have an advocate, we have a public defender. First John 2:1, “My little children, I’m writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate ...” The word “advocate” is related to the Greek

word *paraklete*, a comforter. We have an Advocate. I think it's a legal term. We have an advocate, a *paraklete* with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous. We have a Righteous Advocate who stands before us, who will say, "not guilty because I paid that penalty in full." So the answer is Jesus Christ. In Job chapter 13, verse 16, Job says, "This also will be my salvation, for a godless man may not come before His presence." That word "salvation," some translations have "deliverance." That word is the noun form of the Hebrew equivalent of the name "Jesus." That will be my salvation. It's all about Jesus. The answer is Jesus.

And so, Father, we come before You with these things in mind, looking at this struggling man from many, many years ago, but knowing that he represents so many other struggling saints throughout history. And even today, in aspects of our lives and times during our lives when we have struggled, when we have thought, wondered, if our hope has been extinguished finally – but yet, Lord, we persevere by Your grace. We persevere, we continue on, Lord, knowing that You're personal, that You're approachable, that we can bring our concerns before You – even those things that we want to respectfully argue with You – we can bring those before You. You have big enough shoulders. You hear us, You understand. And during those times when You seem elusive we have the hope in knowing that You are there, that no, we may not know, but we can trust. We may not sense Your presence, but we can trust that Your presence is with us. Knowing also, Lord, that the answer is Jesus Christ. He's the answer for everything in our lives; informed by Your precious Word. I pray, Father, for any within the sound of my voice that has not yet come to that knowledge, that the answer is Christ alone; the answer for their sin, for their estrangement from You. It's not works, not the church. The answer is Christ alone and faith in Him as He died for sinners, raised to new life on their behalf, taking Your, the Father's wrath so

that fallen, sinful man can be spared. So, Father, we thank You for that. And we pray that You continue to bless our fellowship together, to the glories of our Triune God we pray. Amen.

**The Second Speech of Eliphaz: No Grace for the Grieving
Job 15:1-35**

April 25, 2021

Christ Church of Clarkson

0421Job15.1-35(18) | Audio Length: 55:26

Job chapter 15 beginning in verse 14. And if you would follow along as I read:

14 “What is man, that he should be pure, or he who is born of a woman, that he should be righteous? 15 “Behold, He puts no trust in His holy ones, and the heavens are not pure in His sight; 16 how much less one who is detestable and corrupt, man, who drinks iniquity like water!”¹¹⁶

Father, we are turning our hearts and minds to Your Word here in Job chapter 15. And we pray Lord that You would work through the messenger. We pray Holy Spirit that You work among Your people – that You will encourage and challenge and exhort. So we ask Your blessing. Apart from Your blessing, everything is futile. So Lord, we ask for your blessing. We trust that through Your blessing we will see the greatness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

JUSTICE

Justice. Think about that word JUSTICE. It's word that has taken on greater meaning in our time and in our culture. Not only do we have the social justice movement, a secular crusade devoid of a biblical foundation, but we also witnessed a week in which a guilty verdict was handed down in a major court case that was largely already decided was in the courtroom of public opinion. Was justice accurately served? I don't know, I wasn't there. I did watch the trial. Most importantly, I wasn't a juror. But I do know this: ultimately God will answer that question.

¹¹⁶Scripture citations are taken from the NAS95 unless otherwise noted.

As a pastor, as a theologian, my thoughts turn toward eternity when I hear the word justice, or when I see circumstances that revolve around the concept of justice (or what's right). I think in an eternal perspective, and you ought to as well. We ought to be concerned about justice in this life, in this world. Justice for individuals, for groups. But we had better be sure that our version of justice is consonant with God's version, that is, that it's according to His Word. His Word gives us justice biblically defined and defended. And above all, we need to be about proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ to lost sinners who will one day face ultimate justice. In that regard, all justice that we work toward in this life should serve to point us toward what we will all face: the eternal justice of a holy God.

We read later in the book of Job, chapter 34 verse 12, “Surely, God will not act wickedly and the Almighty will not pervert justice.” But in that regard, we must face the fact that we all – everyone without exception – *we all deserve God's death penalty*. All of us sin and the wages of sin is what that we all deserve, death.

The book of Job largely consists of three cycles of dialogue between Job and his three friends: Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. And we know what happened to Job, by God's design. As a test of his devotion to God, Job suffers the loss of his wealth, He suffers the loss of his children – all in one disastrous day. And upon learning of his suffering, three friends arrive. Job is now physically, as well as emotionally, suffering. He's covered in oozing sores while sitting in the town dump scraping his sores with ashes. His friends sit in silence with him for seven days and nights. Job breaks the silence in chapter 3 while he laments what has happened to him. Eliphaz responds to Job in chapters 4 and 5. Job responds to Eliphaz in chapters 6 and 7. Then Bildad speaks in chapter 8, and Job replies to him in chapters 9 and 10. Lastly, Zophar speaks in

chapter 11, followed by Job's reply in chapters 12, 13 and 14. That concludes one full cycle of speeches and responses by Job. And that's where we left off. There are two more cycles to go. We get to hear each friend two more times, Zophar excepted as he drops out of the last cycle. It does get a little redundant. One commentator asked the question: "Is there any inherent reason in the dynamics of the book why a second and a third cycle of speeches should unfold? The friends have no new points to make, so their speeches are in themselves [futile]."¹¹⁷ But by God's design we have three cycles.

The Second Speech of Eliphaz: No Grace for the Grieving

We're looking this morning at the second speech of Eliphaz: "The Second Speech of Eliphaz: No Grace for the Grieving"¹¹⁷ Samuel Johnson was a man known as the literary czar of 18th-century England. He loved to debate, but Johnson always had to win the argument, whether he was right or not. The poet and playwright Oliver Goldsmith said this, "There is no arguing with Johnson; for if his pistol misses fire, he knocks you down with the butt end of it!"¹¹⁸ That certainly describes Eliphaz as he is now quick to judge and condemn Job. But keep in mind again: *We all deserve God's death penalty.*

The Indictment of Job (1-13)

Job's words are empty

There are three main points as far as our outlined is concerned: There's The Indictment of Job (verses 1 through 13); There's The Incrimination of All Humanity (verses 14 through 16);

¹¹⁷David J. A. Clines, *Job 1–20, vol. 17, Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1989), 346.

¹¹⁸Adapted from Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Patient, "Be" Commentary Series* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 57.

and then The Instruction of History (verses 17 through 35). Follow along with me as we begin in verse one with The Indictment of Job. And the first thing we see is that, according to Eliphaz, Job's words are empty. This has been a familiar refrain throughout the book of Job. His words are in fact empty. Verse one, 1 **Then Eliphaz the Temanite responded,** 2 **“Should a wise man answer with windy knowledge and fill himself with the east wind?”** The implication is that, “Job, you are not a wise man.” There's sarcasm here. Remember, it was Bildad in chapter 8 that leveled the same accusation against Job, chapter 8 verse 2, “How long will you say these things, and the words of your mouth be a mighty wind?” Job admitted as much in chapter 6, verse 26 when he said, “Do you intend to reprove my words, when the words of one in despair belong to the wind?” But here Eliphaz refers to the **“east wind.”** It's literally in the Hebrew language “to fill your belly with the east.” This was a reference to the east desert wind that scorch the earth, particularly in May and October. This may also be a veiled reference, speaking of wind and east wind, to that wind that ultimately claimed the life of Job's children as it leveled the house that they were in. And he goes on to say, verse three, **“Should he argue with useless talk, or with words which are not profitable?”** So again, the accusation that Job's words are empty.

Job's worship is empty

Secondly, *Job's worship is empty.* That's the next accusation in verses four through six. Look at verse four, **“Indeed, you do away with reverence** [some translations have “fear of God”] **and hinder meditation before God.”** “Job, your worship is empty. You don't really fear God as you claim. Job, your religion is worthless.” That's the accusation that Eliphaz is leveling against this poor suffering man. Eliphaz gives the reasons why he thinks Job's worship is empty

in verses five and six: **“For”** (it could be translated “because”) 5 **“For your guilt teaches your mouth, and you choose the language of the crafty.** Note the progression. We have *guilt*, we have *mouth*, we have *language* (lips). **“Your guilt touches your mouth; you choose the language of the crafty.”** That is, “Job you’re guilty of sophistry; your own mouth condemns you, not I. And your own lips testify against you. Job your worship is empty and your mouth gives you away.” What did Jesus say? “The mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.” Eliphaz is judging Job on the basis of words he has said; Job's words are empty; Job's worship is empty.

Job's wisdom is empty

Thirdly, *Job's wisdom is empty*. Beginning in verse seven. Eliphaz asks Job a series of questions. First, **“Were you the first man to be born, or were you brought forth before the hills?”** This is like thing to somebody, “are you older than dirt?” And then, second, verse eight, **“Do you hear the secret counsel of God and limit wisdom to yourself?”** Of course, “no.” What is the secret counsel of God? That includes what we've seen in chapters one and two: a day when “the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came among them” (1:6). And in chapter 2 verse one, repeated again, “There was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the LORD.” “Do you hear the secret counsel of God, Job?” Neither Job nor Eliphaz knew that as fact. Nobody does. Deuteronomy 29:29, “The secret things belong to the LORD our God.”

There are two more questions in verse 9: **“What do you know that we do not know? What do you understand that we do not?”** Remember in Job's earlier reply to Zophar, Job

claimed that he was not inferior in knowledge to his three friends. We call this *his epistemic equality* – his equality of knowledge. It was in 12:3 where Job said, “I have intelligence as well as you. I’m not inferior to you.” And he repeats it in 13:2: “What you know I also know. I am not inferior to you.” Eliphaz turns the tables: “What do you know or understand that we don’t?” And Eliphaz appeals to age in verse 10 (very interesting): **“Both the gray-haired and the aged are among us, older than your father.”** There are a couple different ways you can take that. We’ve noted that Eliphaz was likely the oldest of the three friends. He speaks first in each round of dialogue. And he is the one whom God chastises toward the end of the book. He stands representative of the three friends. Eliphaz was very likely the oldest and he may be affirming that he is older than Job’s father. Possible. It may be more likely that he is simply talking about the aged men of the past who serve as witnesses to his case. In that regard, the United Bible Society Guide to Translations (it’s a guide that that helps one in translating the Hebrew / Aramaic in the Old Testament, the Greek and the New Testaments) – it’s one of the resources I have in my library. And the UBS guide on translation paraphrase the thought this way: “Old men with wrinkled faces taught us wisdom; they lived long before your own father.” That’s verse 10. “Job, your words are empty. Your worship is empty. Your wisdom is empty.”

Job’s way is empty

And then lastly, verses 11 to 13, *Job’s way is empty*. By that I mean, all that relates to Job’s heart and behavior is empty, according to Eliphaz. Here’s his last question to Job in verse 11: **“Are the consolations of God too small for you, even the word spoken gently with you?”** Well, think about that. The implication is clear that the consolations of God are how God is using Job’s friends to bring comfort to Job, including Eliphaz who thinks his words were

spoken with gentleness. It almost seems out of place. What is Eliphaz referring to? “Job, are the consolations of God, is the comfort of God, is that too small for you – even the word spoken gently to you?” And Eliphaz may be referring back to his first address to Job in chapters 4 and 5. He was much more sympathetic and gentle then — even optimistic:

16a “So the helpless has hope . . . 17 “Behold, how happy is the man whom God reproves, So do not despise the discipline of the Almighty. 18 “For He inflicts pain, and gives relief; He wounds, and His hands also heal. 19 “From six troubles He will deliver you, Even in seven evil will not touch you.

“Job there's hope. I'm here to encourage you, Job.” And that's why they came in the first place. Chapter 2 verse 11, “They made an appointment together to come to sympathize with Job and comfort him.” Now, however, Eliphaz is loaded for bear. He has lost all patience. As a reminder to us, be patient with the hurting. You may think, “Well I was patient at first. I was patient the second time.” Be patient, kind, persevering. That's what it means to come alongside someone who is suffering, to “weep with those who weep.” But Eliphaz is loaded for bear — he's lost all patience, 12 **“Why does your heart carry you away? And why do your eyes flash.”** “Job, your heart is wayward and I can see it in your eyes, your eyes give you away.” 13 **“That you should turn your spirit against God and allow such words to go out of your mouth?”** In other words, “Job, shame on you!” Job admitted that the words of the sufferer may be impetuous, chapter 6, verse 26 (we noted that earlier): “Do you intend to reprove my words when the words of one in despair belong to the wind?” But Eliphaz has new room for that. For him, it's *no grace for the grieving*.

I think about the darkest of the days that I experienced following the loss of our daughter. I acted in ways that were not consistent with who I am in Christ. “Windy words” – and worse behaviors. And I am so thankful that God insulated me from the Eliphaz's of the world,

because they are out there. In my case, there was plenty of grace for the grieving – from God and from my dear friends. But for Eliphaz? Job's words are empty. Job's worship is empty. Job's wisdom is empty. Job's way is empty. This is his indictment of Job in verses 1 through 13.

The Incrimination of Humanity (14-16)

Next we turn to The Incrimination of Humanity where Eliphaz has a moment of clarity whereby he affirms that all people everywhere have a sin problem; it's universal. In short, *we all deserve God's death penalty*. Look at verse 14: **“What is man, that he should be pure, or he who is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?”** Eliphaz asked the question earlier: “Can mankind be just before God? Can a man be pure before his Maker?” Job affirmed it in his reply to Bildad 9:2 “. . . how can a man be in the right before God?” God and His angels and the heavens are not exempt, verse 15: **“Behold, He [that is, God] puts no trust in His holy ones [I take that to refer to fallen angels who were once holy], and the heavens are not pure in His sight.”** This verse echoes the earlier words of Eliphaz in chapter 4 verse 18 where he says, “God puts no trust even in His servants, and against his angels He charges error.” But note the comparison to that in verse 16: **“How much less one who is detestable and corrupt, man, who drinks iniquity like water!”** In other words, if God puts no trust in His holy ones and the heavens are not pure in His sight, what about man who drinks iniquity like water? This is the incrimination against all humanity. What a picture! Robert Alden in his in-depth critical commentary on the book of Job says this:

Eliphaz’s words are so eloquent it is a pity they are not more often quoted to support the doctrine of original sin. Though much about the friends was objectionable (e.g., their lack of compassion and their faulty doctrine of suffering and retribution), much of their

theology was accurate and can be appropriated today if it is in harmony with the rest of Scripture . . .¹¹⁹

Yes, and that includes the fact that man, get the picture, man drinks iniquity or sin like water.

Some have referred to this as *Adam's ale* here, my friends. We see the theological doctrine of the total depravity of man. Here's a definition by the reformed theologian Robert Raymond

(quoting):

[M]an in his raw, natural state as he comes from the womb is morally and spiritually corrupt in disposition and character. Every part of his being—his mind, his will, his emotions, his affections, his conscience, his body—has been affected by sin . . . His understanding is darkened, his mind is at enmity with God, his will to act is slave to his darkened understanding and rebellious mind, his heart is corrupt, his emotions are perverted, his affections naturally gravitate to that which is evil and ungodly, his conscience is untrustworthy, and his body is subject to mortality.¹²⁰

The total depravity of man. R.C. Sproul. This is the way he puts it:

The Bible teaches the total depravity of the human race. Total depravity means radical corruption. . . . For total depravity means that I and everyone else are depraved or corrupt in the totality of our being. There is no part of us that is left untouched by sin. Our minds, our wills, and our bodies are affected by evil. We speak sinful words, do sinful deeds, have impure thoughts. Our very bodies suffer from the ravages of sin.

Perhaps "radical corruption" is a better term to describe our fallen condition than "total depravity." I am using the word "radical" not so much to mean "extreme," but to lean more heavily on its original meaning. "Radical" comes from the Latin word for "root" or "core." Our problem with sin is that it is rooted in the core of our being. It permeates our hearts. It is because sin is at our core and not merely at the exterior of our lives that the Bible says: "There is none righteous, no not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one." Romans 3:10-12

¹¹⁹Robert L. Alden, *Job, vol. 11, The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 175.

¹²⁰Robert Reymond, *Systematic Theology*, 450.

“It is because of this condition that the verdict of Scripture is heard: we are "dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1); we are "sold under sin" (Romans 7:14); we are in "captivity to the law of sin" (Romans 7:23); and "by nature children of wrath (Ephesians 2:3). Only by the quickening power of the Holy Spirit may we be brought out of this state of spiritual death. It is God who makes us alive as we become His craftsmanship (Ephesians 2:1-10).¹²¹

We read about sin throughout Scripture. Going back to the book of Genesis chapter 8 verse 21: “The Lord . . . said in His heart . . . the inclinations of [man’s] heart is evil from childhood.” Ecclesiastes chapter 9 verse three: “Furthermore, the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil and insanity is in their hearts throughout their lives. . . .” I have said that over and over the past year, people are becoming insane. Yes, it is in their hearts. It is because of their total depravity, because they don't have Christ. Colossians 1:21 (speaking of believers): “. . . you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds” How about Titus 1:15? “To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled.” Total depravity doesn't mean that fallen men – even atheists and agnostics, pagans, false religionists – it doesn't mean that they can't do things that are good or that we would classify as being good. Mothers and fathers can sacrificially love their children and each other, and an atheist can go into a burning building and sacrifice his own life for the sake of someone he doesn't even know. but apart from Christ none of that is done to the glory of God. And while we can think of stories of great valor we also know history is replete with stories of great evil – unspeakable evil – against children, against babies, against the innocent. Yes indeed, Isaiah 64:6, “For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment;” [read “menstrual cloths” – that's

¹²¹R.C. Sproul, www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/onsite/sproul/depravity.html.

what that phrase refers to and how strongly Isaiah wants us to see the picture of the gravity of our sin] “and all of us wither like a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.” Yes, *we all deserve God's death penalty*. It's what we deserve, it's what I deserve, it's what you deserve, it's what Job deserved, it's what his three friends deserved.

A byproduct of total depravity is the doctrine of total inability. Total inability, that is, the inability for the sinner, the depraved sinner, to make himself / herself right with God. To put it simply, a sinner has no ability to make himself born again or regenerate. If you have been born again that is the sovereign work of God. You have no more power over being born again spiritually than you had power to be born physically – that was God's ordination as well. Regeneration is the work of the Holy Spirit. End of argument. We're told, for example, 1 Corinthians 2:14 that “a natural man does not accept the things” of the spiritual. The natural man, someone who's not converted, an unsaved person, why “they are foolishness to him and he cannot understand them.” Not, it's hard for him to understand them. Maybe you'll get it, maybe you won't. No, he *cannot* understand them. Romans chapter 8 beginning in verse five:

5 For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. 6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, 7 because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so . . .

That's total inability that comes from total depravity.

All this talk of sin. Praise our God that we are a church that will talk about sin, because that is contrary to our post Enlightenment humanism which views everybody as good. As recently as 1973 Carl Menninger asked the question, “Whatever happened to sin?” That concept has been pretty much erased from Western culture. It's contrary to our humanistic-centered

philosophy. We falsely believe that people are naturally good. They are born that way. But if they turn bad it's just their environment. And what's the answer? Psychology and education.

Isn't it interesting that when a gunman kills someone we attack the inanimate object: the firearm? We don't call the person sinful and depraved, in need of spiritual reform. We simply call him mentally ill. And maybe he is, but he's got a bigger problem. At one level or another we're all mentally ill. You see, in our culture, we blame everything on something else, avoiding the real issue that men are fallen (totally depraved) and that we are in need of a spiritual resurrection. And the further we get from God, the worse we become. This false narrative, that people are basically good, has spilled over into churches that erase the word "sin" from their vocabulary. You know that there are churches that won't talk about sin? There are church leaders that will not use the word? I came across this 1992 interview between the Presbyterian theologian Michael Horton who was interviewing the late liberal churchmen Robert Schuller. Remember Bob Schuller? The Hour of Power? The Crystal Cathedral? Schuller's words are echoed throughout liberal churches across the land. We have them within the few miles of us.

Listen to this dialogue:

SCHULLER: If we want to win people to Jesus we have to understand where they are at.

HORTON: I agree absolutely. And they are in sin, that is where they are at.

SCHULLER: They are in the state of condition called sin which means they don't trust. They are lacking faith.

HORTON: I guess the difference would be our definition of sin, because what I see in scripture is that we're dead in sin and cannot respond to God even if we were trusting.

SCHULLER: Oh no, you're wrong, you're wrong. And very seldom do I use this language. . . . The ultimate, deepest, most sinful problem that you can imagine is lack of trust. . . . [in other places he calls the root of sin a lack of self-esteem]

HORTON: But isn't it because faith is the instrument through which we're justified before a God who otherwise would take account of us for our sins, not just our "not trusting..."

SCHULLER: We are not justified by faith.

HORTON: No, it is by grace through faith.

SCHULLER: By grace through faith, that's right.

HORTON: But what I'm asking is this. Justified from what? The wrath of God?

SCHULLER: Oh! I'll never use that language

HORTON: But the Bible does.

SCHULLER: . . . Listen, and then call me a heretic if you want to, but I'm interested in attracting people, and not driving them farther away. . . . I tell you this, I have come to the conclusion that I haven't stepped into the center of truth until I've dared to step into contradiction. The Bible is a contradiction: Old Testament--Law, New Testament--Grace. Jesus is a contradiction; totally human and totally God.¹²²

No, the Bible is not a contradiction. Neither is Jesus Christ who is the incarnation of logic itself.

And apart from sin, apart from talking about the wrath of God, there is no gospel. Strip away

sin, strip away the wrath of God from the equation, and you are leading people straight to hell.

Apart from sin there is no real church. Indeed, Eliphaz is correct: **“Man drinks iniquity like water.”** *We all deserve God's death penalty.* That is The Incrimination of Humanity.

The Instruction of History (17–35)

The last main point, The Instruction of History. Eliphaz turns to personal experience, his and others, and he turns to the voice of history to make his case, the voice of the past. To sum up, the argument of Eliphaz is nothing new: The wicked get what they deserve; they are wicked and that's why they suffer; and if you suffer you must be wicked. At this point Eliphaz turns his attention away from Job directly, but I think he's still addressing him indirectly. I found at least one commentator who said, “No, Eliphaz is saying in verses 20 and following that Job is none of these things.” I'm sorry, but I can't go there. With the rest of the scholars that I have consulted on this (that agree with me!) have that this is talking about Job indirectly.

¹²²www.monergism.com/discussion-robort-schuller.

Past Opinion

Eliphaz addresses the fate of the wicked, and he does so under the heading of three points. There's Past Opinion; Present Woes; and, Future Grief. Past Opinion, what others have said in the past; Present Woes, what the wicked experience now; Future Grief, what the wicked will experience in the future (all applying, at least indirectly, to Job). So let's look at the first one. Look at verse 17, Past Opinion. Eliphaz starts with himself (no surprise): **“I will tell you, listen to me; and what I have seen I will also declare.”** Eliphaz loves to argue anecdotally. He loves to bring his personal experience to bear. “This is what I've seen, therefore, it must be true.” And we saw this earlier: 4:8, “According to what I have seen, those who plow iniquity and those who sow trouble harvest it.” 5:3, “I have seen the foolish taking root, and I cursed his abode immediately.” And who can forget the vision he related in chapter 4, where he says “a word was brought to me stealthily, a vision in the night.” (We concluded that this vision was unlikely divine in origin.)

So Eliphaz gives his opinion, verse 17, and then he goes to talk about others in verses 18 and 19, 18 **“What wise men have told, and have not concealed from their fathers,”** and then verse 19 is very difficult, 19 **“to whom alone the land was given, and no alien passed among them.”** To sum up the idea Clines writes: “Eliphaz’s experience is wholly of a piece with traditional wisdom. He has sold his soul to tradition, and has so ensured that he will never have any experience that runs counter to it . . .”¹²³ And, of course, I began to think of our friends in Roman Catholicism. Roman Catholic theology that grounds truth in what they call “sacred tradition” – even if that tradition is contrary to or absent from the teaching of Scripture. It was

¹²³David J. A. Clines, *Word Commentary: Job*.

Pope Pius IX at Vatican I in 1870 who declared, "I am tradition." Be mindful of the words of Jesus who chastised the Jews in Matthew 15, telling them that, "You invalidate the word of God for the sake of your tradition." The early church father, Cyprian, the third century bishop or pastor of Carthage, warned: "Custom, though never so ancient, without truth, is but an old error." Where is that truth, that foundation? It's the Word of God. That we measure everything against God's Word doesn't mean we throw out all that we've learned from history, especially church history. I agree with R.C. Sproul who said, "Although tradition goes not rule our interpretation, it does guide it." We have to admit that Job and his three friends did not have the luxury of a complete Scripture, not even an Old Testament, but the point is that opinion, experience, even traditions of the past, are not an ultimate ground for absolute truth. Eliphaz gives his opinion and then he talks about past opinion, that is, others.

Present Woes

Then he turns, beginning in verse 20, to Present Woes. That is, the woes of the wicked, those things the wicked now experience. First, we see *pain*, verse 20 – and Job was in pain. 20 **“The wicked man writhes in pain all his days, and numbered are the years stored up for the ruthless.”** This is the kind of pain that was used of a mother suffering the extreme pain of giving birth. Job was in physical pain that paled in comparison to his emotional and spiritual anguish. And that's likely the kind of pain that Eliphaz has in mind here, emotional, spiritual anguish. So there's pain and then *sudden calamity*. Verse 21, **“Sounds of terror are in his ears; while at peace the destroyer comes upon him.”** This could be portraying Job back in chapter one verse one: “There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job; and that man was blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil.” He was blessed *materially* with

livestock and servants. He was blessed *paternally* with 10 children. He was at peace. Then three messengers come with horrible news. While he was at peace the destroyer came (v. 21) and Job lost his wealth, and finally his children. Third, *sudden death* (verse 22): **“He does not believe that he will return from darkness, and he is destined for the sword.”** “Job, you are destined for a short life.” There’s *famine* (v. 23): **“He wanders about for food, saying, ‘Where is it?’ He knows that a day of darkness is at hand.”** The Septuagint translates verse 23, **“He has been appointed for food to vultures.”** You may have a translation that uses the word “vulture” and that is just simply because the consonants of the Hebrew word are the same. It’s how you pointed the word with vowels which were added later. So we speculate. Was he talking about wandering about for food or was he saying that he was going to be food for vultures, or he looked for food like a vulture? What else happens to the wicked (read “Job”)? *Anguish* like a King facing a battle he knows he cannot win. 24 **“Distress and anguish terrify him, they overpower him like a king ready for the attack.”** Why? Well Eliphaz gives another reason. In verse 25, **“Because he [implied Job] has stretched out his hand against God and conducts himself arrogantly against the Almighty.”** Eliphaz pictures Job as being so pompous that he would lead the charge against an omnipotent God: 26 **“He rushes headlong at Him with his massive shield.”**

Future Grief

Then Eliphaz ends with *Future Grief*. This is what the wicked will experience, future grief. Job’s previous life of prosperity and wealth is given as a reason for his supposed callous attitude toward others (v. 27): **“For he has covered his face with his fat and made his thighs heavy with flesh.”** This is a picture of prosperity. Job was prosperous and in antiquity people

were often known for being prosperous if they were large people. There was a time when fat was cool, believe it or not. I happen to be born in the wrong age!

The wicked will face desolation. Verse 28: **“He has lived** [better “he will live” as this is talk about the future] **in desolate cities, in houses no one would inhabit, which are destined to become ruins.”**

The wicked will not retain wealth and possessions. Verse 29: **“He will not become** [or remain] **rich, nor will his wealth endure; and his grain will not bend down to the ground.”** That's a figure of speech meaning that he will not be prosperous.

We will let verses 30 through 35 speak for themselves. Follow along with me beginning in verse 30, **“He will not escape from darkness** [that’s death]; **the flame will wither his shoots** [that may be a veiled reference to Job's children], **and by the breath of His** [that is, God’s] **mouth he will go away.”** Verse 31, **“Let him not trust in emptiness, deceiving himself; for emptiness will be his reward.”** Verse 32, **“It will be accomplished before his time, and his palm branch will not be green.”** A picture of life withering away, verse 33: **“He will drop off his unripe grape like the vine, and will cast off his flower like the olive tree.”** Verse 34 is another reference to Job's children; he and his wife were now barren, **“For the company of the godless is barren, and fire consumes the tents of the corrupt.”** Verse 35, **“They conceive mischief and bring forth iniquity, and their mind prepares deception.”**

12 afflictions faced by the wicked

We’ll sum all this up is with a list of 12 afflictions faced by the wicked according to Eliphaz who imputes these to Job.

1. *Pain—particularly emotional anguish* (v. 20)
2. *Terrifying sounds* (v. 21). Job had certainly heard some terrifying news in chapter one.
3. *Attack by destroyers* (v. 21). The Hebrew word may be translated “marauders” – Job and his estate were attacked by marauding Sabeans and Chaldeans.
4. *Destined for the sword* (v. 22). Violent death.
5. *Without food and desperate, aimless wandering* (v. 23).
6. *Distress and anguish hound him* (v. 24).
7. *The wealthy wicked will come to ruin, forced to live in desolate towns* (v. 28).
8. *Loss of possessions* (v. 29). What happened to Job? He pretty much lost everything.
9. *Darkness (death) with perhaps the loss of children* (v. 30).
10. *Emptiness* (v. 31).
11. *Premature death* (v. 33).
12. *Childlessness and consuming fire* (v. 34).

One writer sums it up, saying, “By affirming that all these mishaps come to wicked people in this life, Eliphaz did not have all the facts. His attempt to jolt Job into repentance failed.”¹²⁴ For Eliphaz there’s *no grace for the grieving*. If you're grieving and suffer loss it’s because you’re being punished, and if you're being punished it’s because you sinned.

Three Closing Observations

1. *Job the man is an imperfect picture of the innocent sufferer.*

And in that sense he is an imperfect picture of Jesus Christ who is the perfect picture of an innocent sufferer. Jesus had no sin; he deserved no pain. But he suffered for us. So Job the man is an imperfect picture of the innocent sufferer.

2. *Job the man is a picture of someone who is falsely accused.*

Throughout the book Job is accused of sins he did not commit. And again, I point you to Jesus who was in a far greater way falsely accused by sinful men.

¹²⁴Roy B. Zuck, "Job," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*.

3. Job the book shows us that we all deserve God's death penalty.

Verse 14: "What is man that he should be pure, or the son of man that he should be righteous?" Verse 16b ". . . man who drinks iniquity like water." Later in the book we see, in the form of a question: "Who can make the clean out of the unclean? No one!" (14:4) Eleven chapters later, 25:4, "How then can a man be just with God? Or how can he be clean who is born of woman?" *We all deserve God's death penalty.*

The grace and mercy of the gospel

That brings us to grace and mercy: Not getting what we deserve (judgement) and getting what we cannot possibly earn (righteousness). And that goes back to Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. In my Bible reading over the past couple of days I read through John chapter 10 verse 11 where Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep." The good Shepherd was an innocent falsely accused suffer for us. Later in John 10 he could tell those who didn't believe in him that they were not of his sheep and that He would save those who are and will believe in Him:

26 "But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep. 27 "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; 28 and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. 29 "My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

When Jesus died on the cross the last words he uttered, what were they? Three words: "It is finished." That's one word in the Greek, Τετέλεσται, a perfect passive indicative. "It is finished!" You know in antiquity we have found ancient receipts dating back to that time, ancient receipts for taxes with that word Τετέλεσται written across it meaning "paid in full."

Paid in full. Second Corinthians 5:21, “He made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” That is imputation.

We all deserve God’s death penalty, yet God the Father made God the Son, who knew no sin, He made Him sin. He didn't become sinful. No, sin was imputed, or charged to Him that we might have righteousness imputed, or credited to us. So that when God sees the believer He sees the work of Christ, perfect righteous, clothed in the righteousness of Christ. Jesus died not only *for* we who believe, but He died *instead* of we who believe, His sheep. Are you one of His sheep? Do you hear His voice? Are you following Him? If you are, give thanks to the One True God of the Universe because it was part of His plan from all eternity. You were on His mind. He was your Savior from all eternity. What He decreed in eternity He worked out in time.

If you've not been born again, I pray that the Holy Spirit will work in your heart to open your eyes, to make you see your depravity – that you deserve God's death penalty – and you will reap that death penalty in a place called hell if you do not believe and repent. That is a work of God. Believe, turn from your sin, and turn from your unbelief to embrace Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Father, we thank You for the truth of the gospel. We thank You that we can study the words of Job – perhaps the most antique book of the Bible – and we can live that truth. . . . You are still saving sinners, those who believe and confess that they deserve Your death penalty. . . . Honor Your name. We thank You for the truth that You have revealed to us, the truth that we have so readily available in our hands, the truth of Your Word. Encourage hearts, challenge hearts, redeem sinners. We pray in Jesus name.

Job's Second Reply to Eliphaz: Despair Over Divine Destruction

Job 16:1-17:16

May 16, 2021

Christ Church of Clarkson

0521Job-16.1-17.16(19) | Audio Length: 54:38

James and John, and the cup of suffering

You might remember from the gospel account that it was James and John who asked Jesus that, if in the future kingdom, they could sit at the places of honor. And Jesus replied to them, “Are you able to drink the cup that I drink?” And they said they could; and his answer was “The cup that I drink you will drink.” Of course, Jesus was talking about suffering. He didn't say, “You will be exempt from suffering because I'm going to suffer on your behalf,” but, “You will experience suffering” – not redemptive suffering, but suffering none the less. Philippians chapter 1 verse 29 tells us that we have been gifted – we have been graced – to suffer for the sake of Jesus Christ, even that for a purpose. Listen, your suffering is never ultimately wasted. In 1 Peter 4:13, Peter writes, “To the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of his glory, you may rejoice with exultation.” This is radical, biblical, precise Christianity.

Job was graced to suffer

Job was graced to suffer. He learns that in the end; he knows that now. But it sure didn't feel like it at the time. And that is true for us as well. We're not “stoics” who “grin and bear it.” No, but we, by faith, believe in the purposes of God, and that they are good, and that we have an ultimate hope, an ultimate destination that is sure. So, even during those darkest times, we walk by faith not by sight. Suffering can be brutal. Yes, even for the sinner accounted righteous in

God's sight, through Christ. I can testify, as does Job, that there are dark times when one feels as if God has forsaken his child. Christopher Ash in his book on Job writes:

All this and more was Jesus' experience. The reality was that he was the beloved son, in whom the Father's heart was well pleased (Mark 1:11; 9:7). And yet in his experience he was God-forsaken (Mark 15:34). And his experience created its own reality, as it does with every sufferer. He knew a real God-forsakenness at the same time he was the Father's beloved son.

This feeling of God-forsakenness is also an authentic part of Christian experience. It is possible to be—objectively—a dearly beloved son or daughter of God while also experiencing—subjectively and in part—all the ingredients of Job's experience . . .¹²⁵

We are going to see several parallels to Jesus Christ in these two chapters, chapter 16 and 17 of the book of Job. We can say that Job almost serves as a picture, or a type, of Christ who suffered for us.

Job's Second Reply to Eliphaz: Despair Over Divine Destruction (16:1 - 17:16)

This is "Job's second reply to Eliphaz: despair over divine destruction." To put it in a nutshell, *Job's distress is demonstrated in his disgust with his friends and disillusionment with his God.* That sums up these chapters.

I'm going to handle this section, these two chapters, a little bit differently. It's going to be a topical exposition. So we'll be moving back and forth (so have your Bibles at the ready). Again, *Job's second reply to Eliphaz: despair over divine destruction.* And if you've noted the title, you will also note the outline, that we are using a lot of these "D's." We will be using a lot of these today.

¹²⁵Christopher Ash, *Job*, 191-92.

Job's Disgust with His Friends (16:1–6; 17:2,5,10)

The first one, our first main point under our heading, is *Job's disgust with his friends*.

And the first thing we see (and look with me): chapter 16, beginning in verse one. The first thing we see as to Job's disgust is that they [his friends] are sorry comforters. “**Then Job answered . . .**” (verse one), directly answering the words of Eliphaz as he spoke for the second time in chapter 15. “**Then Job answered, ‘I've heard many such things. Sorry comforters are you all.’**”¹²⁶ “Sorry comforters.” They are sorry comforters. Literally, “comforters of trouble.” You might wonder back to chapter 13 verse four where Job calls them “worthless physicians.” After all, it was the three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, that came to Job right after they heard of his suffering. They arrive in chapter 2 to sympathize with and comfort him. That's what the text says: they came to sympathize with and comfort Job. But once they open their mouths comfort went out the window. Eliphaz, we looked at this last time, referred to their words as “the very consolations of God” in chapter 15 verse 11. “Our words are God's comfort to your ears, Job.” But the more they spoke the more they added to Job's pain. And with the familiar refrain in verse three, Job says, “**Is there no limit to windy words? Or what plagues you that you answer?**” In other words, “What's gotten into you?” One commentator writes of this:

With a biting rhetorical questions Job charges Eliphaz with uttering windy words . . . i.e., eloquent speech devoid of content.

He is directly countering Eliphaz's reproach that his knowledge is empty wind (15:2) and Bildad's retort that his words are a mighty wind (8:2). Next Job asks Eliphaz what

¹²⁶Scripture citations are taken from the NAS95 unless otherwise noted.

irritates . . . him so much that he feels compelled to keep answering. Job cannot fathom why Eliphaz is so upset with him.¹²⁷

Job says, “You know what? I could certainly do better!” Verse four, **“I too could speak like you, if I were in your place. I can compose words against you, and shake my head at you. I can strengthen you with my mouth, and the solace of my lips could lessen your pain. If I speak my pain is not lessened, and if I hold back what has left me?”**

Some commentators think that Job is speaking sarcastically here. I'm not sure. There may be a blend of sarcasm and realism in Job's words, that he could do better. If you remember, it was Eliphaz in his first speech that said that Job's words had been a healing balm to the suffering (4:4). Job had brought comfort others. So yes, Job certainly could do better. But as far as they're concerned? They're sorry comforters.

They are mockers (16:20; 17:2)

Second, chapter 16 verse 20, **“My friends are my scoffers.”** Scoffers meaning, “to laugh at with contempt,” according to one lexicon. Chapter 17 verse two uses a different word where Job says, **“Surely mockers are with me.”** So we have scoffers and then we have mockers. That second word, “mockers,” pictures a person surrounded by others that ridiculed him. It made me think of a poor kid in junior high, being bullied by a group of friends who just surround him and mock him and pick at him. Well, that's the picture that Job is painting here as it relates to his three friends.

And so chapter 17 verse two, he also says, **“My eye gazes at their provocation.”**
“They're provoking me so I just stopped in the midst of these so-called friends and I'm just

¹²⁷John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job (NICOT)*, 1988. 257. Cited in Swindoll, *Job: A Man of Heroic Endurance*, 135.

looking at them as they provoke me.” So, sorry comforters in their mocking. Later on, in chapter 21 verse three, Job cries out, “Bear with me that I may speak; then after I have spoken, you may mock.” I like the way the NIV puts that verse: “Bear with me while I speak, and after I have spoken, mock on.” David experienced this. He says in 119th Psalm verse 51, “The arrogant mock me unmercifully, but I do not turn from Your law.” That was Job. He really is being mocked, in a sense, without mercy. Yet he refused to turn away ultimately from God. Sorry comforters. They’re mockers.

They are betrayers (17:5)

They are also *betrayers*. Go to chapter 17 verse five. Now what you expect from a true friend is loyalty, right? And that's one of the things that I'm fanatical about, reasonable people and loyal people. My good friends are, to a man, reasonable and loyal. Well, [Job’s friends] are not that; they are betrayers. Chapter 17 verse five, “**He who informs against friends for a share of the spoil, the eyes of his children will also languish.**” This is a proverbial saying that could almost be tucked away into the book of Proverbs. It speaks of a friend who serves as an informant in order to gain something in return, and his betrayal will come back on his own family. And so Job is looking at his friends as being betrayers. . . . This is Job's disgust with his friends. Sorry comforters, mockers, betrayers.

They are unwise (17:10)

And, fourthly, *they are unwise*. Chapter 17 verse 10, “**But come again all of you now, for I do not find a wise man among you.**” Earlier in chapter 12 verse two, Job very sarcastically said, “Truly then you are the people, and with you wisdom will die.”

Job's Disillusion with God (16:7-14; 17:4)

But we move from Job's *disgust with his friends* to *Job's disillusionment with God*.

These are Job's complaints against God. Now they're not all entirely true, in fact, we will see that Job lays undue harshness toward God, he imputes undue harshness toward God, but this is how Job feels.

God has exhausted Job and decimated his family (16:7-14; 17:4)

Number one, *God has exhausted him and decimated his family*. Chapter 16 verse seven, Job says, **“But now He has exhausted me; You [and again he's talking to God] have laid waste all my company.”** All of Job's *company* refers to his *children*, or as the NIV has it, “his entire household,” which would include his family, his kids, and his servants.

God has emaciated Job

Secondly, *God has emaciated Job*. Chapter 16 verse eight, again Job talking to God, **“You have shriveled me up, it has become a witness; and my leanness rises up against me, it testifies to my face.”** It's almost as if Job were looking in a mirror, looking at this gaunt figure of a man covered with sores, suffering all over his face.

And he says in chapter 17 verse seven, **“My eye has also grown dim because of grief.”** “My eye is grown dim, no sparkle, no life, no life in my eyes.” It was Eliphaz who said to Job in chapter 15, “Why do your eyes flash that you should turn against God?” Job says, **“My eye has grown dim because of grief, and all my members [that is, parts of his body] are a shadow.”** This is a picture of a man whose soul has been literally eclipsed by suffering; emotional loss, spiritual struggle, physical agony, emaciated, covered with sores. The greatest man of his time sitting in pain at the town dump surrounded by friends who blame *him* for his affliction.

God hunts Job down like a defenseless animal (16:9)

Then, as Job sees it, God hunts him down like a defenseless animal. Look at the picture we see in chapter 16 verse nine. Job says, **“His anger has torn me and hunted me down, He has gnashed at me with his teeth; my Adversary glares at me.”** . . . And in similar fashion to this, Job says that **“God has set me up as His target,”** picturing God as a warrior with a quiver full of arrows aimed at Job. A few verses down from verse nine, in verse 12, he says, **“He has also set me up as his target. 13 His arrows surround me. Without mercy He splits my kidneys open; He pours out my gall on the ground.”** This is Job's disillusionment with his God.

Remember some of Job's earlier words about God making him a target? Chapter six verse four: “The arrows of the Almighty are within me, their poison my spirit drinks; the terrors of God are arrayed against me.” Chapter 7 verse 20, “Have I sinned? What have I done to You, O watcher of men? Why have You set me as your target, so that I am a burden to myself? Again, Job is attributing hostility to God. Yet he could see no other explanation. Layton Talbert writes:

Job’s perception of God’s posture toward him is as graphic as it is sad. “Only [a] literal translation can do justice to the savagery of Job’s description of God’s vicious attack.” God has “shriveled up” Job with a disfiguring disease (16:8), torn him in pieces like a beast bent on revenge, and gnashed on him with His teeth, His eyes shooting daggers at him (16:9). Others have joined in the abuse (16:10) as God turned him over to be victimized by the wicked (16:11). Job was at ease, but now he is a shattered man. Lion-like, God has taken him by the back of the neck and shaken him (16:12). Then God set him up for His archery practice (16:12c-14). Job’s is a pathetic case, all the more pathetic being undeserved (16:15-22).¹²⁸

¹²⁸Layton Talbert, *Job*, 116-17.

God hands Job over to mockers (16:10-11)

So the picture changed again in verses 10 and 11: *God hands Job over to mockers*. We saw how the three friends mock Job, but here he attributes the mockery ultimately to the sovereign hand of God who has delivered him not only to the mockery of the three, but to others as well. Look at chapter 16 verse 10 (and note the plural). The verse begins with “they:” **“They have gaped at me with their mouth, [that is, they stare at me with mouths open in amazement] they have slapped me on the cheek with contempt; they have massed themselves against me. God hands me over to ruffians and tosses me in the hands of the wicked.”** Very briefly, Robert Alden in his commentary said:

This . . . is reminiscent of some of the passages that the Evangelists used to describe the crucifixion . . . Though no New Testament passage ever cited him as a type of Christ, Job nevertheless belonged to that company of righteous sufferers who anticipated the one who was perfect righteousness and who suffered even death on a cross.¹²⁹

We see Christological-type language used here: 10 **“They gaped at me with their mouth, they have slapped me on the cheek with contempt.”** To be slapped was a sign of contempt and insult. We see this used of Jesus in Matthew chapter 5 verse 39: “But I say to you, do not resist an evil person, but whoever slaps you on the right cheek, turn the other to him also.” I don't think that is talking about just laying down in passivity when you're being physically assaulted. I think it's talking about an insult. How do you slap somebody – if most people are right-handed – how do you slap them on the right cheek? With a backhanded slap. A backhanded slap, that was an insult. You are insulting someone and that's what Job is talking

¹²⁹Robert L. Alden, *Job, vol. 11, The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 184.

about here. He's being insulted. He's handed over to ruffians. He's been tossed into the hands of the wicked. Maybe he's talking about others, maybe he's including the three friends.

Later, in chapter 30, Job said 1 “Those younger than I mock me, whose fathers I disdained to put with the dogs of my flock.” *Younger than me*. “They have no upbringing and yet they're mocking me.” 9 “And now I have become their taunt, I have even become a byword to them.” Chapter 30 verse 10: “They abhor me and stand aloof from me, and they do not refrain from spitting in my face.”

God shakes Job out of a peaceful existence (16:12a)

Next, Job sees that *God shakes him out of a peaceful existence*. Go back to chapter 16 verse 12. Job says, “**I was at ease, [or peace] but He shattered me, and has grasped me by the neck and shaken me to pieces.**” “I was at peace” – and we saw Job's peaceful existence “shaken” in chapters 1 and 2. A God-fearing man, with a good reputation, with a prosperous estate, a family man with 10 children who apparently serve Yahweh. And then boom! All that changes. That peaceful . . . “tranquility,” dare we say? A comfy life shattered in a moment.

Have you ever experienced that? Life changes on a dime? Of course, I have. I know what it's like to have a good life, ministry in a good church, wonderful family, a beautiful young daughter who loves Jesus, looking forward to putting up a tree on Christmas Eve, a blessed family time at home – *and then boom!* that all changes, shattered by a drunk driver in a moment I don't even remember. But Job still remembers it all. . . . He got shattered, grasped by the neck and shaken to pieces.

I've taught others looking to get into pastoral ministry to be prepared for, perhaps, unequalled suffering. Guaranteed? No. But it does seem that those whom God puts at the front

lines in pastoral ministry are the ones with the biggest targets on their backs by the enemy, by Satan. . . . God often tries them with tremendous suffering. Not unexpected for leaders, but certainly should not be unexpected for all of us. . . . But especially leaders need to be aware of this.

This is *Job's disillusionment with God*. Job's perspective. God has exhausted him, has decimated his family, emaciated him, hunts him down like a defenseless animal, made him a target, handed him over to mockers, shakes him out of his once peaceful existence.

God has conquered Job like a defenseless army (16:14)

Number seven: *God has conquered Job like a defenseless army*, chapter 16 verse 14. Catch the picture here: “[**God**] **breaks through me with breach after breach; He runs at me like a warrior.**” He’s like a town or city that's under siege. They would sometimes have multiple walls, may be two walls, and the walls get breeched; the next wall gets breached . . . the warriors came over; pulverized, conquered, defeated. Not by enemies, according to Job, but by God an ultimate Friend. . . .

We can't be too hard on Job. These are the *windy words* of the sufferer whereby Job sees God as a foe.

God has blinded Job's friends (17:4)

Then, lastly, *God has blinded Job's friends*. Job even attributes his friend’s insensitivity to God. Chapter 17 verse four, Job says, “**For You have kept their heart from understanding, therefore You will not exalt them.**” “Give them understanding of what I'm going through; but you know what? You will not exalt them, they’re still accountable.” God is sovereign, man is

accountable. Always keep that in mind. God's sovereignty doesn't do away with man's responsibility.

Job's Distress Over His Plight (16:15-17; 17:1a,6-8,11-16)

Deplorable Job

Next we look at *Job's distress over his plight*, his anguish over what just happened to him. Another “D” word: *deplorable*. Job is deplorable. Job gives a picture of unequalled suffering in chapter 16 verse 15: “**I have sewed sackcloth over my skin and thrust my horn in the dust.**” That second part of the verse, if you're using probably anything other than a New American Standard, you've got something different (and we'll talk about that). But look at the word “sackcloth.” What was sackcloth? It was course, scratchy material made of goat or camel hair. To put on sackcloth was a sign of mourning used in the Bible. For example, upon hearing of the false narrative that Joseph was killed by wild animals, we read in Genesis 37:34 that “Jacob tore his clothes, and put sackcloth on his loins and mourned his son many days.” But now Job says, “I've not put sackcloth on, I have sewn it on.” This indicates that Job expects to wear sackcloth, to be in the state of ultimate despair and grieving, until the end of his days. “These are my permanent clothes.”

But what about that second part, “**thrust my horn in the dust.**” Your translation may have “buried” or “laid my strength in the dust” and that's taking the literal Hebrew and interpreting it, putting it into English. But literally in Hebrew, it's “thrust my horn in the dust” (again, the second half of chapter 16 verse 15). The picture is probably of a defeated animal. Think of a bull and a bullfight. What happens ultimately in that brutal sport. When the bull dies

and goes down, he thrusts his horns in the dust. Defeat. That's what Job pictures here. The defeated animal. "My horn has been thrust in the dust."

In verse 16, again, we see Job's physical demonstration of his suffering. **"My face is flushed from weeping, and deep darkness is on my eyelids."** If you're seen somebody that has suffered so badly, maybe lost a loved one, a spouse, a child; they have cried so much. You can see it on their face: red eyes, puffy eyes. Listen! I kid you not. I cried when Giana passed, *I cried every day for three years*. That is not an exaggeration. I could not stop crying. And finally, it stopped. I still cry, but not every day. But I cried every day for three years. I thought, "I've never cried this much in my life." I can't imagine I ever cried this much as a baby, as a toddler. I was crying all the time. And that's Job: "My face is flushed from weeping, deep darkness is on my eyelids." Although he appeals to his innocence in verse 17: **". . . there is no violence in my hands, and my prayer is pure."**

It was all cause-and-effect for them [Job's friends]. "If that happened, you did bad" – and that's what his friends are accusing him of. "God is righteous. Bad has happened to you. He doesn't do bad for nothing; God doesn't bring calamity on somebody for nothing. You did something to deserve it." And Job says, "No! My prayer is pure; there's no violence in my hands. And then he adds, verse 18: **"Oh earth, do not cover my blood, and let there be no resting place for my cry."**

"Don't cover my blood." It's a metaphor of the first murder. The first mention of blood in that regard is found in Genesis chapter 4 verse 10, where God says to Cain after he murdered his brother, Abel: "What have you done? The voice of your brother's" (what? blood, right?) "is crying from the ground." That's the picture. In a similar way, Job is asking that his blood, his

suffering, not be forgotten; not be covered by the earth, that it not be for nothing, that it not be wasted. And indeed, Job had little idea that his story would go down in sacred Scripture, be known, generation after generation after generation.

Then, chapter 17, more on deplorable Job. Again, catch the picture. Chapter 17 verses 7 and 8: **“My eye has also grown dim because of grief, and all my members are as a shadow. The upright will be appalled at this, (that is, at the sight of me) and the innocent will stir up himself against the godless.”** “The righteous.” Implication? “Not you Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar.” The righteous will be appalled at what has happened and they will raise themselves up against Job's persecutors, *if indeed they are righteous*. So here again, Job's distress over his plight: *deplorable Job*.

Dreams shattered

Second, *dreams shattered*. Again, chapter 17 verse one: **“My spirit is broken, my days are extinguished.”** When I read that as I was studying this I just had to pause. “My spirit is broken.” That is such a sad sight. It is such a tragic experience, to have a broken spirit. Have you been there before? Hope seems so dim that you can't even see. You are so discouraged that the word “discouraged” doesn't even do justice to how you feel; your spirit is just broken. That's what Job said in verses 11 and 12, **“My days are past, my plans are torn apart, even the wishes of my heart. They make night and today saying, ‘The light is near,’ in the presence of darkness.”** “My plans are torn apart, eclipsing all my hopes. All my dreams are gone.”

I remember Chip once describing giving one of his daughters driving lessons. Giana was around 10 at the time. Chip said to me, “You will experience that one day with her.” Giving Giana driving lessons, walking my daughter down the marriage aisle while performing the

wedding at same time, having grandchildren. Those dreams gone forever as far as she is concerned... *My spirit is broken, my plans . . . those things I'd hoped for.* Can you imagine? You all have plans, you all have hope, you all have dreams for the future, dreams for your kids. Can you imagine what it's like for someone like Job to have all that torn apart, thrown to the ground, gone? Yeah, your spirit would be broken too!

Derided by others

Then Job is *derided by others*, his reputation is gone. Chapter 17 verse six: “**He** [that is, God] **has made me a byword . . .**” – that's what the New American Standard has, “a byword” – it's a catch term for a proverbial example. “. . . **He has made me a byword of the people.**” One translation renders this, “I am a joke among the nations.” In other words, Job is someone to be ridiculed. Later in chapter 30 verse nine, he says, “Now I have become their taunt, I have even become [again that word] a byword to them.” A proverbial example of suffering.

And then in verse six of chapter 17, second half of the verse, “**and I am one at whom men spit.**” Again, like being slapped. This was a serious insult and it still is. There are accounts in sports where combatants have spit into the face of another. I remember the famous story from a couple decades ago where, I forget who it was, a baseball player spit in the face of an umpire. Just in the news this past week, did you see that, the gas shortages? The lines in North Carolina? A woman jockeying for position with a man at the pumps gets out and spits into his face and he returns that and they end up getting into a brawl. “I am one in whom men spit.”

Death is welcome

No wonder, for Job, number [four], *death is welcome*. Chapter 17 verse one (second half of the verse), “**the grave is ready for me.**” Chapter 17 verses 13 through 16: “**If I look for**

Sheol [that's the grave] **as my home, I make my bed in the darkness; if I called to the pit, 'You are my father;' to the worm, 'my mother and my sister.'**" In other words, you have got to catch this, Job lost his family, his children, who knows what happened to his wife; and he looks forward to a company of worms devouring his body in the grave as his future family. "My brother, my sister."

"Where now is my hope? [verse 15] and who regards my hope? [verse 16]. Will it go down with me to Sheol? Shall we together go down into the dust?" It seems that the ship that was Job's hope has sailed for good. He has missed the boat. Or has he?

Job's Desire for Hope (16:19-22; 17:3,9)

Last point, *Job's desire for hope*. Job's desire for hope. Hope is there. The ship may be somewhere out there on the horizon. Maybe just a speck, but it is there. This is true for the believer, no matter what happens. Hope may seem gone to us, but it is out there. Sometimes you gotta trust others to see it for you. There were times during my struggles, I've said to others (I may have said it to you, Larry), "I just need you to believe for me. I don't have the energy, I don't have the bandwidth, I don't have the faith to believe that somehow I'm going to come out of this." Hope is there.

Four sub-points. We're turning to "P"s. Job's protector, Job's plea, Job's pledge, and Job's perseverance.

Job's protector (16:19)

Number one, *Job's protector*. Go back to chapter 16 verse 19: **"Even now, [in the midst of this] behold, my Witness is in heaven, and my Advocate is on high. My eye weeps to God."** Job has a Witness in heaven, even an Advocate. The word (*sached*) is an Aramaic word

(Aramaic is very close to Hebrews). . . . [It's] used only here in the Old Testament. It means “a mediator” or “an intercessor.” It's a term, again, a legal term. A term from the law courts. “My Advocate on high,” “my *sached* on high.” As one Lexington defines it, this is “a person who acts as a spokesperson or representative of someone else's policy, purpose, or cause; especially before a judge in a court of law.”

Do you see Jesus there? We're told that He is our Advocate, and Job is saying, “Yes, even though I was looking for that umpire who can mediate between us, somehow, in the midst of all that, I see that I do have an Advocate on high.” And you say, “How can Job's be accruing so much hostility to God, and then, on the other hand, he's got this glimmer of hope. How can that be?” There have been some critical commentators who said that “this verse doesn't even belong here; it was added or taken from someplace else.” No, this is ancient Middle Eastern logic. God can be seen as both judge and advocate at the same time. God can hate and love at the same time. And so while God caused, ultimately, Job's suffering, Job still retains faith in God's goodness. Yes, the words of Eliphaz are true, for God inflicts pain and he gives relief, He wounds and His hands also heal (5:18).

And Job will later confess – the height of his confession in this book – chapter 19 verse 25: “As for me, I know my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will take His stand on the earth.” Yeah, there's still hope – and we've seen that in Job, as we've gone through this study. There's this great despair, then this hope. One Old Testament scholar says:

In the midst of this, Job's fifth speech, there shines another ray of hope. Admittedly Job was inconsistent. Those who demand consistency even of a man in the throes of grief and disease explain away these positive passages that hint at resolution, divine provision, and life after death. But people can be forgiven for being more or less optimistic and even for vacillating between doubt and faith, all the more so when they are experiencing the emotional trauma of losing ten children in one catastrophe and being afflicted with a

gruesome, offensive, painful, physical affliction. Let us rejoice with Job when his spirit soared, and let us weep with him when he wept.¹³⁰

Job's plea (16:21-22)

Next, we see *Job's plea* in chapter 16 verses 21 and 22: **“O that a man might plead with God as a man with his neighbor! For when a few years are passed, I shall go the way of no return.”** And note again verse 21: **“O that a man might plead with God as a man with his neighbor!”** . . . That Hebrew word “plead” is translated “decide” in Isaiah chapter 11 verse four, a messianic passage. Listen to Isaiah 11:4, “But with righteousness, He will judge the poor, and ‘decide’ [same word for “plea”] with fairness for the afflicted of the earth. . . The “afflicted,” like Job. This is Job's plea ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Job's pledge (17:3)

And then there's *Job's pledge*, chapter 17 verse three: **“Lay down, now, a pledge for me with Yourself; Who is there that will be my guarantor?”** More language from the law courts. Literally in Hebrew, “pledge me.” Job asks for God to act as his guarantor, a friend or relative who provides bail money to obtain a prisoner's release. . . . “God pay the price to have me released! God provide the money to free me from prison, to pay the price to set me free!” Yes, Job is thinking of his physical turmoil and the attacks against his character. He wants to be vindicated. But ultimately that price was paid at the cross to set Job free. As Jesus said, “You shall know the truth and the truth will set you free.”

¹³⁰Robert L. Alden, *Job, vol. 11, The New American Commentary*

Job's perseverance (17:9)

Then there's *Job's perseverance*. Verse nine of chapter 17: **“Nevertheless, the righteous will hold to his way, and he who has clean hands will grow stronger and stronger.”** There's again that optimism: righteousness will win out. Not just self righteousness, but righteousness based on a good God, righteousness gained by faith. These words of Job, one writer says, “are like a rocket which shoots above the tragic darkness of the book, lighting it up suddenly, although only for a short time.”¹³¹ Job's perseverance!

James, the Lord's half-brother, in the book that bears his name (James 1:12): “Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial, for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.” Persevere and endure.

Perseverance is such a mark true Christian faith. We talk about “perseverance of the saints;” we think of that as a relates to soteriology, the doctrine of salvation, but you know, it marks our discipleship. It marks everything. Persevere. continue on. You get knocked down, get up! Let another brother or sister in the church help you up. Persevere. You feel like you're going backwards, or feel like the wind is just driving you back, yard after yard after yard after yard; don't give up. It's always too early to give up! Persevere and keep looking up. Don't look down, look up! That's where the source of your redemption is, on high, with Jesus Christ the righteous.

And speaking of James, remember later in the book, chapter 5 verse 11: “We count those blessed who endured.” And James says, “You've heard of the endurance [or perseverance] of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.” Job said that “the earth not cover up my blood,” that all this suffering just not be for

¹³¹F. Delitzsch, cited by Robert L. Alden, *Job, vol. 11, The New American Commentary*.

nothing, not go to waste. And 2000 years, approximately, after Job, James could cite him again in sacred Scripture as an example. Now 2000 years this side of James we're doing the same thing. . . .

There were times, there continue to be times, when it is all I can do to persevere, to endure. And there were so many times I wanted to give up, times when I felt like I *had* given up. But there's the arms of Jesus. You're falling, you're falling, you're falling – you may not feel it, but they're there to catch you when you fall.

Eight Parallels Between Job and Jesus

When we started we said that Job is almost a type of Christ, and I trust you've seen that as we've forged through these two chapters. I want to leave you with eight parallels that I found between Job and Jesus, between Job chapters 16 and 17, and to Jesus that we learn from the New Testament. Eight parallels. There may be more, you may quibble with some of them, but this is what I came up with. We will go through them really quickly.

1. Job was Mocked, as was Jesus (16:10,20, 17:2; Cf. Matt. 27:27ff.)

Number one, *Job was mocked, as was Jesus*. Job said, chapter 16 verse 10, "They have gaped at me with their mouth." Chapter 16 verse 20, "My friends are my scoffers." Chapter 17 verse two, "Surely mockers are with me." And then we read in Matthew chapter 27 versus 27:

27 Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole Roman cohort around Him. 28 They stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. 29 And after twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand; and they knelt down before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" 31 After they had mocked Him, they took the scarlet robe off Him and put His own garments back on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him.

Job was mocked, but a far greater way so was the Son of God.

2. *Job was Spit Upon, as was Jesus (17:6; Cf. Isa. 50:6; Matt. 26:67, 27:30)*

Job was spit upon, as was Jesus. Look at chapter 17 verse six, “I am one in whom men spit.” The prophet Isaiah, Isaiah chapter 50 verse six, foreshadows the mistreatment that Jesus would endure, including the spittle and scorn of sinful men, those and he came to save. Isaiah 50 verse six, “I gave My back to those who strike Me, My cheeks to those who pluck out My beard. I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting.” We see the fulfillment of that in the Gospels, Matthew chapter 26 verse 67, “Then they spat in His face and beat Him with their fists.” Matthew 27 verse 30, “They spat on Him and took the reed to beat Him on the head.”

My New Testament reading has been going through these accounts, and I just kind of cringe when I read the accounts of the mistreatment of my God, my Savior. *My friend Jesus Christ was mocked, spit upon.*

3. *Job was Slapped, as was Jesus (16:10; Cf. Mark 14:65; Matt. 26:67)*

Thirdly, *Job was slapped, as was Jesus.* Job 16:10, “They have slapped me on the cheek with contempt.” Matthew chapter 26 verse 67, “Then they spat in His face and beat Him with their fists, and others slapped Him.” Mark 14 verse 65, “The officers received Him with slaps in the face.”

4. *Job was Handed over to the Wicked, as was Jesus (Job 16:11; Cf. Luke 24:7; Acts 2:23)*

Job was handed over the wicked, as was Jesus. Job 16:11, “God hands me over to ruffians and tosses me in the hands of the wicked.” Well, this [same treatment] was predicted by Jesus [of Himself] in Luke 24 seven: “The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men [wicked men], and be crucified, and the third day rise again.” Predicted by Jesus, preached afterward by Peter. Acts 2:23: “This Man [that is, Jesus Christ] delivered over by the

predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless [or wicked] men and put him to death.”

5. *Job was Betrayed, as was Jesus (17:5; Cf. Matt. 26:21, 27:9; Mark 14:10)*

Job was betrayed, as was Jesus. Chapter 17 verse five, Job said: “He who informs against his friends for a share of the spoil, the eyes of his children also will languish.” He who informs against his friends for gain. Matthew chapter 26 verse 21, as Jesus was eating the Passover meal with his disciples, He said: “Truly I say to you that one of you will be betray Me.” Mark 14 verse 10, “Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the 12, went off to the chief priests in order to betray Him to them.”

And remember the price Judas received for betraying Jesus? *30 pieces of silver*, the price of a slave according to Exodus 21:32. Jesus, the Suffering Servant, betrayed for the price of a slave. Matthew 27 verse nine: “And that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: ‘And they took the 30 pieces of silver, the price of the one whose price had been set by the sons of Israel.’”

6. *Job was Disfigured, as was Jesus (16:8, 17:7; Cf. Isa. 52:14, 53:3; Psalm 22:17)*

Number six. *Job was disfigured, as was Jesus.* Job 16:8, “You have shriveled me up, it has become a witness, my leanness rises up against me, it testifies to my face.” Chapter 17 verse seven, “My eye has also grown dim because of grief, and all of my members are as a shadow.”

And then one thinks of Jesus who endured beatings and hung crucified, a disfigured pathetic figure of a man, not just any man, but the Son of God. And the Old Testament predicted this of the Messiah. Again, Isaiah 52:14 prophetically states, “His appearance was marred more than any man.” After all, a whipping with a Roman *cat of nine tails* alone would induce shock

and sometimes death. Cat of nine tails, a stick, a sturdy stick with leather thongs attached to it. And attached to those leather strips were pieces of bone and sharp metal. And the Romans were experts at bending one over backward onto the post and digging that in, ripping and shredding skin.

Yes, “Jesus was despised, forsaken of men” (Isaiah 53:3), “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.” Psalm 22:17 speaks of His crucifixion, prophetically: “I can count all My bones. They look, they stare at Me.” Again a picture of a crucified man hanging, and the forces of gravity pulling apart bone and tendon. . . . Job was disfigured; Jesus in a far greater way than Job, disfigured to the glory of God. Jesus disfigured to the glory of God and the salvation of man.

7. Job was Crushed by God, as was Jesus (16:12b-14; Cf. Isa. 53:4-5; 2 Cor. 5:21)

Number seven: *Job was crushed by God, as was Jesus.* Chapter 16 verses 12 and 13: “He has also set me up as His target. His arrows surround me. Without mercy He splits my kidneys open; He pours my gall on the ground.” And we saw in chapter 16 verse 14: “He breaks through me with breach after breach.” Again, we read in Isaiah chapter 53:4-5: “He was smitten of God and afflicted, pierced through for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities.” Job was crushed by God. Jesus, in a far greater way.

And by the way, this speaks of the very meaning of the word “propitiation,” the satisfaction of God's wrath against sin. To put it another way, God's wrath fell upon Jesus Christ rather than on we who deserved it. 2 Corinthians 5:21, “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

In 2001 songwriters Keith Getty and Stuart Townsend composed one of my favorite songs, *In Christ Alone*. It was a song not without controversy, namely a line from the second verse: “Till on that cross as Jesus died, the wrath of God was satisfied.” That’s controversial in some so-called Christian circles. In 2013, a 15 member committee of the Presbyterian Church USA, a liberal mainline denomination, voted to exclude the song from a new church hymnal. They requested permission to change the words to “the love of God was magnified.” That request was denied. A PCUSA minister, Chris Joyner, remarked that while many in his congregation liked the hymn, he agreed with the decision because “that lyric comes close to saying that God killed Jesus. The cross is not an instrument of God's wrath.”

Isaiah 53:10, “The Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief, rendering Himself as a guilt offering.” Denny Burke, Director of the Center for Gospel and Culture, and a professor at Boyce College / Southern Seminary, stated in response “that when wrath goes, so does the essential meaning of the atonement of God: penal substitution. At the end of the day, the cross itself is the stumbling block.” Well, yeah, that doesn't surprise us. Because the cross *is* a stumbling block. As the apostle Paul says in Galatians: the cross is a stumbling block for those that are perishing; for we who believe, it’s our only boast in life.

8. *Job Faced Sheol (the grave), as did Jesus (17:13-16; Cf. Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:24ff.)*

Then lastly, *Job faced Sheol (the Hebrew word often meaning grave), as did Jesus*. Here's the big difference: Jesus conquered the grave. Hallelujah! Three times in the book of Acts we see Psalm 16 verse 10 quoted as having been fulfilled in Jesus. Twice by Peter in Acts chapter 2 verse 24: “But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power. Because You will not abandon My soul to

Hades.” That's the Greek word used to translate *Sheol* – You will not abandon my soul to *Hades*, nor allow Your Holy One to undergo decay. A little later in verse 29, and following Peter's preaching:

Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David, that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. And so, because he was a prophet and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendents on the throne, he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh suffer decay. This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses.

Hallelujah! *Job faced Sheol, as did Jesus*. But Jesus conquered Sheol, the grave – and so will we, if we know Him.

So Lord, we are grateful, so grateful, for Your purpose in our lives knowing that our suffering is not wasted, that You are patient with us. Contrary to the picture that Job paints with windy words, You're not an enemy, a savage beast looking to devour us. No, we're Your children, in Christ alone. Yet we're not exempt from suffering, that for a purpose. So I pray, Lord, that You continue to equip us, that You continue to bless this study. I pray, Lord, for any who know not Christ as Lord and Savior. They will suffer in this life, but they will suffer far greater for all eternity if they don't believe and repent. Holy Spirit, open those blind eyes, to the glory of our Triune God. Amen.

**Round Two with Bildad: The Fate of the Wicked and the Hope of the Righteous
Job 18:1 - 19:29**

June 6, 2021

Christ Church of Clarkson

0621Job18.1-19.29(20) | Audio Length: 56:40

Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God

I'm going to give you a date, I'm going to give you a name, and I'm going to give you a place. . . . The date: July 8, 1741. The place: Enfield, Connecticut. The name: Jonathan Edwards. Jonathan Edward's most famous sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." That's the title. The subtitle: At a Time of Great Awakenings, and Attended with Remarkable Impressions on many of the Hearers. Edwards cited as his text, Deuteronomy 32:35 (*their foot shall slide in due time*).

I don't know if you've ever read Jonathan Edward's sermon. It is sometimes included in books on American literature. It is remarkable. Listen to an excerpt and imagine being an unregenerate individual under the conviction of the Holy Spirit as you hear these words back in the 18th century (Edwards preaching):

The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked: his wrath towards you burns like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be cast into the fire; he is of purer eyes than to bear to have you in his sight; you are ten thousand times more abominable in his eyes, than the most hateful venomous serpent is in ours. You have offended him infinitely more than ever a stubborn rebel did his prince; and yet it is nothing but his hand that holds you from falling into the fire every moment. It is to be ascribed to nothing else, that you did not go to hell the last night; that you were suffered to awake again in this world, after you closed your eyes to sleep. And there is no other reason to be given, why you have not dropped into hell since you arose in the morning, but that God's hand has held you up. . . .

It was said that Edwards preached this sermon in a monotone. It was also said that his audience was under such deep conviction that many were crying and moaning. But Edwards didn't leave them there. He went on to say:

And let every one that is yet out of Christ, and hanging over the pit of hell, whether they be old men and women, or middle aged, or young people, or little children, now hearken to the loud calls of God's word and providence. This acceptable year of the Lord, a day of such great favor to some, will doubtless be a day of as remarkable vengeance to others. . . .

Therefore, let every one that is out of Christ, now awake and fly from the wrath to come. The wrath of Almighty God is now undoubtedly hanging over a great part of this congregation. Let every one fly out of Sodom: "Haste and escape for your lives, look not behind you, escape to the mountain, lest you be consumed."

Edwards brought them the truth of judgment, but Edwards didn't leave them there. He brought them to hope, he brought them to Christ, he brought them to the cross.

Bildad in chapter 18 preaches a message worthy of Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God. *Well, sort of.* Listen to the words of one church leader. He says this:

I run a training course for preachers. Had I heard Bildad preach this one [chapter 18] I would have had to give him high marks—on every account except one. . . His sermon is so fundamentally misapplied that needs to be consigned to the incinerator of failed sermons.¹³²

Bildad does a masterful job of showing the condemnation that sinners rightly deserve. But he misapplies it – and applies it to a righteous man, that is Job. And he does not offer any hope.

One commentator gives as his title to chapter 18, "Bildad's Second Speech: The Road to Hell." It's one thing to warn others about the road to hell, but you also need to show them how they can get off that road before they arrived there.

¹³²Christopher Ash, *Job*, 199.

Round Two With Bildad: The Fate of the Wicked and the Hope of the Righteous

My title takes both chapters 18 and 19 into account. This is Round Two With Bildad: The Fate of the Wicked and the Hope of the Righteous. There is room – in this rather gloomy two chapters – there is room for hope. But it's gonna take us a little while to get there, so hang on as we come to chapter 18.

The Black and White World of Bildad

Once again we see *the black and white world of Bildad*. We talked about that in Bildad's first response to Job in chapter 8 (that was the title of my message then, The Black and White World of Bildad). Bildad lives in a tiny theological world. His doctrine is all well-arranged in stark categories that have no exceptions. There is no room, as we said back in chapter 8, for *the living color of the gospel*.

As I thought about this, Matthew chapter 23 verse 27 came to mind where Jesus says, “Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites, you are like whitewashed tombs, which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.” Well, in a similar way, Bildad appears to have his doctrine well-ordered in strict, tidy categories. But when you look beneath the surface what you find is the darkness of death.

I will give you the same caveat I gave back when we were in chapter 8. I'm not a theological relativist, I am a biblical literalist (literal rightly understood). I am a Christian in the historic reformation tradition. I'm not sliding toward liberalism when I say that being black-and-white in everything can be dangerous. Certainly, there are things in Scripture that are black-and-white, but often it's what *how* and *what* we do with those things – *how* we interpret those things – that become the issue, because everything, frankly, is not cut and dry. . . . I'll say

it again, to be a good theologian, you have to be able to handle nuance, *you have to be able to handle nuance*. You can't make everything binary. . . . Jesus? Is He God or man? Choose. That is an "either / or fallacy." He is *both* fully, and completely, perfectly God and perfectly, completely, fully man. But when we absolutize the application of certain truths we get into trouble.

I gave you a couple of examples back in chapter 8. I told you about the parents that I heard about who believed that God *only* loves the elect. Since He has no love for the non-elect, they would not tell their children, "Jesus loves you," because they didn't know if the children were elect. That's a misunderstanding of the nuanced nature of God's love. I also thought of another family that would not allow their children to pray, as God doesn't hear the prayers of the wicked – "and I don't know if my little Johnny, my little Janie . . . I don't know if they're converted . . . therefore, I'm not going to allow them to pray." Then there's the man I met with over coffee years ago who told me that no Christian can have assurance of salvation. He was a Calvinist, but he was so gobbled on his doctrine of perseverance of the saints that he believed that since you don't know the future – you profess Christ – but you don't know, [you might become] apostate. You may not really have been converted, and you don't know until you die, as you may not die well. Therefore, you can't have assurance. A professed believer [who] takes his life? Ergo! He was never converted in the first place. Bildad would fit right into this. His theology was neatly arranged in tight categories. But his theology was wrong. . . .

Bildad made two mistakes when he gave this speech about the horrors of death, that is, chapter 18. To begin with, he preached it to the wrong man, for Job was already a believer (note Job chapter 1). Second, he preached it with the wrong motive, for there is no love in his heart,

no love in his heart. Well, Bildad not only lacked compassion, he lacked in his fundamental understanding of how God works.

Remember we talked about this before. In their world, bad things just don't happen to good people. And if you profess to be someone who fears God, who knows God in a salvific way, and tragedy falls upon you, you must've done something to deserve it (and it may ultimately be proof that you're not one of God's own). That is the world in which they lived. That is the perspective that Job's three friends take. "Job, calamity has come upon your life; you were blessed. Now you're being cursed *because* you are a unrighteous person." That is why the author of the book of Job begins, at the very beginning, by establishing Job's righteousness, so we always have this in mind as we're making our way through the book.

When the accuser of the brethren strikes, take refuge in the Redeemer

Bildad, to the glee of Satan, throws unfounded accusations Job's way. With that in mind, this sentence sums up chapters 18 and 19: . . . *When the accuser of the brethren strikes, take refuge in the Redeemer.* "When the accuser of the brethren" – yes, Satan is called "the accuser of the brethren" – but at times it can be his minions, or can be a so-called friend. When the accuser of the brethren strikes with accusations, take refuge in the Redeemer.

Bildad's Second Speech: The Future Fate of the Wicked (Chapter 18)

This is Bildad's second speech, chapter 18. Bildad talks about – this our first outline point – The Future Fate of the Wicked. And under that heading, there are other points. The first one is an accusation (well, no surprise, right). Bildad, the three friends in general, are filled with accusations against Job.

Bildad: "Job you are Egocentric and Dumb" (18:1-4)

And here's how I would phrase Bildad's first accusation, chapter 18 verses one through four, Bildad speaking: "Job you are Egocentric and Dumb." This is what we call an *ad hominem* argument; *ad hominem*, Latin for "against the man." This is where "I'm not going to address the issue, but I'll criticize you and call you names. I'll call you egocentric and dumb." And that's what Bildad does. He attacks the man, *ad hominem* style. This isn't the first time you've seen this; it will not be the last.

Look at verse one. **1 Then Bildad the Shuhite responded, [to Job] 2 "How long will you hunt for words? Show understanding and then we can talk."**¹³³ In characteristic fashion, Bildad begins his speech with a question (verse two): **"How long will you hunt for words?"** Literally, "How long, Job, will you set a trap for words?" It's interesting. Bildad is addressing Job, yet in the Hebrew language these are second person plural verbs. And commentators have speculated why that is. I think the answer is that Bildad is characterizing Job with *all* of the wicked people. In other words, it's like someone might say, "Well, this is how you people are." Somebody critical of Christians: "Well, you Christians are all like this." And Bildad is lumping Job, not with the righteous, but with the wicked. "This is the way you wicked people are; you set traps for words."

And then he gives two more questions in verses three and four. Again, more interrogative's, more questions. Verse three: **"Why are we regarded as beasts, as stupid in your eyes?"** Verse four: **"O you who tear yourself in your anger — For your sake is the earth to be abandoned, Or the rock to be moved from its place?"**

¹³³Scripture citations are taken from the NAS95 unless otherwise noted.

Remember chapter 16 verse nine? Job said this, “God's anger has torn me and hunted me down.” *Torn me* (note that). Bildad says in verse four, “You, Job, tear yourself in anger. It isn't God who's tearing you up, it's yourself – and your own wickedness!”

And then, when Bildad says in verse four: “For your sake is the earth to be abandoned, or the rock to be moved from its place?” He's accusing Job of being egocentric; that he sees the world revolving around him. You can paraphrase it this way: “Is the world supposed to stop because of you?” We've said things like that to other people, or we've thought them. “You're so self-absorbed. Is everything supposed to stop . . . is the earth supposed to stop revolving because of you?”

Now there is an element of truth here. I can testify that when you are suffering, when you are *really* suffering, you become very egocentric. You become self-absorbed. And in His grace, in His mercy, God understands that. But Bildad doesn't. So he begins with this accusation: “Job you are egocentric and dumb.”

Bildad: “The Wicked face Eventual Doom” (18:5–21)

And then, the main point, and this takes us through the end of the chapter: The Wicked Face Eventual Doom, verse five to verse 21. The wicked face eventual doom, which is in itself true. The wicked, those that don't have a knowledge of God, ultimately through Jesus Christ, those not rightly related to Him, do face eventual doom. But it's how Bildad applies it and the fact that he gives no hope. And the fact that, again, he's applying this to Job.

His light is extinguished (18:5-6)

Now there are several elements here and we need to go through them quickly, we have so much to cover. But notice, number one, under that heading, The Wicked Face Eventual

Doom, number one is that *his (the wicked's) life is extinguished*, verses five and six. And note the contrast between “light” representing life, and “darkness” representing death. Verse five: **“Indeed, the light of the wicked goes out, and the flame of his fire gives no light.”** Verse six: **“The light in his tent is darkened, and his lamp goes out above him.”**

We see this similar imagery in the book of Proverbs as it relates to darkness and the wicked. Proverbs 13:9: “The light of the righteous rejoices, but the lamp of the wicked goes out.” Or Proverbs 24:20: “For there will be no future for the evil man, the lamp of the wicked will be put out.” Well, such are Bildad's words, “The light of the wicked goes out, the light in his tent is darkened. The lamp goes out above him.” So number one: *His light is extinguished*. That's going to be the fate of the wicked.

His plans bring him down

Number two: *His plans bring him down*. His own schemes entrap him. Verse seven: **“His vigorous stride is shortened, and his own scheme brings him down.”** Here is a picture of the evil man who once walked with great confidence, arrogance if you will. Yet he loses his stride under the judgment of God and it begins to be shortened and halted; not so confident anymore. He's being humbled, and he will become a victim of his own advice; his own plans bring him down.

His capture is certain

Third: *His capture is certain*, verses eight through 10. There are six different Hebrew words for “trap” used in these three verses, six different words. Bildad's belief that the wicked will not escape disaster is shown in this picture of being trapped, like animal traps. 8 **“For he is thrown into the net by his own feet [talking about the wicked], and he steps on the**

webbing.” *He steps in the webbing.* Well, that word pictures branches and leaves placed over a hole. You dig a pit, you put branches and leaves over it hoping that your prey will walk along and unexpectedly fall into the pit. Then, verse nine: **“A snare seizes him by the heel, and a trap snaps shut on him.”** The snare, again, picturing a tree bent over with a rope attached. Someone steps into the loop triggering the tree; you're caught. Verse ten: **“A noose for him is hidden in the ground, and a trap for him on the path.”**

Six different words used: You have “net” and “webbing” (verse nine); You have a “snare” and you also have the word “trap” (verse 10); you have a “noose” and you have a different word for “trap” used in verse 10 (from what's used in verse nine). All of this describes unexpected catastrophe; being caught. Unbeknownst, like a mouse, thinking that piece of cheese, that bait, is a good thing. Suddenly he is broken in half by the trap.

This reminded me of a story I heard a few years ago. It was an actual news story about a sinkhole in Florida. (And Florida is notorious for sinkholes. I know, back in Arizona, we would see them as well.) . . . This sinkhole was so large that it sucked in an entire house, and all that was left was the cable TV line that went down in the hole. It actually killed a man inside. Like an unknown sinkhole, this is the fate of the wicked. According to Bildad, *capture is certain. His life is dominated by fear (18:11)*

And then, in verse 11, *his life is dominated by fear.* All-around terrors frighten him. **“All around terrors frighten him, and harry him at every step.”** One translation renders this verse, “Terrors startle him on every side and dog his every step.”¹³⁴ Some believe these terrors to be demonic, but Bildad doesn't specify.

¹³⁴NIV.

One thing we do see, especially from those who have no saving relationship with God through Jesus Christ, is fear. These people can walk with great confidence until something happens like 9/11 when people were rushing into church. Or COVID when they *couldn't* rush into church (but you still saw people with an irrational fear). And this is particularly true, not that Christians are exempt, but this is particularly true of those who have no confidence in Jesus Christ. And it's particularly true – and will be ultimately true – for the wicked at some point, if they don't repent. And that is that is Bildad's point here. Terrors dog his every step.

His Battle is Lost (18:12)

Fifth: *His battle is lost*. Here is a picture of a weary warrior facing inevitable defeat. Verse 12: **“His strength is famished, and calamity is ready at his side.”** The NIV has “calamity is hungry for him.” The battle is lost. And what's the finality of all of this? Numbers 6, 7, and 8: His life is ended; his memory erased; his doom sealed. And that brings us to the end of the chapter.

His life is ended (18:13-16)

There's this progression. *His life is ended*. Then see his *demise* and his *death*. Look at verse 13 of chapter 18 [his *demise*]: **“His skin is devoured by disease [again talking about the wicked man, speaking to Job], the firstborn of death devours his limbs.”** And then his *death*, verses 14 through 16. Verse 14: **“He is torn from the security of his tent, and they march him before the king of terrors.”** 15 **“There dwells in his tent nothing of his; brimstone is scattered on his habitation.** 16 **His roots are dried below, and his branch is cut off above.”**

You see, that's death: *The king of terrors*. Some joke about it. Woody Allen once said, “Death doesn't really worry me that much. I'm not frightened about it. I just don't want to be

there when it happens.” But it's one thing to joke about it. The fact is, death is the greatest fear people face. It's something that every one of us – except the select few who will be around when Jesus Christ returns – something that everyone of us will face. Every single person walking around on the face of this earth is going to be confronted by death. As I've said before, death is a relentless foe that always captures in the end.

You've heard of the King of beers, Budweiser. *Really?* Luther would vehemently disagree! But Luther would agree with this: that death is the king of terrors, that is for those who are not savingly related to God. You see, believers, Christians, have been redeemed from such fear, that is the fear of the king of terrors.

Hebrews chapter 2 verses 14 and 15. The writer of the Hebrews, talking about Jesus, says: “Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood [that is humanity], He, [Jesus] Himself, likewise, also partook of the same [*same what?* flesh and blood], that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil.” And note verse 15 of Hebrews chapter 2: “And might free those who, through fear of death, were subject to slavery all their lives.” Believer, we have been set free from the fear of death. Does that mean we don't fear – that some Christians don't die with great fear? I'm not saying that. I'm not saying that at all.

It's like skydiving for the first time. I have a fear of heights. I don't like going up ladders, and I'm not jumping off a perfectly good airplane with the backpack behind me! But even if I had to do it, I can't imagine doing it, because I've never done it! (I know of one person in this church that's sky-dived.) But I would think that the average person that's going to do this for the first time is going to have some apprehension, again, because that person has never done it

before. Well, none of us has ever died physically before. It's an unknown experience. But the good news is we know One (capital "O"), and He has conquered death on our behalf.

But it should be a terror for those that don't know Jesus Christ. It is, death is, the king of terrors, or it should be. So we see *his demise*, chapter 18 verse 13; we see *his death*; that is, the wicked. chapter 18 verses 14 to 16.

His memory is erased (18:17-20)

And then number seven: His memory, that is the wicked, his memory after his death is erased. Verse 17: **"Memory of him perishes from the earth, and he has no name abroad."** The word "memory" could be translated "fame." Again, how does that apply to Job? What were we told about Job in chapter 1 verse three? He was "the greatest of the men of the East." He was a man who had great fame. And Bildad is saying, "No, Job, you are wicked. You will die and your fame will be erased." [Psalm 9:5b ". . . You have destroyed the wicked; You have blotted out their name forever and ever."]

Verse 18: **"He is driven from light into darkness, and chased from the inhabited world."** 19 **"He has no offspring or posterity among his people, nor any survivor where he sojourned."** No offspring for the wicked. Well, again, if you're Job and you're listening to this what are you thinking? He lost all of his children, all 10 of them (chapter 1 verses 18 and 19). "No posterity among his people," Bildad says. One author writes in this regard:

Since one lived on in children, to die childless was considered a great misfortune and even divine punishment. Stories of barrenness . . . reflect this major concern, from Abraham and Sarah and the other patriarchs to Manoah and his wife (Judg 13:2), from Elkanah and Hannah (1 Sam 1:2) to Hezekiah. . . Though Job had fathered ten children,

he was now childless, and there is no doubt that this was in the minds of both Bildad and Job when Bildad spoke these words.¹³⁵

And then verse 20. Here is a *merism*, that is, talking about one extreme to another to encompass everything (like east and west): **“Those in the west are appalled at his fate, and those in the east are seized with horror.”** That’s called a *merism*; far and wide, like saying “A-to-Z.”

His doom is sealed

Then lastly, *his doom is sealed*. This is the fate of the wicked. Verse 21: **“Surely such are the dwellings of the wicked [and note this, underline this in your mind], and this is the place of him who does not know God.”** Bildad is accusing Job of being *reprobate*. That is, destined for eternal destruction. “Well, Job, this is the fate of the wicked. His light is extinguished; his plans bring him down; his captures certain; his life is dominated by fear; his battle is lost; his life is ended; his memory erased; and his doom is sealed.” Christopher Ash writes:

Job feels himself hunted and trapped by God. God has hunted him (10:16) and has put his feet in the stocks (13:27). He know what it is to be ‘hedged in’ (3:23), trapped and unable to escape. Precisely, says Bildad. Hell is that place. And the only people in Hell are the wicked. ‘Draw your own conclusion, Job.’¹³⁶

¹³⁵Robert L. Alden, *Job, vol. 11, The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 198.

¹³⁶Ash, *Job*, 202.

Job's Reply: The Eternal Hope of the Righteous (Chapter 19)

Well, Job gets to reply. That's chapter 19. Job's Reply: The Eternal Hope of the Righteous. Job's reply consists of six reactions, that is, his reaction to his friends (mainly Bildad) and his reaction to his God. Six reactions.

Job's First Reaction: The Brethren Accuse Me (19:1-6)

What's the first one? Chapter 19 verses one through six: The Brethren Accuse Me. Note that Bildad (chapter 8 verse two), note the words, *how long*: "How long will you say these things, Job?" (Bildad in chapter 18 verse two). We just saw that, "How long will you hunt for words?" Well, Job responds in verse two: "How long, Bildad? I'm responding like you responded to me." **"How long will you torment me and crush me with words?"** 3 **"These ten times now . . ."** (not literally, although one wonders because Job lost 10 of his children; I don't know if there's a connection there). But he says in verse three: **"These ten times . . ."** which at least is a figure of speech for "many"—"many times" **". . . you have insulted me, and you are not ashamed to wrong me."** And then verse four. He says, **"Even if I have truly erred, my error lodges with me."** What Job is saying is, "Even if I have unknowingly sinned, it's still a matter that's between me and God."

Verses five and six: 5 **"If indeed you vaunt yourselves against me and prove my disgrace to me,** 6 **know then that God has wronged me and has closed His net [another word for "trap"] around me."**

Look at that word "wronged." That same Hebrew word occurs twice in chapter 8 verse three. Going back to Bildad's first address where Bildad asked this: "Does God pervert justice? Does the Almighty pervert what is right?" Does God literally *wrong* justice? Does the Almighty

wrong what is right? And Job's response was “no,” of course. “I know that God is righteous.” And Job knows that, but this is out of the suffocating weight of grief. And he blurts out here, “God, you have wronged me.” *Windy words.*

Aren't there times when what we know to be true doesn't match our attitudes or words or actions? I know that holds true for me. The times that I have irrational thoughts, irrational fears, depressions, discouragements; and it doesn't match what I believe. There's an inconsistency.

I knew that Christian parents were not exempt from losing their children (and I'm not talking about a Christian parent who's 90 who loses a 70-year-old child). I'm talking about parents who lose babies, parents who lose 12-year-olds, parents who lose *14-year-olds*. But for me, and in my experience – in our experience – it was the way that everything unfolded in the crash and the loss of our daughter, the way everything unfolded that seems so cruel.

I may have shared this before, but I read widely and I found the writings of C.S. Lewis to be helpful. In his book, *Grief Observed*, he writes with brutal honesty, much like Job, about how he felt after his wife died, and the way things providentially unfolded with ups and downs. And he says:

What chokes every prayer and every hope is the memory of all the prayers . . . offered and all the false hopes we had. Not hopes raised merely by our own, wishful thinking; hopes encouraged, even forced upon us [including] one temporary recovery that might have ranked as a miracle. Step by step we were "led up the garden path." Time after time when He seemed most gracious [God] was really preparing the next torture.¹³⁷

How can a Christian say something like that, being so brutally honest? How can Job say the things he says; he's being brutally honest. And that so resonated with me because I felt, at times, “God, You are being cruel! I had this hope, we would have victory. . . . He spared us, He

¹³⁷C.S. Lewis. *A Grief Observed*, 34-35.

spared us so wonderfully from being burned to death in that wreckage – and it was almost miraculous. It was so providential. And yet You knew that You were going to take Giana!

What right do we have to feel that way? What right do we have to feel that God has wronged us? Well, we really don't. That's when we go to our heads and we say, "Okay, I know Scripture. I know God is good. I know He is righteous, and I'm the sinner deserving of hell. By God's grace, by His mercy alone, I'm an heir of eternal life. I'm a slave of Christ. What reason do I have to complain? None." But we do feel, don't we? C'mon, be honest. We do feel. And in God's love, in His compassion . . . He understands that. He is long-suffering with us.

So here's Job's first reaction. He's looking at Bildad, looking at Eliphaz, he's looking at Zophar: *The brethren accuse me. . . .* Behind, of course, those three stands Satan cheering them on.

Job's Second Reaction: Why God? (19:7-19)

Job's Second Reaction: Why God? "Why?" is a question of every sufferer, even Christians. "Why? Why now? Why this?" Is there ever a convenient time to suffer? For me, it was "Why Christmas Eve, by a drunk driver?" Why did we decide to get a Christmas tree that year? Why wasn't I the one who was so badly injured? Why didn't I die instead of my daughter? And Job asked these same "why?" questions. As one commentator frames the issue, "Why God should buffet one of His own is always one of the most baffling questions a believer faces."¹³⁸

Why do You remain silent? (19:7)

And for Job this centers around three questions:

- Why Do You Remain Silent? (19:7)

¹³⁸*Bible Knowledge Commentary.*

- Why Do You Attack Me? (19:8-12)
- Why Do You Turn Others Against Me? (19:13-19)

No, of course, this is Job's *perception*. This doesn't mean that this is true. But this is how Job feels in his brutal honesty, “Why God do You remain silent during my darkest times?”

I turned to the Psalms. One of the Psalms that burned a hole in my heart was Psalm 10:1: “Why do You stand afar off, O Lord? Why do you hide Yourself in times of trouble?” And as I read that I would cry out to God, “Why are You hiding Yourself from me?” – because that's how I felt. It wasn't true, but that's how I felt. So Job feels, verse seven, **“Behold, I cry, ‘violence!’ but I get no answer. I shout for help, but there's no justice.” . . .**

Why do You attack me? (19:8-12)

Number two: *Why do You attack me?* (verses 8-12). We see five metaphors that Job uses to support his feeling, his feeling justified in how he feels – not justified as to reality – but this is how he feels – five metaphors related to God.

Metaphor of an impenetrable wall (19:8)

The first is the *metaphor of an impenetrable wall*, verse eight (and we've seen this before):

“He has walled up my way so that I cannot pass, and He has put darkness on my paths.”

This is Psalm 23 backwards. Remember David who said, “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me, Your rod and Your staff they comfort me.” Here, Job is saying: “God has put darkness on my paths.”

Metaphor of a crown removed (19:9)

Next we see the *metaphor of a crown removed*, verse nine 9: **“He has stripped my honor from me and removed the crown from my head.”**

Metaphor of an uprooted tree (19:10)

Then, the *metaphor of an uprooted tree*, verse 10: **“He breaks me down on every side, and I am gone; and He has uprooted my hope like a tree.”** [In 14:7 we read, “For there is hope for a tree, when it is cut down, that it will sprout again, and its shoots will not fail.” “Not for me,” says Job.]

Metaphor of a consuming fire (19:11)

Then, there is the *metaphor of a consuming fire*. In chapter 19 verse 11, again accusing God: **“He has also kindled His anger against me and considered me as His enemy.”**

[16:12–14 12 “I was at ease, but He shattered me, and He has grasped me by the neck and shaken me to pieces; He has also set me up as His target. 13 “His arrows surround me. Without mercy He splits my kidneys open; He pours out my gall on the ground. 14 “He breaks through me with breach after breach; He runs at me like a warrior.]

Metaphor of an unconquerable army (19:12)

There is a *metaphor of an unconquerable army* in verse 12: **“His troops come together, and build up their way against me and camp around my tent.”** This is Job's perception that God is attacking him: *Why do to remain silent, God. Why do you attack me, God?*

Why do You turn others against me? (19:13-19)

And then thirdly, *Why do You turn others against me?* His friends and relatives deserted him (that wasn't God's fault).

His friends and relatives have deserted him (19:13-14, 17-19)

In Verse 13 he says, **“He has removed my brothers far from me, and my acquaintances are completely estranged from me.”** Verse 14: **“My relatives have failed, and my intimate friends have forgotten me.”** And then, the only other mention of Job's wife

in the entire book (we saw in chapter 2, the other mention). Here in verse 17 of chapter 19: **“My breath is offensive to my wife, and I am loathsome to my own brothers.”**

Here is a little interesting side note, the Latin Bible, the Latin Vulgate from Jerome (ancient translation) has the word “halitum” for “offensive.” *Halitum*, from which we get *halitosis*. Job is saying, “I’ve got halitosis.” As the ESV puts verse 17: “My breath is strange to my wife, and I am a stench to the children of my own mother.”

Verse 18 (and this is counter-cultural): **“Even young children despise me; I rise up and they speak against me.”** Well, you didn't do that to somebody who was older than you, and it's still true in many cultures that you don't do that. [“But now those younger than I mock me, whose fathers I disdained to put with the dogs of my flock.” (30:1)]

Verse 19: **“All my associates abhor me, and those I love have turned against me.”** The New American Standard uses the word “associates;” better rendered by, for example, the English Standard Version's “intimate friends” – “all my intimate friends abhor me.” This is literally, “All the men of my confidence.” These are Job's most trusted friends that he says *abhor him*, men like Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. This is betrayal by friends.

David knew what that was like, Psalm 55 verses 12 through 14, where David could say (and maybe you have felt this way, maybe you've experienced this):

12 For it is not an enemy who reproaches me, then I could bear it; nor is it one who hates me who has exalted himself against me, then I could hide myself from him. 13 But it is you, a man my equal, my companion and my familiar friend; 14 we who had sweet fellowship together walked in the house of God in the throng.

That's what it's like to be betrayed by a trusted friend.

One of the marks of true friendship is loyalty, a brother or sister who would give their own life for you. Yet sinful men, even the best of them, fail. There is One, however, will never

leave us nor forsake us. One who said, as recorded in the 15th chapter of John's Gospel, "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends." That's Jesus Christ, our God our Savior. Even if we're abandoned by others, by friends – and I thank God for faithful friends, for loyal friends . . . – ultimately there is One that will always stand with us, and that's that's our God, Jesus Christ. *So Job's friends and his relatives have deserted him.*

His servants have deserted him (19:15-16)

He goes on to say, verses 15 and 16, *his servants have deserted him*. Job had a number of servants that were killed. We saw that chapter 1. But he had others that weren't killed, male and female. We see the female in verse 15 – we see the mail servants in verse 16 – who have turned against him: 15 **"Those who live in my house and my maids consider me a stranger. I am a foreigner in their sight."** 16 **"I call to my servant, but he does not answer; I have to implore him with my mouth."**

These are Job's reactions. Sitting on a pile of dirt covered with oozing sores, his heart in a vacuum of loss, his friends having deserted him. Job's First Reaction: The Brethren Accused Me; Job's Second Reaction: Why God?

Job's Third Reaction: I Am Pitiful (19:20-22)

Job's Third Reaction: I Am Pitiful. Verse 20: **"My bone clings to my skin and my flesh, and I have escaped only by the skin of my teeth."** This is a little bit like what he said in chapter 16 verse eight, "You [God] have shriveled me up, it has become a witness; and my leanness rises up against me, it testifies to my face." This is his emaciated state in his sickness and in his grief. And so he says in verse 21: **"Pity me, pity me, O you my friends, for the hand of God has struck me."** That Hebrew word for "struck" is the same word Satan used in

chapter 1 verse 11, and chapter twelve verse five, when he told God to *strike* Job. Job says, “the hand of God has indeed struck me.” Verse 22: **“Why do you persecute me as God does, and are not satisfied with my flesh.”** He tells his friends, “All you want is your pound of flesh!”

Job’s Fourth Reaction: An Eternal Witness (19:23-24)

But here's where things begin to look up with *Job's Fourth Reaction: An Eternal Witness*. I find these two verses striking. Look at verse 23: **“Oh that my words were written! Oh that they were inscribed in a book!** In verse 24: **“That with an iron stylus and lead they were engraved in a rock forever!”** Job desires to have an enduring testimony of his suffering, and eventually his vindication. He wants an eternal witness and enduring testimony.

In a lesser sense, this is why we have grave markers and inscribe messages into granite; for an enduring legacy. Again, when you lose a young child, especially, you think more seriously about your own mortality and things like burial plots – that you can be in your 50s or 60s, even in your 70s and you don’t want to think about that. Well, I can tell you, when you lose a 14-year-old it's not a big deal to think about that . . . you start to think about family plots. And that's what we did: an above-ground mausoleum at Riverside Cemetery. And I wanted the inscriptions on our markers to have an enduring legacy; not for Giana only (or us), but really, way beyond that an enduring legacy to our great God. And we may have the most elaborate inscriptions at Riverside Cemetery in Rochester. There are two panels . . . with the name “BARTOLUCCI” written across the top. Then there are the names of my parents, Lois, me, and of course, Giana. . . . (My dad was cremated so he goes with mom.) But we also have the words of Philippians 1:21, “For me to live is Christ, to die is gain.” And then we have John 11:25 and 26: “Jesus said, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me will live, even if he

dies” – I love that, “he who believes in Me will live, even if he dies” – “and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die.” And then the words: “Do you believe this?” And I thought, “What a wonderful thing to have for those that are visiting a cemetery. They have death on their minds, and to see that inscription, and to see that question” “Do you believe this?” Well . . . markers on granite may be enduring, but they’re not eternal, right? Grave markers fade.

But think about the words of Job: 23 **“Oh that my words were written! Oh that they were inscribed in a book!”** 24 **“That with an iron stylus and lead they were engraved in the rock forever!”** Job had no idea of [how prophetic his words] would be, inscribed in an *eternal book*. Isaiah chapter 40 verse eight: “The grass withers, the flower fades” (we could say, “the gravestone becomes obscured, washes away”), “but the word of our God stands forever.” *Forever.*

Job’s Fifth Reaction: Sanity (19:25-27)

Job’s Fifth Reaction: Sanity. That’s what I call this. Job’s fifth reaction is one of a sane person. Out of the midst of darkness comes light. And we’ve seen that before with Job. He was so gloomy, so down. “Oh, I’m being kicked! I’m down! God is kicking me and stomping all over me!” And all of a sudden comes this ray of light. We saw it in chapter 13 verse 15, in the midst of the darkness, he says, “Though He slay me, I will hope in Him.” We saw it in chapter 16 verse 19, in the midst of the darkness and gloom, “Even now, behold, my Witness is in heaven, and my Advocate is on high.” And here we see it in verses 25, 26 and 27.

Hope in a Redeemer

Job has two things: hope in a Redeemer and hope in resurrection. These two verses – I didn’t know this before I started to study this passage – these two verses are celebrated in music

through Hensel's *Messiah*. Did you know that? And in the lyrics, as I looked them up, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." Here's how Job puts it, as rendered by the New American Standard:

25 "As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will take His stand on the earth. 26 "Even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh I shall see God; 27 whom I myself shall behold, and whom my eyes will see and not another. My heart faints within me!"

Three things we see here: *I know He lives; I know He stands; and I know I will see*. And that, Job says, is [his] hope in a Redeemer. *When the accuser of the brethren strikes, take refuge – where? – take refuge in the Redeemer*.

I know He lives (19:25a)

Job says, "I know He lives." Verse 25: **"As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives."** *I know*. This is experiential, saving knowledge. This is the Hebrew word *yada*, to know with intimacy. Adam *knew* (*yada*) his wife and she conceived. The New Testament counterpart is *ginōskō*. John 17 verse three: "This is eternal life, that they may *know*" (*ginōskō*) – "that they may *know* You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." Job says, I know (*yada*); I know that my Redeemer lives!

I have hope in a Redeemer (19:25)

Job says, *"I have hope in a Redeemer."* I know He lives! He is the living God! 1 Timothy 4:10. The word "Redeemer" is *ga'al*, only used here in Job. The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament defines it, "To redeem a relative from danger or difficulty." It's used as a *kinsman-redeemer* in the book of Ruth. You gotta pull that together! Listen, I know it's getting late; I've been going on for almost an hour, but you gotta pull this together. This is the

dessert, right here. *Ga'al*, a kinsman-Redeemer. A “kinsman” – One like us! Who is that, friends? Who’s our kinsman-Redeemer? Jesus Christ! He redeemed us as a kinsman, One like us, yet without sin. Who could stand and reconcile God and man? None other but One who is God and man, Jesus Christ. He purchased us from the slave market of sin to be slaves of His righteousness; slaves of Christ alone.

I know He stands

Job says, “I know He lives.” And he says, “I know He stands.” Verse 25: “**At the last He will take His stand on the earth.**” You say, “what is that about?” This is more courtroom language. It's the idea of taking a stand as a witness. Robert Altman in his commentary says, “For Job, and for every believer before and after him, there is a divine Redeemer. We know his name is Jesus, and at the last day he will stand up and defend us because he has bought us with his blood . . .”¹³⁹ *Job's hope in a Redeemer.*

Job's hope in resurrection

And then there's *Job's hope in resurrection*. This is profound. Job says, “I know I will see Him” (verse 26) “**even after my skin is destroyed.**” What does that mean? “After I die” “**Yet from my flesh I shall [future] see God, whom I myself shall behold, and whom my eyes will see and not another.**” And this knowledge is so great that Job adds: “**My heart**” – literally “my kidneys” – “**faints within me!**” This is the earliest biblical testimony to bodily resurrection, that which Paul talks about in 1 Corinthians chapter 15. Read that chapter sometime.

¹³⁹Robert L. Alden.

“I know that my Redeemer lives.” That something that we know, we have the full picture on, we have the completed revelation of God's Word. We know that when Jesus comes, we will be resurrected. Our bodies will take on a new form. From our flesh, from our redeemed flesh, we will see our God.

Job's Sixth Reaction: A Warning to His Three Friends (19:28-29)

Job's sixth and last reaction is, A Warning to His Three Friends. They were warning him. He now warns them. I'm just going to read this:

28 “If you say, ‘How shall we persecute him?’ [that is, Job] And ‘What pretext for a case against him can we find?’ 29 “Then be afraid of the sword for yourselves, for wrath brings the punishment of the sword, so that you may know there is judgment.”

Job gives a very appropriate warning. That which Bildad talked about, the judgment that's going befall the wicked? He didn't give any hope. Job talks about hope. But then he warns them about the judgment that they will receive if they don't repent: “So that you may know there is a Judge.”

Jesus speaking of the role of the Holy Spirit in John 16:8, “But He when he comes, He will convict the world of three things” – the great work of the Holy Spirit. “You will convict the world, you will convict people, *concerning sin*.” That is, that we have sinned and fallen short of the glory, fallen short of the glory of God. “And *righteousness*” – that God is righteous, that there is a Divine standard – “and *judgment*.” That's the work of the Holy Spirit bringing a sinner to repentance. Convicting one of *sin*: “Why, yes, I have sinned, I am a sinner;” *righteousness*: How can you know sin unless you have a standard of perfect goodness; and then you have *judgment*: I will give an account. So where do I go? *Where do I go?* I flee to the cross! I flee to Jesus Christ! *When the accuser of the brethren strikes take refuge in the Redeemer.*

Let's pray. Well, Lord, this has been a whirlwind. We've covered so much here. I'm thankful for my hearers and their patience, there have been so many ups and downs, literally, figuratively. I pray, Lord, that You'll take these words and impress them upon our hearts. I think of the high point as we looked at Job's hope in Redeemer, Job's knowledge of a future resurrection. And, Lord, encourage our hearts. This is a man who testified some 4000 years ago, 2000 years before the coming of the Savior, Jesus Christ, who is still building His church, of which we are part. And so what I pray for is any who know not Christ. And I pray, Holy Spirit, that You would convict that one concerning sin, concerning righteousness, and concerning judgment. And for those of us, Lord, who do know You, let us always remember that when the accuser of the brethren strikes, whether it's a fallen angel, whether it's a fellow fallen human being, may we take refuge under the shadow of the Redeemer's wings. In His name we pray.

Zophar's Parting Shot and Job's Rejoinder (Part 1)

Job 20:1-29

July 8, 2021

Christ Church of Clarkson

0721Job20.1-29(21) | Audio Length: 55:29

Open your Bibles to Job, chapter 20. . . . I'm just going to read a couple select passages, one from chapter 20 and the other from chapter 21. Chapter 20, beginning in verse one:

1 Then Zophar the Naamathite answered, 2 “Therefore my disquieting thoughts make me respond, even because of my inward agitation. 3 “I listened to the reproof which insults me, and the spirit of my understanding makes me answer. 4 “Do you know this from of old, from the establishment of man on earth, 5 That the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the godless momentary? 6 “Though his loftiness reaches the heavens, and his head touches the clouds, 7 He perishes forever like his refuse; those who have seen him will say, ‘Where is he?’¹⁴⁰

Then chapter 21 verse seven, Job speaking:

7 Why do the wicked still live, continue on, also become very powerful? 8 "Their descendants are established with them in their sight, and their offspring before their eyes, 9 Their houses are safe from fear, and the rod of God is not on them.

May God add His blessing to the reading of His Word as we pray:

Father, we thank You for our time that we have been able to spend in this book, a tremendous book, the book of Job. What a blessing it has been; by Your design a perfect addition to the canon of Scripture, and yet so challenging at times, especially these middle chapters. And so, Lord, continue to be gracious to us as we make our way through this book this morning through chapter 20. I pray, Lord, that You would give me clarity. I pray that my hearers would focus on the text, on the words, as well as on the outline. And I pray that all of that will come together to increase our knowledge; that our knowledge increase so that we may

¹⁴⁰Scripture citations are taken from the NAS95 unless otherwise noted.

walk in a greater worthiness before our God, with greater joy, better equipped to suffer for Your sake. It's in the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

The danger of the tongue

Chuck Swindoll once said that the most treacherous enemy in the church is the tongue. . . . Of course, by that he means *speech*, that which comes out of our mouths. Sometimes the Bible likens the tongue to a sword; the tongue cuts deep and wide. The tongue spreads gossip, slander, false doctrine, lies, painful hurtful words. When Solomon penned the Proverbs, he included seven things the Lord hates, and among them was “a false witness who utters lies.” You know what it's like to have things said about you that are not true. I know what it's like to have things said about me that are not true. It hurts. But none of this is foreign to the Bible.

Joseph of the Old Testament was falsely accused of rape by his master's wife. Moses had the very same people he led to deliverance turn against him with the accusation that he had led them into the wilderness to die. David was falsely accused. He was falsely accused of attempting to dethrone King Saul. And for a dozen years he was a fugitive held sway under the weight of those accusations. Nehemiah led a movement to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem just before its completion, as enemies spread the word that he was in it for himself, to make himself king.

We go to the New Testament. The apostle Paul was accused of being a phony convert, a false teacher, a pseudo-apostle, and a poor public speaker. We can go on.

What about Jesus? He was not immune from slander during His earthly ministry. He was accused of being an illegitimate child, having a demon, violating the very Word He authored. And worst of all, He was accused of blasphemy. As it relates to false accusations, we can say

that Jesus set the standard in that regard because you can't get any lower than accusing the God of the universe of lies and deceit.

But as it relates to us sinners saved by amazing grace, Jesus gave us these words of expectation in Matthew chapter 5: “Blessed are you when people insult you, when they persecute you, when they falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.” Jesus says you’re blessed! So “rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” Nothing new. It happened to God's people in the Old Testament, throughout history into the New Testament, throughout history after the New Testament.

When accused or suffering unjustly, flee from God to God

But to look at it another way, as we come to chapter 20 (and later to chapter 21) in the book of Job – follow me here . . . *When accused or suffering unjustly, flee from God to God.* And I really struggled with this. There's something I'm trying to get through to you that's tricky. Let's see if I can clarify it, because it almost sounds like a contradiction. *How can you flee from God to Him?* But I think that's what we see from Job. Job flees from God, even as he flees to Him. Job knows, for example, that God is sovereign over every single inch of his suffering. Job complains, he flees from God in one sense, even as he flees to Him in another.

I can identify with that in suffering the tragic car crash and subsequent loss of our daughter. I found God's sovereignty both comforting and a challenge. I fled from God even as I fled to Him. Fleeing from Him, fearful, in all of His sovereignty, and yet knowing there's no other place to turn. And vacillating; fleeing *from* Him, fleeing *to* Him, knowing that He had hold of me. So when accused, or falsely accused, or suffering unjustly, *flee from God to God.*

There are other biblical examples of men who were unjustly accused, men like Joseph, David, Nehemiah, Paul. But when we talk about righteous men, fallen men but righteous men, I can think of no one that can stand at the head of the class beyond Job. We've seen throughout the chapters we've covered so far that Job's three friends are slow to comfort, quick to accuse. They've lied about Job. They slander his name. But the thing is, I don't think they're lying deliberately. I think their lies are out of ignorance. They flow out of a faulty worldview.

Let me give you a little lesson on deductive logic. We can put this in the form of a syllogism. This is their faulty worldview – and we seen this before. It ought to sound familiar.

1. The wicked suffer calamity.
2. Job is suffering calamity.
3. Therefore, Job is wicked.

That's deductive logic as it relates to the concept of logic. It's actually a valid argument because it's a consistent system. The conclusion follows the premises. But the problem is, it's not a sound argument, because it's not true. So you could say, yes this is a valid argument, but it's not a true argument. The logic of Job's friends, the logic of the times in which they live, is that calamity only befalls those who are wicked. And that brings us to Zophar.

You might want to give Zophar a round of applause at this point. Not really for him; but these are his last words. We're done with Zophar by the time we get done with chapter 20. After chapter 20 we hear no more of him.

Chapter 21, Job's reply, ends the second cycle of dialogue between Job and his three friends. So remember, Eliphaz speaks, Job answers; Bildad speaks, Job answers; Zophar speaks, Job answers. Round one. The same thing with round two. And this is where we are concluding next week with Job's response to Zophar. We will conclude the second round of speeches.

There's one more round to go, but guess what? We have Eliphaz, we have Bildad, and Job's response to them, but we have no Zophar. . . . He opts out. I think he's probably exasperated; and he has nothing – as we'll see – he has nothing new to say, and so he remained silent.

Remember, Zophar is the youngest of the three friends and he has a brashness to match his youth. One commentator hits the nail on the head when he writes:

Zophar is the hottest and most violent of the three, and his impassioned harangue is marked at once by a fanatical fierceness and unmitigated coarseness that are unequaled in other parts of the drama.

. . . The innuendo that Job is perishing in his sin, cut down as an evil-doer in the midst of his days . . . ; the suggestion that he has been a gourmet in wickedness, rolling it as a dainty morsel under his tongue . . . ; the assumption that . . . Job is being compelled to disgorge his ill-gotten wealth and deserves the fierceness of God's wrath . . . – all of this would be incredible if it were not the natural outcome of the dogmatic rabies which devours the innocent with the guilty, the fanatical perversity which changes the truth of God into a lie. Zophar's rhetorical diatribe is well worth studying as the utterance of a partisan who . . . magnifies God's strictness with a zeal [[that we might call] "an indecent enthusiasm."] . . . [H]is haste explains his theology; for, making God, as every zealot does, in his own image, he conceives Him, like an impatient judge, blazing out wrath against evil-doers, exulting in the doom which He pronounces upon them. . . . According to the zealot, the wheels of God grind quickly. . . . When the zealot makes his own opinions and sentiment as the standard of divinity there is a magnified Zophar on the throne of the universe.¹⁴¹

Pretty harsh words. But as we'll see, words that Zophar deserves.

Zophar's Parting Shot and Job's Rejoinder

As far as our message for today (Job chapters 20 and 21) – I'm planning on preaching next week – we have Zophar's Parting Shot and Job's Rejoinder. To give an overview of our outline, “The last words of Zophar,” and then under that heading, three points: The wicked die young; The wicked have temporary pleasure; and The wicked die painful deaths. This is

¹⁴¹Strahan. Cited in Talbert, 124.

Zophar's contention. And this isn't just like, well most the time this happens, or you're in danger of this happening. If you're wicked, no, this is just the way it works: *The wicked die young, Job. The wicked have temporary pleasure, Job. The wicked die painful deaths, Job.* All of this as a warning to Job.

And then, *Job's rejoinder*, his response in chapter 21. And again were saving that for next time. He refutes each of Zophar's three points: *The wicked do live long lives* (Job's first point). *The wicked do live pleasurable lives* (Job's second point). And, *The wicked do die the same as the righteous* (his third point). . . .

But go back with me to verse one of chapter 20. Again, The Last Words of Zophar. There's a few introductory verses that we need to cover before we get to that first point. So verse one: **“Then Zophar the Naamathite answered,”** that is, he answered Job, and he says: 2 **“Therefore my disquieting thoughts make me respond, even because of my inward agitation.** Zophar is peeved. He's troubled. The words used here give the impression that Zophar is even rattled. And he says, verse three: **“I listened to the reproof which insults me, and the spirit of my understanding makes me answer.”** “Job, your words insult me. I'm insulted and therefore I have to answer in the spirit of my understanding. . . . Job, I'm tired of listening to your nonsense and I'm offended. And you know, Job, my understanding of how life works and what's true impels me to answer you this last time.”

This connects to what Job said in chapter 19 verse 29, the last verse of that chapter, where Job warns the three friends: “. . . be afraid of the sword for yourselves; for wrath brings the punishment of the sword, so that you may know there is judgment.” “You want to talk about

me being judged. Well, take a look in the mirror; be afraid for yourselves. For wrath brings the punishment of the sword so that you may know there is a judgment.”

Well, Zophar is insulted, Zophar is threatened. Really, after all, Job is right. Everything Zophar stands for is wrong (and we get threatened by that). [It’s like the] way we have passionate convictions about things. Maybe it’s a doctrinal view and somebody takes a contrary view to our favorite, or one of our favorite, doctrinal views. And they make a good case against us and we feel threatened because we want to be right. But Zophar, he’s threatened, he’s agitated, he’s peeved.

The Wicked Die Young (20:11-19)

[And so] Zophar moves to his first point, The Wicked Die Young. Those whom God opposes will not see a long life. A similar argument was made by Bildad in his first speech, chapter 8 verses 11 through 19. It was also made by Eliphaz in his second speech, chapter 15 verses 29 through 35. The wicked die young. Now here’s Job. We don’t know how old he is. He’s probably not elderly. And so, this warning applies to Job, who’s deathly ill; not only suffering grief, but suffering physical torment. *Well, Job, the wicked die young.*

Verses four and five are really central to Zophar’s argument. And there’s a translation issue I want you to catch. Reading from the New American Standard, verse four, **“Do you know this from of old, from the establishment of man on earth, 5 that the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the godless momentary?”** I think it’s misleading because it implies that Job should know that the wicked live short, momentary lives. That’s the opposite of what Zophar is trying to prove here. And so if you have other translations, like the English Standard Version, they insert the word, *not*: “Do you *not* know this from of old . . .” I think that

fits the context. I'm not sure why the NAS omits that word, or that idea, because, clearly, in the context, Zophar's argument is that the triumphing of the wicked is, indeed, short, and the joy of the godless is, indeed, momentary. And he says, "Don't you *know* this, Job?"

I looked up that word *know*. It's a common Hebrew word, *yada*, which has the idea of knowing something with intimacy, an intimate, personal knowledge. It's the same word Job used in the last chapter in 19:25: "As for me, I know [*yada*] that my Redeemer lives . . ." *I know this*. But here we have Zophar saying, "Don't you know this, Job, from the establishment of man on earth" (verse four) . . . "the triumphing of the wicked is short, the joy of the godless momentary." *Job, the wicked die young; don't you know this?*

Well, the psalmist who wrote after Job seems to affirm this. He says, 35 "I have seen a wicked, violent man spreading himself like a luxuriant tree in its native soil. 36 Then he passed away, and lo, he was no more; I sought for him, but he could not be found." (Psalm 37:35–36). But that's just a single observation. That's not a statement that this is *always* the case, and that's what Zophar is trying to contend here. And he says, "Don't you know this? Doesn't experience tell you this, Job?" And you wonder *what world is Zophar living in*. God waited 120 years before sending the flood (Genesis chapter 6). He gave the wicked Canaanites at least four centuries before He judged them (Genesis 15). Wiersbe's right when he says,

Most of the people in Scripture who pondered the problem of evil in the world started from a different premise—the wicked enjoy long life and freedom from trouble, while the righteous suffer much and die young (Pss. 37; 73; Jer. 12:1–4). Zophar was deliberately blocking out a lot of data to prove his point.¹⁴²

¹⁴²Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Patient*, "Be" Commentary Series (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 77–78.

Those who live wicked lives and engage in wicked practices, who reject God and his Word, do not always die young. From the beginning of time, to use Zophar's reference point, there's been no ironclad rule of heaven that either sinfulness leads to a short life, or that God always blesses his saints with longevity. That's just not true. We see it in the Bible, we see it throughout history.

I think of the godly Scottish Presbyterian minister, Robert Murray McCheyne, who died when he was only 29 years old. He accomplished a lot in those 29 years; wrote a lot, preached a lot. There's also David Brainerd, missionary to the Native Americans, who was also 29 when he died. There are those you know (of course, our daughter Giana was only 14). By Zophar's faulty logic, everyone who dies young is guilty of some sin that caused their demise.

Now keep in mind we're not talking here about bad lifestyle choices. Yes, if you're sexually promiscuous, if you're a drug user, a drunkard, reckless, your lifespan is generally going to be shorter than that of a true believer in Christ whose lifestyle is consonant with his or her profession. But that's not what Zophar is talking about here. He's referring to this sort of natural law of heaven, that wicked behavior is going to bring immediate judgment from God. You may not get it when you're 20, 21, 22, but you're going to get it before you get old. And you will have a miserable life and a miserable death. That for Zophar is a rule of heaven. But it's a faulty rule.

From distinction to dung

And note the metaphors Zophar uses in verses six through 11; there's some "D" words in the outline if you're following along. The first one, *from distinction to dung* (that's verses six and seven). Look at verse six, talking about the wicked: **"Though his loftiness reaches the**

heavens, and his head touches the clouds . . .” In other words, he's a big shot, he's a man of distinction, but he's wicked. Verse seven: **“He perishes forever like his *gēl* . . .”** – that's the Hebrew word for *feces*, for *dung* (the New American Standard has *refuse*) – **“those who have seen him will say, ‘Where is he?’”** In those days, one's excrement was buried and returned to dust. To use a modern metaphor, flushed down the toilet. Once you push the handle the waste goes down the porcelain hole, never to be seen again. That's the wicked man, according to Zophar: from *distinction to dung*

(verses six and seven).

Like a fading dream (8-9)

And then *like a fading dream*. So we have *distinction*, we have *dung*, and we have *dream*. Verses eight and nine: **“He [that is, the wicked] flies away like a dream, and they cannot find him; even like a vision of the night he is chased away.”** Well, you know what it's like to go to sleep, to look at the clock, go to sleep and have a dream, wake up – and it's only been 10 minutes. And yet you travel the world in your dream! That's the wicked. And: 9 **“The eye which saw him sees him no longer, and [note this] his place [that is, where he lived, where he operated] no longer beholds him.”** That last phrase in verse 9 parallels the thought of verse 7 (“those who have seen him will say, ‘Where his he? He's gone! Rapidly! Quickly!’”).

And then verse 10, which is sort of parenthetical, is a difficult verse. David J.A. Clines, who wrote the Word Biblical Commentary on the book of Job – the Word Commentary series is what's called *a critical commentary* which generally assumes the ability to interact with Hebrew or Greek; it's very in-depth scholarly commentary – and Clines says of verse 10, “No truly satisfactory interpretation of this awkward verse exists.” Well, what does it say? 10 **“His sons**

favor the poor, and his hands give back his wealth.” We've got three uses of the word “his” but we're not exactly sure who are the “his's” – who's being referenced here. This likely means that the unrighteous man, again Job implied object, gained his wealth by immoral means, and that his children, of whom Job has none at this point in the narrative, but this applies to the wicked, will have to pay back those whom their father defrauded. If you listen to the United Bible Society's Handbook on translation, they suggest the verse be paraphrased as, “The sons of the wicked father will have to return to the poor what their father took from them.” That's verse 10.

Death

But go back to the metaphors and the “D” words” *distinction, dung, dream*. Then verse 11, *death*: “**His bones are full of his youthful vigor** [Remember, *the wicked die young*], **but it lies down with him in the dust.**” That's death. The wicked die young.

As I was studying this, I thought of the words to Billy Joel's 1977 hit song, Only the Good Die Young. You probably remember that classic, contemporary song. . . . I have heard it myself [thinking], “It's not so horrible, but it's not so good.”. . . Here's one stanza of the song:

So come on Virginia show me a sign
Send up a signal and I'll throw you the line
The stained-glass curtain you're hiding behind
Never let's in the sun
Darlin' only the good die young.¹⁴³

Well, if Zophar had a version, it would go like this:

So come on Job, listen to us
We're here to help, don't ya' fret and fuss
If you don't repent you will most surely die

¹⁴³1977 Billy Joel, The Stranger album.

And that won't be much fun.
You see, only the wicked die young.
Yeah, only the wicked die young.

The last words of Zophar: The Wicked Die Young.

The Wicked Have Temporary Pleasure (20:12–22)

But before they die, his second point, The Wicked Have Temporary Pleasure. There's some truth in this, as we've said, as we've looked at the book of Job. Yet be really careful because sometimes there's truth, but it's lopsided. Other times there's truth, but it's misapplied. And certainly those who – from our perspective on this side of the Cross – those who die outside of Christ, whatever pleasures they have are going to be temporary.

But again Job is being referenced here as one of the wicked who have temporary pleasure, and that this *temporary pleasure* falls in line under the heading of *dying young*. So it's not that it's temporary pleasure and, well, they live to be 70 or 80 (Bill Gates, whomever), and that then they die, and that's temporary. No, again, it's within the context of a relatively young demise. So the wicked have temporary pleasure. . . . They may have some apparent success, even joy, but it will be short-lived.

Here Zophar turns to several metaphors for eating. . . . And there's in verse 12, 13, 14, two conditions and a conclusion. Follow with me, verse 12 (here's a condition): **“Though evil is sweet in his mouth,”** [the unrighteous] **“and he hides it under his tongue,”** [savoring something sweet, like candy]. Verse 13 (another condition): **“Though he desires it and will not let it go, but holds it in his mouth,”** (here's the conclusion, verse 14): **“yet his food in his stomach is changed to the venom of cobras within him.”**

I thought of ethylene glycol poisoning when I was reading this. Ethylene glycol is what comprises the main ingredient in antifreeze. I'm told (never tested it) – I'm told it's sweet to the taste, but deadly if consumed in sufficient amounts. A 2011 report by the national Library of Medicine was entitled, "Intentional Ethylene Glycol Poisoning Increase After Media Coverage of Antifreeze Murders." That is, there were these cases of people murdering others, often a spouse, by mixing ethylene glycol, or antifreeze, in their food, or using it in such a way in a beverage (like to sweeten their coffee). [In consuming] that day after day after day after day, the person gets sick and dies. Well, don't do that, okay? (See me; I've got uncle Vito and he owes me some favors!) . . . No, we're not going to put a hit on anybody for you! No, don't do that, the authorities are wise to it. You will get caught. Not to mention that you will to face the punishment and face holy God for what you did. (But interesting, there's been a movement to add an ingredient to antifreeze that makes it taste bad.) People even put it out for feral cats, that sort of thing, which is just totally cruel. I love cats. So it ends up being a metaphor for the deadly consequences of sin, something sweet to the taste that ultimately kills you.

It's like the laboratory experiment done years ago whereby scientists took a control group of mice, or rats, and they hooked them on drugs. And then they put out equal amounts of food and drugs. And these rats kept going back to the drugs, neglecting the food, until they became emaciated and died. What a picture of sin! Sin is deadly; sin kills. And yet in our fallen state we go back to it again and again and again. And if it doesn't kill us in this life, if we don't repent, it's gonna kill us in the next. Proverbs 20:17: "Bread obtained by falsehood is sweet to a man, but afterward his mouth will be filled with gravel." That's the picture here.

The metaphor continues in verses 15 and 16. Verse 15: **“He swallows riches, but will vomit them up; God will expel them from his belly.”** 16 **“He sucks the poison of cobras; the viper’s tongue slays him.”** What a picture of sinful pleasures! They look, taste, and feel good – for time (even as believers). Why do we at times deliberately sin? Because we think that there's some benefit that outweighs the risk. “Well, I shouldn't say this about that person.” . . . “I shouldn't (men) look at that girl.” *Summertime comes and the clothes diminish.* “I shouldn't look at that girl, but I'm going to.” Why? Why? A temporary pleasure; you think, “I'll get away it.” And, of course, you can take that to some extreme conclusions. You think of those that get hooked, like laboratory rats, get hooked on drugs. And they keep going back to it and back to it until they go to prison. They come off it. Then they get out and they go back to it. They become emaciated, and eventually it kills them. You say, “You're just going back to that which kills you!” This is the nature of our depravity!

Jesus puts within the believer a set of brakes whereby we can say, “No, I don't have to do this! This isn't right, I'm gonna stop.” But the point is, even for the believer, sin can be awfully appealing; let's be honest. But it's fleeting, it's temporary. Ultimately it's like the viper's venom in the stomach. So it goes.

You just take these verses out of their context and they could be Proverbs, these five verses:

12 “Though evil is sweet in his mouth and he hides it under his tongue, 13 Though he desires it and will not let it go, but holds it in his mouth, 14 yet his food in his stomach is changed to the venom of cobras within him. 15 “He swallows riches, but will vomit them up; God will expel them from his belly. 16 “He sucks the poison of cobras; the viper’s tongue slays him.

These could be in the Proverbs under the heading of what the wicked will face. But Zophar wrongly imputes these words to Job. Again, *when accused or suffering unjustly, flee from God to God.*

It is a miserable picture. Look at verses 17 and 18: 17 **“He does not look at the streams, the rivers flowing with honey and curds.”** Here is more sweetness. You can picture the beauty of a stream, Job, but you won't look at it or live long enough to enjoy it. That's implied in the next verse: 18 **“He returns what he has attained and cannot swallow it; as to the riches of his trading, He cannot even enjoy them.”**

Verse 19, the next verse, is critical. For the first time Zophar gives a reason why the wicked, specifically Job, suffer. . . Here's a “why?” – and this directly is being applied to Job: *the oppression of the poor and needy.* Other things are added later on, but this is where Zophar starts among the three friends. The Old Testament is filled with injunctions to care for the poor, to be generous to widows, orphans, exercise generosity and hospitality. In other words, charity is a mark of those who fear God. And that's brought up also in the New Testament. And here's an accusation against Job in verse 19 that is paralleled in verse 20. . . . Let me go back to verse 19 of chapter 20: **“For he has oppressed and forsaken the poor; he has seized a house which he has not built.”** To Zophar, that's the reason – the reason for all this calamity upon the wicked. They die young. They have short stints of happiness before they die young. What did they do? Well, they have oppressed and forsaken the poor. “Job, you did this. You oppressed, you forsook the poor. You seized houses that you have not built.”

Eliphaz is more direct with a similar accusation in chapter 22, beginning in verse five. Speaking to Job:

5 “Is not your wickedness great, and your iniquities without end? 6 “For you have taken pledges of your brothers without cause, and stripped men naked. 7 “To the weary you have given no water to drink, and from the hungry you have withheld bread. 8 “But the earth belongs to the mighty man, and the honorable man dwells in it. 9 “You have sent widows away empty, and the strength of the orphans has been crushed.

You can see why it is so important, as we study this book, to learn right at the very beginning that Job is a righteous, God fearing man. If we didn’t have that, those first two chapters, you would think, “Boy, Job is quite a jerk.” No, these are false accusations based on the false presupposition that the wicked suffer: Job suffers: Job's wicked.

Now, verses 20 to 22 are difficult; very difficult verses. What I'm going to do is, just as I compared some translations, I'm going to read the New International Version. And this is something you can do when you're studying, when you're reading something, maybe using a more literal wooden translation like the New American Standard or the English Standard Version, and you come across a verse, and your kinda like, “I'm not sure what this is saying?” Well, pull out – I really suggest the NIV – it does a very good job in balancing an accurate translation with capturing the interpretation of what is being said.

And keep in mind that *every translation is an interpretation*. You learn that in seminary when you take biblical languages. Every translation, guys, gals, is an interpretation. If you know Spanish, and I write a letter in English, and that letter in English is going to be translated for my Spanish friend, there's gonna be some interpreting going on as to what did I mean when I said this. It's not a bad thing, it's just the way it is.

So listen to verses 20 to 22 in the NIV:

20 “Surely he will have no respite from his craving; he cannot save himself by his treasure. 21 Nothing is left for him to devour; his prosperity will not endure. 22 In the midst of his plenty, distress will overtake him; the full force of misery will come upon him.

The Wicked Die Painful Deaths (Job 20:23–29)

So we’ve seen: The Last Words of Zophar: The Wicked Die Young (vv. 4-11); The Wicked Have Temporary Pleasure (vv. 12-22); The Wicked Die Painful Deaths (20:23–29).

Preparation for Destruction

Now four quick points. We’re using a little ingenuity (I have the gift of alliteration!). We’re using “P”s and “D”s. And the first point: *Preparation for destruction*. . . . Verse 23 (again, we’re still with this eating metaphor): **“When he fills his belly, God will send His fierce anger on him and will rain it on him while he is eating.”** His *preparation for destruction* is filling his belly. But God is sending fierce anger on him. It's going to rain on him while he's eating, while he's enjoying whatever he is doing.

Picture of Death

Second point: *Picture of death*. . . . Verse 24 and 25: 24 **“He may flee from the iron weapon, but the bronze bow will pierce him.”** Again, a picture of ancient warfare; chariots, archers. You’ve got the bow and the arrow piercing him. Verse 25: **“It is drawn forth and comes out of his back, even the glittering point from his gall. Terrors come upon him.”** This is the terror of, you know what? *I have suffered a fatal blow*. You see that in accounts in the Old Testament: “I have suffered a fatal blow. I am terrified. I'm gonna die.” **“Terrors come upon him.”** *Preparation for destruction*. A picture of death.

Permanent Destitution

Third, *Permanent destitution*. That is, after the wicked man dies, his possessions, his wealth are meaningless. Verse 26 and 28: 26 **“Complete darkness is held in reserve for his treasures, and unfanned fire will devour him; it will consume the survivor in his tent.”** 28 **“The increase of his house will depart; his possessions will flow away in the day of His anger.”** *Permanent destitution*.

Predestined Decree

And then lastly, *Predestined decree*. Verse 27: **“The heavens will reveal his iniquity, and the earth [note this] will rise up against him.”** Probably this is being used in the legal sense of standing to testify. Here God testifies, along with all of creation, to the wicked man's guilt (read “Job”). The last verse: 29 **“This is the wicked man’s portion from God, even the heritage decreed to him by God.”** *Predestined decree*.

That word “heritage,” is often translated in the Old Testament “inheritance.” You could say, “even this is the *inheritance* decreed him by God.” What a word play . . . Here you have a picture of a wealthy, wicked person (and we know Job was very wealthy, very prominent), but in the end what he inherits is not more wealth but total loss.

These are The Last Words of Zophar: The Wicked Die Young; The Wicked Have Temporary Pleasure; The Wicked Die Painful Deaths. This ends the words of Zophar. We will save Job's rebuttal for next week. But as for Zophar, one scholar writes of this chapter:

Zophar, of course, in his philosophical shortsightedness, made no allowance for a person being afflicted for any reason other than retribution for sin. In his stubborn invective, he flared at Job with venomous words, like the poisonous snake he spoke about.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴*The Bible Knowledge Commentary.*

When accused or suffering unjustly, free from God to God.

Concluding Thoughts

Where do we go from here? Specifically, what are we to do when we are falsely accused? I'm sure I could ask for a show of hands – I won't put you on the spot – but I'm sure just about every hand would go up here if I said, "Have you ever learned that you were gossiped about, or somebody said something about you that was entirely untrue; if you ever had somebody slander you, accuse you of something?" We know what that's like. So what should we do?

1. Find your conscience

Number one (always start with this): *Find your conscience*. . . . In other words, examine your heart to see if there's any truth in what is being said about you. There was a time when I had a gal in the church just rain down on me accusation after accusation after accusation. And I had to stop and say, "Well I don't know; that's not true, but there may be some truth here." And I had to examine my own heart. Even if 98% of this is false and 2% is true, Lord let me grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ by addressing that 2%. So *find your conscience*.

2. Forsake gossip

Number two: *Forsake gossip*. . . . Don't be party to gossip. I've been here nearly 19 years and in that time we saw one mass exodus. We lost about one third of our number. That was around 2012. And that was largely, not exclusively – there were different things going on, people moving, stuff like that – but a big portion that we lost was largely due to gossip about things that were not true. People were talking, they were taking sides. Then they started accusing the leaders, the elders. And . . . we met with every family in the church. And one of things we

said is, “Listen, there are things that we cannot say about this situation or that situation because it would be violating a confidence. That would not be right. You just have to trust us. But if you have any questions about something that's been said that we can say ‘this is true or false,’ we’ll address that.” But we found, interestingly, that some people are very quick to distrust their leaders. And these are people you minister with, you love – and all of a sudden they're taking sides and buying into the things that are said about somebody, and you got a mess. So *forsake gossip*. If somebody is gossiping, in a nice way change the subject. Or tell them, if somebody’s saying, “I’ve got a real a real issue with so-and-so and this is why . . .” [tell them] “brother, sister, you need to go to that person; talk with them.”

Find your conscience; forsake, gossip – and be sure you have all your facts straight. How did Zophar begin? Verse three of chapter 20: “I listened to the reproof which insults me, and the spirit of my understanding makes me answer.” Well, Zophar, your spirit of understanding was not accurate. Proverbs 19:5, “A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who tells lies will not escape.” God takes this very seriously.

3. *Forgo being defensive*

Number three: *Forgo being defensive*. I find that, as a general rule, don't defend yourself unless you have to. One time when I was being raked over the coals, I said, “You know what I am? I am a bankrupt sinner. I have no hope apart from Jesus Christ. Yes, I do fail.” And there were the accusations . . . [they were] kind of vague, no real specifics. But I wasn’t going to get up and say, “You know what? Do you realize that I am gifted? Do you realize how long I've been in this church? Do you realize my education? Do you realize . . .” Don't go about defending or exalting yourself. And obviously, in some circumstances, you want to bring clarity;

[like] you're accused of harming someone's child, you don't want to just say, "I'm not going to defend myself." Obviously, in situations like that, you have to. But often we don't have to do that. Defend your doctrine. Defend your family. Defend your friends. Just don't be overly defensive [of yourself]. And joyfully accept attacks, especially if they are because of Jesus, from those that are not His, not Christ's. That passage I read at the beginning, "Blessed are you when people insult you." *Blessed!* "I just got insulted by somebody at work who called me a religious kook." Rejoice! That's what Jesus says; it's right here! Be glad, "your reward in heaven is great!" And you're not alone. "They have done that to the prophets who were before you."¹⁴⁵

4. *Fly to the Cross*

Number four: *Fly to the Cross*. After all, where is our hope? Where is our vindication? You get accused of something and sometimes there's no way to prove it with any type of logical certainty. In other words, I could be talking to somebody and nobody else is around and they say, "Well you said this and you talked about this . . ." *I did not; I didn't do that.* "Yes, you did." *I didn't.* I've had that sort of thing happen. [When that happens] fly to the Cross. God knows; God knows my heart. And by all means, if you don't know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, fly to the Cross, because much of what Zophar has said does apply to you, at least in some sense.

Christopher Ash said this: "Hell is the place where all evil enjoyment is turned to endless nausea."¹⁴⁶ You hear people say, "I want to go to hell; that's all my friends are and I'll be partying . . ." No, that sweetness will be poison in your mouth. It will be viper venom. All those things you think are enjoyable are going to be nauseating; endless suffering. *So fly to the Cross.*

¹⁴⁵Cf. Matthew 5:11–12.

¹⁴⁶Christopher Ash, 224.

Flee from God to God

And then lastly: *Flee from God to God*. . . . We'll close with an 11th century poet's words that captured this concept beautifully when he wrote this:

Therefore though You slay me, I will trust You.
For if You pursue my iniquity,
I will flee from You to Yourself,
And I will shelter myself from Your wrath in Your shadow,
And to the skirts of Your mercies I will lay hold
Until You have mercy on me.
And I will not let You go till You bless me.¹⁴⁷

We pray, *though You slay me I will trust You* (we heard that from Job). Yes, if You pursue our iniquity, yes, we have to flee *from* You, but we flee *to* You to be robed in the righteousness of Christ. We're grateful that we can lay hold of the skirts of Your mercies, that You will have mercy on us in Christ, and that You have, and will, bless.

And so, Father, we've gone through this chapter; lots to cover, some of it difficult. I pray that we will set the stage for chapter 21 next time, and that, Lord, these concepts, outlines, all of this that I worked so hard to put together, will stay with the hearer – they will get the big picture – not going to remember every nuance – but we'll get the big picture and will be better equipped in an understanding of this central book of the Old Testament. Equip us, Lord. And, Lord, when we suffer, and when we are slandered or falsely accused, may we ultimately flee into Your arms. We fly to the Cross of Christ. We forgo being defensive and forsake gossip and find our conscience. Grace is a wonderful thing; it is indeed amazing. Apart from the grace of Jesus Christ, apart from His work on our behalf and our faith in Him, we have no hope. All of

¹⁴⁷From "The Royal Crown" by 11th c. Spanish-Jewish poet Solomon ibn Gabirol, as cited in Talbert, 128.

these temporary enjoyments will be turned to endless nausea. So, Lord, I pray that You would regenerate the hearts of any who are outside of Christ. Any who are a mere heartbeat away from eternity in hell. I pray, Lord, that You would open their eyes that they may be saved. Yes, these things we pray in Jesus name.

Zophar's Parting Shot and Job's Rejoinder (Part 2)

Job 21:1-34

July 25, 2021

Christ Church of Clarkson

0721Job21.1-34(22) | Audio Length: 56:40

I came across this quote a few weeks ago as I was reading, at the time reading, through 2 Corinthians. I was reading a commentary about 2 Corinthians, and this was the quote that took me by surprise. The writer said, “Few portions of the New Testament pose as many problems for translators and interpreters as does 2 Corinthians. Few, therefore, are the preachers who undertake a systematic exposition of its contents.” *Few are the preachers who undertake a systematic exposition of its contents.*

That took me by surprise. I didn't know that, yet I'm not seeing any shortage of men preaching through 2 Corinthians. But I have seen a shortage of men preaching through the book of Job, especially doing so in the manner that we have undertaken. A preacher friend of mine, when I told him what I've been doing going through Job, and going, basically, chapter by chapter and touching on 99% of the verses, was greatly surprised to hear that.

I thought I'd check SermonAudio.com wondering how many others have done it. SermonAudio.com may be the largest database of sermons online. And I checked, looking for expositions of the book of Job. There were many, many sermons. There were several series. I found one – and I was surprised to find this – I found one man who preached systematically through the book: 44 messages on the book of Job. That just does not happen, not normally. But we're on that pace as today is the 22nd message in Job. Once we're finished this morning we will be halfway done with the book, so we're on that sort of pace.

When accused or suffering unjustly, flee from God to God

This is part two of The Last Words of Zophar and Job's Rejoinder (his response). We looked at Zophar's last words in chapter 21, last week, and we will look at Job's rejoinder this morning. As far as application is concerned, one key point that I've been driving home is this: *When accused or suffering unjustly, flee from God to God*. We explained a little bit what that was about last time. This is what Job is doing. We see him fleeing from God, shying away from God, understanding God's absolute sovereignty, knowing that God has His hand on the thermostat (and that's true for our lives as well). When we go through times of suffering and trial, God has his Hand on the thermostat. And we may shy away from that, but yet we have nowhere else to flee but to Him, or to Jesus Christ.

The treacherous tongue and deductive logic

Last week I quoted Chuck Swindoll when he said that *the most treacherous enemy in the church is the tongue*. That enemy, that danger of unrestrained speech, hasn't changed. What can be said about the New Testament church can also be said about the days of Job, over 4000 years ago. That *treacherous enemy* is the tongue. And Eliphaz, Bildad – especially Zophar (as we've seen it) are noteworthy in that regard. Their accusation centrally is that Job is suffering because of his sin. That flows from their faulty worldview. Last time I gave you a lesson in deductive logic that may have left a few of you confused. As an example I gave you three points of a valid deductive argument, one that expresses the faulty worldview of the three friends. It goes like this:

1. The wicked suffer calamity.
2. Job is suffering calamity.
3. *Ergo* . . . Job is wicked.

And I said . . . this is a valid deductive argument in that the conclusion follows the premises; they are logically consistent. It's valid, but for an argument to be *true* deductively, it doesn't only need to be valid, it must also be sound. For example, I could say that all spiders have six legs, a tarantula is a spider. Therefore, a tarantula has six legs. Well, that is a valid deductive argument. . . . *It's valid but it's not sound.* In other words, it's not true because arachnids have eight legs, not six.

So it may be valid to argue that the wicked suffer calamity, Job is suffering calamity, Job, therefore, is wicked. But it's not a sound argument. It's not true because the wicked do not always suffer disaster in this life because they are wicked, just as the righteous . . . are exempt from calamity because they're righteous. This is not a settled rule of heaven.

Zophar

But this brings us back to Zophar in chapter 20, because his argument matches his faulty view of how things work in God's economy. To review our outline from last week (chapter 20): The Last Words of Zophar. Three points. As he speaks to Job he's making the contention, number one: That the Wicked Die Young. The wicked don't live long lives. Number two: The Wicked Have Temporary Pleasure. Yes, they may have pleasure, but it is temporary. And number three: The Wicked Die Painful Deaths. Those were Zophar's three points. That is Zophar's last word, as we said, because we don't hear from him again in the book. But we have Job's rejoinder whereby he refutes each of Zophar's three points.

Then Job's response, point by point: The Wicked Do Live Long Lives; The Wicked Do Live Pleasurable Lives; and The Wicked Do Die the Same as the Righteous. This is Job's

argument. Each of Job's points addresses those three of Zophar, point by point. Job takes Zophar's speech and shreds it to bits.

Job's Rejoinder (21:1–34)

But let's look at verse one of the 21st chapter. So if you're not there, settle your eyes on that first verse. This is Job's Rejoinder. . . . And before we get into the first point proper, *The Wicked Do Live Long Lives*, here are a few introductory comments we need to go through in verses one through six. . . . Verse one, the first three words: **“Then Job answered.”**¹⁴⁸ Job answered Zophar. I think the atmosphere – and as I take it this is still occurring at the town dump – I think the atmosphere may have gotten a little heated at times, but was mostly matter-of-fact. I don't picture shouting matches going back and forth. I do picture Job here, as we look at verse two, taking a deep breath with a heavy sigh, probably thinking “here we go again,” and then saying, verse two, **“Listen carefully to my speech, and let this be your way of consolation.”** Job wants them to do two things: to listen (hear him), and find comfort. How can I find comfort in what Job has to say? Well there may be a little bit of sarcasm going on here. It's like saying, “Please listen carefully to what I have to say. This is the only comfort I can expect from you is that you would listen and maybe you keep your mouth closed for a while.”

Commentator David J.A. Clines writes:

Job ironically observes that the biggest consolation his friends could offer him would be to say nothing at all. Their speeches defending the doctrine of retribution have made them into “torturer-comforters” (16:2), even though they themselves (or Eliphaz at least) have represented their words as “God's encouragements” (15:11).¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸Scripture citations are taken from the NAS95 unless otherwise noted.

¹⁴⁹David J.A. Clines, Job 21–37, vol. 18a, *Word Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2006), 522.

Job, then, pleads for a little patience. Verse three: **“Bear with me [be patient with me] that I may speak; then after I have spoken, you may mock.”** A little more sarcasm here. He wants them to be patient, even as he justifies his own lack thereof. Verse four: **“As for me, is my complaint to man? and why should I not be impatient?”** Job's complaint isn't ultimately – as he looks at it – it's not ultimately with the three friends. His complaint is ultimately with God. *When accused or suffering unjustly, free flee from God to God.* Job sees God as sovereign; totally in control of what has happened to him.

In verse five he says, **“Look at me, and be astonished, and put your hand over your mouth.”** (He had said “listen;” now it’s “look.”) **“Look at me and be astonished, and put your hand over your mouth.”** That was symbolic, to put one's hand over one's mouth. It signified at least three things. *It signified respect.* You might do that as a sign of respect (we see that in chapter 29, Job's last reply to his friends, where he dreams about turning back the clock before his tragedy struck him). And he says in chapter 29, beginning in verse two, he talks about the days “when God watched over me, when His lamp shone over my head, and by His life I walked through darkness. As I was in the prime of my days when the friendship of God was over my tent, when the Almighty was yet with me and my children where all around me.” Remember, he lost all 10 of his children, and he dreams about when his children were all around him. When, “I went out to the gate of the city, and when I took my seat in the square” (and that's where all the prominent men, the elders, leaders, would gather) “the young men saw me and hid themselves” (as a sign of respect) “and the old man arose and stood.” And then notice verse nine: “the princes” (or leaders) “stopped talking and *put their hands on their mouths.*” To put one's hand on one's mouth was a symbol of great respect.

But not that alone. *It also could signify horror.* Horror, fear, terror. According to Bildad people everywhere are horrified at what befalls the wicked (chapter 18 verse 20). “Those in the West are appalled at his fate, those in the East are seized with horror.” And that's what Job sees here. Horror at his condition. Remember, he just said **“look at me.”** Horror at his condition. What does he look like? Well, in the town dump, scraping himself with broken pottery, covering himself with ashes, emaciated, weary, many sleepless nights, suffering the suffocating pangs of grief. The loss of all things he holds dear, feeling abandoned by God. And so he says in verse five: “Look at me and be astonished and put your hand over your mouth.” Horror! “Even when I remember I am disturbed and horror takes hold of my flesh.” So we see putting one's hand over one's mouth, it could signify respect, it could signify horror

And then, thirdly, *it could signify awe.* Awe as in the fear of God. Interestingly, in chapter 40, after the first of God's two speeches directly addressed to Job, Job is struck with a sense of fearful awe (40:4). Job says to God, “Behold, I am insignificant. What can I reply to you? I lay my hand on my mouth!” Respect, horror, or awe. Which now brings us back to our first main point.

The Wicked Do Live Long Lives (21:7, 14-15, 16-21)

Job's first point: The Wicked Do Live Long Lives. Job is saying, “Zophar, you claim the wicked die young, they don't live into to old age. . . . I beg to differ.”

They live on and become strong (v. 7)

Number one from verse seven. *They live on, the wicked live on, to become strong.* So Job asks the question “why?” (we can insert the word “then”): 7 **“Why do the wicked still live, continue on, also become very powerful?”** This is Job's central question, “Why do the wicked

still live, continue on, become powerful?” And this is Job's counterpart to Zophar's central point in chapter 20 verse five where Zophar said, “The triumphing of the wicked is short, the joy of the godless momentary.” Job's reply here in verse seven, “Well, then, why do they still live on, continue on, to become very powerful?” You see, Job is refuting Zophar. [The wicked] live on, become strong.

They reject God and His ways (vv. 14-15)

Number two: *The wicked reject God and His ways.* Verse 14: **“They say to God, ‘Depart from us! We do not even desire the knowledge of Your ways.’”** 15 **“Who is the Almighty, that we should serve Him, and what would we gain if we entreat Him?”** Does that not sound like today's naturalistic culture? “God depart from us; we don't desire the knowledge of Your ways!” And, “We’re certainly not gonna teach anything about Your ways in the schools, government run schools. Who is the Almighty that we should serve Him, and what would we gain if we entreat Him?”

In 2002, the Evangelical Union of the University of Sydney hosted a debate between an atheistic journalist named Philip Adams and the evangelical philosopher-apologist William Lane Craig. The central question of the debate was the existence and relevance of God.

Statements by Adams illustrated the popular perspective. Three quotes

I think God, if he, she or it exists, should be ashamed of him, her, or itself. For the last couple of thousand years it has caused us nothing but trouble....

I do not respect the Judeo-Christian God because I regard him, or her, or it, as a brute who has created great cruelty and great horror in this world, if he, or she, in fact exists....

The one thing which we must agree on is that this division which exists between us—in your [Craig's] case over the existence of God or otherwise—should not stop us working

together on the important issues involving justice, compassion and decency. At the end of the day, I have to say, God doesn't matter.¹⁵⁰

At the end of the day, I have to say, God doesn't matter.

Yes, Job, the wicked reject God and His ways. They say to God, “Depart from us. We do not even desire a knowledge of Your ways. And who is . . . Almighty that we should serve him, and what would we gain if we entreat Him?” It’s all about gains; you know, getting something out of it. I thought of Pharaoh in Exodus 5:2: “Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice? I don't know the Lord.” Well, that is consistent with much of the wicked.

They seem to avoid calamity (vv. 17-18)

Number three: *They seem to avoid calamity*. Job claims, verse 17: **“How often is the lamp of the wicked put out,”** [that signifies death] **“or does their calamity fall on them? Does God apportion destruction in His anger?”** Verse 18: **“Are they as straw before the wind, and like chaff which the storm carries away?”** In 18:5 Bildad said just the opposite. In that case, Bildad, not Zophar, in chapter 18 verse 5 said: “Indeed, the light of the wicked goes out, and the flame of his fire gives no light.” Here, Job asked, “Well, how often does that *really* happen?” He seems to doubt that it happens at all.

We might ask the question, “What if God designed the world so that at the moment you pass a certain threshold of sin, you physically die, like Somebody pulls the plug?” Someone is misbehaving, misbehaving, misbehaving – and boom! There he goes! He passed the threshold . You have this little sin meter within you; can't sin too much! “You’ve got to serve this God or You'll bring calamity and then take my life!” What kind of world would that be?

¹⁵⁰Cited in David R. Jackson, *Crying out for Vindication: The Gospel According to Job*, 68-69.

Remember, the book of Job is about why the believer serves his or her God. What was Satan's accusation back in chapter 1? “The Satan answered the Lord, does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not made a hedge about him . . . and You bless the work of his hands; his possessions have increased in the land.” *You have blessed him with stuff.* “His sin meter is low and therefore he gets all of these blessings and luxuries.” Verse 11 of chapter 1: “But put forth Your hand now, touch all he has; he will surely curse You to Your face.”

And we could ask, “What if believers were always rewarded in this life for being good? You want a bigger house, a bigger bank account, successful relationships, a thriving family, a long healthy life? Well, be obedient to the God you profess and He will give you all the stuff in the world you can imagine. . . . Some supposed Christians teach that sort of thing (the Word of Faith movement, the prosperity gospel – which is no gospel at all). And of course, if it doesn't work, no matter how righteous you're living, it doesn't work for you? It's because you didn't have enough faith; you may not be giving enough, “so send me another check for \$500.”

Why does a true believer serve God? Why do you, Christian, serve God? Because you know Him, because you fear Him, because you love Him. Regardless, God has called you to Himself, and as I like to say, He has rewritten your spiritual DNA so that this desire resides within you.

A friend of mine once told me about a guy who was really entrenched in some significant sinful behaviors, and he said to my friend, as my friend was counseling him, he said, “I don't think I've prayed in a year.” And I thought, you know, I went through our tragedy. There were times I didn't want to pray, I had times of prayerlessness. But there was something within me that compelled me to pray. *I was fleeing from God to God.* Something was compelling me to

do it, or what was it? Was it my good sense? My idea that, “Well, if I pray, maybe I'll get blessed with some stuff?” What was it? It was the work that God did in my life rewriting my spiritual DNA. I love Him. I want to serve Him. I want to fear Him, regardless. Yes, there are eternal rewards, but that is not, or should not be, our primary motivation. How does your wife feel if you say, “Well, I love you, but I love you because I want to get some eternal rewards for doing so.” That’s kind of a mercenary concept, isn’t it? Or you tell your kids, “I love you because you behave.” What message does that send? Misbehave, I don’t love you. No, I love you regardless. That is God's attitude toward the elect, that ought to be the elect’s attitude toward God.

There is, listen, there is no settled rule of heaven that doing good always brings happiness in this life and doing bad always brings tragedy in this life, but that's the faulty view of Job's friends (not to discount the fact that obedience to God and His ways has great reward in this life, but that doesn't mean that the believer will be spared from tragedy). The wicked do live long lives, Job says, they live on and become stronger.

They seem to escape judgment (vv. 19-21)

They reject God's ways (verses 14 and 15), *They seem to avoid calamity* (verses 17 and 18); and, lastly, *They seem to escape judgment* (verses 19 through 21). Look at verse 19. Job is quoting one of the three: **“You say [here's the quote], ‘God stores away a man’s iniquity for his sons.’”** [Job’s response?] **“Let God repay him [the wicked man] so that he may know it.”** 20 **“Let his own eyes see his decay, and let him drink of the wrath of the Almighty.”** 21 **“For what does he care for his household after him, When the number of his months is cut off?”** “You can argue that after the wicked die, their children will face judgment for their

father's sins. But why should that be true?" Job is saying. "After all, why does the wicked man care about his family after he's gone?"

There's a lot of, sort of, doublespeak going on. On one hand, the wicked get judgment; on the other hand, well, they may get some judgment or no judgment, but the sons will be judged for the wicked man's sin. And he doesn't care anyway. Well, is that true? Note two things: only someone terminally depraved would have this attitude. The godless, generally, normally, still care about their progeny after they die, what happens to their children after they die. That's why they get life insurance. That's why they make preparations; inheritance and everything. Most people, unregenerate people, care about what happens to their family after they're gone. Second, God does not judge the children for their father's sins. And that's what the three were contending, verse 19: **"You say, God stores away man's iniquity for his sons."** While each one is accountable for their own sin, God does not store away a man's iniquity for his sons. But Job here is mute on that statement, he doesn't address it. But what do you read the Old Testament? Deuteronomy 24:16, "Fathers shall not be put to death for their sons, nor shall sons be put to death for their fathers; everyone shall be put to death for his own sin." The Prophet Jeremiah in 31:30, ". . . everyone will die for his own iniquity. . . ." How about this? "The soul who sins is the one who will die." (Ezekiel 18)

Yes, children may suffer because of their parent's wickedness. That happens all the time. A parent can be unfaithful, a parent can get an unlawful divorce (or not get married at all). A parent can live a licentious life, be a drug or alcohol abuser, can be abusive to the kids – and even that is abuse. Did you think that the children don't suffer because of the consequences of a parents sin? Of course they do! A parent may hate God and His ways, or disbelieve in God and

reject His ways, and teach that to his or her children. Do you think the children will suffer because of that? Of course they will! And I think that helps us understand passages like Exodus chapter 20:5 and Deuteronomy 5:9. But the bottom line is that each one is accountable to God for their own behavior, their own sin.

So the last words of Zophar (chapter 20). Remember his first point? *The wicked die young*. Job's rejoinder, his response to Zophar (chapter 21). No, *the wicked do live long lives*. We saw four points: They live on and become strong; they reject God and his ways; they seem to avoid calamity; and they seem to escape judgment.

The Wicked Do Live Pleasurable Lives (21:8-13, 16)

Now under that, under that second main point, under Job's rejoinder: The Wicked Do Live Pleasurable Lives. They live lives of pleasure. They are not always miserable simply because they're wicked. No, they live happy lives.

They have healthy children (vv. 8, 11)

Here are six subpoints. Number one: *They have healthy children* (verses 8 and 11). Verse eight 8: **“Their descendants . . .”** (The Hebrew word for “seed” usually means “descendants” in the general sense.) **“. . . are established with them in their sight, and their offspring before their eyes.”** They have healthy children. They go on to see their grandchildren's lives, their great-grandchildren. Note also, verse 11: **“They send forth their little ones like the flock, and their children skip about.”** Here is a picture of a healthy family.

I remember years ago seeing a documentary about Heinrich Himmler, the notorious Nazi leader. And they showed family videos of his children skipping about and playing (as I

remember it, sitting in his lap, hugging him). A happy family life for the wicked? Yes, “They send forth their little ones like the flock, and their children skip about.”

They don't experience the discipline of God (v. 9)

And according to Job, not only do the wicked have healthy children, number two, *they don't experience the discipline of God*. Verse nine: **“Their houses are safe from fear, and the rod of God is not on them.”** (“Rod” here being a euphemism for discipline, the discipline of God is not on the wicked.) I have a book, by one of the Puritans, in my office entitled, “The Mute Christian Under the Smarting Rod” – and it's an expectation for believers to endure God's discipline. So it is true, in one sense, that God does *not* discipline as children, those who are not His. That's Hebrews chapter 12:

6 FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES.” 7 It is for discipline [Christian] that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? 8 But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

So there is an element of truth in Job's point that they [the wicked] don't experience the discipline of God.

They have material success (v. 10)

Number three: *They have material success*. The wicked seem to do well with stuff (things, money). Verse 10: **“His ox mates without fail; his cow calves and does not abort.”** Here's a picture of healthy, thriving livestock (and that was something that was considered in the Ancient Near East as a sign of God's blessing). Deuteronomy 28:11, “The Lord will make you abound in prosperity in the offspring of your body and in the offspring of your beast.” Or

Psalm 144 verse 13, “Let . . . our flocks bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our fields . . .” And that's what Job sees of the wicked around him, the material success.

They have joy (v. 12)

Fourthly, *they have joy*. Verse 12: “**They sing to the timbrel and harp and rejoice at the sound of the flute.**” A picture of the Christ-rejecter, living in the lap of luxury, having pool parties in their beautiful homes. No thought of God.

They are prosperous before they quickly die (v. 13)

Number five: *They are prosperous before they die quickly*. Verse 13: “**They spend their days in prosperity, and suddenly they go down to Sheol.**” That’s “to the grave.” The idea is that they die quickly without lingering illness and suffering. One translation has, “and quietly die without suffering.”¹⁵¹ In other words, they go to their graves in peace (so they are prosperous before they peacefully die).

They don't recognize that all they have is due to God (16)

Number six: *They don't recognize that all they have is due to God*. Note the first part of verse 16: “**Behold, their prosperity is not in their hand . . .**” In other words, it was the grace of God, the common grace of God, that they have what they have.

And we can look at the wealthy (I could name them, but I won't), the wealthy and the prominent in our day, and say, “You know, all that they have is due to the goodness of the sovereign God whether they recognize it or not.” *Behold, their prosperity is not in their hand*. One wonders if Jeremiah had this in mind the statement by Job when Jeremiah wrote, chapter 12 verses one and two, 1 “. . . Why has the way of the wicked prospered? Why are all those who

¹⁵¹Today's English Version.

deal in treachery at ease? 2 You have planted them, they have also taken root; they grow, they have even produced fruit. You are near to their lips but far from their mind.” This is the picture we see Job painting here. And then he adds in the second half of verse 16: “. . . **The counsel of the wicked is far from me.**” In other words, “I’m innocent. So why do I suffer when the godless thrive?” It's a good question.

The Wicked Do Die the Same as the Righteous (21:22–34)

Zophar’s third point, again, to reflect back on chapter 20 and last time, his third point (of three points) was this: The Wicked Die Painful Deaths. That was Job 20:23-29. Job counters with his third point here in chapter 21: The Wicked Die the Same as the Righteous.

Job affirms that God Knows All (v. 22)

Now, for the sake of time, we need to go through these quickly. Job affirms, number one, beginning in verse 22, *Job affirms that God knows all*. God is truly omniscient, He is all knowing, He knows everything. And so Job says, "**Can anyone teach God knowledge, in that He judges those on high?**" I want you to note that first part. "**Can anyone teach God knowledge . . .**" Of course, it's a rhetorical question. The answer is “no” – no one’s going to teach God anything. God doesn't learn. Got that?

There are views out there, those that contend, those that claim to be Christians and say, “God learns, God is growing.” At its worst, it's called “process theology.” Look that up sometime: *process theology*. A lesser extreme is the *openness view of God*, whereby it's falsely believed that God does not exhaustively know the future. Listen, if God doesn't know what's going to happen in the future, if anything takes Him by surprise, then He is changing, He’s not immutable and He's learning something He didn't know before. He’s not omniscient. And that is

simply false. God is perfectly omniscient. He knows the past – and He knows the past as the past. He knows the present – and He knows the present as the present. And He knows the future – and He knows the future as the future. He knows it all at once, and it all works according to His grand plan. Amazing!

But what does it mean when he talks about “judging those on high?” That's the second half of the verse: 22 **“Can anyone teach God knowledge in that He judges those on high?”** *Those on high* translates a single word in Hebrew, sometimes rendered “the exalted.” The Holman Bible translates this as, “Can anyone teach God knowledge since He judges the exalted ones?” We’re not sure who Job has in mind, who these “exalted ones” are. Are they earthly rulers, prominent people? Are they an angelic host, heavenly beings? Regardless, the point is God is the One who has all knowledge. He is the source of all knowledge. All truth is God's truth. How could it be anything less? Some people deny that: “No, not all truth is God's truth.” Well, whose truth is it? On what basis is it true? No, not all truth is enscripturated, but all truth is God's truth nonetheless. So God knows all.

Death for all (vv. 23-26)

Second point: *Death for all*. Here is a picture of two people, one prosperous and happy, the other destitute and bitter. Job's point: they die the same way! Beginning in verse 23: **“One dies in his full strength, being wholly at ease and satisfied; 24 his sides are filled out with fat, and the marrow of his bones is moist.”** You get the picture; somebody who dies fat and happy. Look at verse 25: **“While another dies with a bitter soul, never even tasting anything good.”** Verse 26: **“Together they lie down in the dust, and worms cover them.”** Worms are

indifferent to the fact of whether one is a multimillionaire or a pauper who lived on the streets. Worms don't care.

Job's accusation (vv. 27-28)

Next we see *Job's accusation* (verses 27 and 28). Notice that all of the second person pronouns used here (that are actually in the text, not implied), are plural indicating that Job is talking about all three friends. Verse 27: **“Behold, I know your [plural] thoughts, and the plans by which you would wrong me. 28 “For you say, ‘Where is the house of the nobleman, and where is the tent, the dwelling places of the wicked?’”** This sounds like a summation of all that the friends have said. Job is saying, “Well, this is what you are saying – my three friends – you're saying this: ‘Where is the house of the nobleman, the leader, the ruler, the Prince?’” I take it to be a wicked ruler in keeping with the second half of the verse (“and where is the tent, the dwelling place of the wicked?”). In other words, they are gone. In other words, Job is saying, “Your contention, my three friends, is that the wicked live short unfulfilled lives.” And of course they're pointing all thirty fingers at Job while they contend this. That was *Job's accusation*.

Job's Answer (vv. 29-33)

His answer (verses 29 through 33), he says basically “Well, Is that true? Is that true . . . you look at the leader, you look at the nobleman, and his tent is gone. The wicked? They're gone. Is that true? No. Ask those who have been around the block a few times.” Verse 29:

“Have you not asked wayfaring men [travelers], and do you not recognize their witness?”

Look around and ask those who've seen it! That's verse 29.

Have you ever had a teacher a teacher say this to you in school? “Time to put on your thinking caps.” [I’m going to ask you to “put on your thinking caps” metaphorically-speaking as we address verse 30.] If you're using the New American Standard it's an unfortunate translation of a word here that follows the King James. Remember, verse 30 gives the answer to the question of verse 29. But listen to verse 30 carefully. You go to the head of the class if you get the problem I'm talking about. Job's words: **“For the wicked is reserved for the day of calamity, they will be led forth at the day of fury.”** Did anybody notice something there that seems inconsistent? Who does that sound like: *the wicked is reserved for the day of calamity, they will be led forth at the day of fury?* The wicked is reserved for the day of calamity! What does that sound like? It sounds like one of the three friends, doesn't it! That's not the point Job is trying to make. This is what Zophar has been arguing. Is Job suddenly agreeing with him? No, *Job's been arguing the opposite, that the wicked live long pleasurable lives.*

You see, the problem is the word that the New American Standard translates “reserved.” And if you're using another version other than the King James or the New American Standard you're not seeing this; it seems consistent. But let me read you a Hebrew lexical entry for this word *hasak* in Hebrew, translated “reserved,” “reserved for judgment” by the New American Standard. Here is a lexical entry for that word: *to keep back; to withhold; to restrain; halt or stop an action from occurring; to spare, that is caused to be free from danger; to bring relief; to have a favorable circumstance and so not being in a state of trouble or pain; to be relieved.*¹⁵²

¹⁵² 3104 אָסַק (ās): v.; ≡ Str 2820; TWOT 765—1. LN 68.34–68.57 (qal) **keep back, to withhold, restrain, halt, i.e., stop an action from occurring** (Ge 22:12); 2. LN 21.17–21.24 (qal) **spare, i.e., cause to be free from danger** (Ps 78:50); 3. LN 22.35–22.37 (qal) **bring relief, i.e., have a favorable circumstance, and so not be in a state of trouble or pain** (Job 16:5); (nif) **relieved** (Job 16:6; 21:30+), note: for NIV text in Eze 30:18, see 3124. [James Swanson, Dictionary of

Does that lexical entry sound anything like the idea that the wicked are *reserved* for the day of judgment. The same word *hasak* is used in Job 16:5 where it's used in the sense of relief. You see, this isn't the wicked reserved *for* the day of calamity. This is the wicked relieved *from* the day of calamity. Yes, the difference is significant.

Listen to a few better translations of verse 30:

- “. . . the evil man is spared in the day of calamity . . . he is rescued in the day of wrath.” [ESV]
- “that the wicked are spared from the day of calamity, that they are delivered from the day of wrath?” [NIV]
- “Indeed, the evil man is spared from the day of disaster, rescued from the day of wrath.” [HCSB]

That fits the Hebrew text and the context. It is consistent with Job's argument that the godless seem to prosper. Listen to the words of this commentator:

That the wicked man is spared in the day of calamity: verse 30 is the testimony that can be obtained from travelers who support Job's claim “that when misfortune strikes, the wicked person escapes unhurt.” So Job contradicts the friends' teaching of retribution, being punished for evil.¹⁵³

Now Job continues to the end of the chapter. Verse 31: “**Who will confront him** [that is, the wicked] **with his actions, and who will repay him for what he has done?**” You see, Job does not see any justice. Verse 32: “**While he is carried to the grave, men will keep watch over his tomb.**” [a picture of an honorable burial for the wicked man] Verse 33: “**The clods of the valley will gently cover him; moreover, all men will follow after him** [that is, in death], **while countless ones go before him** [that is, in death].” This is the way of all flesh according to Job, good and evil alike.

Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament) (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997)]

¹⁵³United Bible Society Handbook on the Book of Job.

Now there's a final question that Job asks of the three friends. That's in verse 34: **“How then [in light of all you have said] will you vainly comfort me, for your answers remain full of falsehood?”** Note that last word “falsehood.” According to one Old Testament scholar, this was a term that meant “violation of a sacred object” It was to “profane the sacred.” He writes: “Here, Job declares the Friend’s answers to be an act of faithlessness against the truth and by that token against God.”¹⁵⁴ It’s one thing to speak against the truth; that’s bad enough. It’s another to speak against God who is the truth.

Summary

- I. The Last Words of Zophar (20:1–29)*
 - A. The Wicked Die Young (20:4–11)*
 - B. The Wicked Have Temporary Pleasure (Job 20:12–22)*
 - C. The Wicked Die Painful Deaths (Job 20:23–29)*

That was Zophar in chapter 20.

And then we see this morning, Job's Rejoinder (chapter 21) refuting each of Zophar’s three points:

- II. Job's Rejoinder (21:1–34)*
 - A. The Wicked Do Live Long Lives (21:7, 14-15, 16-21)*
 - B. The Wicked Do Live Pleasurable Lives (21:8-13, 16)*
 - C. The Wicked Do Die the Same as the Righteous (21:22–34)*

Closing Observations

In the few moments we have left I want to give you a few closing observations.

I. Not Everything Job Claims is Correct

Number one: *Not everything Job says is correct.* And we talked about that back in the introduction to the book of Job when we said that the Bible is inspired and inerrant, which

¹⁵⁴Gordis, cited in Janzen, 157.

means that everything it records it records truly. But there are things that are recorded, such as the lies of Satan, that are not true. And not everything Job claims is correct even though it's accurately captured – but not everything Job says is correct. One thing we see is that he implies that there is no ultimate justice (we see that in verse 17) and that's not true. More on that in a moment. He also implies that there is no difference between the death of a believer and an unbeliever (the godless and the wicked), and we saw that in verses 23 through 25 – and that's not true. So not everything Job claims is correct.

2. There is a Theological and Philosophical Necessity for Judgment

Number two: *There is a theological and philosophical necessity for judgment.* When we look at judgment, there is a theological and philosophical necessity for judgment. . . . This is the teaching of God's Word: there will be a judgment. God does sometimes judge in this life. He will without exception judge in the end. Remember Revelation chapter 20 verses 11 through 15 – the great white throne judgment? Those whose names are not found in the book of life, the Lamb's book of life, are condemned to eternity in hell.

But there's also a philosophical-theological element in that if there is no God, and no judgment, there really are no morals. If there's nothing that is absolutely evil – or good for that matter – then what's the point? You see, we as a people demand punishment for depraved acts, whether we're Christian or non-Christian, whether we're theist or atheist. There's something within us that demands punishment for depraved acts. A man molests children and he gets caught, and we are indignant, as we should be. “His head should role!” (literally or figuratively). And many of those who are against the death penalty change their mind if the crime is egregious enough. Think about some man (and you read this in the headlines all the time), who kills his

wife and children, and then he kills himself. There's something within us that cries out for eternal justice. After all, in an atheistic universe, he got off scot-free. "Well, the jerk killed himself; now he has nothing to face." Listen, in an atheistic universe what he did wasn't any different than what commonly occurs in the animal kingdom. In fact, it was simply the entirety of his genetic being that caused him to do it in the first place. In a naturalistic worldview, biology is destiny. But we don't live in a naturalistic world, we live in a world that is under the providential control of the triune God. There's a necessity for judgment.

3. Why the Godless Prosper and the Godly Suffer is an age-old Question

Number three: *Why the godless prosper and the godly suffer is an age old question.* We spent a bit of time looking at that already and we'll continue in the future. I was badly injured – our daughter was killed – due to the godless actions of a drunk driver who should have not of been in this country in the first place. That he survived with a few bruises and scratches doesn't seem right. I've had many people say that to me. A few days after Giana passed I received this note from a friend. He wrote:

Words simply can not express the sadness I have right now, knowing how much you are suffering. . . . Even though we haven't seen [Giana] since she was young, my heart is broken. I have such a hard time believing there is a God in times like this. . . . I am on the verge of tears thinking of you on this father's day, wondering what our Father, which art in heaven, really has in His plan. . . .

Why the godless prosper and the godly suffer? Yes, that is a perplexing question, but it's nothing new. It's a dilemma expressed many times the Old Testament. Listen to a prophet Habakkuk in chapter 1 verse 13 where he says,

Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, and You can not look on wickedness with favor. Why do You look with favor on those who deal treacherously? Why are You silent when the wicked swallow up those more righteous than they?

It's an age-old question. Suffice to say that the answer to that question is bound up in what we've already said: there will be a reckoning. Romans 12:19, "Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God. For it is written, vengeance is mine, I will repay." So we rest in that; we take it by faith that there will be an ultimate judgment. And those that are wicked? We pray that they might be converted. As I've said many times, the man that killed my daughter, I pray for him. I pray that he comes to believe in Jesus Christ and that he meets not only Jesus, that's most important, but that he meets Giana someday. I pray for him. So we have to walk by faith, we have to have an eternal perspective. And when you're struggling with this whole issue go to Asaph in Psalm 73. There he addresses that idea of taking an eternal perspective. As we heard a couple weeks ago, preach to yourself, preach an eternal perspective to yourself.

4. A Child of God Dies Differently Than Those Who Don't Know Christ

Number four: *A child of God dies differently than those who don't know Christ.* Yes, they die in the same way as far as cessation of bodily functions, all of that, but yet they die differently. When the 18th-century revivalist John Wesley was asked, "What differentiates your people, Christians, from the rest of mankind?" Wesley's response was, "My people die well." *My people die well.* Martin Luther said this, "Our God is the God from whom comes salvation. God is the Lord, by Whom we escape death." John Knox: "Live in Christ; die in Christ. And the flesh need not fear death." Those were among his last words on this earth.

5. God is With Us; He's Good and Just — Even if We Don't Feel That Way

Number five: *God is with us; He's good and just regardless of how we feel.* Here's a great quote by the commentator-theologian Matthew Henry. Listen to this, "The God of Israel,

the Savior, is sometimes a God that hides Himself, but never a God that absents Himself; sometimes in the dark, but never at a distance.” When accused or suffering unjustly, flee from God to God.

We closed with this last time; I will read it to you again: the words of an 11th-century poet:

Therefore though You slay me, I will trust You.
For if You pursue my iniquity,
I will flee from You to Yourself,
And I will shelter myself from Your wrath in Your shadow,
And to the skirts of Your mercies I will lay hold
Until You have mercy on me.
And I will not let You go till You bless me.¹⁵⁵

One last thing. I want to bring this back to the Cross. Remember, Job said of the wicked in verses 32 and 33:

32 “While he is carried to the grave, men will keep watch over his tomb. 33 “The clods of the valley will gently cover him; moreover, all men will follow after him, while countless ones go before him.

But there is One who had men, a Roman guard, keep watch over His tomb. He wasn't wicked; He was and is perfectly righteous. In fact, He is God in the flesh, Jesus Christ, Job's God, Job's Savior. And the clods of the valley, verse 33, did not cover Him

Peter, on the day of Pentecost, declared of the resurrected Lord, Acts 2:31, “He [speaking of King David] looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay.” Proverbs 16:10 prophetically fulfilled.

¹⁵⁵From “The Royal Crown” by 11th c. Spanish-Jewish poet Solomon ibn Gabirol, cited in Talbert, 128.

J. Gresham Machen said this: "[Christ] has not merely paid the penalty [for our sins, but] also He has positively merited for us eternal life . . . merited for [us] the reward by His perfect obedience to God's law."¹⁵⁶ Yes, therefore, we can run, we can flee to our heavenly Father without fear. Let's pray.

I pray for my hearers, even as I pray for myself, that when we are tempted, or when we flee from You, that we will flee to You, thankful for Your mercy, thankful for Your great amazing grace that we sang about a moment ago. We're thankful for Your plan, that You began a good work in us and will complete it until the day of Christ Jesus. I pray for any, Lord, within the sound of my voice that know not Christ. I pray, Holy Spirit, that You would birth them, birth them to belief, birth them to faith, birth them to salvation, birth them to be worshipers of our triune God. In His name we pray. Amen.

¹⁵⁶Cited in Keller, *Prayer*, 69.

Disorder in the Court: The Last Words of Eliphaz

Job 22:1-30

January 16, 2022

Christ Church of Clarkson

0122Job22.1-30(23) | Audio Length: 56:40

By God's grace will cover the entire chapter this morning, but we will just read the first seven verses before we pray. Job 22, beginning in verse one:

1 Then Eliphaz the Temanite responded, 2 “Can a vigorous man be of use to God, or a wise man be useful to himself? 3 “Is there any pleasure to the Almighty if you are righteous, or profit if you make your ways perfect? 4 “Is it because of your reverence that He reproveth you, that He enters into judgment against you? 5 “Is not your wickedness great, and your iniquities without end? 6 “For you have taken pledges of your brothers without cause, and stripped men naked. 7 “To the weary you have given no water to drink, and from the hungry you have withheld bread.”¹⁵⁷

We pray, Father, and we thank You for this time that we can join together in fellowship around Your precious Word. I pray, Lord, that You would work to the power of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and lives, to the glory of Your name we pray. Amen.

Bad Things Happen to Bad People?

One thing we've noticed throughout our study in this book is the underlying assumption that bad things happen to bad people. Job's three friends assumed this to be an unwritten law of heaven. Calamity strikes as a direct result of personal sin: bad happens to you, you must've done something to deserve it. This was a common thought in the Ancient Near East, common thought in Job's time in the Ancient Near East.

Around 2000 BC is when Job lived, but we could turn the clock forward from Job's time 2000 years and we see the same mentality during the time of Jesus. It's recorded for us in the

¹⁵⁷Scripture citations are taken from the NAS95 unless otherwise noted.

Gospels. In John chapter 9 the disciples see a man born blind from birth, and they asked Jesus a question. Remember this? “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents that he should be born blind?” Jesus replied that, “it was neither that this man’s sin, nor his parents, but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him.” In other words, physical disability is not the result of personal sin. But in this instance it was foreordained so that God would be glorified. And with that, God was glorified as Jesus healed the blind man. We read in Luke chapter 13 about Jesus being confronted with the news of a group of Galileans who were murdered by Pontius Pilate. And Jesus responded by asking, “Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered this fate? I tell you no, but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.” And Jesus immediately offers another example, verse four, “Or do you suppose that those 18, on whom the tower of Siloam fell and killed them, were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem? I tell you no, but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.” In other words, don't blame disaster on personal sin. But remember: we are all sinners in need of repentance. So fight this underlying assumption that when bad things happen, when calamity strikes, it must be deserved because of a person's individual, personal sin.

Pagans also believed bad things happen because people are bad. In the book of Acts we read about how Paul was shipwrecked on the Mediterranean Sea. And he apparently floated on some of the debris of the ship, floated to the island of Malta, just south of Sicily, and the natives received him there. They made a fire, and while Paul was placing some sticks on that fire a poisonous viper bit him. And we read in Acts chapter 20 verse four, “When the natives saw the creature [that is the snake hanging from his hand, that is, Paul's hand] they began saying to one

another, ‘undoubtedly, this man is a murderer, and though he is been saved from the sea, justice has not allowed him to live.’” In other words, this bad happened to him because he deserved it. He must be a criminal, he must be a felon, he must be wicked and it's finally caught up with him. Well, God of course, in His providence, allowed the apostle Paul to escape physical harm from that poisonous viper. But again, the point is we see this mindset, not uncommon today – even among Christians. That is: something really bad happens? God must be punishing you. And that was the unshakable conviction of Job's three friends.

Disorder in the Court: The Last Words of Eliphaz

So back to Job 22. The title for this morning is *Disorder in the Court: The Last Words of Eliphaz*. “Disorder in the court” because Eliphaz continues his legal assault as if he's a prosecuting attorney against Job. And “the last words of Eliphaz” because this is the last we hear of him in the book.

Remember, there are three cycles of speeches in the book of Job. Three cycles of speeches whereby the three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, take turns confronting Job claiming he suffered because of his sin. And here in chapter 22 we see Eliphaz kicking off that third and last cycle of speeches. (And after chapter 22 we are, for the most part, done with him.)

You cannot apply right what you know wrong

One of the main ideas I want to bring out as we move along is that you cannot apply right what you know wrong. You've heard me say that, or of variation of that, in the past. *You cannot apply right what you know wrong*. And Eliphaz, along with his other two friends, often – most of the time – speak truth. The problem is in the application. They misapply that truth to

Job's situation. No, *you cannot apply right what you know wrong*. Robert Alden, in his excellent commentary on the book of Job, said this:

There is not much new in Eliphaz's third speech. He touched on most of the themes that the friends had used. For the first time we read of specific accusations (vv. 6–9), a move that represents a further emboldening on his part and a wider rift between him and Job. Toward the end of the speech (vv. 21–30) is a fine evangelistic sermon with several well-turned phrases. While it would be applicable for many situations, Job was not the one who needed to hear it. It is another example of good medicine given to the wrong patient.¹⁵⁸

No, *you cannot apply right what you know wrong*. You can [also] have the truth but apply it in the wrong situations or to the wrong people. So we need to know; we need to know our Bibles, we need to know circumstances and how we apply the Scriptures. We need to be prepared.

You know me. I'm quite compulsive when it comes to preparation. It takes me many, many hours of extensive study in preparation, especially for preaching. For one hour of preaching there is often 30 hours of preparation. And fear of unpreparedness becomes a common object in my dreams. Have you ever had the same dream over and over and over again? I do. For years I've had some of the same dreams, and they almost all have as a theme this lack of being prepared, this lack of being ready. And just last week I had a dream that I was attending a wedding. It was such a significant wedding that hundreds were in attendance. And whoever was getting married was prominent because the local news crews were there to cover it. And I arrived at the wedding with Lois, and I noticed that I'm not properly dressed. I'm dressed the way I generally dress year-round when not in church on Sundays, and that is . . . in shorts and a T-shirt, even when it's 0° outside. And so I'm coming to this wedding and I realize I am not dressed for this occasion. Well, that's not the worst part. The worst part is that I'm informed:

¹⁵⁸ *Job, vol. 11, The New American Commentary.*

“You're supposed be doing the ceremony” – and I panic. . . . I can't get to my office and pull something off-the-shelf. What in the world do you do? I am in such a tizzy that I fight myself out of the dream. I wake up [relieved, knowing] that it was just a dream. “Thank you, Lord!” I drift off to sleep, and what happened? I go right back to the same dream – and that happened at least twice! That is a frequent theme [of my dreams]. It's not usually weddings that I dream about. It's usually preaching. And it's preaching – often in my dreams I'm guest speaker in some gigantic church – and all of a sudden, as if I've been mystically transported from my office, . . . I'm supposed to speak! I'm not prepared to say anything. So I have this underlying paranoia when it comes to being prepared. I know that I cannot preach well, before God and before men – and before angels – when I am not prepared to do so in my mind and in my heart. That can be good because I am, I would say for the most part, I am never unprepared. But because of my perfectionistic bent, I rarely feel adequately prepared.

But back to “you cannot apply right which you know wrong.” That applies to Eliphaz as well. He is instructing Job, but he is unprepared as to how to apply those things that he says (most of which are true). He fails when it comes to his application, and we'll see that as we go through five main points in our outline: 1) False *Assumptions* by Eliphaz Against Job; 2) False *Accusations* by Eliphaz Against Job; 3) False *Allegations* by Eliphaz Against Job; 4) False *Applications* by Eliphaz Against Job.

I. False Assumptions: The Depth of Job's Sin in Light of God's Indifference (22:1-5)

Look the first five verses with me. This is the first point: False Assumptions: The Depth of Job's Sin in Light of God's Indifference. . . . This is the perspective of Eliphaz.

God's Assumed Indifference (vv. 1-3)

First we see *God's assumed indifference*. God's *assumed* indifference, in verses one through three. Look at verse one: **“Then Eliphaz the Temanite responded, 2 ‘Can a vigorous man be of use to God, or a wise man be useful to himself?’”** The word that the New American Standard translates “vigorous man” is the Hebrew *gibber*, “a strong or vigorous man.” And what Eliphaz is asking is, “Does God really need even the strongest and best of men?” That's the question. Then Eliphaz turns to Job in verse three: **“Is there any pleasure to the Almighty [Shaddai] if you are righteous, or profit if you make your ways perfect?”** Does that give God pleasure? Does He need you? And what Eliphaz is doing is he's painting a picture of a God who is indifferent, a God who is aloof. No, it's not true that God is indifferent. On that account Eliphaz is wrong. No, *you cannot apply right what you know wrong*. But it is true that God doesn't need us. We need Him; He doesn't need us. God cannot be improved upon. He didn't need to create. We call this the attribute of God's *aseity*. Aseity means “by itself,” or “of self.” God is perfectly self-sufficient. He doesn't need anything. He's complete. We see this, for example, in Acts chapter 17 verse 25 where Paul said, “The God who made the world and all that is in it ... is not served by human hands, as if He needed anything.” No, God doesn't need you, or me, or anything to be made complete. He is complete. He is perfect. John Calvin the Reformer, as it relates to this passage, said this:

When men do worse than they could, do they take away the righteousness that is in God? Can they subtract from His majesty? Can they annihilate His glory and His honor? Can they shorten the boundaries of His kingdom? Not at all! . . .

We can't detract from God. But that doesn't leave us without responsibility. And so Calvin goes on to say: “But as for us, let us consider whether or not it is our blessedness to take His side and

to render ourselves His subjects in obedience.” Yes, there is blessedness in serving and following Jesus Christ.

Some people may say, “Well, God needed to create so that He can be glorified,” or “God needed to create in order to be love, to experience love.” . . . “He cannot experience that attribute if He didn't create those angels and men that would love Him and worship Him.” That is false as well. And here I bring in the doctrine of the Trinity. For all of eternity there was perfect love and glory within the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. No, we cannot add anything to God. We cannot subtract anything from God. He is perfect from all eternity. Complete; His aseity. Aseity is self sufficiency. So Eliphaz *assumes* that God is indifferent. *Job's Assumed Sinfulness (vv. 4-5)*

And then he goes on to make another false assumption, and that is he *assumes Job's sinfulness*. Verse four (you have to read this rhetorically, as sarcasm): **“Is it because of your reverence that He reproves you, that He enters into judgment against you?”** In other words, “Job, is it because you're such a goody two-shoes that God is judging you, that God is disciplining you, that God brought all this calamity in your life?” The implied answer, “No, of course not. It's, Job, it's because of your sin, it's because of your wickedness.”

By the way, the word “reverence” in the New American Standard (in verse four) is the word for “fear.” Some translations render it, “Is it because of your *fear* that He reproves you?” And you may be noting this in your mind, that we're told three times in the first two chapters that Job *feared* the Lord, Job *feared* God, Job was blameless. That sets the stage for the entire book.

In verse five Eliphaz continues: **“Is not your wickedness great, and your iniquities without end?”** “Job, your wickedness abounds, and your sins are multiplied many times over.” It's interesting because Eliphaz is taking much of what Zophar said previously – Zophar, the youngest of the three friends, in his attack against Job – Eliphaz is taking the words of Zophar, and he turns Zophar's generalities (and Zophar speaks in generalities; basically, wickedness brings calamity and judgment – implication, “that's you Job”) – Well, Eliphaz takes those general statements and he puts them, applies them, directly against Job. Now, it's not just generally that calamity befalls the wicked, now it's specific: “You are the wicked man who has suffered calamity!” *You can apply right which you know wrong.*

But one thing we note, as we go through the book of Job in these three cycles of speeches, is that there's a progression of frustration (that's what I would call it). The three friends . . . are getting, apparently, more and more frustrated as they continue their attacks against Job. You go back to the first cycle of speeches and they're very general statements – and even some complementary words toward Job. The same Eliphaz begins the first cycle of speeches in chapter 4 and he says this to Job: 3 “Behold you have admonished many, and you have strengthened weak hands. 4 “Your words have helped the tottering to stand, and you have strengthened feeble knees. [4:3-4] “Job, you've done some good things.” But then in the second cycle the three focus on the dire fate of the wicked. The wicked suffer. The wicked are destroyed. God is displeased with the wicked. Of course, the implication in the background is that they're talking about Job. But they don't so much say that directly to him. That's the second cycle. The third cycle are speeches that we see beginning here in chapter 22. All assumptions are off. Eliphaz gets personal and there's a progression from bad to worse. The pronouns [go from

“they” to “you”] . . . “*You*, Job, are the wicked one.” So there's a progression of frustration through the book. All the gloves come off here in this third cycle of speeches.

So, False Assumptions: The Depth of Job's Sin in Light of God's Indifference. And those assumptions are false because God is *not* indifferent (and Job is not suffering the depths of sin).

II. False Accusations: The Delineation of Job's Sin in Light of Three Categories (22:6-11)

From those *false assumptions* we go to our second point: False Accusations: The Delineation of Job's Sin in Light of Three Categories. Here we see Job's sins enumerated. Again, we're getting more specific. It's not just “they” the wicked (someone else). Now it is “you Job.” “And not only are you wicked, but I'm going to bring out some specifics . . . what the specifics of your wickedness are all about.” And that comes in three categories.

Now it's interesting. Job did say in chapter 6 to his three friends, he said this in verse 24, he said, “Teach me. Teach me and I'll be silent. Show me how I have erred.” Eliphaz is more than happy to oblige. The list he gives here are sins of *omission*. In other words, Job has been neglectful. And they're social sins, Job's relationship to others. And they fall into three categories: Job's sin against the brethren; Job's sin against the weary and hungry; and Job's sin against widows and orphans. Now we know that Eliphaz is just pulling this out of the air. And it may be because these sorts of sins were common in the Ancient Near East. These were common failures . . . by the wicked, especially the third one (sins against widows and orphans). So it may be that Eliphaz is so caught up in his assumption that calamity has happened to [Job], therefore, [Job] did something to deserve it. “I don't really know what you did, but here the common three, and you probably fell prey to these. I'm going to assume that is true.”

Sins Against the Brethren (v. 6)

So verse six, *sins against the brethren*. Eliphaz says, “**For you have taken pledges of your brothers without cause, and stripped men naked.**” So what's that about? Job's being accused of granting loans to his countrymen and taking their clothing as surety, or as a guarantee. This practice was condemned in the Ancient Near East and later in the Mosaic law. Exodus chapter 22:25-26: “If you lend money to My people, to the poor among you, you are not to act as a creditor to him; you shall not charge him interest. If you ever take your neighbor's cloak as a pledge, you are to return it to him before the sun sets.” Why? Because that was a cherished possession. Your outer garment was very important in that culture. In that context and that climate sometimes you slept in it. If you were to take that as surety, it was to be returned . . . before the sun sets. Well, Eliphaz is accusing Job of doing just that thing: stripping men naked and abusing them.

Against the Weary and Hungry (v. 7)

The second category is *against the weary and hungry*. Verse seven, Eliphaz falsely accuses Job: “**To the weary and the tired you've given no water to drink; from the hungry you've withheld bread.**” And then verse eight I take as a parenthetical statement. I want to just gloss over it, but we will read verse eight, “**But the earth belongs to the mighty man, and the honorable man dwells in it.**” There are different ways to understand this, several different interpretations. I take it as a statement of fact, the implication that the once powerful Job, the greatest of the men of the East, is neither mighty nor honorable.

Against Widows and Orphans (v. 9)

And the third category of sins is *against widows and orphans*. Verse nine: **“You have sent widows away empty, and the strength of the orphans has been crushed.”** There are two classes of people here that were the most vulnerable of society.¹⁵⁹ During this time they were defenseless, much like unborn babies (the scourge of abortion). To neglect widows and orphans was . . . an atrocious felony. According to one commentator that I read it's condemned throughout the Old Testament. This is also a point of warning in the New Testament. James chapter 1:27 – how does he define “pure and undefiled religion”? . . . “To visit orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained from the world.” So here Job’s sins are being enumerated. “Job, you’ve sinned against the brethren and you've sinned against the weary and hungry. Job, you sinned against the widows and orphans.” All assumed to be true by Eliphaz. Well, *you cannot apply right what you know wrong*. And later, Deo volente, when we get there, chapter 31 [a chapter that] concludes with “the words of Job are ended.” [There] Job defends himself against these charges. Listen to these verses from Job 31. Job says,

16 “If I have kept the poor from their desire, Or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail, 17 Or have eaten my morsel alone, And the orphan has not shared it. . . . 19 If I have seen anyone perish for lack of clothing, Or that the needy had no covering, 20 If his loins have not thanked me, And if he has not been warmed with the fleece of my sheep, 21 If I have lifted up my hand against the orphan . . . 22 Let my shoulder fall from the socket, And my arm be broken off at the elbow.

“If I've done these things . . . may I suffer the wrath of God!”

¹⁵⁹“We know that these [accusations against Job] are generic offenses ... from the standpoint of ancient Near Eastern legal texts that regularly address the obligations of society to care for these vulnerable people.” [John Walton, NIV Application Commentary: Job]

Assuming the cause

Eliphaz commits what I term *the fallacy of assuming the cause*. . . . (It's an informal fallacy.) It's the idea that something happens and we assume that there is a connection, a direct cause, when there may not be. It's assumed. Why was JFK assassinated? Well, there are lots of theories about that. But someone who assumes the cause could say, "It's the result of prayer being banned in schools by the Supreme Court because it wasn't long before JFK was assassinated that that was done by the Supreme Court. So here is God's judgment on a nation." But that's assuming the cause. And that's a silly example, but you get the point.

And we all fall prey to this mistake of assuming the cause. We all do it, like when we're suspicious about others. Do you ever get suspicious? You think, "Well, that person thinks this of me; that person doesn't like me; that person's probably being critical of me" – and yet we don't have any factual information to go on. We just sort of feel that way. That's the fallacy of assuming the cause. When we don't think the best about others, we assume something we really don't know with certainty. I hate being tailgated. I drive along Ridge Road, I'm going 55, and I've got someone on my bumper. And I assume the cause: they're idiots! "You are doing this because you're an idiot and you are probably are mad at me and think I'm an idiot, but you are the real idiot, not me – I would like to tell you that!" Well, maybe that person isn't paying attention. I've driven with people and I remember at least one time saying, "Aren't you following a little too closely?" They're not paying attention. They're not in a hurry, they're just not paying attention. Maybe there's an emergency and the person's in a hurry. But we assume the cause.

When calamity strikes someone like it did Job, we assume the cause when in fact we don't have all the facts. No, as believers we ought to think the best of others, not assume we know what God is doing in their lives (and why). Well, the fallacy of assuming the cause? Eliphaz is guilty. *You can apply right what you know wrong.*

Eliphaz imputes the reason for Job's suffering, and he places that reason squarely at Job's feet. Verses 10 and 11: 10 **“Therefore snares surround you, and sudden dread terrifies you, 11 or darkness, so that you cannot see, and an abundance of water covers you.”** You get the picture here: “Job you're drowning. You're terrified, you're suffocating under water.” The mention of snares and terrors, of darkness and floods, and images of suffering. Common images of suffering, common images even of death. Eliphaz is *assuming the cause*. “Job, you lost your wealth, you lost your children because you are wicked. Job that's why you're suffocating.” No, *you cannot apply right what you know wrong.*

III. False Allegations: The Defiance of Job's Sin in Light of God's Transcendence (22:12-20)

Thirdly, False Allegations: The Defiance of Job's Sin in Light of God's Transcendence. Eliphaz first establishes the fact that God is transcendent. It's a theological word, one that you should know. We talk about God's immanence and God's transcendence. We talk about God's transcendence when we're talking about how big He is, how great He is, how He stands over and apart from His creation. He's not part of the creation as in pantheism. No, He stands apart from it. He's big, He's great. But then we talk, on the other hand, we talk of God's immanence: God with us. The transcendent God, the immanent God, the God who stands far away, the God who's at work, knows the number of the very hairs on our heads. The God who sees every sparrow that falls. You see, that's God's immanence versus God's transcendence. And false

religions will emphasize one to the neglect of the other. Like God's immanence; they'll say He so immanent that He's part of creation. That's pantheism. Or His transcendence; God is so far away that He's disinterested in what man is doing and uninvolved. That's 19th-century deism.

Well, God's transcendence is true. So verse 12 at face value is true. Eliphaz asks Job, 12 **“Is not God in the height of heaven? Look also at the distant stars, how high they are!”** That's transcendence.

The Milky Way, I'm told, contains approximately 100,000 million stars. Our galaxy, approximately 100 billion stars. The Hubble space telescope, launched in 1990, recently discovered the furthest star ever seen by humans, 9 billion light years away. If I understand that right, this means that if you could fly at the speed of light it would take you nine billion years to arrive at that star. That is awesome! 12 **“Is not God in the height of heaven? Look also at the distant stars, how high they are!”** Eliphaz had no idea what he was saying. . . . And yet, God stands transcendentally above and beyond all of that. He created all of that.

Practical deism and contemporary culture

Well, in light of that great God, Eliphaz paints Job's supposed alleged defiance. Eliphaz is actually accusing Job of being a practical Deist, of being of the conviction that God is not involved in our lives. And verse 13 begins: **“You say: ‘What does God know? Can He judge through the thick darkness? 14 ‘Clouds are a hiding place for Him, so that He cannot see; and He walks on the vault of heaven.’”** Eliphaz is accusing Job of being a practical Deist, of believing that God is so transcendent that He doesn't really care about what happens on planet earth. The problem is, there's no evidence that Job ever said such a thing, and it would be supreme word twisting to take that which Job has said previously and twist it. . . . But that's

what word twisters do, right? Have you ever had your words used against you, or misused against you? I have. But these are the type of words, “what does God know?” that the wicked say. Psalm 73:11, they say, “How does God know? And is there knowledge of the Most High?” Well, that's what Christ-rejecters say today, isn't it? *How does God know? What does God know? What does He care? Is there any knowledge with Him?* Scientists are our contemporary theologians in America, not real theologians. You know, these people are on social media. These are our celebrities, the ones that get trophies because they sing so well or they acted in a movie that made lots of money. They're the supposed “smart people” in our colleges and universities. They're the prominent who know better than you do. And that's why – even our politicians among them – they live contrary to what they say you should be doing. “Ride your bike. We've got a climate-change crisis, ride your bike. If you fly, make sure you fly coach” What do they do? They fly to places unknown and they fly in private jets. They live in mansions with a large carbon footprint. Well, it's that whole idea that “we are prominent, we're special. Don't do as we do, do as we say because your peons.” These are the type of people who say, “What does God know? Is there any knowledge with the Most High.” (If they affirm God's existence at all.) They live as practical Deists.

I'm amazed as I watch and observe culture, even observing television programs, how everything is engineered as if God doesn't exist. Everything is so man centered, everyone is so humanistic. And I'm thankful that our girls, they've caught on to old-fashioned retro-TV. They like some of these old television shows like Andy Griffith and I Love Lucy, Leave it to Beaver. And those were, for the most part, they were really good shows. And you will see things – we'll be watching a show and you'll see there will be something mentioned about doing the right thing

or that God knows what you're doing, or going to church. And what will I say sometimes? I'll say, "They wouldn't put that in a program today!" These programs from the 50s and 60s. We have become so completely secularized in a post-Christian culture. People live as practical Deists, if not outright atheists. But that's not true of us. It wasn't true of Job.

The ancient path

And so Eliphaz goes on. Based on his false assumptions he puts forth a challenge. Look at verse 15 (here's the challenge): "**Will you keep to the ancient path . . .**" That's used positively in Jeremiah 6:16, "ancient path," as walking in the way of the righteous. Here it's used negatively. It's the ancient path "**. . . which wicked men have trod, 16 who were snatched away before their time, whose foundations were washed away by a river?** [maybe an allusion to the great flood] 17 **"They said to God, 'Depart from us!' and 'What can the Almighty do to them?'"** *Are you going to continue on that path, Job?* Job hasn't even been in on that path!

God's common grace

Eliphaz goes on to point out God's common grace in verse 18: "**Yet . . .**" [context: in spite of the wickedness of the wicked] "**. . .He filled their houses with good things;**" [The assumption is judgment for their wickedness will come later in life] [Eliphaz adds:] "**But the counsel of the wicked is far from me.**" The same words were used by Job in chapter 21, the previous chapter, verse 16, and it's as if Eliphaz is mocking Job. Job said, "the council of the wicked is far from me." Eliphaz looks Job in the face, after telling him how wicked he is, and says, "No, the counsel of the wicked is far from me, Job. Not you."

The sinner's demise

And then in verses 19 and 20, we see *the sinner's demise*, the demise of the wicked, the judgment on the wicked, the calamity of the wicked being celebrated by the righteous. These are misguided words. The beginning of verse nineteen: **“The righteous see and are glad . . .”**

What do the righteous see? The calamity of the wicked (verse 16). They’re snatched away, they die before their time, the foundation of their lives, their homes, washed away like a raging flood. And the righteous are glad. They're so glad that they belittle the wicked. **“The innocent”** (verse 19) **“mock them 20 saying, ‘Truly our adversaries are cut off, and their abundance the fire has consumed.’”**

Are we to rejoice in the calamity of the wicked?

Are we to rejoice in the judgment and calamity, the pitfalls of the wicked? A Christ-rejecter, a prominent person, is stricken with cancer and given a terminal diagnosis, do we say, “You got what you deserve, Christ-rejecter!” Are we to rejoice in the calamity of the wicked? I have to be careful here because David, in Psalm 52, says much the same in a positive light. So what – do we do that? I didn't have time to spend too much here, too much time, but I'll say this, “are we to rejoice in the calamity of the wicked?” Not in the sense reflected here. Here's the nuance: we may rejoice in our sovereign God who vindicates his children and righteously judges persistent Christ-rejecters. And I think that's the sense, in a general way, of David's similar words in Psalm 52. We don't have time to look at context, but it's a different context than what Eliphaz is saying here. And we're warned, for example, in Proverbs 24:17, “Do not gloat when your enemy falls; when he stumbles. Do not let your heart rejoice.” We're warned in the wisdom literature not to do that. Jesus in Matthew 5:44, what did He say? *Hate your enemies; curse*

those who persecute you. No! He said the opposite: “Love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you.” Job didn't rejoice in the suffering of the wicked (again in chapter 31). He refutes Eliphaz's contention there. He says, verse 29, “Have I rejoiced at the extinction of my enemy, or exulted when evil befell him?” Verse 30, “No, I have not allowed my mouth to sin by asking for his life in a curse.” [31:29-30] So this is totally misapplied, totally misconstrued by Eliphaz.

As an interesting side note, when Eliphaz claims that the righteous will mock the calamity of the wicked, in verse 19, he uses the same Hebrew word that Job uses in chapter 21. Follow me here. Job began his reply in the previous chapter, “Bear with me that I may speak; then after I have spoken you may *mock* [me].” [21:3] Now you can get the insinuation that may be at work here. Is Eliphaz justifying the belittling – even the mocking of Job – saying that those who are innocent, those that are righteous, *mock* the calamity of the unrighteous? Just something I caught that I think is very thought-provoking.

IV. False Applications: The Direction of Job's Sin in Light of God's Restoration (22:21-30)

Let's move on. Our last point: False Applications: The Direction of Job Sin in Light of God's Restoration. Now, two things we see here, both start with the letter “R:” *repentance* and *restoration*. And we've seen this before: “Job, you need to repent, then God will restore you. Job, it's not too late if you repent; you can be restored.”

Repentance

There are three subpoints under *repentance*: 1) *submit*, 2) *learn*, and 3) *return*. 1) *Submit* (Eliphaz tells Job): 21 “**Yield now and be at peace with Him; thereby good will come to you.**” 2) *Learn* (verse 22): “**Please receive instruction from His mouth and establish His words in your heart.**” (At least he said “please.”) And then in verses 23 and 24: 3) *Return*

(*submit, learn, return*) – and here's the condition (note the word “if”): **“If you return to the Almighty, you will be restored; if you remove unrighteousness far from your tent,”** (verse 24): **“and place your gold in the dust, and the gold of Ophir** [legendary gold of the East] **among the stones of the brooks.”** In other words, “Bury your hope, Job, bury your hope in riches and things – including loved ones. Return to God, forsaken righteousness, forsake wealth, people, power.”

Now again, chapter 31. This is Job's last rebuttal (remember chapter 31 ends with, “The words of Job are ended”). Job would later deny that he had done this as well. Verse 24, chapter 31: **“If I have put my confidence in gold, and called fine gold my trust, 25 if I have gloated because my wealth was great, and because my hand had secured so much; 28 that too would have been an iniquity calling for judgment, for I would have denied God above.”** [31:24-25, 28] . . .

Restoration

And then there comes *restoration* (verses 25 to 30). Again, we have more of those conditions, “If / then” (“*if* you do this, *then* this is what will happen”).

God will be prized above all

There are six points under restoration (we’ll go through them quickly). “So if you repent Job (number one) God will be prized above all.” Verse 25: **“Then the Almighty [Shaddai] will be your gold and choice silver to you.”** *God will be prized above all.*

God will be cherished above all

Number two: *God will be cherished above all.* Verse 26: **“For then you will delight in Shaddai [the Almighty] and lift up your face to God.”** This was a common way to express

God's favor (the *prosōpon*, the face).¹⁶⁰ If God shined His face upon you, that was His favor. If you could lift up your face to God, that was a sense of “I’m standing in righteousness and pleasing to God, and I can look at Him.”

Prayers will be heard

And then, thirdly, *prayers will be heard*. “You will pray to him and he will hear you, Job.” Verse 27, in a twist of irony at the end of the book, what happens? God confronts the three friends because they misrepresented Him. And then He says, chapter 42 verse eight, “My servant Job will pray for you. For I will accept him, so that I may not do with you, according to your folly.”

Vows kept

And then the fourth aspect of Job's restoration, according to Eliphaz: *vows (or promises) will be kept*, the second half of verse 27. [“. . . **And you will pay your vows.**”]

Decisions will be confirmed

And fifth, *decisions will be confirmed* (your life will be illuminated). 28 “**You will also decree [better, “decide”] a thing, and it will be established for you; and light will shine on your ways.**” The Holman Christian Standard Bible makes this a little bit more clear: “**When you make a decision, it will be carried out, and light will shine on your way.**”

Usefulness to others promised

Sixth, *usefulness to others promised*. This is a couple of difficult verses in the Hebrew: . . . 29 “**When you are cast down, you will speak with confidence, and the humble person He will save.**” 30 “**He will deliver one who is not innocent, and he will be delivered through**

¹⁶⁰*Prosōpon* is the Greek. The Hebrew is *panim* (pah-neem)._

the cleanness of your hands.” That's the promise of restoration for the supposedly, allegedly wayward Job.

These things are good in and of themselves. These are the marks of being restored, the marks of revival: God should be prized above all, God should be cherished above all, we want our prayers to be heard, we want to keep our promises, we want our decisions confirmed because they're in keeping with God's will as He illuminates our path, we want to be useful to others. All those things are good, but it's a problem of application to Job.

1. When falsely accused, find refuge in God who knows the facts

Well, how do we take *disorder in the court* and turn it to *order in our lives*? I want to give you a couple of concluding thoughts from all of this (some that may sound familiar). Number one: *when falsely accused, find refuge in God who knows the facts*. When falsely accused, or criticized, flee to God. He knows your heart. He knows the facts. You can face accusations, you can face criticisms, by resting in truth, resting in the Man of truth, Jesus Christ.

I think back to the year 2000. It was a very difficult time. I was forced to resign my pastorate in Arizona, under false allegations. I'd gone through a period of burnout in ministry and a subsequent deep, deep depression which resulted in that I needed to take a couple months off. It was during that time, a few men found out that I was taking medication (a psychotropic medication) for my depression, and they thought that was a great offense. And I was led into a meeting with several men. They placed me in a circle of chairs and, one by one, began to tell me that I was disqualified for ministry for taking this medication. Well, I subsequently resigned. But in the midst of false accusations and criticisms Lois and I found great refuge in the God who knows our hearts and who knows the facts – and used that for good (Romans 8:28 style). It was

during that time that I finished my Masters degree, it was during that time we had Giana, it was during that time that we joined with the a congregation sympathetic to what we had endured, a congregation that loved us. And unknown to me at that difficult time (1999, 2000 2001) was that was also a difficult time 2500 miles away here at Christ Church. A difficult time. There was a man who was murdered, set up by his wife, a man that was music leader here. The senior pastor, the senior minister, resigned. A lot of people left the church during that time. But God was at work. He was at work here in the Rochester area. He was at work in the Phoenix area. My resignation, what I'd gone through, finishing my degree, all the blessings subsequently experienced, ended up resulting in God providentially leading us out here so that I could assume the role of teaching and preaching and praying and shepherding, being one of the elders. And that was 19 years ago. Amazing. When falsely accused find refuge in God; He knows the facts.

2. Take accusations and criticisms seriously (check your heart)

Second, we are to *take accusations and criticism seriously (check your heart)*. There were times when I have subtly tried to bring something up to someone that's an issue and they immediately got defensive. "Don't you know that I (fill in the blanks), I go to church every week, I teach Sunday school, I read the Bible" (whatever); immediately gets defensive. When we are accused, when we are criticized, we ought to check our hearts. That is hard for me to do. I don't take criticism well (I don't know anybody that does take it well), but I get discouraged easily. One criticism can cut the legs out from under 50 complements for me. But we need to be aware of our sin, and if someone accuses me of failure, in that regard it behooves me to check my heart and see if there's any element of truth there. One of the Puritan divines put it this way:

Teach me how to take reproofs from friends, even though I think I do not deserve them; use them to make me tenderly afraid of sin . . . more concerned to keep heart and life

unblameable; cause them to help me, to reflect on my [lack] of spirituality . . . to look upon myself as unworthy . . . Blessed be [Your] Name for anything that life brings.¹⁶¹

3. *Be sure of the facts before you accuse or criticize someone else*

Number three: *be sure of the facts before you accuse or criticize someone else*. How often do we form opinions about someone, something, and then later learned, we didn't know the whole story, we were wrong? Remember: Satan is called “the accuser of the brethren.” He doesn't need help from us.

4. *You cannot apply right what you know wrong*

Number four: *You cannot apply right what you know wrong*. And that's true when it comes to how we think or speak about others; how we correct them. Also true when it comes to knowing (especially true) when it comes to knowing biblical truth. Churches are filled with people who take the Bible and twist it. You can't apply bad theology in a good way. When the Puritan Richard Rogers was asked why he was so meticulous in his approach to God's Word, he stated: “I serve a precise God.” *That's why I'm meticulous. That's why I'm precise*. No, you can only apply right what you know wrong.

5. *Remember the One who was falsely accused*

And then lastly, *remember the One who was falsely accused*. In the Gospels, Jesus was accused of having a demon, He was called an illegitimate child, a half-breed Samaritan, a sinner, a blasphemer, a deceiver, and a false prophet – and ultimately was crucified for crimes He did not commit. The Jews had their reasons, as did the Romans. We read in Acts chapter 4 that they came together to do that which God had predestined to occur. This was always part of

¹⁶¹*The Valley of Vision*, 148.

God's plan. This was always “plan A” – that God would permit the fall, that God would endure a fallen, sinful creation, and that He would send a Redeemer, Himself God, the second person of the Trinity, to die for the sins of all of those who believe in Him for eternal life.

Swindoll cites the story about the German reformer Martin Luther who found himself condemned by Satan for his sin. The Satan began naming his sins one-by-one. Luther responded by saying, “Think a little harder. You must have forgotten some.” Once Satan ran out of ammunition, the Reformer replied, “Now write across the list in red ink: ‘The blood of Jesus Christ . . . cleanses me from it all.’”¹⁶²

Satan is the accuser of the brethren. However, we have an Advocate, an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. “Upon the cross where Jesus died, the wrath of God” was what? “Satisfied.” Praise be his name!

So Father, we've been in a whirlwind as we've gone through this [section]. I pray that You will take that which has been shared and implant it in hearts, layer by layer. I pray that it is food for their souls as it's been food for mine. Thank You. Glorify Your name. . . . May we learn more and more how to delight in our great God, the One who stands above and apart from the stars, the One who created all things – and yet the One who dwells within us. We pray these things in the name of Jesus Christ the righteous. Amen.

¹⁶²Adapted from Swindoll, 181.

When Life is Unfair and God Seems Not to Care (Part 1)

Job 23.1-17

January 30, 2022

Christ Church of Clarkson

0122Job23:1-17(24) | Audio Length: 54:34

Please go ahead and open your Bibles to the book of Job, chapter 23. And if you would, stand. I'm going to be reading a section out of Job 23, verses 13 through 17. Job chapter 23, beginning in verse 13, Job speaking of God says:

13 But He is unique and who can turn Him? And what His soul desires, that He does. 14 "For He performs what is appointed for me, and many such decrees are with Him. 15 Therefore, I would be dismayed at His presence; when I consider, I am terrified of Him. 16 It is God who has made my heart faint, and the Almighty who has dismayed me, 17 but I am not silenced by the darkness, nor deep gloom which covers me.¹⁶³

Father, we thank you for another time that we can encroach upon this book as we are at the midway point. We pray for your continued blessings upon this series and upon your people. Use, Lord, your truth to feed our souls. And we thank you; glorify yourself in our midst. We pray in Jesus name, amen.

Where's Waldo?

It was back in 1986 that the book illustrator Martin Handford was asked by his art director at Walker books in London to develop a picture book mainly for children. And Handford came up with an idea of a cartoon figure, a world traveler donning red and white, whose image is hard to find within a crowd of other people. In England, he is known as "Wally." We refer to him as "Waldo," as in "Where's Waldo." Maybe you as a child, or your own children, have spent time searching for little Waldo. Picture a scene where Waldo is so

¹⁶³Scripture citations are taken from the NAS95 unless otherwise noted.

hidden that you can search for hours—maybe even days or months— and not be able to find him. “Where's Waldo? I cannot find him no matter how hard I try?” That is an amusing picture of where Job is as he searches for God in the midst of the multitudes of his suffering—and yet cannot find Him.

Return to God? I Can't Find Him

In chapter 22, which we covered two weeks ago, Eliphaz exhorted Job to return to God. Here in chapter 23, Job is saying, “Return? Return to God ? I can't even find Him!” That's not an uncommon experience, that feeling that God is elusive. It's not an uncommon experience that believers go through.

Layton Talbert wrote this: “Believers sometimes find themselves in terrain where they feel abandoned and God seems to be absent. This is not virgin territory. Job pioneered it for us long ago.” And that's what we see here in chapter 23 and chapter 24. This is Job's response: God seems absent. He can't be found and it seems as if He doesn't care.

You could think of this under the heading of two letter “A's:” *apathy* and *absence*. “God is absent; I can't find Him. It seems as if He is not there— and He also seems apathetic. It seems that He just does not care.”

When Life is Unfair and God Seems Not to Care

I encapsulate these two chapters, 23 and 24, under this heading: *When life is unfair and God seems not to care*. Have you ever felt that way? Have you ever felt when you have suffered, really suffered, that life is unfair and that God seems to not care about what you're going through? Maybe He cares but He doesn't care enough to do something about it.

Losing our daughter to a drunk driver on Christmas Eve didn't seem fair. The man who hit us walked away from the wreckage. It didn't seem right that we agonized with her for months in rehab centers, our hopes finally crushed in her undeserved death. Does God care? And what do we do as believers—especially as followers of Jesus Christ—what do we do when we feel that way? Maybe we feel guilty: “Lord I feel that you just don't care. You are not hearing me.” What do we do?

Trust and Obey for there *is* no Other Way

I'm not a fan of 19th century revival hymns. We sang quite a few of them in my early days as a Christian. But one of them came to mind as I was studying Job, and that's the old song “Trust and obey.” The song was inspired words spoken by a young man converted during one of D.L. Moody's revival meetings in Chicago. During a time of testimony, this young man, this new convert to Christ said, “I'm not quite sure. What I'm going to do is trust and obey.” His words were recorded by the man who later wrote the music to the hymn whose lyrics were penned by another; lyrics that include what that young man—that young converts said—summarizing them this way (you know the song): “Trust and obey, for there's no other way.” And that phrase kept coming back to me. And I think that line, with a slight change in emphasis, is the challenge believers face in their suffering and in their doubts. It's a lesson that Job eventually learns. And here's how I change the line: “Trust and obey for there *is* (emphasis on “is”) – there *is* no other way!”

In my suffering I didn't always trust well. I certainly didn't always obey well. There were dark moments where I felt God was absent and apathetic. I think of the disciples in John chapter 6. In that account, one that I often refer to, we're told that *many stopped following Him*, they

stopped following Jesus. And Jesus looks at the disciples and He says, “Do you want to go away too?” How does Peter respond: “Where? Where am I going to go? You have words of eternal life.” And that passage also came to me, time after time, in the darkness of my suffering, in the deepness of my disillusionment, “Where can I go? Trust and obey, for there *is* no other way” (as difficult as it is).

Think about the great issues of life, including death. Death is a great issue of life, as it is something we all face, but nobody likes to talk about it. None of the great issues of life make any sense apart from God and His Word. “Trust and obey, for there *is* no other way.”

As far as our outline is concerned, there are five points, five main points, and each point of the outline has two parts: there's a statement that relates to Job and then there's a question that relates to us, that's relevant for us.

Job Believes He Cannot Find God

Number one: *Job believes he cannot find God*. That's the statement (chapter 23 verses one through nine). The relevant question for us, *Will I trust God when I don't perceive Him* – when I feel as though He's absent? When I feel as though my prayers are not being heard? Will I nonetheless trust?

Job Believes He is Innocent

The second point: *Job believes he is innocent* (chapter 23 verses 10 through 12). *Will I trust God when life seems unfair?* Job felt he was suffering unfairly. He couldn't understand that. Of course, his friends were saying, “It's because of your sin Job, it's because of your sin.” But that wasn't true. It all seemed so unfair. And things happen to us that don't seem fair. But will I trust Him anyway?

Job Believes God's Sovereignty is Capricious

The third point: *Job believes God's sovereignty is capricious* (far from the truth – chapter 23 verses 13 through 17). The question for us is, *Will I trust God in his wise sovereignty?*

Job Believes the Wicked Triumph, Yet the Righteousness will Eventually Prevail

And then two more points from chapter 24. *Job believes the wicked triumph* (chapter 24 verses one through 17). Ask yourself, *Will I trust God when it seems that evil is triumphing? Will I trust him nonetheless?* And then the last point, chapter 24 verses 18 through 25, *Job believes righteousness will eventually prevail*. The question for us is, *Will I trust God in His timing?* Job seems to make an about-face and comes to understand that no, the righteous will eventually win out, the wicked will eventually suffer calamity (“wicked” being those who reject God and His ways). But that's in God's timing. Will we trust God in His timing when it doesn't match up with ours?

Job's Eighth Speech: A Soliloquy

Chapters 23 and 24 comprise Job's eighth speech in the book so far. Like his first speech in chapter 3, these two chapters are a *soliloquy*. These are Job's thoughts, spoken out loud, to no one in particular. And we see a progression in Job's responses. He goes on from that soliloquy in chapter 3 to reply to each of his three friends, after they address him, and he does so often directly. Sometimes he goes on to directly address God. But here in this soliloquy he seems to do neither. He is now sharing his thoughts, his struggles, spoken out loud, but to no one in particular. And he sees himself, as we've seen so commonly in this book, Job envisions himself

in a courtroom setting. He's a defendant facing an invisible opponent. He seeks acquittal from his Judge, that is, from God. But God seems absent and apathetic. And life seems unfair.

Will I Trust God When I Don't Perceive Him?

Well look at chapter 23, beginning in verse one, there's our first point: *Job believes he cannot find God* (verses one through nine). The question for us is, *Will I trust God when I don't perceive Him, when I don't sense that He is there? When I question whether He is at work in my life, or within a given situation?* For Job, God is absent. Like a missing "Waldo" in a crowd of spectators, God is nowhere to be found.

In verse one, Job replies, not really replying directly to Eliphaz (some translations simply render this, "**Job said**"). Note verse two, "**Even today, my complaint is rebellion.**" The word "rebellion" is better understood in the sense of "bitter," and that's the way some translations put it: "Even today, my complaint is bitter." And then Job goes on to say, "**God's hand is heavy despite my groanings, despite my suffering, God's hand remains heavy upon me.**" Then verse three, "**Oh that I knew where I might find Him that I might come to His seat!**" This pictures a judge seated in the courtroom and Job wants to come before him in his seat. And he says, "**If I could,**" verse four, "**I would present my case**" (the picture of spreading out documents and all in a legal situation). "**I would present my case before Him, and fill my mouth with arguments.**" Job is saying, "I would serve both as defendant and defense attorney before God, my Judge, if I could just find my way to the courtroom, but He's not there." *Will I trust God when I don't perceive Him?*

Lots of things happen to us that we don't understand. There's bitterness, bitter experiences we go through, painful experiences. We may question at times, "God, are you really

at work in my life? Are you there?” And what you do when heaven is as brass? You pray, you cry out, and it feels as though your prayers hit some sort of solid dome. What you do? You may not understand, you may not see, *but you can trust*. That is when our faith is put to the test.

Think about God's work in history. Think about history itself. What was the darkest hour that ever struck the earth, the worst time? What seemed to be the greatest tragedy, the greatest calamity? It's not what most people would say. But it certainly seemed that God was absent on that day. It certainly seemed that wickedness won on that day. That was when Jesus Christ hung on the cross and from his lips, from his dying lips, came the suffering cry, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Evil appeared to have won. The disciples hope for Christ was shattered. It didn't seem fair. But the darkness was broken! We know what came after the Cross: the empty tomb! The darkest hour of history gave birth to the greatest light, gave birth to the truth of who Jesus is, as the son of God, as God, as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world! It gave birth to the greatest joy anyone has ever experienced; it gave birth to an eternal hope! And God glorified Himself, even through what seemed like a hopeless situation. There are times that we feel like crying out, “God, why have you forsaken me? Why you turned your back on me? Why don't you hear me? Why don't you see my tears?” But the fact is, He hasn't forsaken you. Your tears are stored in a bottle! He knows the most intimate details of your life!

Remember in the Gospels when Jesus stated that five sparrows are sold for two cents? They seem rather insignificant. You can buy a cart full of them for pennies. Yet he says not one of them is forgotten before God; not one of those creatures that seem so insignificant. And indeed he says, speaking of those created in God's image, “The very hairs of your head are all

numbered. Therefore, do not fear. You are more valuable than many sparrows.” God knows the most intimate details of your life, and He cares. He has not forgotten you; He is at work in your life.

The apostle Paul, no stranger to suffering, could say, “Our light affliction is but for a moment.” It may seem like it's forever. It may seem like you can't take another step forward. But you can by God's grace. You will get through. You will pass through the fire to the other side. And that was true of Job. But you see he's at that point in the story where so many of us have been. You can't see it; you can't see an end in sight. You can't see good coming out of this. You can't see yourself surviving.

And Job envisions what would happen if he could get a legal hearing before God. In verse five he says, **“I would learn the words which He would answer.”** In other words, “I would hear what He would have to say about my case and perceive what He would say to me.” Job was anticipating his acquittal. Job believes he is not guilty of anything that would bring such devastating suffering in his life. And then Job answers his own question in verse six, **“Would He,”** that is, **“Would God, if I had a hearing with Him, contend with me by the greatness of His power?”** *Certainly He's omnipotent, but I know He would pay attention to me.* Again, the idea that Job is innocent. And he says in verse seven, **“It would be there that the upright would reason with Him and I would be acquitted. I would be delivered forever from my Judge.”** Job is not looking at the unrighteous pagan standing before God. Job was speaking from the perspective of a believer, one who has been justified by faith (like Abraham). Note the word **“upright”** (*yashar* in the Hebrew). Where did we see that word? Chapter 1 verse one

where it describes Job as “upright” (straight, a man of integrity). Job can dream about finding God and what he would say and how God would acquit him. But it's just a dream.

In verses eight and nine, Job gives directions, spatial directions, that parallel our four points of the compass. Count them: **“Behold, I go forward, But He (that is, God) is not there, and backward, but I cannot perceive Him. When He acts on the left, I cannot behold Him. He turns to the right and I cannot see Him.”** This is a familiar figure of speech, *merism*, that we've seen before in Job. A merism is where two extremes describe a whole. For example, God is called “The Lord of heaven and earth.” This is creation described in two polar extremes, “heaven and earth” which means He is Lord of everything! It would be like us saying, “I've searched North, South, East and West. I have searched everywhere!” (That, of course, is a fallacy because nobody searches everywhere. People say, “God does not exist.” But how do you know? “Why, I'm never seen Him.” So you've been everywhere? How do you define “exist?” The problem is, you cannot prove a universal negative). But that's beside the point. We don't speak rationally when we're suffering.

Five years ago I memorized Psalm 10:1. I had overlooked it for most of my Christian life. When I read it in the context of my suffering that Psalm screamed at me from the page. Psalm 10:1, “Why do you stand afar off, O LORD? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?” You see, you're not alone when you feel that way. Now it would be one thing if the Bible gave all these promises, that when things are the toughest, then you will sense the most that God is with you (and that will happen without exception). And if that doesn't happen? Well, then something's wrong. Indeed, it would be nice to have God— to have Jesus— appear in front of you and put His arm around you and say it's going to be okay. That would be nice. But that

doesn't happen. We, on the side of the Cross, have God's Word, God's complete Word. And we also know from that Word that God's people often feel abandoned, that those are experiences that are common to all of us. Job believes he cannot find God. And the question for us is, "Will I trust God when I feel that way?"

Will I Trust God When Life Seems Unfair?

Our second point in verses 10 through 12: *Job believes he is innocent*. He didn't do anything to deserve what God brought upon him. Ask yourself, *Will I trust God when life seems unfair?* Here we have Job's declaration of innocence.

So far we've seen two things. Number one, we've seen right off the bat that the writer establishes the fact that Job is innocent. He's blameless. He's upright. But we also see that Job's friends *assume* he's guilty. His calamity must be, in their worldview, a result of his personal sin. Eliphaz, in the last chapter, went so far as to falsely accuse Job of specific crimes. He says, "Is not your wickedness great, Job? And your iniquities without end? You've taken pledges from your brothers without cause; you've stripped men naked; to the weary you have given no water and from the hungry you have withheld food! You sent widows away empty; the strengths of orphans has been crushed by you!" All without no valid reason to believe that Job did any of those things. It is just assumed. It has to be that way. These are common sins of the day, social sins, and Job must have sinned because he's suffering all this calamity. We called this "the fallacy of assuming the cause," and that often involves an *a priori* assumption. By that I mean, based on what *I won't accept* as a logical reason that something that has happened, I will accept *what I think* is the best alternative.

Think of naturalists and the worldview of naturalism with the question of creation. How did we get here? Where did I come from? Where did the universes come from? This is one of the biggest questions of life. But naturalists, in rejecting that we came from a Creator assume naturalistic Darwinism. Similarly, if Job's friends outright reject that God's people do suffer undeservedly, if that is taken off the table, what "cause" do they go to? Sin. Job must have sinned. That's why he is under, as they would say, the judgment of God. But Job knows he didn't commit crimes that caused his calamity. And he bases that here on two things: God's knowledge and his own. What God knows exhaustively, and what Job understands intuitively.

As far as experience is concerned, based on God's knowledge, in verse 10, Job says, **"But He knows the way I take."** (In other words, "I cannot find Him, but yet I believe He knows me.") **"When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold."** How many of you have heard that verse quoted in the context of going through suffering, as a near-parallel to the New Testament Romans 8:28? **"When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold"** is often quoted, but not always understood in its proper context. The way we often understand it is: "God knows my life. And when I go through trials they will be for my good and I will come out purified as gold through the fire." Well, that's true, but not directly from this verse. This is not what Job is thinking right now. As one writer observes:

Job maintained an unshakable faith in God, a confidence in His sovereign control over all his experiences, and a belief that he would someday see and hear God for himself. But nowhere does Job express any inkling that his circumstances are only a temporary hardship through which he will pass perfected and purified. To take 23:10 in that way is to make it a schizophrenic exception to Job's unwavering attitude throughout the book. . . . God has simply turned against him for unknown reasons . . . Job is not saying, 'God knows what I am going through, and when He is done testing me, I will be the better for it, purified like gold.' He is saying, 'God sees me and knows me. He knows I am innocent. When he tests me . . . I will come through like gold.' Not because the process

will purify him but because he is already ‘gold’—innocent, blameless, righteous—as he has been claiming throughout the book.¹⁶⁴

Again, look at it from the perspective of a courtroom. Job believes he will come through like gold, and that the verdict against him before God, his judge, will be “not guilty.” This isn’t hope in God’s work of sanctification, as we often think of it, this is the hope in God’s vindication. That’s the context. Is it true that Job’s suffering will conform him into greater godliness? Yes, and we’ll see that at the end of the book. But that’s not where Job is right now. Job knows he didn’t commit crimes that caused his calamity, based on God’s knowledge.

Secondly, verses 11-12, *based on Job’s knowledge*. Look what he says beginning in verse 11, **“My foot has held fast to His path (to God’s path). I have kept His way and have not turned aside. I have not departed from the command of His lips. I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.”**

This is Job affirming his innocence before God. He gives four descriptions in verses 11 and 12, descriptions that fall into two categories. Those two categories we could outline as “God’s way and God’s Word.” In each of these verses, the second statement of the verse elaborates or gives insight on the first. We’ll see that in a moment.

So first, *God’s Way*. Note verse 11, **“My foot has held fast to His path”** (second part of the verse is an elaboration on the first) **“I have kept His way and not turned aside.”** Note the words, **“path”** and **“way.”** These are words that are common in Old Testament wisdom literature of which Job is a part. For example, Psalm 119:105, “Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” In Proverbs 4:14 we’re warned: “Do not enter the path of the wicked.

¹⁶⁴Talbert, *Job*, 140-41.

Do not proceed in the way of evil men.” These are words that talk about direction, how we live our lives, that are common in Old Testament wisdom literature.

So there's *God's Way* in verse 11, then *God's Word* in verse 12. Job says, “**I have not departed from the command of His lips.**” And then, elaborating on that first part, the second part of the verse, “**I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.**” “God's Word has been my bread of life” is what Job is saying, “and I've kept His way in keeping with that Word.”

At this point, an astute question might be: “how did Job know the words of God's mouth, as he puts it in verse 12?” Did Job have a Bible? No, Job didn't even have a Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, much less an Old Testament. Job's experience was during the time of Abraham, centuries before Moses. We do know, however, that God revealed Himself in other ways, other ways apart from creation. Yes, we know God reveals Himself through creation, but there are ways, in that category we call “special revelation” that God, in those times, Old Testament times, would use to reveal Himself. For example, dreams and visions; direct speech (“God spoke to me and said . . .”).

Note that five centuries before Moses wrote anything, God spoke of Abraham, as it's described in Genesis 26:5, “Abraham obeyed Me and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws.” Abraham didn't have a Bible, Job didn't have a Bible, but they did know God's word in keeping with the means of revelation that God used at that time. As it says in Acts, God has not left Himself without witness.

Back to our second main point: Job believes he is innocent. The question for us, *Will I trust God when life seems unfair?* That's one of the great themes of the book. Will Job trust God

in the midst of what seems to be very unfair circumstances. Will we trust God when things happen to us that seem unfair? Will we trust Him?

I recently read the story of the great American missionary to Burma, now Myanmar, Adoniram Judson, who translated the Bible into Burmese and whose influence has resonated beyond the decades that he spent there. His influence is still felt in the church, and through the influence of the church, in Myanmar.

Sometime in 1824 Judson was imprisoned by Burma under suspicion of espionage. This was during the time of war between Burma and England, and prisoners that Burma captured, even under suspicion without any grounds, were routinely tortured; they were often executed. And Judson, under the suspicion that he was on the British side was imprisoned and tortured. He was hung upside down by his ankles and then lowered until his shoulder blades just touch the ground. He would be left hanging there.

After his release Judson received word that his wife had died along with his infant daughter. Think about it. You're ministering in a foreign place, you're suffering, you're in prison for 17 months (in which time you're tortured). You get released and then find out that your wife has died—and your baby girl. One biographer picks up the story:

Judson's instinctive reaction was to throw himself relentlessly into translation work. Inwardly he wrestled with loneliness, guilt and grief [which] gave way to despair and doubt. He left mission work, built a hut in the jungle, and dug a grave where he perched for long periods of morbid meditation. Lost in a desolate wasteland of mind and soul, this veteran missionary penned a pathetic plea to his dead wife's parents: 'have either of you learned the art of real communion with God, and can you teach me the first principles? God is to me the Great Unknown. I believe in Him, but I find him not.'¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁵Cited in Talbert, 135.

Judson eventually remarried but lost his second wife to illness. This was common in those days; women died in childbirth. Men, women, died of disease. Children died young. Death was a common companion before the advent of modern medicine.

John Piper writes of this loss: “This time, Adoniram did not descend into the depths of depression as before. He had his children. But even more, his sufferings had disengaged him from hoping for too much in this world . . .” I just want to stop there in the middle of this quote by Piper. That is true. I can tell you, in the suffering that we have gone through (and continue to go through), in the calamity that struck our lives on Christmas Eve of 2015, you come out of that not caring so much about “stuff.” And you look at things you bought, collectibles and whatnot, and you say “Why did I ever waste money on that? This means nothing to me.” And if you're still holding on to stuff, I would encourage you, hold on with a grip that is increasingly loosening, because you can't take it with you. And God will show you that these things are not to be your treasures. So again picking up the quote, “. . . He was learning how to hate his life in this world without bitterness or depression. And now, he had one passion: to return and give his life for Burma.”

In the meantime, Judson marries a third time to a woman 18 years his junior (not uncommon in those times). She was committed to ministering with him and God gave them four years of tremendous happiness, during which time they had a child. In 1850, however, Judson fell ill and died a miserable death at sea. One of his last sentences as he was perishing was this, “How few there are who die so hard.” Ten days later his wife Emily gave birth to their second child who sadly died at birth. It wasn't until four months after that, because of the slowness of

communication, that she learned her husband had died. She returned to New England that next January and she herself died of tuberculosis three years later, at age 37.

Life is filled with suffering, with trials and afflictions; times when it seems as though God is not at work and He's not even hearing you when you cry out to Him. *Trust and obey, for there is no other way.*

You see, Judson, as we need to do, lived in keeping with the promises of Romans chapter 8 where Paul could say, "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us." We live on that basis do we not? I'm not living for this life alone; that's how the world lives (*what can I squeeze out of this present existence*). No, we live for the hope of reward, which is ultimately Jesus Christ, and glorifying Him. We live in the hope of eternal life; we live in a hope of a God who has spoken; we live in light of the hope of the gospel; we live in light of a sovereign God.

Will I Trust God in His Wise Sovereignty?

But Job, third point, believes God's sovereignty is capricious. Ask, "Will I trust God in His wise, not capricious, in His wise sovereignty?"

The word "sovereign" relates to "kingship" or "lordship." God's sovereignty means He is King over everything: good, bad, up, down, over all of His creation. And that Kingship, that Lordship, encompasses two words that begin with the letter "P:" His *predestination* and His *providence*. His *predestination* is that which God, from eternity, has determined, or decreed, that He will do. And his *providence* is the outworking of that decree in time. That is God's sovereignty. That is a God who is in control. That is the God that we read about in the Bible.

We see an accurate portrayal of God's sovereignty in verses 13 and 14. It's an accurate portrayal, but Job misunderstands the application behind it, he misconstrues God's nature and intent. But verses 13 and 14 stand alone: **“God is unique and who can turn Him? And what His soul desires that He does.”** It's like Psalm 115:3, “Our God is in the heavens. He does whatever He pleases.” That's the big picture. God is sovereign over everything. But what about me? What about His providence? Verse 14, **“He performs what is appointed for me”** (i.e. Job suffering—including the loss of his estate, his livestock, his servants, his children— was appointed for him). Job adds, **“And many such decrees (decisions from before creation) are with Him.”** That is an accurate portrayal of God's sovereignty which includes our affliction and suffering. First Thessalonians chapter 3 verse three refers to “afflictions that were ordained” for Paul and for those first century Christians. The same is true of us.

I think the Bible is clear, as we see here, that whatever happens to God's people comes by God's appointment in keeping with His sovereignty. And that should comfort us. But here's the difference as it relates to Job: it doesn't comfort him, it terrifies him. For Job, God's sovereignty seemed capricious and arbitrary; fickle, without any meaning or purpose. Far from finding comfort, look at the passage beginning in verse 15: **“Therefore, (for this reason) I would be dismayed at His presence. When I consider, I am terrified of Him. It is God who is made my heart faint, and the Almighty has dismayed me.”** Then, verse 17, **“But nonetheless, I am not silenced by the darkness nor the deep gloom which covers me.”** (“I may feel this way, but I am still in my soliloquy. I'm still going to speak out.”)

You see, the idea that God is capricious is a false belief. For example, in the theology of Islam, God is indeed capricious. God does whatever he wants, even if that is quite arbitrary,

even if it's fatalistic, even if it's capricious. But that is not the God of the Bible. Dr. R. Scott Clark, professor of historical theology at Westminster theological seminary in California, wrote this:

One of the great misconceptions about the Augustinian doctrine of divine sovereignty, which was restated by the Protestant Reformers . . . is that it makes God arbitrary or capricious. . . .

The charge that the God of Scripture is capricious rests ultimately on the assumption that unless we can explain his actions then we may sit in judgment upon them and him. In other words, the charge rests upon rationalism. Of course we cannot explain all of God's acts and we cannot explain fully any of them! His ways are higher than our ways. His thoughts are not our thoughts. . . .

If we consider that God always acts according to his nature, then he cannot be said to be arbitrary, especially if we concede that God's understanding of his justice transcends our ability to comprehend it.

That is a great difference between the Triune God of Holy Scripture revealed in Christ Jesus and Allah or fate. The god of Islam really is capricious. He may forgive or he may not. No one can know. Allah cannot be known. He is utterly hidden. Indeed, he isn't even really personal . . .

The God of Scripture . . . reveals himself to us and what he reveals to us is true. . . . [W]e can know God because he has come to us and made himself known. He has revealed himself in creation and in redemption and chiefly in his Son, the Word: Jesus the Messiah. . . .

Unlike Allah, the God who is, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is not arbitrary. He cannot contradict himself. He cannot be what he is not. He cannot do what is contrary to his nature and his nature is just."¹⁶⁶

But there are times when our Arminian friends equate our understanding of the biblical doctrine of God's sovereignty with fatalism. Have you ever heard that accusation? "Oh, that's just fatalism. If the elect will to be saved regardless, then why evangelize?" Questions like that. Or, "If God has ordained the time of my death, why wear my seatbelt?"

¹⁶⁶www.monergism.com.

No, it is far from the truth that God's sovereignty is fatalistic. Listen to this: the god of fatalism is impersonal; the God of the Bible's personal. The god of fatalism is arbitrary, capricious; the God of the Bible works in keeping with His nature, perfectly holy, good and consistent. The god of fatalism is to be dreaded; the God of the Bible is to be trusted— even loved. God's sovereignty is good because God is good.

The great London Baptist preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon, speaking in the 19th century, said this:

There is no attribute more comforting to His children than that of God's Sovereignty. Under the most adverse circumstances, in the most severe trials, they believe that Sovereignty has ordained their afflictions, that Sovereignty overrules them, and that Sovereignty will sanctify them all. . . . [I]t is God upon the throne that we love to preach. It is God upon His throne whom we trust.¹⁶⁷

Trust and obey for there is no other way!

Job believes he cannot find God. Ask yourself, “Will I trust God when I don't perceive him? Job believes that he is innocent, chastised unfairly. Ask yourself, “Will I trust God when life seems unfair?” Thirdly, Job believes God's sovereignty is capricious. Ask yourself, “Will I trust God in His, not capricious, but wise, good, holy sovereignty?” *Trust and obey, for there is no other way.*

That brings us to chapter 24. Two more points, ready? Neither am I! As much as I hated to do this, as you can see, by necessity we need to save that for next time.

I will close with this, a sweet prayer that resonates with the struggles that Job experienced, that we see in chapter 23, a sweet prayer by an anonymous Puritan who offered

¹⁶⁷C.H. Spurgeon. From a sermon on Matthew 20:15. Cited by A.W. Pink, *The Attributes of God*, 32-33.

these words to our good sovereign God. And maybe these words reflect where you have been. Maybe these words reflect your struggles right now. I will use these as our closing prayer. Let's pray.

*I am sadly harassed by doubts, fears, unbelief,
in a felt spiritual darkness.
My heart is full of evil surmisings and disquietude,
and I cannot act faith at all.
My heavenly Pilot has disappeared,
and I have lost my hold on the Rock of Ages;
I sink in deep mire beneath storms and waves,
in horror and distress unutterable,*

*Help me, O Lord,
to throw myself absolutely and wholly on [you],
for better, for worse, without comfort,
and all but hopeless.
Give me peace of soul, confidence, enlargement
of mind,
morning joy that comes after night heaviness;*

*Water my soul richly with divine blessings;
Grant that I may welcome [your] humbling in private
so that I might enjoy [you] in public;
Give me a mountain top as high as the valley is low.*

*[Your] grace can melt the worst sinner, and I am as vile as he;
Yet [you have] made me a monument of mercy,
a trophy of redeeming power;
In my distress let me not forget this.*

*All wise God,
[Your] never-failing providence orders every event,
sweetens every fear,
reveals evil's presence lurking in seeming good,
brings real good out of seeming evil,
makes unsatisfactory what I set my heart upon,
to show me what a short-sighted creature I am,
and to teach me to live by faith upon
[your] blessed self.*

*Out of my sorrow and night
give me the name Naphtali —
'satisfied with favour'—
help me to love [you] as [your] child,
and to walk worthy of my heavenly pedigree.¹⁶⁸*

¹⁶⁸*The Valley of Vision*, 184-85.

When Life is Unfair and God Seems Not to Care (Part 2)

Job 24.1-25

February 20, 2022

Christ Church of Clarkson

0222Job24:1-25(25) | Audio Length: 56:39

This is part two of “When Life is Unfair and God Seems Not to Care.” It was three weeks ago that we spent an hour in chapter 23. This morning we will be spending most of our time in chapter 24. Yet these two chapters, 23 and 24, stand as a unit. I wanted to cover them both in one message, but that was not to be. It's also been three weeks since I've been in the pulpit, and that adds to further distance between what we covered then and what we want to cover now; and that makes it a bit of a challenge.

I always approach the pulpit with some apprehension, and there are weeks such as this one where I am especially apprehensive. As far as what we covered in chapter 23, I encourage you, if you have not listened to that message, I would encourage you to go and listen to it. In some ways it is “the boom” and chapter 24 is sort of “the smoke,” and I think you would be cheated if you do not get “the boom.”

I want to give a bit of a review. I think that's important, just to pull us all back together to the larger context of chapter 24, and back to part one of the series 3 weeks ago. That was January 30th. And I reminded you on that day that Eliphaz, the oldest of Job's three comforters, had just finished addressing Job (this sets the stage for chapter 23), Eliphaz had just finished addressing Job in chapter 22, a chapter we called “Disorder in the Court: The last Words of Eliphaz.” “Disorder in the Court” because so much of Job, and we see that with Eliphaz in chapter 22, fits within that rubric of a courtroom setting. “The last Words of Eliphaz” because chapter 22 is the last we hear of him. And we said that, as far as chapter 22 is concerned, we

said *you cannot apply right what you know wrong*, or the way I sometimes put it, you cannot apply rightly what you know wrongly. So it behooves us to be accurate exegetes, to handle God's Word well, because sloppy interpretation results in sloppy living. You can apply right what you know wrong. And we said that is related to chapter 22 because Eliphaz, like his two friends, says things that are true, but he totally misapplies them, and so his error was in his understanding of how to apply his words. And that's a common theme among the three friends, this idea of taking those things that are true and then shoving them in Job's face when he doesn't deserve what they are bringing before him in their accusations.

And one of the common themes among the friends is their counsel that Job needs “to return to God.” In other words, “Job your problem, your suffering, is because you're not repenting. So repent while you still have time.” Eliphaz, in chapter 22, verse 23, flat out says so, “If you return, or repent, you will be restored” (22:23). Well that set the stage for where we are now, chapters 23 and 24. And in chapter 23, where we were three weeks ago, Job declares (again, I'm sort of paraphrasing) in light of Eliphaz saying, “Return Job, return to God,” Job's thought is “Return? I can't even find Him. I would love to have a hearing, I would love to come before His seat”—again, courtroom language—“but He is nowhere to be found.”

And we talked about how common it is in the life of the believer to feel that God is not there. He's not paying attention. And that's especially true during times of trial, during times of suffering. I quoted Layton Talbert who said, reflecting on this, “Believers sometimes find themselves in terrain where they feel abandoned and God seems to be absent. It is not virgin territory. Job pioneered it for us long ago.”¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁹Layton Talbert. *Beyond Suffering*, 133]

This is what we see in Job's response that covers these two chapters, chapter 23 and chapter 24, which I said stand as a unit. And especially in chapter 23 where you see this idea that God is absent, He is nowhere to be found (how Job feels in his suffering). And to make it worse, He doesn't seem to care. We outlined it with two letters "A:" apathy and absence. God seems absent, and he seems not to care. And so I summarized these two chapters under the heading, "When Life is Unfair and God Seems Not to Care" (chapter 23, part one; chapter 24, what we're looking at this morning, part two).

Trust and obey for there IS no other way

Last time I told you about the 19th century hymn "Trust and Obey" (remember that)? And I gave you little bit of a background of that old hymn, how that came to my mind as I studied these two chapters several weeks ago. Trust and Obey, a song inspired by the words of a young man who was converted during one of D.L. Moody's revival meetings in 1800s Chicago, and that new convert, reflecting on the change wrought in his life, said: "I'm not quite sure; but what I am going to do is trust and obey." And those words formed the basis of the hymn, which includes the line, "Trust and obey, for there's no other way." And as I thought of that, I thought how to change it as it relates to this passage: "Trust and obey for there IS no other way!" That is, for the believer we have no other options. When we're confused, when we're struggling, when we're suffering, when God feels as if He's absent, when life is falling down seemingly around us, what are we going to do? Forsake Him? Is that an option? Go run and hide? Is that an option? No, we persevere; we trust and we obey, for there IS no other way.

After all, where are you going to go? To the godless culture? Does that make sense? Naturalism, that cannot even defend itself philosophically; that cannot answer the question, Why

is man unique? Why are there morals, or ethics? What standard are they grounded upon? That's a dead end! Not that I ever seriously considered it, but in the height of my suffering, I thought, "There's nowhere else I can go." I heard about people who go through tremendous suffering, and they forsake the Lord, they jettison the faith. But for me it was like, "For what? It is intellectual suicide to jump in lot with the world and their philosophy; that makes no sense. I can't honestly do that." So what do we do? We persevere. We trust and obey, for there is no other way.

Philip Yancey, an author from a few decades ago, in his book *Disappointment with God*, tells a true story about a friend who

went swimming in a large lake at dusk. As he was paddling at a leisurely pace about a hundred yards offshore, a freak evening fog rolled in across the water. Suddenly he could see nothing: no horizon, no landmarks, no objects or lights on shore. Because the fog diffused all light, he could not even make out the direction of the setting sun.

For 30 minutes he splashed around in panic. He would start off in one direction, lose confidence, and turn 90 degrees to the right. Or left—it made no difference which way he turned. He could feel his heart racing uncontrollably. He would stop and float, trying to conserve energy, and force himself to breathe slower.

Then he would blindly strike out again. At last he heard a faint voice calling from shore. He pointed his body toward the sounds and followed them to safety.

Reflecting on the story of Job, Yancey concludes:

Something like that sensation of utter lostness must have settled in on Job as he sat in the rubble and tried to comprehend what had happened. He too had lost all landmarks, all points of orientation. Where should he turn? God, the only One who could guide him through the fog, stayed silent.

The whole point of [Satan's challenge] was to keep Job in the dark. If God had delivered an inspiring pep-talk—"Do this for me, Job, as a Knight of Faith, as a Martyr"—then Job, ennobled, would have suffered gladly. But Satan had challenged whether Job's faith could survive with no outside help or explanation. When God accepted those terms, the fog rolled in around Job.

God ultimately 'won' The Wager, of course. Though Job lashed out with a stream of bitter complaints, and though he despaired of life and longed for death, still he defiantly

refused to give up on God: 'Though He slay me, yet will I hope in Him.' Job believed when there was no reason to believe. He believed in the midst of the fog.¹⁷⁰

He believed in the midst of the fog. Sometimes, as believers, we need to remind ourselves that we must persevere through the tough times, we must persevere through the fog. You may not understand, but you can walk in obedience to the light of God's Word. You may feel like you're drifting in an ocean, but you have God's voice in His Word. You may feel that He is absent, but you can trust. Yes, "we walk by faith, not by sight." Our perceptions sometimes can be wrong. Trust and obey, for there is no other way.

Job Believes He Cannot Find God (23:1-9)

Will I trust God when I don't perceive Him?

Three weeks ago we spent an hour in part one (chapter 23). And the first three points of our outline tell the story. First, *Job believes he cannot find God.* That was verses one through nine. In verse three of chapter 23, he says, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come to His seat." Job was in a fog and can't sense where God is. And like a lost swimmer stuck in a blinding fog, fearing for his life, with no compass, Job says in verses eight and nine, "Behold, I go forward, He is not there. Backward, I cannot perceive Him. When He acts on the left, I can't behold Him. He turns to the right, I cannot see Him." And the question I asked as it related to that first point is this, "Will I trust God when I don't perceive Him?"

Last week I was talking to Lois about the frustrations of not living up to what you know. One of the things that struck me when I was in Bible college and seminary is that you start gaining all of this knowledge, but it seems as though your application starts lagging further and

¹⁷⁰Phillip Yancey. *Disappointment with God*, 203-204.

further behind. And I think, in my 30 some years of living the Christian life, I think, “I know these things. I know that I'm dead to sin and alive to righteousness (Romans 6). I know that if I walk by the power of the Spirit I will not carry out the desires of the sinful flesh (Galatians 5). Yet why do I sometimes go through those periods of feeling lackluster, apathetic, dead, and easily taken in by sin, by that which I am dead to?” And it seems like the air of heaven that you want to breathe in deeply is a million miles away. It's like Paul who reminds us in 1 Corinthians 13:12: “Now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.”

Yes, we see dimly, and sometimes it seems really dim, it seems like the fog is just rolling around us and we have nowhere to turn. Job certainly sees dimly, if at all here. But it's interesting, because like the words of Paul, who says “Now I know in part, then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known” (*I may not know fully, but I am fully known by God*), that's what Job admits in verse 10 of chapter 23, “He knows the way I take.” The first word is *but*, “But He knows the way I take.” I may feel lost, but I know that He's still there and He knows me.

Job Believes He is Innocent (23:10–12)

We noted how Job believes he is innocent (verses 10 through 12). In spite of the accusations against him by his friends, in spite of those accusations which were groundless, Job knows he did nothing to deserve the afflictions he is suffering. Chapter 23, verses 11 and 12 (I found this quite convicting—that we can say this same sort of thing): Job's words, “My foot has held fast to God's path. I have kept His way. I've not turned aside, I'm not departing from the command of His lips. I have treasured the words of His mouth more than necessary food.” What

a goal to aspire to! And Job says, "I have done these things and yet I'm suffering, Yet I'm being accused by friends who tell me it's all because of my sin." It all seemed so unfair.

Will I trust God when life seems unfair?

And the question that I asked of us under part two, "Will I trust God when life seems unfair?" I say *seems unfair* because that's our perception. We don't know the whole story. We don't know why God has ordained things to be as they are (big picture in the world, little picture in her own lives).

At one level, there are times when we can say "life is unfair." We said this as kids all the time. And we may not say it all the time as adults, but we certainly think it. But perfect equity, rightly defined, perfect equality, rightly defined, cannot be found in this life because we have a problem. It's something the modern movements refuse to acknowledge, we have a sin problem.

But there's another level in the fairness question we have to ask, "What is fair anyway?" "What is fair in the big picture?" What is fair in the economy of a perfectly holy all-consuming God?" All have sinned and fallen short of that glorious standard. You want fair? You want justice, from God's perspective? That means we all get judged for our sin. That is fair, that is ultimate justice: we all lose, we all go to hell (no argument, mouth shut). We get the punishment we deserve. So what do you want? Do you want fair or do you want grace and mercy? I'll take that which I don't deserve, Christ's righteousness, rather than that which I do deserve, and that's judgment.

Job Believes God's Sovereignty is Capricious (23:13–17)

Will I trust God in His wise sovereignty?

Thirdly, we noted *Job believes God's sovereignty is capricious* (verses 13 through 17). And we saw that Job rightly affirms God's sovereignty: “He does what His soul desires” (v. 13). “He works out that which He has appointed, or ordained, for me” (v. 14). This is His decree, what He has decided, predestined to do before the creation of the world. This is the council of the Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in eternity. Amen! That is true, but Job takes that to mean that God is capricious. That's why Job, verse 15, is terrified of Him. And the question we asked then was, “Will I trust God in His wise sovereignty.”

This isn't fatalism. We talked about the false theology of Islam and the fatalism that is involved in the Islamic religion. We talked about how the god of fatalism—little “g”—the god of fatalism is impersonal, but the God of the Bible is personal; the god of fatalism is arbitrary, capricious, the God of the Bible works in keeping with His nature, perfectly holy, good, and consistent; the god of fatalism is to be dreaded, the God of the Bible is to be trusted, even loved. No, it's not capricious. It should not bring terror to the heart of the believer. Rather, it is comforting. Again, listen to the words of Spurgeon:

There is no attribute more comforting to His children than that of God's Sovereignty. Under the most adverse circumstances, in the most severe trials, they believe that Sovereignty has ordained their afflictions, that Sovereignty overrules them, and that Sovereignty will sanctify them all. . . .¹⁷¹

¹⁷¹C.H. Spurgeon from a sermon on Matthew 20:15. Cited by A.W. Pink, *The Attributes of God*, 32-33.

Trust and obey, for there is no other way. That assumes perseverance. It assumes we keep going. We don't give up. And this is one reason why the church is so essential (the relationships). There were times when I asked friends, during the height of my struggle with grief, suffocating grief, “You just have to believe for me. I see no end of this. Would you believe for me?” Not that someone else’s belief can be imputed to you, but someone else can stand there strong saying “it's going to be okay” when you don't feel that way. We need one another. This is why we “weep with those who weep.”

Job Believes the Wicked Triumph (24:1–17)

Will I trust God when evil triumphs?

That brings us to chapter 24 and our fourth point: *Job believes the wicked triumph.* That's what we see in verses 1 through 17: Job believes that the wicked triumph. And the question we need to ask is this, “Will I trust God when evil triumphs?” (We will talk a little bit more about that later.)

Job asks a question in verse one, and he follows it by several examples that he thinks prove his point. The overarching question is this, in verse one, **“Why are times not store up by the Almighty and why do those who know Him not see His day?”**¹⁷² What in the world does that mean? What is Job saying? Well, the NIV gives a little more of an interpretation to it. And I would encourage you, when you're reading difficult passages, especially in the Old Testament, sometimes look at another good translation (the NIV is good, the Holman Christian Standard Bible is good). But the NIV says this, verse one: “Why does the Almighty not set times for judgment? Why must those who know Him look in vain for such days and hours?” Why doesn't

¹⁷²Scripture citations are taken from the NAS95 unless otherwise noted.

God hold court so that the righteous can appeal to him, especially regarding the crimes of the unrighteous (against them and against others)? This is a good versus evil sort of thing.

The godless are driven by greed

Job gives a few common examples of those crimes in verses 2 through 17. We can go through these quickly. The first thing we see is that the godless are driven by greed (verse 2). “**Some** [that is, the wicked, the godless] **remove the landmarks; they seize and devour flocks.**” This was the unethical movement of property boundary markers to enlarge one's estate, robbing land from others while also stealing their herd, which was their livelihood. This practice was condemned in the ancient near eastern legal codes of the times, as well as later in the Mosaic Law (Deuteronomy 19:14, 27:17). This was probably a land grab by the rich and powerful in Job's day. They would've wielded their power to influence the community leaders to give their approval. In other words, this probably wasn't someone in the middle of night getting up and going and moving the fence so that the next day his neighbor looks and says, “What happened? Now the fence is moved and my sheep are in this other person's area— and they’re claiming this land and this livestock for their own.” That's probably not what's happening. This is a powerful man getting the other powerful men to do so, meeting at the gate of the town. That's where the elders would meet, that's where the leaders would meet and conspire together: powerful individuals getting other powerful individuals to agree that “yes you can do that; go move the boundary marker, go take those flocks.” This is like having the power to get politicians to do your bidding. Doesn't that ring true today? Powerful corporations, Amazon, Facebook, big tech, big pharma, operating in keeping with their godless agendas to step on the little man. And they get consent to do so from political and other authorities.

As a side note, I'm a capitalist. I believe capitalism best reflects the economy of Scripture. But like constitutionalism—and I'm a constitutionalist—like constitutionalism, capitalism needs a moral framework in which to operate. Our forefathers knew that the Constitution would not work, liberty would not work, without morality. You take away moral absolutes and all that is left is corruption. That's what we see in politics and in big business today. So the godless here in verse two are driven by greed.

The godless exploit the vulnerable

The godless exploit the vulnerable (vv. 3-11). The vulnerable are easy prey and they're used as human tools to achieve the furtherance of the powerful. We see two things here: we lust for money, and we see the exploitation of the less advantaged (those who cannot adequately defend themselves). The primary target in that regard, this was true of antiquity, is widows and orphans. See verse three: **“They drive away the donkeys of the orphans; they take the widow’s ox for a pledge.”** These are the two most vulnerable classes of people, widows and orphans. Their meager means for survival is taken away as payment for a debt or as collateral. This was condemned in the legal texts of that day, as well as later by the Mosaic Law, where we read in Deuteronomy 24:6, “No one shall take a handmill or an upper millstone in pledge, for he would be taking a life in pledge.” This means you cannot take someone's livelihood away from them as collateral for a debt because you take their life away from them if you do that. So the primary target was widows and orphans.

But a second class of disadvantaged (that included widows and orphans) was the poor (vv. 4-8). Look at how they're treated in verse four, **“They [that is, the godless] push the needy aside from the road. The poor the land are made to hide themselves altogether.”** And as a

result they're driven to desperation; they're forced to scavenge for food like wild animals, verse five:

Behold, as wild donkeys in the wilderness, they [that is, the needy] go forth seeking food in their activity, as bread for their children in the desert. They harvest their fodder in the field, and glean the vineyard of the wicked as bread for their children in the desert.

And verse six, **“They harvest their fodder in the field and glean the vineyard of the wicked.”** The prosperous wicked at least allow them to go and get some leftovers—while the wicked feast in their homes!

Not only is there no suitable food, but they also have no suitable clothing (v. 7): **“They spend the night naked without clothing, and have no covering against the cold.”** This is what Eliphaz had accused Job of doing in chapter 22, verse 6, “Job, you have taken pledges of your brothers without cause, you have stripped men naked” (not literally naked but taking their outer garment which was so essential in that climate and during those times).

And then we go to verse eight. From no suitable food, to no suitable clothing, to no suitable shelter: **“They [the suffering] are wet with the mountain rains; they hug the rock for want of a shelter.”** They're forced to dwell in rock country, finding maybe a ledge or a cave where they can get some relief from the elements.

And then there are unfair labor practices, including child abuse, verses 9 through 11. Verse nine: **“Others snatch the orphan from the breast.”** This isn't a baby; these are juvenile children forced into slave labor. **“And against the poor they take a pledge”** (that brings us back to verse three). Verse 10, **“They cause the poor to go about naked without clothing and they take away the sheaves from the hungry.”** Sheaves were grain (food). And it may be that

the hungry here were employed in transporting that food like human mules: starving, carrying food but forbidden to eat from it. And that's also what we see in verse eleven, "Within the walls they produce oil; they tread wine presses but thirst." They produce oil and wine but are forbidden to touch it. One writer observes that verses five through 11,

"[give] one of the most graphic pictures of the plight of the poor found anywhere in the Bible. See them foraging for food like wild animals in the desert (vv. 5–6), freezing because they have no clothing (v. 7), drenched by the rain because they have no houses to live in (v. 8), weeping because their children have been snatched from their arms until they pay their debts (v. 9), and forced to work for the rich and yet not allowed to eat any of the food that they harvest (vv. 10–11)."¹⁷³

Job seems the afflicted crying out, but the only ears that matter, God's, to Job seemed not to hear. Verse twelve, "**From the city men groan, and the souls of the wounded cry out; Yet God does not pay attention to folly.**" In other words, God does not hear.

I thought of Exodus chapter 6, verse 5, where God says, "Furthermore I have heard the groaning of the sons of Israel, because the Egyptians are holding them in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant." *I've heard, I'm going to take action.* But these people are without a covenant. Why doesn't God hear them?

Why are those that are the most godless seem to be the most prominent and powerful? Why do they seem to prosper? We talked about Asaph and Psalm 73 before. It's good go back to that again. To summarize Psalm 73, Asaph says,

Surely God is good to . . . those who are pure in heart! But as for me, my feet came close to stumbling . . . For I was envious of the arrogant As I saw the prosperity of the wicked. . . . pride is their necklace; The garment of violence covers them. . . . always at ease, they have increased in wealth.

¹⁷³Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Patient*.

Well look around folks. That's Hollywood, that's the powerful and prominent in our culture, the politicians, the leaders of big corporations. People like Soros and Gates (and on and on we could go). Why does it seem like they just increase in power and get away with it while they spurn the name of God?

And Asaph says,

When I pondered to understand this, It was troublesome in my sight Until I came into the sanctuary of God . . .

“I changed my perspective. I see things not from a human perspective; I'm going to see things from God's perspective.”

Then I perceived their end. Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction. How they are destroyed in a moment! They are utterly swept away by sudden terrors!

So what we see now is not the end of the story. God will make amends in His time.

Job believes the wicked triumph. Will I trust God when evil triumphs? That's hard to do. We rightly have indignation against people that abuse their authority, or their power, or against tyrants. I just read the other day about a large group of gospel ministers who wrote an open letter to Canada's Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, objecting to the godless tyranny that nation to the north has experienced, from laws that criminalize the gospel to draconian COVID restrictions. And a group of like-minded believers got together and said that “this needs to stop; you’re acting wickedly.” Yes, there's a time for civil disobedience. There’s a time to stand up for what's right. And there's always a time to proclaim biblical truth, always. That's what we do here, in the pulpit, outside of it, we’re going to proclaim truth—even if we see the day when authorities come to bar the doors. The wicked appear to triumph, but they don’t win in the end. Proverbs 16:4, “Yahweh has made everything for its own purpose, even the wicked for the day of evil.”

Verses 13 through 16 give further examples of what godlessness looks like, what we see demonstrated in our cities across America, murder and adultery. And these are all, follow with me, verses 13 through 16, they're all triplets with a common theme of darkness as wickedness and light as righteousness. What do I mean by triplets? I mean that the verses are structured in patterns of three. Note them:

- 13 **“Others have been with those who rebel against the light;
They do not want to know its ways
Nor abide in its paths.**
- 14 **“The murderer arises at dawn;
He kills the poor and the needy,
And at night he is as a thief.**
- 15 **“The eye of the adulterer waits for the twilight,
Saying, ‘No eye will see me.’
And he disguises his face.**
- 16 **“In the dark they dig into houses,
They shut themselves up by day;
They do not know the light.**

In that regard, verse 13 forms a heading in that it's the overarching principal. Verse 13, **"Others have been with those who rebel against the light; they do not want to know its ways; nor abide in its paths."** This is the godless rejection of light, the godless rejection of truth, the godless rejection of God's Word. They refuse to walk in His ways. Proverbs 2:13 warns about “those who leave the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness.” Out of that heading in verse 13 we see murderers and thieves (v. 14), we see adulterers (v. 15), and we see others (v. 16). And together they share that common theme of darkness and light: darkness representing evil, light representing good. We see this from the Old Testament to the New, where Jesus says that “everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light

for fear that his deeds will be exposed” (John 3:20). Light exposes, it brings illumination. God's Word is a light that exposes, it brings illumination. We're reminded in Ephesians 5:8, “For you were formerly darkness . . .” Apart from Christ, we were darkness and we lived lives of darkness. We were darkened in our understanding. “. . . but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light.”

But for the wicked, verse 17, **“the morning is the same to him as thick darkness, for he is familiar with the terrors of thick darkness.”** He is familiar, even comfortable with, the terrors of thick darkness. It's all the same; no absolute standard they can go to. That's what we see today. Men can be women. Women can be men. It's just what you perceive (postmodernism run amok). Marriage can be between members of the same sex. *By what standard?* Light is the same as darkness in our culture!

There's no partnership between righteousness and lawlessness. No fellowship between light and darkness (2 Corinthians 6:14). In the book of Genesis, God separated the light from the darkness, and that's sort of a an image, a precursor to what He will do in the final judgment: separate the children of light from the children of darkness

Reflecting on verse 17 and what preceded it, Robert Alden in his commentary on the book of Job says, “On this depressing note Job ended his description of the wicked, who appear to go unpunished because of an apathetic God.” [Robert Alden, *The New American Commentary*] Job believes the wicked triumph. Will I trust God when it appears that the wicked triumph?

Job Believes Righteousness will Eventually Prevail (24:18-25)

And related to that is our last point (because it speaks of God's timing). Our fifth point which covers verses 18 through 25: *Job believes righteousness will eventually prevail.* These

last eight verses are very difficult. Thus, they are widely contested by scholars. Not only is the Hebrew language challenging here (that's true of the entire book, the Hebrew in Job is considered the most difficult of all the Old Testament) but the big question we come to in verses 18 through 25 is “who's speaking here?” There are three basic options as to who’s speaking.

It could be that Job is quoting the three friends. “This is what you said . . .” And if you're using the English Standard Version, it puts the words of verses 18 through 24 in the mouths of the friends (maybe Eliphaz). The ESV begins in verse 18, “You say.” Well, the words “you say” are read into the text. It’s not in the Hebrew, it's implied, it's interpreted to be that. So, who is speaking? Job could be quoting the three friends; ESV takes that perspective.

Or it could be one of the three friends directly speaking. So Job isn't quoting someone, this is somebody else speaking, maybe Zophar’s missing third speech. There are people that think, scholars who think, that these words should be attributed to Zophar.

Remember back with me. In the book of Job, in the dialogue section of chapters 3 through 37, there are three cycles of speeches whereby each friend confronts Job. Three friends, three cycles. Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar each have a turn at Job; Job responds (cycle one). The next cycle, the next round, again Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar; Job responds. The third cycle we see Eliphaz and Bildad, but no Zophar. And there are some scholars who think this is Zophar’s missing speech, that maybe it was later in the book and it's been transposed here. I can’t go there. I don't think that's needed. I think Zophar is the youngest. In chapter 20 he was especially harsh. Zophar is getting caught up in his youthful zeal, getting very exasperated. I just think he shuts up at this point.

The third option (it could be Job quoting the friends, it could be one of the friends speaking, the lost words of Zophar), the third option is possible. This is where I land and that is that this is Job continuing to speak here in verses 18 through 25.

You may wonder why this is an issue. It's an issue because of the abrupt change in thought. We've gone from "Job believes the wicked triumph" in verses 1 through 17 (verse 12 ends by implying that God is ambivalent to these crimes and seems unconcerned with all of this injustice); that's verses 1 through 17. Then you come to verses 18 through 25, and there is a complete about-face. That's why I've entitled this last outline point "Job believes that righteousness will eventually prevail."

But look at the change in thought. After what was seen in verses 1 to 17, look at verses 18 through 21:

18 "They [the wicked] are insignificant on the surface of the water; Their portion is cursed on the earth. They do not turn toward the vineyards. 19 "Drought and heat consume the snow waters, So does Sheol [the grave] those who have sinned. 20 "A mother will forget him; The worm feeds sweetly till he is no longer remembered. And wickedness will be broken like a tree. 21 "He wrongs the barren woman And does no good for the widow.

You have this picture of judgment. But then you get to verse 22 and you've got the supplied pronoun "He." This is another issue with interpreting this: who's the "He" in verse 22? Is it the wicked of verse 21? ("**He wrongs the barren woman and does no good for the widow.**") Then you get to verse 22 and you've got, "**But He drags off the valiant by His power.**" It was talking about the wicked, but now it seems that he is talking about God, and I think that's right. Verse 22, "**But He**" (and some translations put the word "God" here even though it isn't in the text), "**But He drags off the valiant by His power,**" that is, God judges those oppressors with

His power. They think they're powerful? Well God will show them power! **“He** [that is, God] **risers”** (a picture of God's active nature; He stands up demonstrating action) “but no one (that is the wicked) has assurance of life” (that is, their lives are in His hands). They think they live. It's like the man who built the bigger barns: “Tonight your soul is required of you.” Verse 23, **“He** (that is, God) **provides them with security and they are supported** [God allows them to seemingly prosper] **and His eyes are on their ways.”** [He's watching; judgment is coming]. We see that explained in verse 24, **“They are exalted a little while, then they are gone; moreover, they are brought low and like everything gathered up; even like the heads of grain they are cut off.”**

You see, I think this is Job still talking. There is a change in thought in that he believes that righteousness will eventually prevail. Wickedness seems to be winning the day, widows and orphans are being taken advantage of and neglected, but righteousness will eventually prevail.

Now the question is, “Why the sudden change in Job?” Some commentators see this as an inconsistency. Therefore, Job must be quoting one of the others (the ESV Bible), or this is the missing speech of Zophar (some commentators). But is it really inconsistent that these words can't be Job's and that his thought hasn't changed? Can someone go from pessimism to optimism in a moment? Remember this is a lament;¹⁷⁴ we talked about that last time. This is Job speaking to no one in particular, voicing his thoughts, his frustrations; and he is also suffering. Within that context, you can go from “this thought” to “that thought” because you're lamenting, you're suffering.

¹⁷⁴Should be “soliloquy” and not “lament.”

So I don't think there's an inconsistency here. And again it's not at all unlike Asaph in Psalm 73. We saw that earlier. Asaph who said, "I was envious of the arrogant; I saw the prosperity of the wicked; but then when I pondered to understand this, it was troublesome until I came to the sanctuary of God, then I perceived their end; they are destroyed in a moment." And it could be that Job, in verse 18, has his *sanctuary of God* moment where he sees things from the other side. I don't think that's inconsistent at all. He's now looking at things from an eternal perspective: Job believes righteousness will eventually prevail.

Will I trust God in His timing?

The question for us is, "Will I trust God in His timing?" God's timetable is different than ours. We see injustices (I almost hate to use that word because it's so loaded in our culture); we see things that just don't seem right. We see tyrants at work, we see the poor and the un-powerful exploited by the rich and powerful, and we wonder how long this can go on. Why do they get away with it? "Will I trust God in His timing" makes you think of Romans 12:19, "Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God." If you're like me you want to get out the sword and lop off some heads! No, "leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, vengeance is mine, I will repay." I *will*, future. That takes trust by us. It's God's timing, not ours.

So verse 24, "**They were exalted a little while**" [the George Soros, the Bill Gates, the Jeff Bezos of the world], "**they were exalted for a little while and then they are gone.**" Job closes this section with a challenge in verse 25, "**Now if this is not so who can prove me a liar and make my speech worthless?**" Well, Bildad has some words to say; that comes in chapter 25.

1. God's justice delayed demonstrates His mercy

Let me give you three quick closing thoughts (I could've had ten closing thoughts, but just didn't have time). Number one: *God's justice delayed demonstrates His mercy*. The delay of God's justice demonstrates His mercy, His patience. It was Martin Luther King who said "Justice delayed is justice denied." And you may look at this and say, "Well, this is justice delayed. God doesn't seem to care." Well, justice delayed is justice denied within an earthly economy. But from God's kingdom perspective, the perspective of His sovereign rule, it's not justice denied, it's an opportunity for mercy. That God doesn't drop the proverbial hammer demonstrates his patience. 2 Peter 3:9, "The Lord is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance." Sam Storms: "Justice is not necessarily for now. Retribution for moral evil and reward for moral excellence are guaranteed only in the age to come." That doesn't mean we don't, with all that we are able, come to the aid of those who are suffering injustices. But the "social justice movement?" That's like one hand clapping the dark! The contemporary social justice movement is a godless, for the most part, a godless movement that is driven by liberal progressive ideology. Sam Storms also noted that "our responsibility to obey God is never suspended on whether He shows Himself."¹⁷⁵ *Trust and obey, for there is no other way.*

2. God is never absent regardless of how you may feel

Number two: *God is never absent regardless of how you may feel*. I've memorized these words attributed to C.S. Lewis: "I don't believe in God because I see Him, but through Him I see everything else." That drips with the beauty of a biblical worldview, a Christian apologetic! I

¹⁷⁵Sam Storms, *Biblical Studies: Job* (Edmond, OK: Sam Storms, 2016), Job 8–37.

don't believe in God because I see Him, but through Him, or through God's Word, I see everything else. It is God in His Word that makes sense of a life and existence that would otherwise be nonsense! So, God is never absent regardless of how you may feel. Matthew Henry (some of you use his commentary) wrote, "The God of Israel, the Savior, is sometimes a God that hides himself, but never a God that absents Himself. Sometimes in the dark, but never at a distance. Keep that in mind.

3. Life may be unfair, but that doesn't mean that God is

Number three. *Life may be unfair, but that doesn't mean that God is.* Remember, if life were fair Jesus would never have died. Go back to the point I made earlier. Do you want fair? Do you want ultimate justice from God's perspective? Or do you want mercy? I sign up for mercy. I signed up for mercy as a religious, yet godless, rebellious teenager. I signed up for mercy and I'm not getting off that list by God's grace. Romans 5:8, "God demonstrates His own love toward us that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

You demonstrated Your love for Your elect. Christ died for us while we were yet sinners, while we were yet in darkness. We deserve judgment and You could have chosen not to save any—and You would be just in doing so; no one is going to come before you and say "What have you done?" They may do it now; they won't do it when they stand in judgment before You. Lord, we are thankful that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Rather than judgment falling on we who deserve it, the judgment fell on the One who did not deserve it—yet the only One that could pay the price, Jesus Christ. All I am as a sinner for all that He is, the righteous Son of God. I pray, Lord, for those that have not yet signed up for mercy, that You would show them that they face ultimate, final justice—that their part will be a Christless eternity in hell—but You

demonstrated Your love. We pray, Holy Spirit, that You would open hearts to see the desperation of the plight of one without Christ. The only rescue, the only deliverance, the only hope, is through faith in Him resulting in repentance from sin. Amen.

Bye-Bye Bildad

Job 25.1-26.14

March 6, 2022

Christ Church of Clarkson

0322Job25:1-26:14(26) | Audio Length: 46:41

Open your Bibles to the book of Job, chapter 25. Two short chapters, so we might go rather short this morning. Let's read both of these chapters and then we'll pray. Chapter 25, beginning in verse one:

25:1-6 1 Then Bildad the Shuhite answered, 2 “Dominion and awe belong to Him Who establishes peace in His heights. 3 “Is there any number to His troops? And upon whom does His light not rise? 4 “How then can a man be just with God? Or how can he be clean who is born of woman? 5 “If even the moon has no brightness and the stars are not pure in His sight, 6 How much less man, that maggot, and the son of man, that worm!”

26:1-14 1 Then Job responded, 2 “What a help you are to the weak! How you have saved the arm without strength! 3 “What counsel you have given to one without wisdom! What helpful insight you have abundantly provided! 4 “To whom have you uttered words? And whose spirit was expressed through you? 5 “The departed spirits tremble under the waters and their inhabitants. 6 “Naked is Sheol before Him, and Abaddon has no covering. 7 “He stretches out the north over empty space and hangs the earth on nothing. 8 “He wraps up the waters in His clouds, and the cloud does not burst under them. 9 “He obscures the face of the full moon and spreads His cloud over it. 10 “He has inscribed a circle on the surface of the waters at the boundary of light and darkness. 11 “The pillars of heaven tremble and are amazed at His rebuke. 12 “He quieted the sea with His power, and by His understanding He shattered Rahab. 13 “By His breath the heavens are cleared; His hand has pierced the fleeing serpent. 14 “Behold, these are the fringes of His ways; and how faint a word we hear of Him! But His mighty thunder, who can understand?”¹⁷⁶

We come before you in this moment; we ask that you would bless the proclamation of your Word; that you would continue to instruct us from this book, the book of Job. It has a special place within the canon of the Old Testament—within the canon of Scripture. We pray

¹⁷⁶Scripture citations are taken from the NAS95 unless otherwise noted.

Lord, that it would have a special place in our hearts. Some of it is difficult to understand. I pray, Lord, for your help as I go through a few difficult matters as it pertains to chapter 26. And so, Lord, we ask for your blessing. Smile upon us now. Work in the hearts and lives of your people, to the glory of our Triune God, we pray. Amen.

There is a little mealtime prayer that you may have learned as a child: “God is great, God is good, let us thank Him for our food.” And there's actually some profundity in that simple prayer. It includes thanksgiving, it talks about God's goodness, and God's greatness. *God is great, God is good.* And theologians have used those twin themes of goodness and greatness in answering the question of who God is. Who is God in His goodness? Who is God in His greatness? The goodness of God, what He does; the greatness of God, who He is.

We can say that what God does and who He is are different aspects of His greatness. We talk about God's greatness, we talk about God's goodness, but we're also talking about God's goodness *in relationship to* His greatness. So these are two categories that can't be separated, but they can be contrasted. And that's at least part, a small part, of what we see here in Job chapter 25 and chapter 26.

God's greatness in what He does is a whisper compared to the thunderous greatness of who He is

We can put it this way (listen to this): “God's greatness in what He does is a whisper compared to the thunderous greatness of who He is.” Followed me, *God's greatness in what He does is a whisper compared to the thunderous greatness of who He is.* What God does in His goodness is his *activity*; who God is in His greatness is *ontology*. There is some overlap here. We're told in 1 John, for example, that God is love. God loves, that's something He does. Love is also an essential attribute of God, who He is. But when we think of works like the creation,

“God created the heavens and the earth,” we’re not to equate God, the giver, from the gift. We need to keep the gift and the giver separated from the standpoint we don't worship the gifts, we worship the God behind the gifts. If we worship the gift of creation, we become pantheists, or if we blur the distinction between God and the creation, we become pantheists. So again, *God's greatness in what He does is a whisper compared to the thunderous greatness of who He is.* And it's clear, don't get me wrong, that God's greatness is demonstrated in what He does. But, again, that is a whisper compared to the thunder of who He is. You will have to wait for the end of the sermon for the punch line as far as how all that fits together I'll give you head's-up: it comes in the last verse of chapter 26 (Deo volente, we'll get there shortly).

Again, last time I said it, and I'll say it again, *this is a very difficult section in the book.* That was true of chapter 24 and even more so in our text for today. There are several questions, some big ones, “Why is Bildad's reply in chapter 25 so short?” Six verses. That's the shortest. “Who's speaking in that section, chapter 26 verses 5-14, and why do those words sound like Bildad?” “And what about the parallels to Ancient Near Eastern creation stories that we see in chapter 26?” Obviously we can't go into all those questions in detail. If I were teaching in an undergraduate or graduate class in the book of Job, we would explore those. But it doesn't make for good preaching. So we'll just tip-toe our way through them. I don't want you to get stuck in the trees and miss the forest. We want to get the big picture, and that is the greatness of God.

The Last Words of Bildad (25:1-6)

But first we come to chapter 25. Six verses that I call “The last words of Bildad.” Remember in chapter 22 Eliphaz kicked off the third and last cycle of speeches between Job and the three friends. Three cycles, three friends. The third cycle began in chapter 22. Eliphaz begins

each of the three cycles indicating that he is the eldest of the three. Job replies to Eliphaz in chapters 23 and 24. The middle friend is Bildad so he is up next. This is Bildad's third and last speech, so we could say "Bye-bye Bildad" when we're done with chapter 25.

This is the shortest of the speeches, six verses, and the length of the third round of speeches by the friends corresponds to their ages. We see Eliphaz, likely the oldest, speaks first in chapter 4. His last speech was in chapter 22 (it was 27 verses). Bildad, the middle friend, speaks for a total of six verses; we see a step down in this chapter, chapter 25. Zophar, the youngest, doesn't speak at all. He opts out of this third round (he was quite exasperated in the second cycle so he just gives up). Well, Bildad's brevity here in chapter 25 shows that he is running out of steam. You can only say the same thing so many ways before you run out of ammunition, and that's what we see here in chapter 25.

Establishing the Greatness of God (25:1-3)

We see two things, two sub points here. Number one: Establishing the Greatness of God. That's verses one through three, Establishing the Greatness of God. Look at verse one of chapter 25, **"Then Bildad the Shuhite answered, 'Dominion and awe belong to Him Who establishes peace in His heights.'"** "Dominion" we call *the sovereign rule of God that inspires fear*. Dominion is God's capacity to rule. Dominion speaks of His sovereignty. And then "awe," word often translated "fear." One translation renders verse two, "God rules with frightening power; with a strong hand He establishes peace in heaven.

Think about that latter part of the verse: **"peace in heaven."** Is there any lack of peace in heaven? It's the nature of sin that it brings disorder, that it brings wars. We pray for peace. And when we pray, in keeping with the Disciples Prayer (Matthew chapter 6), "Thy kingdom come,

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” we’re including in that “peace” because the kingdom is ultimately a peaceful kingdom. In the words of Isaiah chapter 11, verse six through nine, speaking of the kingdom:

6 And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little boy will lead them. 7 Also the cow and the bear will graze, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. 8 The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child will put his hand on the viper’s den. 9 They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

God's kingdom, God's rule, heaven, is a place of peace. The good news of Jesus Christ is called “the gospel of peace” (Ephesians 6:15). Jesus said “blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the sons of God” (Matthew 5:9). Quite a contrast to atheistic Marxism! But as we sang, “the wars that rage are birth pains of the coming age.”

The word “peace,” *shalom*, means more than a cessation of hostility. This word refers to wholeness, completeness, health, satisfaction, contentment, blessing. Yes, “Dominion and awe belong to Him who establishes peace in His heights.”

Sometimes establishing peace requires a peacekeeping force, and so we see in verse three, “**Is there any number to his troops?**” Some equate “troops” with the stars, the numerous stars of heaven; others with the angels. And in the second half of verse three, “**and upon whom does His light [God's light] not rise?**” In other words, God sees everything. As we read in Hebrews chapter 4 verse 13, “There is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.” (“**upon whom does his light not rise?**”) So Bildad begins in his response by establishing, once again, the greatness of God (and we’ll return to that theme in chapter 26).

Contrasting the Fallenness of Man (25:4-6)

But secondly, the second half of chapter 25, we see Bildad is contrasting the fallenness of man. So we have the greatness of God, and we have a contrast. God's greatest also means He's perfect, He's sovereign, He's holy. What about man? Here's the contrasting of the fallenness of man: we go from the perfections of God to the imperfections of man.

And note the first two words of verse four: **“How then.”** That is, in comparison with this dreadfully powerful God, who is man? Specifically, “Job, who do you think you are?” I think that's what Bildad is saying here in verse four: **“How then can a man be just with God or how can he be clean who is born of a woman?”** “Job, you want a hearing in the courtroom of God? You think you can stand before Him? Job do you really think you're without guilt?” I think that's why Bildad is emphasizing the dominion and power of God here.

And it talks about **“man born of a woman.”** How can he be clean? Born of woman is no slight against females. This is a reflection on man's inherent sinfulness at birth. We are born sinful; Psalm 51:5, “In sin did my mother conceive me,” says David. Romans 3:23, we have sinned, all of us, and fall short, far short of God's glory.

But the question that Bildad asked in verse four, in response to Job, is a question that Job himself had asked earlier. For example, in 9:2, “How can a man be in the right before God?” Or 14:4, “Who can make the clean out of the unclean? No one.” But again, look at the contrast, verses five and six, **“If even the moon has no brightness and the stars are not pure in His sight, How much less man, that maggot, And the son of man, that worm!”** These are not original thoughts in Bildad's head; he's borrowing from his elder Eliphaz who earlier, chapter 4, said this: ‘Can mankind be just before God? Can a man be pure before his Maker? ‘He puts no

trust even in His servants; And against His angels He charges error. ‘How much more those who dwell in houses of clay, Whose foundation is in the dust, Who are crushed before the moth!

[4:17–19] Similar sort of thing. And also Eliphaz in chapter 15: “Behold, He puts no trust in His holy ones, and the heavens are not pure in His sight; How much less one who is detestable and corrupt, Man, who drinks iniquity like water! [15:15-16] That's what we see here in verse six:

“How much less man, that maggot.”

Man the maggot. Maggots stand for death. We see that, for example, in Isaiah chapter 14 verse 11, where God, speaking of the king of Babylon, says this: “Your pomp and the music of your harps have been brought down to Sheol; Maggots are spread out as your bed beneath you...”

Man that maggot. There are a few things that creep me out; one of them is maggots. I turn and run like a little schoolgirl when I see maggots; they are just creepy to the nth degree to me. And that's true when you see them in the common household trash, but it's quite another thing to see them feeding on something that's dead. This gives me the chills. But this is what man is in his sinfulness, a worm, a maggot. And that should bring humility. The best of us apart from Christ, we are worms.

Think about the desire we have for significance. The desire we have to be somebody. And we often look at people that have “attained,” people that have a great following—even in a smaller circle—but they have a great following. We want to be celebrities in our own little kingdoms. But listen: the best of us, the greatest preacher, the greatest writer, the greatest theologian, fill in the blanks (greatest whatever) is no more than “top maggot” of the pile apart from Christ. It really puts it into perspective. Just as redemption in Christ puts everything in

perspective, because we are elevated through Christ. No matter how gifted we are, how notorious we are, or how much “behind-the-scenes” we are elevated to equal status as slaves, we are slaves of Jesus Christ. This pecking order that we fall into in this world is not of the kingdom. We've got to keep that in mind as we as we search for the application of humility in our hearts. It's okay to be the world's nobody; you're Christ somebody, that's the important thing.

So we see The Last Words of Bildad. He establishes *the greatness of God* in verses one through three, and then he contrast the greatness of God with *the fallenness of man* in verses four through six. Well, that's a short response to Job.

Job's Reply to Bildad (26:1–14)

Bildad Misses the Point (26:1–4)

And how does Job himself reply to Bildad? I think Job begins by basically saying “Bildad you miss the point.” That's the first four verses. These verses are straightforward, reminiscent of Job's reply to Eliphaz in chapter 16 where Job calls his friends “sorry comforters,” and it's the same sort of thing that we see here in verses one through four. These words drip with sarcasm and you have to read them that way. Just follow along with me, beginning in verse one of chapter 26:

“Then Job responded, ‘What a help you are to the weak! How you have saved the arm without strength! What counsel you have given to one without wisdom! What helpful insight you have abundantly provided! To whom have you uttered words? And whose spirit was expressed through you?’”

So you have to see this as being totally sarcastic.

We said this is Job's reply to Bildad. We see that in these first four verses the pronouns “you” are singular in the Hebrew. Job was directly addressing Bildad, and I think he’s saying, “You have missed the point. Your words may be true, but they're not helpful.”

Now we get to verse five and the author of Job turns an abrupt corner. Remember we said, *God's greatness in what He does is a whisper compared to the thunderous greatness of who He is*. Well, verses 5 through 13 talk about God's greatness in what He does. But there's an abrupt change here. We have what one commentator calls “a magnificent hymn that sings of the powers God Himself revealed to [Job] at the end of the book.”¹⁷⁷

So we are now, after Job criticized the response of Bildad, now we’re talking again about God's power. His power over creation, His “awesome dominion,” as Bildad puts it in 25:2. And all the verbs here are in the active voice, demonstrating God's active administration, His providence over everything.

But here are the issues. The big question, “Who's speaking in verses 5 through 14?” Whose words are these? They sound like they’re a continuation of Bildad's thoughts in chapter 25. And so some think these words are actually Bildad's. It could be, another option, Job is quoting the others. The original languages don't come with quotation marks. So Job could be expressing the thoughts of the other three friends. Or it could be that Job is strictly speaking for himself. So that's an issue. There also allusions to Ancient Near Eastern legends. We will not get too much into that—that can be tricky—but to me, a non-issue, and something we've talked about before, as we did in chapter 9:13. But that's a simple overview. I said I would address

¹⁷⁷Robert L. Alden, *Job, NAC*.

these matters in more detail if I were teaching a class. This is not a class, this is a sermon. I want you to see the grand theme of God's greatness.

God's greatness over death and the underworld (verses 5-6)

Three sub-points: 1) God's greatness over death and the underworld (verses 5-6); 2) God's greatness over life and the creation (verses 7-10); and then God's greatness over adversaries and the Satan (verses 11-13). So focus with me. In verses five and six: *God's greatness over death and the underworld*. Verse five, **“The departed spirits tremble under the waters and their inhabitants.”** Verse six, **“Naked is Sheol before Him, and Abaddon has no covering.”** We have a reference in verse five of “departed spirits” (Hebrew *rephaim*). And this could, within its Ancient Near Eastern context, refer to dead rulers, the powerful dead Kings, those in authority. There may be a parallel here in that regard to Job's words in chapter 24, where he bemoaned the wickedness of such people, the wickedness of powerful people. Those who, chapter 24 verses two through four, “. . . remove the landmarks . . . seize and devour flocks. They drive away the donkeys of the orphans . . . take the widow's ox for a pledge. . . . push the needy aside from the road . . .” That may be these once powerful, prominent, godless leaders who have died. That may be who the Hebrew *rephaim* are here. The departed spirits, **“tremble,”** verse five **“under the waters.”** They exist in fearful judgment. These are the dead who, in New Testament terms, are in Hades. Like the Rich Man in Luke chapter 16, a powerful man but a wicked man, who was described as being in agony in the place of flames. Verse six, **“Naked is Sheol before Him and Abaddon has no covering.”** You can see how this gets tricky as you're studying this, as you're going through it. Here we have “Sheol.” We've seen this word several times in Job. Some translations, your Bibles, may just simply rendered this word

“the grave.” A more literal translation takes and transliterates the Hebrew *sheol* into English “Sheol.” So *sheol* can simply mean the grave, it can mean the afterlife in general, it can mean where the wicked go after they die, or where the righteous go after they die. It's a very elastic term. So we have Sheol which is naked before God, and then “Abaddon,” the Hebrew word for “destruction” that “has no covering.” The word Abaddon is used six times in the Old Testament, half of those uses are in the book of Job. It's a place of punishment, again paralleling Hades in the New Testament. This is God's greatness over death and the underworld, specifically, the underworld is it's comprised of those whose sins have not been atoned for by Jesus Christ. “Destruction.” “The grave.”

God's greatness over life and the creation (verses 7-10)

But then we see in verses 7 through 10, *God's greatness over life and the creation*. These verses seem to parallel the creation account of Genesis 1. In verse seven we have *the earth*. Verse seven, “**God stretches out the north over empty space and hangs the earth on nothing.**” Some scholars see here a strong witness to how our globe is suspended upon nothing in space. And that is a scientific fact that was unknown at the time of Job, that wasn't known until long, long afterward. But here, God stretches out the north. He hangs the earth on nothing. And then verse eight we have *the atmosphere*: “**He wraps up the water is in His cloud and the cloud does not burst under them.**” Here you have water, heavier than air, suspended in the air. Clouds holding water, and atmospheric phenomena parallel to Genesis chapter 1:6-7, “God said, let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters. God made the expanse, separated the waters which were below the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse.” Think of later at the time of the flood. I believe the first

time that it ever rained, when during the flood, “the fountains of the earth, the deep burst open and the floodgates of the sky were opened.” Yes, “He wraps up the waters in His clouds and the cloud is not burst under them.”

And then verse nine raises a question: **“He obscures the face of the full moon and spreads His cloud over it.”** I spent a lot of time on this verse. What does that mean “He obscures the face of the full moon?” Well, some translations, such as the Authorized Version, have the word “throne;” not “full moon,” but “throne.” Listen to the King James Version. Verse nine: “He holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth His cloud upon it.” Listen to another modern translation which says: “He obscures the view of His throne, spreading His cloud over it.” [HCSB] *Does God obscure the face of the moon or the view of His throne?* What's the difference? Hebrew vowels. It's how you vocalize the Hebrew word. If you know Hebrew you know that it is a consonantal language that didn't originally have vowels. Little vowel pointing indicators were added much later, centuries after Christ, by the Masoretic scholars. But I thought I would check the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament that was compiled before the time of Christ and the apostles. There it is the Greek word *thronos*. Do you think *thronos* is the Greek word for “moon” or “throne?” It's “throne.” The JPS, the Jewish Publication Society English translation, the Tanakh, renders this verse, verse nine, “He shuts off the view of his throne, spreading His cloud over it.” I think that “throne” (you may want to put a little note in the margin of your Bible), I think “throne” is a better choice here. It makes more sense to me within the context. Verse nine, **“He obscures the view of His throne, spreading His cloud over it.”**

This is interesting, how this comes together with the “cloud” and His “throne” (God's presence). Several times, for example, in the book of Exodus, you have a cloud associated with God's glory. What do we call that (if you've been in Christian circles for any number of time)? The word *Shekinah* (glory). Have you ever heard that? “Shekinah glory,” the glory of God's presence? Such as in Exodus 16:10, “The glory of the Lord appeared in a cloud.” When Jesus ascended (Acts 1:9) He ascended into what? A cloud. When He comes again we're told He comes in what? Clouds (Revelation 1:7). So I think this is talking about the throne of God. He obscures the view of His throne, protecting us from the powerful glory of His holiness. Who can see God and live unless God shrouds Himself? Isaiah chapter 6, “I saw the Lord seated on his throne, and I said, ‘Wow, I'll go on TV! I'll wear the same clothes; they smell like the throne room of God!’” No, Isaiah says, “I am ruined!” So He obscures the view of His throne, spreading His glory cloud over it.

And we go from throne of heaven in verse nine back to the creation in verse 10: **“He has inscribed a circle on the surface of the waters, at the boundary”** [or “the horizon]. The horizon of light and darkness. There are some amazing things here related to the creation. One resource, commenting on these verses, said this:

These are statements amazingly in accord with facts not known or agreed on by scientists till a few hundred years ago. In the clouds in the sky God gathers up water (evaporation) . . . At the horizon . . . light and darkness seem to separate. The horizon is circular, for the verb “marks out” [“inscribed”] translates [a Hebrew word meaning], “to draw a circle,” and suggests the curvature of the earth. This too accords with the facts known by scientists only in recent times.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁸*Bible Knowledge Commentary.*

God's greatness over adversaries and the Satan (verses 11-13)

You see, this is God's greatness over death, over the underworld (we saw that in verses five and six), then God's greatness over life and the creation itself (verses seven through ten). And now, thirdly, verses 11 through 13: *God's greatness over adversaries and the Satan*. More tricky verses (follow along with me). Beginning in verse 11, **“The pillars of heaven tremble and are amazed at His rebuke, He quieted the sea with His power, and by His understanding He shattered Rahab. By His breath, the heavens were cleared. His hand has pierced the fleeing serpent.”** I believe what we are seeing here is God's greatness over his adversaries. *Rahab*, mentioned in verse 12; we saw that back in chapter 9 verse 13, “Beneath Him crouch the helpers of Rahab.” Back when we were in chapter 9 we spent a little bit of time there (there not a whole lot). Some scholars identify Rahab here with the Leviathan that’s talked about, for example, in chapter 3 verse eight. Leviathan, an Ancient Near Eastern mythological creature that stood for destruction. Rahab was also a symbol of the sea, and there's a connection there in what we see in verse 12: “He quieted the sea with His power, and by His understanding He shattered Rahab.” Sea may be in parallel, the sea and Rahab, one with another. Both of them stand for destruction, and destruction is personified in the forces of evil, namely in the Satan. We see similar language in Isaiah chapter 27 verse one. Speaking of the *eschaton*, the end of the age, Isaiah writes, “The Lord, with His hard and great and strong sword, will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, and will slay the dragon that is in the sea.” And here, verse 13, “By His breath the heavens are cleared; His hand has pierced the fleeing serpent.” This could be “destruction,” but I think it looks beyond that to His adversaries, even

Satan. The great theologian Jonathan Edwards said: “It might have been translated, ‘His hands have wounded or tormented the crooked serpent,’ that is, the devil.”¹⁷⁹

Christopher Ash writes:

These verses speak, in storybook language, that would be recognized all over the ancient Near East, of the conquest and subjugation of supernatural evil. “The sea” is a picture of the forces of chaos and disorder that threaten to swamp the moral order of creation with injustice (v. 12). “Rahab” (v. 12), also called “the fleeing serpent” (v. 13), is a storybook name for the gigantic sea monster or sea serpent that lives in the sea and embodies all the anti-God forces of evil in the universe.¹⁸⁰

This is God's greatness in what He does: greatness over death and the underworld, greatness over life and the creation, greatness over adversaries and the Satan.

God’s greatness, however, in what He does is a whisper compared to the thunderous greatness of who He is. That brings us to the punch line. This is where we pull the thread and put it together (if you're with me). Verse 14: **“Behold these are the fringes of His ways, and how faint a word we hear of Him, but His mighty thunder who can understand?”** This greatness of God in creation, this greatness of God over the underworld, over His foes, pales compared to the thunderous voice of who He is.

There times when you are being led by the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, when you cry out with Paul in Romans 11:30 “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!” Yes,

¹⁷⁹Jonathan Edwards, *The "Blank Bible": Part 1 & Part 2*, ed. Stephen J. Stein and Harry S. Stout, vol. 24, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2006), 451.

¹⁸⁰Ash, *Job*, 265-66.

verse 14, “Behold, these things [these things we see in verse five through 13] are the fringes, a whisper compared to His mighty thunder.” We see God's glory.

What is God's glory? John Piper, in answering that question, writes this:

. . . I believe the glory of God is the going public of his infinite worth. I define the holiness of God as the infinite value of God, the infinite intrinsic worth of God. And when that goes public in creation, the heavens are telling the glory of God, and human beings are manifesting his glory, because we're created in his image, and we're trusting his promises so that we make him look gloriously trustworthy.

The public display of the infinite beauty and worth of God is what I mean by "glory," and I base that partly on Isaiah 6, where the seraphim say, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty. The whole earth is full of his—" and you would expect them to say "holiness" and they say "glory." They're ascribing "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty. The whole earth is full of his—" and when that goes public in the earth and fills it, you call it "glory."

So God's glory is the radiance of his holiness, the radiance of his manifold, infinitely worthy and valuable perfections.¹⁸¹

It is the display of who He is. When we say we want to live “to the glory of God” we’re saying we want God's majesty, His awful dominion, His power, His holiness, demonstrated to others.

Demonstrated before the angels of heaven, the demons of hell, before the church, and before lost men and women. We say “God be glorified” and yet that is what we woefully, as maggots, fall short of. Romans 3:23 “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

We go back to Bildad in chapter 25 and the relevant question: “How then can a man be just with God? How can he be clean who is born of woman?” Philosophers and theologians of every stripe have been asking that question for millennia. *How can we be right before God?* Romans 3:23, we've sinned, we fall short of that glory. Romans 6:23, the wages of sin (this is what sin deserves) is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

¹⁸¹<https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/what-is-gods-glory>.

I love that passage in Romans chapter 5, the first couple of verses (and this is reflected in our ministry name for the radio and audio broadcast: Grounded in Grace which comes from Romans chapter 5). *Therefore, having been justified [declared righteous] by faith, we have peace [we talked about peace earlier] justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we've obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand. And we exult in the hope of the glory of God.*

When I stand before the throne
Dressed in beauty not my own;
When I see thee as thou art,
Love thee with unsinning heart;
Then, Lord, shall I fully know—
Not till then—how much I owe.¹⁸²

“Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.”

Father, we come before you in awe of who you are, having seeing your dominion and the awe, the fear, that issues forth in the hearts—especially of fallen men and angels—at your sovereignty, your holiness, your glory. And we look at how you demonstrated your greatness over all of creation. You demonstrated your greatness over the unseen world, over your foes, the demons of hell. And yet, that is but a whisper in comparison to the thunderous voice of who you are. Glorious God, Father, I pray that your Spirit work in the hearts of believers, especially as we dabble in so much triviality that is in the church, so many pop plastic churches that make pop plastic Christians. We miss glorious awesome nature of who you are. We can't relegate Jesus to a mere “buddy,” a mere “pal” who we hang out with. Yes, he's our friend, but greater than that, greater than that, Jesus, you are our God. We want to see you glorified. For those

¹⁸²Author unknown.

that may be listening that are not born again, Holy Spirit, I pray that you would convict them of their sin, of how they fall short, so far short (an unbridgeable chasm) between sin and your glorious person. And we pray, Lord, that your grace would reach down opening hearts and minds to the truth of who you are. To the praise of your name we ask. Amen.

Job's Defense Rests (Part 1): A Vow of Innocence

Job 27:1-23

March 27, 2022

Christ Church of Clarkson

0322Job27.1-23(27) | Audio Length: 53:28

Are you righteous?

I want to begin by asking you a question: *Are you a righteous person?* How would you answer that? Are you a righteous person? Very few would claim that for themselves. The common response of those who think they can attain heaven on their own merit often has the words, “I’m a good person.” But I’ve never heard somebody say, “I’m going to heaven because I’m a righteous person.”

We tend to think of righteousness in negative terms, don't we, as that relates to ourselves? Self-righteousness is not a good thing. We don't look at that as a virtue. Yet, Job refers to himself as being righteous, as being a righteous man. Chapter 9 verse 20 says, “I am righteous.” But then the other side of that, you have chapter 32 verse one where his friends, we read, “stopped answering Job because he was righteous in his own eyes.” Was Job self righteous? To some degree I think he was. But you have to understand that righteousness in the book of Job is largely within a courtroom setting.

Two settings in Job

There are two settings as far as atmosphere in the book of Job that you should always keep in mind as you read. Number one, *the physical setting*. Job, as far as we know, is still sitting at the town dump. That's where he landed in chapter 2: scraping himself with broken pieces of pottery, along with ashes. But there's also *a symbolic setting*, and that is a courtroom. One of the messages that we did in the past was entitled, “In the Courtroom with God.” We have alluded

many times to the fact that there's a courtroom atmosphere and legal language that is used throughout the book of Job. So we have a physical setting and then we have a symbolic setting, that is of a courtroom, where Job is usually a defendant, his friends the prosecutors, and God the Judge. (Although sometimes that does change. For example Job go so far as to put God on the witness stand.) But we have to keep in mind that for Job, righteousness has to be seen within that setting, as in “not guilty” in the courtroom of God. Not always, but that is an important nuance. That seems to be that which is in chapter 9 verse 20, where Job says, “Though I am righteous, my mouth will condemn me. Though I am guiltless, He [that is, God] will declare me guilty.”¹⁸³ He uses *righteousness* and being *guiltless* in parallel, one with another.

The big picture

I said, for the most part, Job did have a problem with self-righteousness. And we see that God addresses him in that regard at the end of the book. But keep the big picture in mind. I think we have kind of lost that over the last several weeks: that Job has suffered great loss, that he is destitute, that he is not only emotionally suffering and spiritually suffering, Job is physically suffering. Some think Job may be near death at this point.

But this was also a culture which believes that to suffer calamity is to be cursed by God. In other words, if bad things happen to you, you did something to deserve it. But Job is not a bad person. Job worships God; he's a man of integrity. And remember how he's described in that very first verse of the book. And that's placed there, the very first verse of the very first chapter, it's placed there for emphasis, to remind you, and to set you up for the rest of the story: that Job is blameless, upright, he fears God, he turns away from evil.

¹⁸³Scripture citations are taken from the NAS95 unless otherwise noted.

Was Job saved?

Some may ask, “Was Job rightly related to God?” In New Testament parlance, “Was Job saved?” While that issue is not so much at the forefront of the book, there's no doubt to me that the answer is “Yes.”

But Job talks about his righteousness. Was Job saved by his righteousness, or by his works? For you who have been in this church for any length of time, you know that the answer to that is an emphatic “NO!” No one has been, no one is, no one ever will be saved, justified, redeemed, made right with God on the basis of what they have done (or I'll add on the basis of what their church has done, as in Roman Catholicism). It is solely based on the person and work of Jesus Christ received by faith. No, Christ did not live at that time, but Christ ultimately paid the penalty for the Old Testament saints.

Abraham in Romans 4

I'm so thankful for Romans chapter 4. It clarifies so much as it relates to soteriology in the Old Testament. Do you remember what key biblical character was contemporaneous with Job? Who was it? Begins with an “A?” Abraham! Abraham lived about the same time, roughly 2000 BC. And what does Paul say about Abraham in Romans chapter 4?

I'll give you a little overview of that great chapter. Paul begins the question, “What then shall we say that Abraham our forefather according to the flesh has found? For if Abraham was justified [that is, declared righteous] by his works, then he has something to boast about, but not before God. What does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.’” *Logizomai*, to place something in the credit column of another, something that a person doesn't deserve. It was credited to him. And Paul goes on to say, “To the one who works,

his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due.” He’s looking at those that do jobs; those that tarry in the workplace. You get paid— and it's not as a gift. You've earned it. And that's the parallel Paul is drawing here. And so he says, “The one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness.” And later in the chapter he turns a corner: “Not for his sake only was it written that it was credited to him, but for our sake also to whom it will be credited as those who believe in Him [that is, God] who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.” We will see Job in heaven. As Peter, James and John met Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration in Matthew chapter 17, you will one day have the opportunity to meet Job and tell him, “I endured, in my church, a three or four year series on a book that told me all about you.” And then, after that, go meet Peter and say, “Well, your little epistle, we were five years there.”

A new section: chapter 27-31

But back to the book. We’re starting a big section this morning. It's a section that runs from chapter 27 to chapter 31. It begins in chapter 27, “Then Job continued his discourse.” It ends in chapter 31 verse 40, “The words of Job are ended.”

So we come to chapter 27. The dialogues between Job and his friends have concluded. In the last few chapters we have endured many of the same arguments, which has made it challenging to preach, to try to think of ingenious ways to say the same thing. Bildad's last speech consisted of a mere six verses. Zophar doesn't speak at all. And we come to chapter 27, and we come to Job's final defense.

Overview of chapters 27-31

I want to give you an overview of these five chapters. Chapter 27, which we'll look at today, Job vows before God that he is innocent. He lays claim to a clear conscience. He warns his friends about the fate of the wicked, even using their own words against them. Chapter 28 is a great discourse on wisdom, and I anticipate will be at least a few weeks in that chapter. Chapter 29, Job looks back to the happiness he enjoyed with his family before tragedy struck. He was respected, even revered, by his friends. We see how he treated others kindly and looked forward to the future. Then in chapter 30, Job contrasts his suffering with that happy picture drawn in chapter 29. In chapter 31, Job concludes by giving a series of protests where he again claims innocence, that last verse saying "The words of Job are ended."

First chapter 27. Focus your attention back there. I want you to note that Job refers to the name of God some 11 times in this chapter (verse 2, verse 3, verse 8, verse 9, verse 10, verse 11, verse 13). Job is clearly focused on God, to a degree that his friends cannot match. God is essentially important to Job. Yes, he has not always acted well. But he demonstrates that he is not an apostate. He's a man of struggles, he's a man of questions, he's a man of doubts. But he is a man of God.

Job's Defense Rests (Part 1): A Vow of Innocence

This is "Job's defense rests." That's the title. Part one: Job's Defense Rests (chapter 27): A Vow of Innocence. We will look at four points as we go through this chapter, four points that begin with the letter "E." Exoneration: Job has a Clear Conscience (1-6). Exhortation: Job Warns his Friends (7-10). Education: Job Desires to Instruct his Friends (11-12). And then Emulation:

Job Uses his Friends Words Against Them (that large section at the end of the chapter beginning in verse 13).

Exoneration. Job has a Clear Conscience (27:1-6)

So that's that first point: Exoneration: Job has a Clear Conscience. Note the beginning of verse one, **“Then Job continued his discourse and said . . .”** Stop there. The previous chapter, chapter 26, began, “Then Job responded.” Job responded to who in chapter 26 verse one? He responded to Bildad. Bildad had spoken in chapter 25. And throughout the book it's been that way, it's been Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar. Here in chapter 27 we expect Zophar to speak, but he doesn't.

So I think that's one reason why we have these words in verse one. Job had just finished speaking. Now he picks up again in verse one, and he continues his discourse. I wonder if there was a period of silence there. We had this round that goes by age: Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar (Job responding in kind). Then we get to the third cycle. It's Eliphaz, it's Bildad (Job responds to Eliphaz, Job responds to Bildad). And it's like, “Okay youngster, it's your turn”—and nothing. We can only speculate. Did Zophar shrug his shoulders? Did he make a face? We can only speculate as to why he didn't give his third message to Job, why he opts out. Was he really angry? Remember, his last speech, his second, he was quite obtuse, he was not very kind, especially compared to the others. Did he have nothing to add? Perhaps.

Something else I want you to note as it relates to chapter 26. In that chapter. Job focused on Bildad and the pronouns in the Hebrew were second person singular: “You Bildad.” Here in chapter 27, we find pronouns that are second person plural. You grammarians, what does that mean? It means he's going from talking about one person to talking about a group. So he is

talking to Eliphaz, to Bildad, and to Zophar. And I think more than just those three. Elihu, the fourth friend, speaks as an eyewitness in chapter 32. That would assume that he must have been present as well, because he refers, he throws Job's words back at him. So he was there, at least by the middle of the book. And being that Job was such a significant figure within the town, within the area, if he's still at the town dump (which I think he is) no doubt others have been drawn to what's going on.

So Job **“continued his discourse . . .”** – his *mashal*. This Hebrew word has been defined as “Speech designed to cause someone to reflect and come to a verdict about the subject under discussion.”¹⁸⁴ A verdict. Again, this courtroom language. And here is Job's final defense. And he begins with a vow, an oath, verse two: **“As God lives, who was taken away my right, and the Almighty who is embittered my soul.”** Well, Job believes, as he's indicated before, that God has denied him justice. Remember, in an earlier chapter, Job said, “I’ve appealed to God, but I can't find Him. He won't show up.” And he sees God as the cause of his bitterness (that common word “bitter, embittered, bitterness” that we see throughout Job). We see it here in verse two, **“The Almighty, who is embittered my soul.”** And I take from that, obviously, God's sovereignty. That it was God who had His hand in Job's misery, and He did so for a purpose that Job at this point doesn't understand. But I'm mindful also of Ruth chapter 1 verse 20. Remember, Naomi goes back to Bethlehem from Edom, and the townspeople greet her. And what does she say? “Don't call me Naomi anymore, call me Mara [the Hebrew word for “bitter”] because the Almighty has dealt bitterly with me.” Well, such is Job.

¹⁸⁴Talbert, 148.

The authority (v. 2)

But he appeals to authority, that we see in verse two. Job swears by the name of the living God, and he says, “**As God lives.**” Oaths were only as good as the authority under which they are taken. Picture courtroom where someone is sworn in as a witness. As he is being sworn in, he’s asked, “Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you *George Washington?*” Well, that would seem odd. Okay, George Washington was a weighty political figure. George Washington carried a lot of authority. But George Washington's dead.

What's the highest authority anyone can go to? God! When it comes to oath, you can't swear by any higher authority. In fact, God can't swear by any higher authority than Himself because there is no higher authority (Hebrews 6:13).

In 2017, when I testified to the grand jury as it pertained to the vehicular homicide charges against the drunk driver who hit us causing Giana’s passing (I'd never been sworn-in before. I've never done that). I was intrigued that they brought out a well-worn Bible. And I was told to place my hand on that Bible, my right hand, and I vowed to tell the truth, “So help me, God.” Amazing that we still do that in this godless culture.

For the ancients, oaths grounded in God's name were inexcusably binding. You just didn't break them (think of Jephthah’s tragic vow in Judges 11 that cost him his daughter). In fact, the thought was that using God's name was inviting God to kill you if you violated your oath. So that's the authority.

The condition (v. 3)

The condition is in verse three. Job says, “**For as long as life is in me and the breath of God is in my nostrils.**” In other words, “For as long as I live I'm vowing under the authority of

God—for as long as I have breath.” Those same three elements of life, breath, and nostrils here? In the Genesis creation account, chapter 2 verse seven, “Then the Lord God formed man out of dust from the ground, and *breathed* into his nostrils the *breath* of life. The man became a *living* being.” We have the authority. We have the condition.

The promise (vv. 4-5)

Then the promise in verse four. Job says, “**My lips certainly will not speak unjustly nor will my tongue utter deceit.**” We come back to verse five of chapter 27. Job turns back to his friends here and he says, “Far be it from me that I should declare you right.” “Right” is the Hebrew word *tsadiq*, another word from the realm of courts and justice. “Far be it from me,” Job says, “that I should declare you right, that I should vindicate you as being correct in what you're saying. I'm never know agree with your false activations.” In fact, the second half of the verse: “**Till I die I will not put my integrity from me.**” Integrity. We saw that before, the same word God, in speaking of Job (chapter 2), “Job still holds fast [his what?] his *integrity*. It's the same word.

Job says in verse six, “I hold fast my righteousness, I will not let it go.” Here's a parallel to his integrity: Integrity, righteousness; righteousness, integrity. Job's not claiming sinlessness. He's simply saying, “There's nothing that I have done that deserves the calamity that is fallen upon me.” Then he alludes to his conscience, verse six: “**My heart does not reproach any of my days.**” Some of your translations may have the word “conscience” here. It's the Hebrew word for “heart” (as I remember it, *levav*), but it looks beyond that to the conscience. Job may have been near death, but his conscience was clear. More on that later. So this is The Exoneration: Job has a Clear Conscience.

Exhortation: Job Warns his Friends (27:7-10)

The second point: Exhortation: Job Warns his Friends. Is this a curse or a warning (verses 7 through 10)? A little bit of both. Look at verse seven, **“May my enemy be as the wicked and my opponent as the unjust.”** Who is Job talking about here? That's the question. Is he talking about the three? Is he talking about others (others who may have gathered)? Who is he talking about here? And doesn't this seem a little harsh, a little out of character? Job is now calling down a curse on those whom he considers his enemies, maybe even his friends whom he now considers his enemies? I wouldn't go that far. There may be some cultural reasons for this. One source I read claims that in the Ancient Near East it was not enough for the accused to affirm innocence. There was also a corresponding practice of calling down the wrath of God on those who said that the accused were indeed guilty.

But what I want to do is consider the rest of the section. I think there is a nuance of warning here, that Job is warning his friends. Verses 8-10. The word “for” (v. 8) connects with what preceded, 8 **“For what is the hope of the godless when he is cut off [when he dies], when God requires his life? 9 Will God hear his cry when distress comes upon him? Will he take delight in the Almighty? Will he call on God at all times?** These are rhetorical questions, but I'm thinking that this may be a warning. I'm in good company. Jonathan Edwards, the Great American theologian said this:

Hereby Job expresses his sense of the miserableness of the state of an ungodly man, however he may seem to prosper, so that he could desire no worse misery to his worst enemy than to be as they. He [doesn't] mean that he wished his enemy such misery, for

that is contrary to what he solemnly and expressly professes and swears in the same discourse (Job 31:29).¹⁸⁵

That passage says this: “Have I rejoiced at the extinction of my enemy, Or exulted when evil befell him?” [31:29] So Job does not seem to simply be calling down a curse—unless it's some sort of an imprecation, like the imprecatory Psalms. That's a possible way to go. But it seems like it's at odds with chapter 31 verse 29. And so Job says, “May my enemy be as the wicked, my opponent as the unjust.” *Don't be like them, don't be like the godless who have no hope, they have no hope apart from repentance.*

Education: Job Desires to Instruct his Friends (27:11-12)

And I think taking it this way fits my next point anyways, and that is: Education: Job Desires to Instruct his Friends. You generally don't desire to teach someone you anathematize. And so in verse 11 Job says, “**I will instruct you [second person plural] in the power of God.**” The *power* of God is the Hebrew word *yad*, hand. God's hand is often used metaphorically of His power. And he says, “**What is with the Almighty I will not conceal.**” Verse 12, “**Behold, all of you have seen it. Why then do you act foolishly?**”

“I will” (future tense), “I will instruct you in the power of God.” I think that points in part to chapter 28 (“power of God”). What's chapter 28 about? It's about wisdom. And I find it noteworthy that power and wisdom are sometimes used together with God as the subject. Listen to Jeremiah chapter 10 verse 12, “It is He who made the earth by His power, who established the world by His wisdom.” Daniel chapter 2 verse 20, “Let the name of God be blessed forever and

¹⁸⁵Jonathan Edwards, *The "Blank Bible": Part 1 & Part 2*, ed. Stephen J. Stein and Harry S. Stout, vol. 24, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2006), 453.

ever, for wisdom and power belong to Him.” Job says he’s going to instruct them as to the power of God, and some of that instruction comes through verse 23, but also as we look at chapter 28, that great discourse on wisdom.

Emulation: Job Uses His Friend’s Words Against Them (27:13–23)

Now, that brings us to verse 13: Emulation: Job Uses his Friend's Words Against Them. We don't need to spend much time here. What Job says in these verses is quite familiar, the same sort of statements that have already been made, for example, by Eliphaz, by Bildad, by Zophar. And it brings up an interesting debate as some scholars think this section, verses 13-23, this section is the missing speech of Zophar. There is this crusade by scholars, mostly critical scholars of the last hundred years or so, to find the missing speech of Zophar. They can't be content that maybe there isn't a third speech by Zophar.

But these verses do bring up some questions as to how they’re to be understood. I am going to take them as Job summing up the arguments that have been used against him. In my study notes I have a list of statements by the three friends from the early chapters of the book up until this point that sound just like what we see here in these 10 or 11 verses. So Job may be giving his friends a warning, or it may be sarcasm. Job is certainly reflecting on the words that have already been used against him, and it begins with an introductory statement in verse 13: “The wicked man's inheritance.” Job says, **“This is the portion of the wicked man from God, and the inheritance which tyrants receive from the Almighty.”** What follows that are five categories of woe that befall the godless, beginning in verse 14, with famine and war.

Famine and war (v. 14)

Speaking of the wicked man of verse 13, **“Though his sons are many, they are destined for the sword** [that's war]; **and his descendants will not be satisfied with bread.**” [that indicates famine]

Plague and the death of family (v. 15)

We have, secondly, plague and the death of family in verse 15: **“His survivors,”** that is, the wicked man's descendants who survive famine, **“they will be buried because of the plague, and their widows will not be able to weep.”** That's how bad it's going to be for them. The widows will be so devastated, they will be in such shock, that they can't even cry.

Here we have that fearsome triad of war, famine, and plague. We see those used, prophesied about, realized, in the demise of Israel and Judah (eighth and sixth centuries BC). Ezekiel writing in the sixth century BC: “Thus says the Lord God, clap your hand, stamp your foot, and say ‘alas because of all the evil abominations of the house of Israel, which will fall by sword, famine and plague.’” Sword, famine, plague (Ezekiel 6:11). This is what happened to apostate Israel in 70 A.D. as recorded by Josephus. We see these three in the disasters described in the book of Revelation. So we see famine and war; We have plague and the death of family.

Sudden loss of wealth (vv. 16-19)

Thirdly, we have a sudden loss of wealth (verses 16 through 19). Look at verses 16 and 17: **“Though he . . . [the wicked man of verse 13] – “Though he piles up silver like dust and prepares garments as plentiful as the clay, he may prepare it but the just will wear it and the innocent will divide the silver.”** The wicked will hoard all sorts of treasure: silver, a big wardrobe—only to give it up to those who are pure in God's sight. And this we see paralleled in

Proverbs chapter 28 verse eight: “He who increases his wealth by interest and usury gathers it for him who is gracious to the poor.” Ecclesiastes 2:26, “To the sinner, God has given the task of gathering and collecting so that he may give to the one who is good in God's sight.” This is how Israel plundered the Egyptians in Exodus chapter 3 verse 22. Verse 18, **“He [the wicked] has built his house like a spider's web, or as a hut which the watchman has made.”** Most translations don't have “spiders web,” they have “moth's cocoon.” The New American Standard, which I'm reading from, has “spiders web,” but I think it's better translated “cocoon” or “moth's cocoon.” What you have here is the Hebrew word for “moth” and then the supplied word for “cocoon” added by implication. So what we have is a moth's cocoon, and then we have a “hut which the watchman has made.” The second part, “watchman.” Specifically, farmers would put up temporary booths in the middle of their fields in order to guard the crops during harvest. They were farmers, but they were *watchman* guarding their crops.

What do these two things have in common? Cocoons? Huts? They're both temporary.

They're both fleeting. Robert Alden writes:

The moth's house is a cocoon, a frail and temporary shelter, and the shack a watchman sets up only for the duration of the harvest is similarly flimsy and impermanent. Both are gone with the turn of the seasons, and, by analogy, so will the elaborate dwellings of the wicked disintegrate.¹⁸⁶

Verse 19: **“He lies down rich, but never again. He opens his eyes, and it is no longer.”** A sudden loss of wealth. And you think of what happened in October of 1929, the great stock market crash which gave rise to the Great Depression that lasted another decade. One account as I was reading about this:

¹⁸⁶Robert L. Alden, *Job in the NAC*.

Will Rogers happened to be in New York on "Black Thursday," Oct. 24, 1929. In his nationally syndicated newspaper column for that day, he wrote: "When Wall Street took that tail spin, you had to stand in line to get a window to jump out of, and speculators were selling space for bodies in the East River." The New York correspondent for one of London's sensationalist tabloids wired home that lower Broadway was clogged with corpses.

Ignatz Engel was a retired cigar maker in the Bronx who invested in the market in time to be wiped out by the Crash. On Nov. 13, depressed over his losses, he lay down on a blanket in his kitchen and opened all the jets of the gas range. The next day, the president of the Rochester Gas and Electric Corp., no longer able to endure his loss of more than \$1,200,000, ended his own life using -- what else? -- gas.

A Chicago dentist snuffed himself with gas on Dec. 12; police said that he had succumbed to remorse for having persuaded his young woman assistant and laboratory aide to put all of their savings into the market in the euphoria before the Crash.

During the early hours of New Year's Day 1930 a Brooklyn broker kept his neighbor awake with whistling and hymn-singing before turning on the gas and lying down on his bed wearing a [blue suit].

A young man named Lytle shot and killed himself in a hotel in Milwaukee, leaving behind four cents and a suicide note directing that "my body should go to science, my soul to Andrew W. Mellon and sympathy to my creditors." The note also asked that his body not be removed from the room until the rent was up.¹⁸⁷

People died. Families were destroyed. Drunkenness was rampant, as were nervous breakdowns.

So we're warned in Proverbs 23:4-5, 4 "Do not weary yourself to gain wealth, Cease from your consideration of it." 5 "When you set your eyes on it, it is gone. For wealth certainly makes itself wings Like an eagle that flies toward the heavens." Gone like that! Your 401(k) or IRA; whatever is your savings can be gone. A sudden loss of wealth.

¹⁸⁷www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1987/10/25/the-jumpers-of-29/17defff9-f725-43b7-831b-7924ac0a1363/

Natural disaster (vv. 20-22)

20 **“Terrors overtake him like a flood; A tempest steals him away in the night. 21**

“The east wind carries him away, and he is gone, For it whirls him away from his place. 22

“For it will hurl at him without sparing; He will surely try to flee from its power.

Mocked by others (v. 23)

“Men will clap their hands at him And will hiss him from his place.” Who does that sound like, class? Famine and war; plague; the death of family; sudden loss of wealth; natural disaster; mocked by others? Job, right? Job lost his estate by way of warring marauders, his family by natural disasters, he loses his children, mocked by others, loss of wealth and reputation. You see, that's what makes these verses so challenging. Is this Job speaking? Or is this someone else? Is it Zophar? I'm going to stick with the ancient Masoretic Text, that this is Job. There's no textual basis for thinking that these words are any other than Job. But what's the tone, what's the purpose? Is Job being sarcastic? Is Job saying that these things happen to the wicked—“even though I'm innocent?”

“Proverbial Eschatological Metaphor”

I will call these verses, 13 to 23, “Proverbial Eschatological Metaphor.” (now, go write a book!). Proverbial Eschatological Metaphor. *Proverbial* in that it is often true that those who sow wickedness get suffering in return. And it should be a natural sort of thing that the horde of the wicked falls down upon them while the righteous are blessed. But proverbial because this isn't always the case. That's the nature of proverbs. They're generalizations. “Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it.” That is not a slam-dunk promise. If you or a friend has trained up children in the ways of the Lord and they have walked

away from that don't think it's because you did something wrong, don't necessarily think that. These are not slam-dunk absolutes, they're proverbial statements. And it may be that that's the way this section is being used. Along with *metaphor* because we know that calamity (along with proverbial statements) we know that this doesn't always happen. Calamity doesn't always befall wicked people. But these words could be a metaphor for the curse that they are under, and that they will face in finality (if they don't repent). And then *eschatological* in that verses 13 through 23 will be realized, to some degree, in the future Kingdom Age.

But here we have Job's Defense Rests (Part one): A Vow of Innocence. Deo Volente we will see that Job has much more to say.

Four Final Thoughts

Beware of giving bad counsel

Let me give you my final thoughts. Number one: Beware of Giving Bad Counsel. Beware. We all give counsel to others. You don't have to be a professional counselor to counsel others. If you give people advice, if you have given another Christian advice, you've given them counsel. Well, don't fall prey to the inexcusable mistakes Job's friends made. Here are six of them. 1) They did not express any sympathy for Job. Not only for what he went through, but for his continued agony. 2) There's no evidence that they prayed for him. 3) they talked too much and listened to little. When somebody's suffering, sometimes the worst thing you can do is talk.

Listen. It's been said that Job's friends, the wisest thing they did was at the very beginning of the book when they didn't say anything. They kept their mouths shut. Then they opened their mouths and all bets were off. 4) They were defensive and argumentative. 5) They assumed they knew the cause of Job's problems. How often do we do that? Somebody comes to us with problems and we

think we have to give an answer (“They came to me. I've got have the answer”). Sometimes just listen. Or say, “I don't know. I'm not sure. Maybe this, or maybe that.” 6) They not only assumed the cause of Job's problems, but they also assumed they had the answers. So beware of giving bad counsel.

Keep a good conscience

Number two: Keep a good conscience. We saw that in verse six, where Job talks about the integrity of his heart. Some versions have his conscience. Your conscience is how your heart reacts to what you do or think. It's an inward barometer. To violate your conscience is to violate your heart. Your conscience isn't always right; your conscience can be wrong. That is, what we think is right or wrong may itself be inaccurate. But as a general rule, don't violate your conscience.

I once heard a story of a pastor who was invited by some pastor friends of his to go out golfing. It was on a Sunday afternoon. And this individual minister had as his conviction that you don't do such things on Sunday. But his friends talked him into it and he went out. No sooner did they go out, he's out on the fairway and somebody yells “Fore!” And the pastor looks up and takes a golf ball right off the head. Now if there was any doubt in that man's mind it was erased by that hit, right? I don't think there's anything wrong with golfing on Sunday, so long as your not missing church, but don't defile your conscience; inform your conscience, don't violate it.

There was a time when I thought all alcohol consumption was wrong. For me to have any sort of drink would've violated my conscience. My view has changed over the years. I think my view's become more greatly informed, more biblically informed. And so, frankly, I look forward to putting down a good ale with Martin Luther someday.

Now if that offends you, listen to this: You have to be careful that what is a conscience matter for you, that's an area of Christian liberty, does not get absolutized as binding on everyone else. How often in the course of my Christian life and ministry have I seen this: "This is my conviction, and it's an area of Christian liberty, yet if everybody else was as spiritual as I am they would do the same thing." R.C. Sproul called it "The tyranny of the weaker brother."

Treasure the right things

Number three: Treasure the right things; treasure the right things. Verse 19: "He lies down rich but never again. He opens his eyes and it is no longer." I thought immediately as I was going through that verse of the parable of the Rich Fool in Luke chapter 12. Remember that? The rich man became very productive and he set out to build bigger barns; hoard more wealth. And God said to him, "You fool! This very night your soul is required of you!" Listen to verse 21 of Luke chapter 12, "So is the man who stores up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God." Treasure the right things; don't treasure the wrong things. Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will also be." We are those who should treasure Jesus Christ. He is the treasure hidden in the field. He is our treasure. You don't neglect that which you treasure. You don't refrain from talking about that which you treasure. No, you enjoy those things you treasure, you like talking about things that are treasures. Even at a secondary level. You love your kids, you like to talk about your kids. You may have a favorite sports team. You talk about your favorite sports team. Well, why are we, as believers who love Jesus, so hesitant to talk about Him out in the world? Is your hunger and thirst for Him too small? Even among ourselves our conversation goes in all sorts of ways; some of it quite carnal, frankly. John Piper: "Our obedience is God's pleasure when it proves that God is our treasure."

Have as your goal to die well

Number four, last point: Have as a goal to die well. This is something every one of us will face (unless we're one of the few generations around when Christ returns). Have as a goal to die well. This was such an emphasis among Christians of past generations, especially the Puritans. They talked about a noble death, of good death. One of them that I read talked about it as *the great last work of faith*, dying well. The problem is, in the modern West we don't experience death like others in past history have. We are rather unique in history in that regard. One of the things that greatly ministered to me after the loss of Giana was how common it used to be for parents to bury their children. Through his first marriage, the great theologian John Owen had 11 children, all of whom died before he did; they died young. That was common.

I can only imagine that this church, back in 1825, 1830, had lots of funerals of people all different ages. Lots of people died of all ages. Now when somebody dies, especially if they're young, we think, "this just doesn't happen." And so we put off—we sanitize it—we put off thinking about our own death. "I'll think about it when I'm 85." Your number may be called by God when you're 25. When you're 14.

Is your conscience clear enough for you to die well? What unresolved sins—and I ask this question of myself—what unresolved sins have you been harboring? Anger? Unforgiveness? Laziness? Greed? Neglect? (Neglecting family, neglecting your joyful responsibilities that you have as a servant of Jesus Christ in His local church.) What about illicit fantasies, men and women?

J.I. Packer said this:

Dying well is one of the good works to which Christians are called, and Christ will enable us who serve him to die well, however gruesome the physical process itself. And dying thus, in Christ, through Christ, and with Christ, will be a spiritual blossoming. As being born into this temporal world was our initial birthday, and as being born into God's spiritual kingdom was our second birthday, being born through physical death into the eternal world will be our third birthday.¹⁸⁸

Let me say that it is impossible to die well if you're not a born-again believer in Jesus Christ. You will die a horrible death because you will face a horrible eternity.

W.R. Inge was the famed 'Gloomy Dean' of St. Paul's Cathedral. At age 93 he told a London Daily Express interviewer:

I have tried to solve three problems: the problem of eternity, the problem of human personality and the problem of evil. I have failed. I have solved none of them, and I know no more now than when I started. And I believe no one ever will solve them . . . I know as much about the after life as you—nothing. I don't even know that there is one—in the sense in which the church teaches it. I have no vision of 'heaven' or a 'welcoming God.' I do not know what I shall find. I must wait and see.

He did not have long to wait; eight months later he died. "You fool, this very night your soul is required."

Plan for death; plan for happy departure. If the Lord should come, or you should meet him through death, you don't want to be one of those who shrink at His appearing. You don't want to say, "Man I wish I would've conquered that bad, sinful habit I had all these years" Keep your conscience clean; make for a happy death. And, as a side-note, envision the wonders of heaven. Do you ever do that? I was doing that as I was thinking about this message. Last night I started getting excited about it. You can picture the most beautiful vacation experience you could ever have. Whatever you love. If it's the water. If it's the forest. If it's an island. Just picture the

¹⁸⁸Packer, J. I. *God's Plans for You*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001.

most beautiful relaxing time. You're in bliss. And that is nothing—it doesn't hit the radar—when it's compared to what awaits us in heaven, the glories of heaven that await the believer in Jesus Christ. But it was also Jonathan Edwards that said, “I desire to live my life with an eye toward two things: The glories of heaven and also the terrors of hell.”

So Father, we thank you for this time. Again, it's been a little challenging at points, working our way through these 23 verses. I pray, Lord, that everyone who has gotten to this point has gotten something out of it, especially, Lord, as we wrapped it up with some very significant matters. Lord, I pray for those that are not born-again. I pray for those that have heard the gospel and yet slumber. And I pray knowing that you are the one that has to bring the shock that gets their heart beating spiritually. We pray, Holy Spirit, that you would be pleased to do that. And I pray for my Christian brethren everywhere, that we can be more mindful of that which we don't like to talk about, that which the world ignores, but that which is inevitable—and that is our death. To have a clear conscience so that if we knew we were going to die tomorrow we could die in peace. That is our desire. We thank you for your Word, how it ministers to us in so many different ways. May you be honored and glorified. May our joy, our delight, our treasure, be in nothing other than you, and in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

An Interlude on Wisdom
Job 28:1-28
June 26, 2022
Christ Church of Clarkson
0622Job28.1-28(28) | Audio Length: 56:40

Job chapter 28. I'm just going to read through the first 12 verses. Job chapter 28, beginning in verse one:

1 “Surely there is a mine for silver and a place where they refine gold. 2 “Iron is taken from the dust, and copper is smelted from rock. 3 “Man puts an end to darkness, and to the farthest limit he searches out the rock in gloom and deep shadow. 4 “He sinks a shaft far from habitation, forgotten by the foot; they hang and swing to and fro far from men. 5 “The earth, from it comes food, and underneath it is turned up as fire. 6 “Its rocks are the source of sapphires, and its dust contains gold. 7 “The path no bird of prey knows, nor has the falcon’s eye caught sight of it. 8 “The proud beasts have not trodden it, nor has the fierce lion passed over it. 9 “He puts his hand on the flint; he overturns the mountains at the base. 10 “He hews out channels through the rocks, and his eye sees anything precious. 11 “He dams up the streams from flowing, and what is hidden he brings out to the light. 12 “But where can wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?”¹⁸⁹

Father, we devote our time to You. I pray that as we look at this topic of wisdom, that we would all have a greater apprehension and understanding that it is indeed the greatest treasure one can find. We pray that You would pour out Your Spirit upon Your people; that You would continue to work in our hearts and lives. To the glory of our great God and King we pray. Amen.

No doubt, from experience, you know that God uses various people in our lives—and that at various times. For me, I look back to the time that I was a new believer in Jesus Christ. And a key person God used in my life at that time was a man named Patrick Brandt. Patrick owned the nearby Christian bookstore, Carpenters Village in Tempe, Arizona. He also ran a counseling ministry. When I was about 20 years old, I was struggling with various sins and questions, so I

¹⁸⁹Scripture citations are taken from the NAS95 unless otherwise noted.

made an appointment to talk to Patrick (I still remember that first time I met him). He ended up becoming a key influence in my life. It was Patrick who introduced me to the ministry of John MacArthur whom God used to instill within me a desire for expositional preaching. It was Patrick who encouraged me, when I had no plans to do so, to go to college. And shortly after Patrick suggested I do so, a suggestion I rebuffed, it wasn't too long after that, that I found myself enrolled in what is now Arizona Christian University, with my studies leading me toward an academic pastoral ministry within the local church. I lost touch with Patrick over the years. He ended up moving out of the state of Arizona. I ended up looking for him, and sadly found his obituary about a year ago. I read about how he had battled Alzheimer's, and eventually the Lord took him home. But I remember that if you asked Patrick how you could pray for him, he always gave the same reply: "Pray that God give me wisdom." That's a worthy prayer.

What is wisdom?

What is wisdom? Spurgeon defined it as "the right use of knowledge." But for simplicity sake, I'm going to give you a four word definition: "Wisdom is practical truth." *Wisdom is practical truth.* In that sense, it differs from mere knowledge. $2+2 = 4$ is true, but it's not really wisdom. For wisdom, we go to places like the Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament. The book of Proverbs is central in that regard. And we can read things like Proverbs chapter 15:1, "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." We say, "this is true, this is a practical truism. It's an aphorism that I can live with and apply to my life."

As it relates to the book, Proverbs contains a single chapter that is especially devoted to wisdom. That's Proverbs chapter 8. And in that chapter, Proverbs 8, wisdom is personified, it is

given a voice. Wisdom is speaking. Listen to just a few of those verses from Proverbs chapter 8, beginning in verse one:

1 Does not wisdom call, and understanding lift up her voice?
10-11 10 “Take my instruction and not silver, and knowledge rather than choicest gold.
11 “For wisdom is better than jewels; and all desirable things cannot compare with her.
13 “The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverted mouth, I hate.
15 “By me kings reign, and rulers decree justice.
17-19 17 “I love those who love me; and those who diligently seek me will find me. 18 “Riches and honor are with me, enduring wealth and righteousness. 19 “My fruit is better than gold, even pure gold, and my yield better than choicest silver.
22-23 22 “The LORD possessed me at the beginning of His way, before His works of old. 23 “From everlasting I was established, from the beginning, from the earliest times of the earth.
30-35 30 Then I was beside Him, as a master workman; and I was daily His delight, Rejoicing always before Him, 31 Rejoicing in the world, His earth, And having my delight in the sons of men. 32 “Now therefore, O sons, listen to me, for blessed are they who keep my ways. 33 “Heed instruction and be wise, and do not neglect it. 34 “Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at my doorposts. 35 “For he who finds me finds life and obtains favor from the LORD.

Yes, the passage says,

11 “For wisdom is better than jewels; and all desirable things cannot compare with her.”
18 “Riches and honor are with me, enduring wealth and righteousness.” 19 “My fruit is better than gold, even pure gold, and my yield better than choicest silver.” 13a “The fear of the LORD is to hate evil . . .”

Wisdom is the greatest treasure you could find

I contend that *wisdom is the greatest treasure you could find*. There’s no comparison. It’s the greatest treasure, and it’s what we see in Job chapter 28. (And remember Job is part of that corpus in the Old Testament called “Wisdom Literature.”)

Job chapter 28 is pivotal

And so, as we come to Job 28, we come to a pivotal chapter. The cycles of speeches between Job and the three friends—those three cycles—have all come to an end. Last we studied it,

Job chapter 27, we saw that “Job's defense rests.” He gives a vow of innocence and will go on to speak in chapters 29 through 31. But chapter 28 is different. The speaker is assumed to be Job, but there are no protests, no accusations, no complaints. It's a quiet in the midst of the storm. Chapter 28 is the eye in the midst of the hurricane. And it's all about wisdom. I call it “an interlude,” *an interlude on wisdom*. And it serves as a bridge between the speeches in chapters 4 through 27 and Job's final words in chapters 29 through 31 (chapter 31 which concludes with “the words of Job have ended”).

So here we are in chapter 28. Robert Alden in his commentary on the book of Job says:

[This] wisdom chapter is distinct from anything in the Book of Job. Commentators discuss whether these are Job's words or those of the author/editor(s) of the book or some combination of those. As with the rest of the book, it seems best to credit the substance of the speeches to the speakers named but believe that the Holy Spirit worked through an inspired author to turn the whole into the magnificent literary masterpiece that has come down to us.

“A magnificent literary masterpiece.”

I think Job is still speaking here in chapter 28, and maybe that he is responding, at least in part, to Zophar. And if you remember, back in chapter 11, Zophar, confronting Job, said: “That God might speak [Job] and open His lips against you and show you [Job] the secrets of wisdom.” Well here in chapter 28 God shows Job's friends “the secrets of wisdom.” Indeed, *wisdom is the greatest treasure you can find*.

Overview of chapter 28

And here's what we see in chapter 28, namely, there are four points, but I want you to note the first three: Wisdom cannot be found by great effort; Wisdom also cannot be found in the created order; and thirdly, Wisdom cannot be found by great wealth. So you can work hard, you can search everywhere, you can possess great riches, and none of that will help you acquire

wisdom, the greatest treasure that can never be found. Again, *where do you find it?* That's the question that is asked twice in this chapter. For example, in verse 12, "Where can wisdom be found?" Well, that's the last point and we'll have to wait to get there; it's reserved for the end of chapter 28.

Wisdom Cannot Be Found By Great Effort (1-11)

But if we start at the beginning (that's always a good place to start, right, at the beginning?), we see that *wisdom cannot be found by great effort*; and that's what we see in these first 11 verses: namely, the hard work of miners to gain earthly treasure. (I read that this is the only mention of mining activity in the Bible.) These 11 verses paint a tremendous picture, one of great effort. Look at verse one: **"Surely there is a mine for silver and a place where they refine gold."** That first word **"surely"** is emphatic, it could be translated "certainly." Certainly what? **"Certainly there is a place . . ."** (and note that word *place* which we saw in chapter 27 verses 21 and 23). There, speaking of the wicked who was removed from his *place* and men who mock the wicked from his *place*. Now Job takes that same word: **"Surely there is a mine for silver and a place where they refine gold."**

Verse two: **"Iron is taken from the dust, and copper is smelted from rock."** Here we have four metals of various value: gold, silver, copper, iron, all valuable but not equally so. But all equally taking great effort to find. You can't just pick gold up off the ground, you have to dig for it and search. It takes effort.

Dark, difficult, and dangerous

That great effort we see in verses three and four. **"Man puts an end to darkness . . ."** He's going underground. In other words, using a light source. **". . . and to the farthest limit he**

searches out the rock in gloom and deep shadow. He sinks a shaft far from habitation, forgotten by the foot; they hang and swing to and fro far from men.” What a picture! A picture of mining activity, a picture of bringing light where there is the complete absence of light, a picture of digging a shaft deep into the earth, a picture of men descending on ropes and hanging back and forth, gloom and deep shadow. Miners operate at that boundary between the earth and the underworld, between light and darkness, between life and death. And the depths—pun intended—the depths that men will go to get valuables. It’s dangerous, dark, difficult. That’s why in antiquity often slave labor was used. Even today, mining is a dangerous job.

According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), while mining employs around 1% of the global labour force, it generates 8% of fatal accidents. . . . China has the world’s largest mining industry, producing up to three billion tonnes of coal each year. But while the country accounts for 40% of global coal output, it is responsible for 80% of mining deaths around the world each year.¹⁹⁰

I read that the deadliest U.S. mining disaster took place at the Monongah Mine in West Virginia. On the morning of December 6, of 1907, the residents of Monongah felt / heard, a blast from the direction of mines number six and eight—and nearly all of the workers in those two mines were killed from the force of the explosion that came from coal dust, methane gas, or both. What ignited the explosion remains unknown, but it was fed with blasting powder in the mine. It was thought that the most likely cause was an electrical spark or another possible ignition source: the carbide lamps that the minors wore. Only five survived. In all 362 men lost their lives in the explosion (explosions being the most common form of mining deaths).

The worst mining disaster in history was in China in 1942 when 1500 men died after an underground gas explosion.

¹⁹⁰www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-11533349.

More recently, October 13 of 2010, the last of a group of Chilean miners were rescued after 69 nine days trapped nearly 1/2 mile beneath the ground. It was the longest mass underground survival in history. After the mine collapsed, 33 men made their way to an underground emergency shelter area where they discovered just a few days worth of food.

According to History.com:

As their situation grew more desperate over the next 17 days, the miners, uncertain if anyone would find them, considered suicide and cannibalism. Then, on August 22, a drill sent by rescuers broke through to the area where the miners were located, and the men sent back up a note saying, “We are fine in the refuge, the 33.”

Food, water, letters, medicine and other supplies were soon delivered to the miners via a narrow bore hole. Video cameras were also sent down, making it possible for rescuers to see the men and the hot, humid space in which they were entombed. As engineering and mining experts from around the world collaborated on the long, complex process of devising a way to bring the 33 men up to the surface, the miners maintained a system of jobs and routines in order to keep up morale.

Rescuers eventually drilled and reinforced an escape shaft wide enough to extract the men, one by one. . . . On October 12, the first of the miners was raised to the surface in a narrow, 13-foot-tall capsule painted white, blue and red, the colors of the Chilean flag. The approximately 2,000-foot ascent to the surface in the capsule took around 15 minutes for each man.

Millions of people around the globe watched the rescue on live TV. Less than 24 hours after the operation began, all 33 of the miners, who ranged in age from 19 to 63, had been safely rescued. Almost all the men were in good health, and each of them sported dark glasses to protect their eyes after being in a dimly lit space for so long.¹⁹¹

Yes, dark, difficult, and dangerous.

As this picture is being painted in Job 28 we go from verses one through four to verse five and the contrast between up and down (what happens on earth compared to what happens below). Look in verse five, “**The earth [up], from it comes food [lit. “bread”], And**

¹⁹¹www.history.com/this-day-in-history/chilean-miners-are-rescued-after-69-days-underground

underneath [down] it is turned up as fire.” What does that mean, **“it is turned up as fire?”**

According to The Bible Background Commentary on the Old Testament: “In ancient mines rock was broken up by a process called fire-setting in which the rock was heated by large fires and then doused with cold water mixed with vinegar (believed to enhance the cold).”¹⁹²

That's how the rocks were split. And why all of this effort by men—digging deep, reaching the darkness, swinging and hanging on ropes—why all of this effort? Because, verse six, **“its rocks are the source of sapphires and its dust contains gold.”** Gold and jewels, precious metals, precious jewels. It's a risk versus reward kind of thing.

Verses seven and eight have a parenthetical statement where you have birds and beasts mentioned. Birds, creatures of the air; beasts, creatures of the ground. And so, verse seven, **“The path no bird of prey knows, nor has the Falcon’s eye caught sight of it.”** *Falcon’s eye caught sight*: falcons, known for their powerful eyesight. We have the birds of the air, then we have what are called “proud beasts,” land animals (and who is the king of the forest, the lion?). **“The proud beasts have not trodden it, nor has the fierce lion passed over it”** (verse 8). So here we have this parenthetical statement, in verses seven and eight.

We come back to the minors and their hard work in verses 9 through 11. Verse nine, **“He [that is, the miner] puts his hand on the flint; he overturns the mountains at the base.”** That's not talking about the use of explosives which were not known at that time. The “flint” is better translated “flinty rock.” *He puts his hand on the flinty rock while overturning the mountains.* That's a hyperbolic way to talk about the violence suffered by the underground rock and dirt. This

¹⁹²Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Job 28:1–5.

is significant activity. In fact, that word “overturns” is the same Hebrew word used in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19. It’s stating the fact that this is brutal work that men are undertaking for valuables. Brutal work, dangerous work. It’s a rampage undertaken by men to do that which is unnatural: busting through rock, digging through earth, to go where no eye has seen, no foot tread. Verse 10, “**He hews out channels through the rocks and his eye sees anything precious.**” Careful scrutiny. Looking for things like gold. “**He damns up the streams from flowing,**” verse 11, “**and what is hidden** [here is a parallel to his “eye seeing anything precious” in verse 10] . . . **what is hidden, he brings out to the light.**” And that’s what it’s all about, all this labor, all the danger, to bring to light, to carefully look for anything of value that can be found. Yet the miner is oblivious to the fact that wisdom is the greatest treasure you can find! Wisdom cannot be found by great effort. That’s verses 1 through 11.

Temporal versus eternal riches

But another lesson of these verses is that men will risk life and limb, overturning tons of earth, to gain something temporal. They’re oblivious to the surpassing value of wisdom. Verse 13 says, “**Man does not know** [wisdom’s] **value,**” they’re oblivious to it. I thought of Jesus’ warning in Luke 12 (we’ve talked about this so many times before, but it is always so applicable). Luke chapter 12 verse 15, where Jesus says, “Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions.” We tend to think that what you have, somehow, is reflective of who you are. *So yeah, great wealth, you must be somebody.* Jesus says, “No, that is error, that is not true.” And then he tells the parable about a rich man who is blessed with even more wealth—and he ran out of space in his warehouse. So, he reasoned, “I will build bigger. There I’ll store my possessions.

I'm good for life, so I'll party on." (Bartolucci paraphrase!) Jesus goes on to say in the parable, "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?'" What's the lesson? Don't be like the man who stores up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God. No, be like the one with an eternal perspective, who doesn't count his earthly wealth as somehow equating to who he or she is, but one who looks for their treasure in knowing Jesus Christ.

Here are miners working hard to get riches, yet they neglect the greatest wealth of all: biblical wisdom. No, wisdom cannot be found by great effort.

Wisdom Cannot be Found in the Created Order (12-14, 20-22)

Second, *wisdom cannot be found in the created order*. This brings us to verses 12 through 14 and also verses 20 to 22. And here's the key question you see in verse 12 (and you see it in verse 20; it's repeated twice in this chapter). Remember, this chapter is talking about men finding things, finding things of great wealth. But the question in verse 12 is, **"Where can wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?"** Verse 20, **"Where then does wisdom come from? And where is the place of understanding?"** It can't be found by digging in mines. And it also can't be found in the created order. It can't be found in the land of the living: verse 13 (second half of the verse), **". . . nor is it found in the land of the living."** Verse 14, **"The deep says, 'It is not in me'; and the sea says, 'It is not with me.'"** Verse 21, **"Thus it is hidden from the eyes of all living and concealed from the birds of the sky."** (birds having the best vantage point). Wisdom can't be found in the land of the living.

And wisdom can't be found in the land of the dead: verse 22, **"Abaddon [that's the Hebrew word for 'destruction'] and death say, 'With our ears we have heard a report of it.'"**

Here is the personification of the sea and the deep. And that draws a parallel, talking about the deep and the sea, a parallel to men going underground in mines (verses 1 through 11).

The living, the dead, the deep, the sea—even death and destruction—they’ve heard of wisdom, but don’t have it. *Wisdom is the greatest treasure you can find.*

Wisdom cannot be found by great effort (1–11); wisdom cannot be found in the created order (12–14, 20–22). But what about money? Certainly you can gain most anything with money, right? If you have enough money you can build kingdoms. But can you find wisdom?

Wisdom Cannot Be Found by Great Wealth (15–19)

Third point: *Wisdom cannot be found by great wealth.* Verse 15, **“Pure gold cannot be given in exchange for it, nor can silver be weighed as its price.”** You can’t say, “Here I have 10 talents of gold; let me exchange it for wisdom.” Verse 16, **“It cannot be valued in the gold of Ophir [that was a place known for fine gold, also mentioned in 22:24], In precious onyx, or sapphire. 17 “Gold or glass [fine glass] cannot equal it, nor can it be exchanged for articles of fine gold.” 18 “Coral and crystal are not to be mentioned; and the acquisition of wisdom is above that of pearls.” 19 “The topaz of Ethiopia cannot equal it, nor can it be valued in pure gold.**

But how did the section begin, verse 15? **“Pure gold.”** How does it end in verse 19? **“Pure gold.”** We call that an *inclusio*: pure gold and everything in between cannot acquire for you wisdom. In these verses, Job mentions gold five times, he mentions silver once, and he names seven different precious stones. Yet none of these treasures, individually or collectively, can gain you wisdom. It’s not something money can buy, yet it’s the greatest treasure you can find. But the question is, “Where can I find wisdom?”

Wisdom Can Only Be Found in a Great God (23-28)

Here's the punchline; it brings us to the end of the chapter: *Wisdom can only be found in a great God*. You can work hard for it, you can dig down deep for it, you can try to buy it—but it's only found in God.

Establishing God's sovereignty

We first have the nature of God established *before* we get to verse 28. So beginning in verse 23, *Job establishes God's sovereignty*. This was something that Job knew quite intimately, that he served a sovereign God, a God who is in control from eternity past, into the present, out into eternity future. Our Triune God is in control. Job knew that God ordained his suffering. He stands in sovereign relationship to all things, even His wisdom. God is sovereign over everything!

Look at verses 23 and 24, *God's omniscience*, He knows all; *His omnipresence*, He is everywhere. In verses 23 and 23, **“God understands its way [way of wisdom], and He knows its place.”** Verse 24, **“For He looks to the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens.”** We see *God's creative power* in verse 25, **“When He imparted weight to the wind and meted out the waters by measure . . .”** (Here we're mindful of the creative activity of God in Genesis chapter 1.) So we see God's omniscience and His omnipresence in verses 23 and 24; we see God's creative power in verse 25. Then we see *God's providence* in verse 26, **“When He set a limit for the rain and a course for the thunderbolt . . .”** God establishes things like rainfall, floods, and a course for the lightning bolt. There is no such thing—in my mind—there is no such thing as natural theology. Everything subsists in God. We're not Deists! No, it's by the will of God that all things function as they do, and continue to function as they do. It is in Christ,

Colossians 1:17, that all things hold together. God sets a limit for the rain, and a course for the thunderbolt. God is the ontological ground for all truth, wisdom included. Apart from the revelation of God in the Bible all we're left is with is opinion; no absolutes, no final truth, no final say. *Wisdom can only be found in the great God.* He is omnipresent, He sees what land animals and people and birds cannot see. He's determined the elements, the weight of the wind, the boundaries of the water, the decree, the limit, for the rain. He is sovereign over each bolt of lightning.

Note verse 27; four verbs that are used. And then we have the first word in verse 27 which is "then." That corresponds to verses 25 and 26 where we had the use of the words "when"—*when* He imparted weight to the wind, *when* He set a limit for the rain. Here we have *then* (verse 27). **"Then He sought and declared it, He established it and also searched it out."**

The answer to the key question

This leads us to the answer to the key question. What was the question? Verses 12 and 20, **"Where can wisdom be found?" "Where does wisdom come from?"** Well, here is the answer. Here is the punchline. Verse 28, **"To man, God said, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil, that is understanding.'" Do you see the road we've traveled in this chapter? Beginning with the dark, dangerous, difficult task of miners digging deep for that which men deemed precious, moving on to the fact that you can't purchase or trade for wisdom, no matter how much wealth you have. No, here's the answer, the end of the chapter, **"To fear the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil, that is understanding."****

Wisdom and understanding

Wisdom is an attribute of God. And that was given to man, shared with man, at creation. God ordained that man share in the wisdom of which only God is the source. What is wisdom? Here we have wisdom equated with *the fear of the Lord* (in Hebrew “Lord” is the word *Adonai*, only used here in Job). We’re more familiar with the idea, “fearing the LORD” (in Old Testament terms, that's fearing Yahweh). But sometimes we read in the Bible, fearing Adonai (or fearing simply God). But they all are talking about the same thing.

So what is wisdom? It’s *to fear the Lord*. What is understanding? *To depart from evil*. So we have two things here: we have wisdom and we have understanding. We have wisdom (*hochmah*) and understanding (*binah*). These two things, wisdom and understanding, are often used together, in parallel with one another. We see that in Proverbs 4:5, “Acquire wisdom! Acquire understanding! . . .”; 7:4 “Say to wisdom, ‘You are my sister,’ and call understanding your intimate friend; 16:16 “How much better it is to get wisdom than gold! And to get understanding is to be chosen above silver.” Sound familiar? You can't mine for it, you can't trade for it.

Defining “fear”

So you have wisdom, you have understanding. What's the difference? Well, we said wisdom is practical truth, but here it's equated with *the fear of the Lord* (fear of Yahweh, fear of the Lord).¹⁹³ We talked about that way back at the beginning of the series. Remember, I said that there are two perspectives with what is the fear of the Lord, what does it mean to fear God. You have the perspective of the believer, on one hand, and then you have the perspective of the

¹⁹³Here it’s the fear of *Adonai* (the Lord).

nonbeliever, on the other hand. Two different perspective as it relates to this word *fear*. The believer? We defined it this way, “Reverential awe that results in worship and humble obedience fueled by love.” It’s reverential; it’s about the awesomeness of God. But it brings about humility and obedience, fueled not by terror, but by love—by the love of God, by the love of Jesus Christ. That’s the believer. For the unbeliever two words (this is what it is and this is what it should be if it isn’t): The fear of the Lord is to be *foreboding terror*. A foreboding terror because you are going to come face-to-face with this God in judgment—if you do not repent.

No fear of God in this place

That goes back to Genesis chapter 20. We talked about that in a different sermon a few weeks ago, where we see Abraham in the land of the Philistines. And he sees the depravity around him and he lies about his wife, thinking to himself, “There is no fear of God in this place, no fear of God; my life is in danger.” In Deuteronomy chapter 25:17 the wicked Amalekites are said to have *no fear of God*. When you take away the fear of God, the fear of the Lord, places become very dangerous and unpredictable. That sounds like our Western culture.

Belief in God at an all-time low

I was surprised to learn that belief in God, according to pollsters, is at an all-time low in America, dropping significantly over the past 20 years. It is now at, according to the poll, 81%. Roughly 20% of people would claim to be atheists or agnostics. (This is driven largely by young people and those affiliated with the political left; that makes sense doesn't it?) No wonder we live in a culture of death and moral confusion. No wonder. In rejecting God you get to be the boss. “*I* will live like He doesn't exist so that *I* am the boss. *I* can determine when and if I want to have a baby—when to get pregnant. *I* can determine if *I* continue to carry that baby to term. *I* can

determine whom I will marry. *I* will define the terms. *I* will determine who *I* sleep with and how often. *I* will determine; *I* am god!" That is the perspective of people who have no belief in God.

Who is to determine who you can kill, who you can cheat, who you can hurt? You see, God through His Word, sets the standard for what is right and wrong, what is good what is evil, what is love. "Well, love wins." Love? What do we mean by "love?" No, all of these things are defined by God. What is sin? What is righteousness? What is judgment? What about heaven? What about hell? You take that away and nothing is foundational, absolutely wrong. And that's why a worldview grounded in this Book, the mind of God, that worldview is so essential for the believer. The unbeliever has no such foundation. They really don't have a foundation—I mean they do—but it's not anything that will stand. It's like a sand castle facing the storms of the sea rolling up onto the beach.

Roe v. Wade overturned

Of course, the big news this week was the decision of the Supreme Court. And you follow the anger of those who were against that decision, who bemoaned that decision, and some of the demonstrations and some of the signs that were held up (sometimes with words that had to be blurred out by the television), and you hear the foolish statements by politicians and by others. And I want to pull my hair out! These people cannot at least be honest, at least define the terms; and cannot say "this is where I stand in light of the terms." But these people cannot think (or are downright deceiving). And so we hear about "protecting reproductive freedom." One politician said, "Today the Republican-controlled Supreme Court has achieved the GOP's dark and extreme goal of ripping away women's right to make their own reproductive health decisions." You don't think abortion is, in part, about birth control? They say it! "Reproductive freedom." *Your*

reproductive freedom ends when you conceive. That is according to the Word of God. And it's a shame we don't have more people who live under the light of that Word. Even people who don't know Him used to live under that light. But a couple of generations ago that was lost. You didn't generally have sex before marriage, or live together before marriage. You got married. You had a family—and remained husband and wife. Well, that is gone today. Again, “I want to be master of everything; I will sleep with who I want to sleep with, live with who I want to live with, and I'll maintain my reproductive rights.” You don't hear any mention of the baby, as if he doesn't exist, as if this is all about telling women that we're mandating that women have their tubes tied, or something. *Well, you've got to be sterilized. It's the decision of the government; you have no reproductive freedom.* That's the way they act! Foundationally, this is about the Constitution. There is nothing in the Constitution about abortion. Nothing. Our founders would vomit in their beer if they knew how the Constitution was being used today. And yet you hear everything spun—and that drives me nuts. I am all about honesty and clarity. And yet you get no honesty, no clarity from the talking heads. (I can't repeat what LeBron James said, but who cares about LeBron James?) These people are godless and immoral; they have no foundation upon which to pontificate. And I love it when they talk about morals. Based on what? Or by what standard? Give me a break! Joe Biden said, “Let's be very clear. The health and life of women across this nation there now at risk. This is a sad day.” Lives at risk? What lives at risk? What about the millions of babies that been exterminated, their lives extinguished in the location which should be the safest place for a child: the womb of its mother. What about that? Everything is spun.

We are trying to teach our kids to listen to what's being said, to analyze it to see how things are being substituted and how things are being neglected. Everything is being repackaged.

It's about selling a "new and improved" morality. Again, based on what? It's not "gambling," it's "gaming." "Abortion is a woman's Constitutional right of choice over reproductive health."

Come on, do you think I'm that stupid? It really makes me angry!

And so I think of Psalm 2. I thought of this when I saw some of this ludicrous behavior on the television.

1 Why are the nations [Hebrew *goyim*: people, nations; AV has "heathen"] in an uproar and the peoples devising a vain thing? 2 The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers take counsel together against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, 3 "Let us tear their fetters apart and cast away their cords from us!"

You see, it's all about control. *God take your hand off me. I want to do what I want to do—even if it brings me to hell!* Well, my friend, you may just get your wish. Meanwhile, verse four, "He who sits in the heavens laughs . . ." God is patient, isn't He? I'm like the disciples who wanted to call fire down from heaven (Luke 9:54). These demonstrators? "Okay you have 10 seconds to repent. God take em' out!" That's what I want to do. But God is patient; He sits in heaven and laughs. He scoffs at them. Verse five: "Then He will speak to them in His anger and terrify them in His fury . . ." That's the fear of the Lord fallen men and women ought to have. You're going to face God in his fury.

A Christological prophecy follows in 2:6ff.:

6 "But as for Me, I have installed My King Upon Zion, My holy mountain." 7 "I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You. 8 'Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Your possession. 9 'You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall shatter them like earthenware.'" Now therefore, O kings, show discernment; Take warning, O judges of the earth. 11 Worship the LORD with reverence and rejoice with trembling. 12 Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish in the way, for His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!"

You listen to the musings—the inspired musings—of the writer to Ecclesiastes (and *futility*, that’s the key word). What does he say in the conclusion? “The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person.” [Eccl. 12:13]

Practical advice. *Fear God and keep His way.*

Defining understanding

What about understanding? We have “the fear of the Lord *and* understanding” (the word, *binah*). I might define it this way: “careful discernment” (*careful discernment*). Understanding is equated with discernment in Proverbs 2:3. One theological dictionary has this to say about discernment. It says:

The sound judgment which makes possible the distinguishing of good from evil, and the recognition of God’s right ways for his people. It is necessary for the understanding of spiritual realities and, on a practical level, for right government and the avoidance of life’s pitfalls. Discernment is given by God, through his Holy Spirit. It is received through God’s word and through the insight of a renewed mind. Discerning believers seek to grow in their understanding and knowledge of God’s truth.¹⁹⁴

Wisdom, understanding; understanding, wisdom. Both of these words go together like two sides of a single coin. To be wise is have understanding, and have understanding is to be wise. And you see them brought together in passages like Proverbs 8:1, “Does not wisdom call, and understanding lift up her voice?” It’s wise discernment, *especially as it relates to forsaking sin*. “God, give me understanding that I walk in your way, not in the deceitfulness of my own sin.” That single word *wisdom* brings both ideas together. *This is to love that which God loves and to hate that which He hates.*

¹⁹⁴Martin H. Manser, *Dictionary of Bible Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies* (London: Martin Manser, 2009).

Back to Job the man

With all that's been said we're brought back to Job the man. Verse 28 of this chapter, **“the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.”** What did we read about Job right off the bat in verse eight of chapter one? “The LORD said to Satan, ‘Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil.’” Chapter 28: **“the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; to depart from evil is understanding.”** *Wisdom is the greatest treasure you can find.*

R.C. Sproul:

How precious and valuable authentic wisdom is, and how few there are who find it. We say sometimes that experience is the best teacher, but that's not the best source of wisdom. The best source of wisdom is the mind of God, and the Wisdom Literature is given to us that we might live, that we might know how to endure and respond to the exigencies that occur in our human existence. This world is a vale of tears, and pain and suffering come to every life. When they come, do we act like fools or do we search for the wisdom of God?¹⁹⁵

Wisdom is the greatest treasure you can find, my friends. And for us, to have wisdom is to value Christ above all else, to value Him above everything: above your family, above your life, above your things (your stuff, your wealth). Nothing can compare to Him. And that's especially true in the scandal which is our culture today. Robert Murray McCheyne said in his day: “You will never find Jesus so precious as when the world is one vast howling wilderness. Then He is like a rose blooming in the midst of the desolation, a rock rising above the storm.” We live in a vast howling wilderness. Sometimes we just need to get our noses out of the news where we get

¹⁹⁵RC Sproul, *What is Biblical Wisdom*.

sucked into the anger and everything else, and just look upon, and rejoice in, a sovereign God and the beauties, the loveliness, of Jesus Christ.

Toward the end of Matthew chapter 13, Jesus says that, “The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid again; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.” It must've been some treasure in that field for the man to get rid of everything he owned in order to acquire it. And, “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.”

Ultimately, Jesus is the pearl. He is the treasure. In believing in Him, we, in our minds at least, forsake everything for Christ. That's repentance. It's in Christ that are “hidden all the treasures” of what, Colossians 2:3? Wisdom. Will you give all you value for Him. What are you holding on to that may be preventing you from coming to saving faith in Him, from repenting of your sins? Christian, What are you holding on to that, if you're honest, you are valuing more than Christ? We have got to hold on to the things of this world with a loose grip—whatever it is. Believe me, I know that when we have a tight grip on something and it is taken from your hands, it hurts. Will you give all that you value for Him?

Esau sold his birthright for a pot of stew. Many of the world, even those who might profess Christ, trade Him away, selling him like Judas. Not for 30 pieces of silver, but for selfish reasons. Some sell Him out in favor of sleeping with a boyfriend or girlfriend. Others sell Him out in favor of other unlawful relationships.

There are three pernicious “F’s,” words that start with “F:” *Fame, Fortune, Fornication*. Those are the three things of this world that lure men's hearts away from Christ: Fame, Fortune,

Fornication. The truth is, *Christ is valued above all, or He is not valued at all.* No genuine believer would sell Him, like Judas, for fortune, for fame, or for fornication.

Wisdom is the greatest treasure we can find. Having the mind of God, having the fear of the Lord, having understanding (biblical discernment). These of the things we need to pray for. These are the things that mark out revival. What a difference that makes when God pours out His Spirit upon churches, upon sinners. Pray for that.

So Lord, we thank you for this time in Job 28 which rings like a clarion call on the value of wisdom. No, it can't be acquired by great effort, it cannot be exchanged for wealth. There's only one source, that's in You. We seek to be wise, and in being wise to fear You—to have a reverential awe, a reverential awe that results in humble obedience fueled by our love for You. Increase our love, our capacity to love our Lord, our God, as we serve Him above everything else. We pray these things in Jesus' Name. Amen.

Job's Defense Rests (Part 2): A Soliloquy on Past Blessing

Job 29:1-25

July 10, 2022

Christ Church of Clarkson

0722Job29.1-25(29) | Audio Length: 56:40

If you would, turn to Job chapter 29 (and if you would, please stand). We are going to go through this entire chapter, but we want to read the first three verses. Job chapter 29, beginning in verse one (reading from the New American Standard):

1 And Job again took up his discourse and said, 2 “Oh that I were as in months gone by, as in the days when God watched over me; 3 When His lamp shone over my head, and by His light I walked through darkness;”¹⁹⁶

O Lord of heaven and earth, we trust all of our ways before You, all that is our lives as worship as we come before You, Lord. To be instructed by Your Word; that is worship. I pray, Lord, that You would take that which I have spent so much time in studying and that You would use that. Guard my mind, my mouth. Holy Spirit, I pray that You would work in the hearts and lives of Your people as we go through this book. To the glories of our Triune God we pray. Amen.

Introductory Overview

Over the past few chapters it feels like we have moved away from that central theme of the book of Job, and that is Job's suffering. And that was something that was so evident in the earlier chapters. We will be returning more intensely to that theme this morning in chapter 29. But just to give you a little broader overlook, go back with me a few chapters to where we began, go back within your minds to chapter 25. You might remember Job's friend Bildad delivers his last speech, which concluded the three cycles of speeches whereby each of Job's

¹⁹⁶Scripture citations are taken from the NAS95 unless otherwise noted.

friends confronts Job as to his sin that they think he must have committed because he's suffering. Bildad, therefore, gives his last speech in chapter 25. Job replies to Bildad in chapter 26, and that ends those cycles of dialogue between Job and the three friends (Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar). Then we had chapter 27, which we covered several weeks ago with "Job's Defense Rests (Part 1): A Vow of Innocence. So chapter 27 was part one. Today, chapter 29, is part two. Twenty seven, twenty nine; what's missing? Chapter 28. That was an interlude on wisdom, and that was the last message that we covered in this book. So to follow along. We have chapter 27, that was Job's defense, chapter 28 an interlude on wisdom, chapter 29 resuming Job's defense (and that continues through chapter 31). So these four chapters 27, 29, 30, 31 all go together. But we can especially look at chapters 29 through 31. Those three chapters, the first of which we'll start this morning, those three chapters hang together. It's almost as if chapter 27 was an introduction. Then we had the interlude on wisdom. Then 29 through 31.

For the sake of our outline, the main points that cover each of these three chapters: Job's Past Prosperity (that's chapter 29); Job's Present Passion (chapter 30); and then Job's Prospective Pardon (chapter 31). So we're looking at past, present, future. Job's Past Prosperity: He's looking back to the way things used to be before tragedy struck, that's chapter 29. Chapter 30 is Job's Present Passion (and I use the word "passion" in the sense of suffering): This is where he is now (and this is chapter 30). Then Job's Prospective Pardon in chapter 31, that is where Job is looking to the future, his future exoneration, that he be declared "not guilty," because, after all, he didn't do anything to deserve the suffering that has fallen upon him and his household.

Job's Defense Rests (Part 2): A Soliloquy on Past Blessing (1-25)

Now go back with all that in mind to chapter 29. This is Job's Defense Rests (Part 2): A Soliloquy on Past Blessing. So in chapter 29 Job reflects back through his tears on the good old days, the past. But there's another way we can look at these three chapters, 29, 30, and 31. And that by parking your minds back to chapter 1, verse 21: Job's great confession where after he learns that his 10 children are killed in what seems like a freak windstorm, what does Job say in light of all these tragedies—and losing his kids? Chapter 1, verse 21 he says, “The Lord gave, the Lord is taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord. Three statements that run parallel to these three chapters: 29, 30, and 31. He says *the Lord gave*. That's Job's wonderful past: “The Lord gave me these children; He gave me this great estate; This great name.” That's the good old days. *The Lord gave*, and that's what Job thinks about here in chapter 29. But then he says *the Lord is taken away*. That's Job's tragedy. That's the present that Job talks about in chapter 30. The third aspect of 1:21, *blessed be the name of the Lord*? Well, Job doesn't quite get there in chapter 31. He doesn't bless God's name, but he does look back defending his innocence. And so in that regard chapter 31 sounds like chapter 27.

But again, chapter 29, Job's Defense Rests (Part 2): A Soliloquy on Past Blessing. What is a soliloquy? Well, one source defines it as “an utterance or discourse by a person who is talking to himself, oblivious to any hearers present;” and that's what Job is doing. He is thinking out loud. In chapter 29, he's not really directing his words toward his friends, he's not really directing his words to God, he is bemoaning past blessings (when it comes to thinking about the past).

As you can imagine, as I've spent 20 hours studying this text, how hard it hit me as I think about my past. And, for one thing, these things tend to give me pause because I have a tendency to dwell on the past. I am a “BSI.” *What is a BSI?* A big, sentimental, Italian! I'm very nostalgic; I wrestle with the passing of time. I may have told you about one moment when Giana was still with us, when she was, I think, 14. And we were driving and talking about something about the past, about something she had done, and I got kinda quiet. And she looks at me and she says, “Now don't start crying Dad.” I have a hard time with the past. And like Job I have suffered great loss. It's easy for me to think back to the way things used to be before 12/24/15.

Don't live life on the fuel or frowns of the past

And so a lesson that I have learned out of this passage, a lesson I want you to learn, is this: *Don't live life on the fuel or frowns of the past.* This is a general rule. I'm not saying that this is absolute. We know as believers we can look back and say, “God has been faithful in the past, I know He will be faithful in the future.” That's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about perhaps past good times that you've had, things that have changed, and you want to, like Job, look back on those good times, and you wish you could go back, but you can't. That's the *fuel* of the past or the *frowns* of the past. Things that happened that were tragic in your life. Maybe it was failures you have had. Maybe it's some great tragedy. *Don't live your life on the fuel or frowns of the past.*

The big heading for chapter 29 is this: Job's Past Prosperity. And then we have several sub-points under that. As it relates to the sub points, the key word is “blessing.” And we see there are five sub points that will take us through this chapter:

- A. Blessings Summarized: The Good Old Days (1-3) – *This is a summary statement.*
- B. Blessings at Home: The Good Life (4-6) – *Job thinks about his domestic life when his kids were still around him.*
- C. Blessings in the Marketplace: The Respected Life (7-11, 21-25) – *This was the honor that Job received among his peers.*
- D. Blessings Defended: The Good Done for Others (12-17) – *That's the good that Job had done for others.*
- E. Blessings Future: The Good to Come (18-20) – *And that's the good to come, what Job was hoping would be his future that hasn't and will not happen (in the way Job expects it anyways).*

Blessings Summarized: The Good Old Days (1-3)

So first we look at *Blessings Summarized: The Good Old Days*. The first three verses summarize the entire chapter. Follow along with me beginning in verse one:

1 And Job again took up his discourse and said, 2 “Oh that I were as in months gone by, as in the days when God watched over me; 3 when His lamp shone over my head, and by His light I walked through darkness;”

The good old days. Job's longing for the good old days. What would that look like for Job?

Well, that's what the rest of the chapter's about. But you know as well as I know that if you go through trials, or you go through tragedy, it's easy to look back on the way things used to be.

Bemoaning what life was like before my husband or my wife died, what life was like before my child died, what life was like before my son or daughter left the faith, or before some threatening disease struck. And we get paralyzed by the past. By saying, “I can think back to the good old days and now I'm suffering, now I'm faced with challenges I'd rather not face. Boy if only I could go back to those days.” That's where Job is. And note that Job equates God's *temporal* blessing with God's goodness. That's a dangerous thing to do, to think, “I'm being blessed.

Therefore God is good.” Well, that's true. But what's the opposite? “Things are going bad for me. Therefore God is not good.” You see, that's the way Job is tracking here. Look at second half of verse two, “. . . **as in the days when God watched over me; when His lamp shone**

over my head, and by His light I walked through darkness.” *God was watching over me.*

What's the implication for Job? He's not doing it anymore. *When God's lap shone over my head; He was giving me direction in the night.* Well, the implication is that He's not doing that anymore. Job is a long way from David in Psalm 23: “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me . . .” (v. 4). That takes faith. That's not easy to do when life is falling down around you.

I want to be careful here. It is easy for us when things are going great to say, “God is blessing, therefore, He must be pleased with me.” When things are not going great we think, “Well, God . . . maybe He isn't so good now. Maybe God is cursing me.” That's easy to follow. And, listen, I know it. So many of you know it as well. But we say in churches, we say this regularly: “God is good all the time.” And then what's the refrain? “All the time God is good.” All the time? Do we really believe that? That takes faith. I know I struggled with that, with thinking about God's goodness, with even saying it or singing, “God is so good, God is so good, God is so good, He's so good to me.” You how hard that was for me to say that after the way things unfolded with the drunk driver encounter we had on that Christmas Eve; the death of our daughter? You see, it takes faith. I can now say that, but for so long it just stuck in my throat.

Blessings at Home: The Good Life (4-6)

We see what the good old days looked like for Job. The first thing he brings out is what I call “domestic blessings” – Blessings at Home: The Good Life. This is verses 4-6. Look at verse four. He says, “**As I was in the prime of my days, when the friendship of God was over my tent.**” *I was in my prime.* “**Prime of days**” doesn't mean that Job was now elderly. He's talking about the physical strength he once had, which is now gone. Remember, Job is suffering. He's

suffering emotionally, he's suffering spiritually, he's suffering physically – in ways that most of us cannot imagine. And when you suffer that way you age fast. I don't care if you're 30, I don't care if you're 50. When you suffer, prolonged suffering, in those ways it ages you. Listen, it's been 6 1/2 years since our encounter with the drunk driver. It's been six years since our daughter passed away. I suffered injuries that will last me through the rest of my life. I have a partly crippled hand. I've got scars from skin grafts on me. My back was blown out. I've got blurred vision in my right eye. Never again will I be able to go to the gym and do rack pulls with 750 pounds. My surgeon said, "No, even if we did surgery you're not going back to that." So for me I have to say that is over I will never again do that. But all that was nothing compared to the emotional and spiritual anguish I suffered (and to some extent still do). And I feel – and I think Lois feels the same way – I feel like every year that is gone by since that tragedy I've age 3 years. I really feel like I've aged 18 years since 2016. It ages you. So I talk about "my prime of days."

But Job's problem is he equates his temporal blessing with God's friendship. he says, "**. . . when the friendship of God was over my tent.**" The New American Standard has "tent" (I don't know about your translation). This would be better rendered "house." It's the Hebrew word for tent but better rendered, or understood, in the sense of *house* because Job was not a nomad, he had a singular residence or household. But that is all gone and he doesn't think God is still his friend. Far from it. Job thinks God is his enemy. Chapter 13, verse 24, Job says, "Why do You hide Your face And consider me Your enemy?" In chapter 16 he calls God "his adversary." Some of the most powerful words that express Job's feelings that God has not only abandoned him, but now opposes him. (After all, it's one thing to be abandoned by God, but then to have God oppose you is something else.) Listen to what Job said in chapter 19:

6 Know then that God has wronged me and has closed His net around me. 7 “Behold, I cry, ‘Violence!’ but I get no answer; I shout for help, but there is no justice. 8 “He has walled up my way so that I cannot pass, and He has put darkness on my paths. 9 “He has stripped my honor from me and removed the crown from my head. 10 “He breaks me down on every side, and I am gone; and He has uprooted my hope like a tree. 11 “He has also kindled His anger against me and considered me as His enemy. 12 “His troops come together, and build up their way against me And camp around my tent.

What Job is saying here is that (in verse four), “God *used* to be my friend.” But he’s saying that now He isn’t. Why? Because disaster has struck him.

Now there is nothing wrong with respectfully referring to God as “friend.” A lot of people don't like that, “Don't call Jesus your friend; He’s your God. Well, okay, let's be balanced here. No, Jesus isn’t your pal like your earthly friends – you pal around together, do this or that. Have a little more respect than that. But there's nothing wrong with saying that “God is my friend” or singing, “What a friend we have in Jesus.” We have biblical precedent for that. Abraham is called “the friend of God” in Isaiah chapter 41, verse eight. That is repeated in James 2:23. What did Jesus say in John 15:14? “If you do what I command you, you are my ‘friends.’” Yes, if you are rightly related to God by faith, *by faith in Christ*, He is your friend.

It’s one thing to say God is your friend, but then again, it's another thing to say God is my enemy. We’re reluctant to say that, we’re reluctant to tell anyone, any unbeliever, no matter how religious and pious, no matter how vile, “You know, you have God as your enemy.” We want to tell people – we want to tell everybody – “God is your buddy; He’s your friend. He's pulling for you.” That's just not good theology. The fact is we were all God's enemies. Believer, we were all God's enemies. Romans 5:10, “For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son . . .” We’re His friends because of what Jesus did, because of our right relationship to God. Though there’s going to be a day when all God's enemies, those

who are not redeemed, will be judged. Psalm 110:1, quoted at least six times in the New Testament: “Sit at My right hand until I make Your [talking about Jesus] . . . until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.” But you see, this was not true of Job. Job was redeemed. Job was a friend of God. But in Job's mind that changed. But note that was in Job's mind. That was not in reality. So we have to be careful. What sometimes we think is true, or is the case, especially as it relates to our feelings, often isn't. And usually we know that. You say, “You know what? I feel this way, but that's not true. And, therefore, I'm going to – I'm going to ground my behavior – I'm going to ground my brain on that which is true.”

Job continues on his past in verses five and six. Here we have the Hebrew word *Shaddai*, “Almighty.” And he says, when again looking back, **5 When the Almighty was yet with me, and my children were around me; 6 when my steps were bathed in butter, and the rock poured out for me streams of oil!** – that would be olive oil. Again, things were good, life was smooth. It was a prosperous life. I think this is the only time (in verse five) that Job directly refers to his children. Certainly Job did not expect that he would outlive all 10 of his kids. What parent who has healthy children expects that they're going to die before he or she does? That's not the expectation. That's why the loss of a child is referred to as “a parent's worst nightmare.” But for Job, they're gone, they're gone from this earthly life – *forever*. And that's hard. If you've lost somebody close to you that is hard because that's like, “they have died and nothing can change that.” It becomes a fact of history that can't be undone.

I found the loss of her daughter at times absolutely suffocating – it would push me into a panic attack when I would think about that. Certainly God can take the past and He can make good things out of it. Certainly when somebody dies in Christ, that's our hope: we know that

they really live; they will live on again. And if we are in Christ, we will see them again. That's a wonderful hope we have for Giana. But as far as the here and now? Nothing can change the fact that this tragedy happened.

And then you think back. There's nothing more painful than present memories of past joys. A line from Tennyson's *Locksley Hall*:

Comfort? comfort scorn'd of devils! this is truth the poet sings,
That a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things.

That a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things.

Dante: "There is no greater sorrow than to remember in misery happier times."

That rings with so much truth.

What do we do when things of our past haunt us? Well, recognize that God is Lord over that and you can't change it. Certainly if there's something you need to do to make things right; I'm not saying don't make amends. And God can certainly bring good out of whatever happened that you bemoan from your past. But recognize that the past is past, and as far as that event is concerned, nothing can change that from having happened. And *don't live life on the fuel or frowns of the past*. More on that later.

Blessings in the Marketplace: The Respected Life (7-11, 21-25)

So we see in verses four through six, Job looks back to blessings at home; the good life. Then he looks back *outside the home* to Blessings in the Marketplace. I call this The Respected Life. We move from domestic tranquility to Job out and about in the open square as a leader. And that's what we see here in verse seven, we see Job as a community leader. And he says, **"When I went out to the gate of the city, when I took my seat in the square."** The "gate" refers to the large doors in the wall that encompassed the town. And within typical towns of that

day there was an open square where people gathered. So the elders would meet at the gate, they would meet at the open square and they would conduct business, they would make decisions. You see that, for example, if you're familiar with the book of Ruth. And remember, chapter 4, Boaz went to the gate of the city to make a transaction that would result in his laying claim to being Ruth's *kinsman redeemer*. We see a gate, we see the square, we see leaders; and it was there that the elders and townspeople served as legal witnesses on Boaz's behalf. Well, such was Job. He was a community leader out in the square. He was an elder at the town gate.

Was he just one of many – just the rank-and-file of elders and leaders? Or did he stand out? No, he stood out (verse eight), **“The young men saw me and hid themselves, and the old men arose and stood.”** Those younger than Job withdrew to the background. Those older than Job, contrary to cultural norm, they stood. 9 **“The princes stopped talking and put their hands on their mouths; 10 The voice of the nobles was hushed, and their tongue stuck to their palate.** They’re mute. They see Job come in and they stop talking. 11 **For when the ear heard, it called me blessed, and when the eye saw, it gave witness of me.”** Here we have princes and nobles; the politicians of the day. They stopped talking when Job showed up. Now, when do the politicians ever stop talking?

You see, Job had what we might call *gravitas*. Ever heard that word, *gravitas*? There was a weightiness to him – and it was deserved. That's different than charisma. I've known people that had charisma that were udder jerks. But to have *gravitas*, to have this well-deserved respect, weightiness, dignity based on character, that's different than charisma. Young men sat down and were silent. Old man stood. Princes and nobles were mute. This was the presence of this man called “the greatest of the men of the East.”

Skip over to verse 21. Job's words were like a spring rain. Verse 21, 21 **“To me they [young, old, princes, nobles] listened and waited, and kept silent for my counsel. 22 After my words they did not speak again, and my speech dropped on them. 23 They waited for me as for the rain, and opened their mouth as for the spring rain.”**

Job's wise words were like rain in a desert land. Job is saying, “I spoke; they were silent. They were like flowers waiting for rains, for mountain dew. And when I spoke they opened up and they receive what I had to say.” And not only his words, his demeanor. Sometimes our words can say one thing but the way we act, the way our facial expression comes across, says quite something else. Well, Job was consistent. Look at verse 24 (this is a difficult verse). The New American Standard has, **“I smiled on them when they did not believe, and the light of my face they did not cast down.”** That is really hard to understand what's being communicated here in verse 24 (looking at the New American Standard). And I said something you can do when it comes to a difficult book like Job is look at some of the other translations, like the Holman Christian Standard Bible, which smooths this out and I think interprets it very well when it says, **“If I smiled at them, they couldn't believe it; they were thrilled at the light of my countenance.”** Or the old New International Version (not so new anymore), **“When I smiled at them, they scarcely believed it; the light of my face was precious to them.”** It seems like Job is claiming that his smile of approval made their day, it was an unexpected blessing. To have somebody that you so respect, that has this weightiness about them, this godliness, and to have them come and just look at you and just smile – or say, “Yeah, you know what you said? That was right. What you're doing, that's right.” It can mean so much. That was the respect Job had. And he was compassionate. Verse 25, **“I chose a way for them and sat as**

chief, and dwelt as a king among the troops, as one who comforted the mourners.” This is a well-respected man who cares, he comforts the mourners. Job's three friends? Well, that was their original design, chapter 2, verse 11, they made an appointment with Job to “come and sympathize with him and comfort him.” Of course, they gave little comfort; much condemnation.

So here's a man, Job, who was respected at the city gate. The young hid, the old sat down, princes stood, nobles covered their mouths. There was silence as they waited for this wise man of the East to speak.

Job is describing himself, right? Isn't he being a little arrogant here? Is he being a little proud and trumping his own horn? What's up with that? No, you don't do that when you're suffering. He does talk honestly and forthrightly about his past. I don't think he's in any position to brag. He's just stating the way that things used to be. And we get that affirmation at the beginning of the book (we've gone over this time and time and time again in this study): *he was blameless, upright, he feared God, he turned from evil*. The greatest of the men of the East. Job wasn't saying it's all about me. He recognizes this is God's graciousness upon him. But the point is all that has changed now for Job. Not only the blessings of prosperity back when “my children were around me,” but his standing in the community. Once a respected leader at the city gate, now a suffering destitute joke to his friends residing at the town dump. Earlier he said, “My breath is offensive to my wife and I am loathsome to my own brothers.” Yeah, that's talking about his physical condition, but I think it looks beyond just the physical to the way that they looked at him. The next chapter, chapter 30 – the very first verse – he says, “Now those younger [the ones who went into the background when I walked up] now they mock me.” His three

closest friends are against him. His reputation has been falsely defiled. But that's not who he was. These are Blessings in the Marketplace.

Blessings Defended: The Good Done for Others (12-17)

Then the fourth point, Blessings Defended: The Good Job Did For Others. He not only talked the talk, he walked the walk. He was a man of integrity. Note the very first word of verse 12, he says, **“Because.”** Because what? This is Job's life, this was his practice beginning in verse 12:

12 Because I delivered the poor who cried for help, and the orphan who had no helper. 13 The blessing of the one ready to perish came upon me, and I made the widow's heart sing for joy. 14 I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; my justice was like a robe and a turban. 15 I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. 16 I was a father to the needy, and I investigated the case which I did not know. 17 I broke the jaws of the wicked and snatched the prey from his teeth.

What do we see here?

- Job delivered the poor (no doubt, blessing them out of his own wealth).
- Job did his best to support widows and orphans.
- Job rescued those who were so destitute they were near death.
- Job was as eyes to the blind and feet to the lame – and a father to all.
- Job investigated the circumstances of the oppressed.
- Job stood against the wicked who would exploit the helpless.

And central to all of that stands verse 14: **“I put on righteousness, and it clothed me**

[righteousness defined by God was my clothing]; my justice was like a robe and a turban.” A

far cry from the accusations that the three friends leveled against him, especially Eliphaz. A few chapters ago, chapter 22, what did Eliphaz say as far as Job's conduct towards those who were destitute and struggling and suffering?

6 “For you have taken pledges of your brothers without cause, and stripped men naked. 7 To the weary you have given no water to drink, and from the hungry you have withheld bread. 9 You have sent widows away empty, and the strength of the orphans has been crushed.

But remember we said there was no truth to that. They're simply bringing up sins that were common by sinners of the day (which tended to be social in nature). Job was suffering, is suffering. "Job, therefore, you had to have sinned." That was the worldview that they lived in. "You had to have done these things." Job says, "No, I'm innocent. As D.A. Carson observes:

Job has been honest, generous, disciplined; he rescued the poor; helped the blind, comforted those who mourned; he made a covenant with his eyes, 'not to look lustfully at a virgin' (31:1); he was host to countless strangers; he made sure he never rejoiced over the misfortune of another; he never trusted in his own wealth. He frankly feared God . . . And he is utterly determined to maintain that his own integrity totally precludes the possibility that his sufferings constitute punishment for sin.¹⁹⁷

But here's the lesson: *There must be integrity between what you say and what you do.*

There must be integrity between what you say and the way you act. We call this "integrity."

Christian, you should be at the top the list when it comes to integrity. You and I, there should be no major blights on our lives that call into question our integrity.

Someone once said of a sham Christian, "Your actions speak so loud I can't hear what you say." Don't tell me about Jesus while you continually live in habitual sin, when your highest priority as yourself, your money or fame. And we talked about the *three pernicious F's* last time: fame and fortune and fornication. Things that draw professed Christians away from the faith. Fame (with that goes worldliness). Fortune, money. Fornication, the love of someone to whom you have no lawful right. I see it all the time. Professed Christians, particularly the young people raised in the church, they get to be a certain age and, "You know what? I want to be cool, have cool friends. I will listen to cool music and watch cool music videos. I want to be like them. And then there is a boy or a girl that I like that's not a Christian, but he's cool. I'll chuck this

¹⁹⁷D.A. Carson, *How Long O Lord*, 147.

Jesus thing.” No, we should be men and women of integrity, like Job. Young people of integrity. *Christ is valued above all or He’s not valued at all.*

Blessings Future: The Good to Come (18-20)

The last point, Blessings Future: The Good to Come. This was hard. I've been here: future hopes dashed. Verse 18, Job says, **“Then I thought, ‘I shall die in my nest, and I shall multiply my days as the sand.’”** Someone paraphrased the thought of verse 18 this way: “I shall grow old among my brood.” This is the hope of every parent. This is the hope of every young person: someday I want to get married, to meet the man or woman of my dreams, I want to have a family, I want to teach my kids truth, to have grandkids. And then I want to die at a ripe old age, feeling blessed. For Job at least, that is gone – for now.

I think again of the time that Chip was telling me about teaching one of his daughters how to drive. And he said to me, “You'll do that someday with Giana.” Hopes dashed. Hopes of seeing her get married. Hopes of her having kids of her own. That's all gone – and it's so hard. But I rejoice – you know it’s graduation time – and I rejoice with the kids that have graduated. But it’s so hard to see Giana’s peers that have now moved on past her having graduation parties. Life goes on. Life moves on quickly (“multiply my days as sand”). That's what our lives are like, sand through an hourglass.

Some of you might remember or have heard of that old soap opera Days of Our Lives that debuted when I was a baby back in 1965. It's one of the longest running scripted television programs in the world. And that soap opera, Days of Our Lives, featured a theme statement. Some of you will remember this: *Like sands of the hourglass, so are the days of our lives.* We have high hopes when we’re young, even into middle age.

As I was studying this passage last week – this very passage – what came on (I had music playing in the background) was a familiar song from high school: Sail Away. I admit that brought me back to my high school years and I got a little misty eyed. (I'm BSI – a big sentimental Italian!) And it's a song that reflects on future hope and past memories. And here I'm working on that very thing in my study. And the words:

I'm sailing away, set an open course for the virgin sea
Cause I've got to be free, free to face the life that's ahead of me
On board, I'm the captain, so climb aboard

We'll search for tomorrow on every shore
And I'll try, oh . . . I'll try to carry on

I look to the sea, reflections in the waves spark my memory
Some happy, some sad
I think of childhood friends and the dreams we had
We lived happily forever, so the story goes

But somehow we missed out on that pot of gold
But we'll try best that we can to carry on.¹⁹⁸

It's easy to look back. So many hopes for the future, right? Some realized, some of those hopes forever gone. That's hard; and was hard for Job.

Job uses several metaphors that express his once hoped for future in verses 19 and 20 (this is before tragedy struck). There's a picture of a tree satisfied by fresh waters (verse 19 is the way it used to be). Job says, **“My root is spread out to the waters, and dew lies all night on my branch.”** A picture of renewed strength and vigor in verse 20, **“My glory is ever new with me, and my bow is renewed in my hand.”** One writer reflects on these words:

¹⁹⁸Sail Away, 1978.

Job had fully expected God's blessings to continue, with his living a long life (days like the sand) of stability (roots), prosperity (dew), an honorable reputation (glory), with perennial strength (pictured by a new bow . . .).¹⁹⁹

Job's looking back and saying . . . (you know, even though it was written after him), but the idea of Psalm 1:3 "He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers." Job says, "That was my path; that was my hoped-for future. That's where I was and that's where I thought things would go on." Take past and extrapolate the past into the present.

Do you know what "inductive inference" is? Inductive inference is just that, it's when you look at something that is always happened in the past and you expect that, therefore, the future is going to be like the past. And we do that, and God is the reason we do that. We can say the sun rose in the East and it sets the West and that's going to be the same thing tomorrow. I can expect sunrise at a certain time; sunset at a certain time. It's why the law of gravity is what it is. I know that if I drop something I'll have to pick it up off the floor, it won't float up in the air. This is inductive inference. And sometimes we do that as it relates to our lives. And sometimes we can do that, *rightly*. Like I said before, God is faithful. God has been faithful to me in the past. I know that God will be faithful to me in the future. But I know that because of this Book – and it's proved out by inductive inference. This is the way it's always been and I know because of this. It's going to always be that way, that God is going to smile upon those who are rightly related to Him by faith. But sometimes that doesn't hold true. We can't say, for example, "My life is falling apart so life is going to forever be a tragedy." No, we can't base inductive inference on that, as things change. Or, as Job is doing, "I've been so blessed. I had these hopes. Life was

¹⁹⁹*Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 752.

so good and I expected that that was going to continue, that I was going to live a long life with my children, my grandchildren, by my side. No, we can't always count on the future to be like the past in that sense. *A Christmas tree turning to Christmas tragedy . . .*

That doesn't mean that God can't change the future. One writer says this, “. . . by the end of the book of Job we find that his expectations are fulfilled to the letter: he dies an old man and full of days (42:17), surrounded by his family.”²⁰⁰ Surrounded by his family. But we know he doesn't get his 10 kids back. For that he hopes for heaven. And he will not only see his children, but his God: chapter 19, verse 26, “Even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh I shall see God.” That's a hope we share as well. So Job's Defense Rests: A Soliloquy on Past Blessing.

The Past is Past — Glorify God In It

So I want to close with a couple of closing points. Number one: The Past is Past – Glorify God In It. Now, if you have unfinished business take care of that, glorify God by taking care of unfinished business. But generally speaking, the past is over. Jesus is the Lord of time: past, present, future. Glorify Him in that. Yes, we all have dreams when we're young, dreams for a good marriage, dreams for kids, a successful home, dreams of a career, ministry in the church. Times change goals change. I've experienced that, you've experienced that. I want to be a faithful, good husband, I want to continue to be a good father, to be a good scholar, a good pastor. And I can still do that in whatever time God has for me at this point. Sins? Failures? “I've sinned; I blew it.” Yeah, we all have. Glorify God for His sovereignty over those times of sin and failure, for His love, for His forgiveness. And even those past memories are opportunities to give God the glory He deserves. I can look back – for me when times were

²⁰⁰David J. A. Clines, 990–991.

different, when times were good with our daughter. I can say that I thank God for those times. I thank God for those four months with her in rehab, that she didn't die at the accident scene, and how that gave us such precious times. They're painful, but precious. And I want to glorify God in them. You've got things in your lives that you can say the same thing about. The Past is Past – Glorify God In It. And *don't live life on the fuel or frowns of the past.*

Live in the Present

Number two: Live in the Present. Don't be paralyzed by your past. Like the old Frank Sinatra song, "Regrets, I've had a few . . ." I've had more than a few regrets in my life. We all have. You can talk about your failures, you can talk about your failed dreams. God is bigger than those things. Time for new dreams. God has you on this earth for a reason; glorify Him in whatever season of life you're in. If you're older don't look back to when you were younger – look in the mirror and think about the fading beauty or handsomeness. You know, it's like the guy that looked in the mirror one day and said, "Dad, how did you get in there?" If you've suffered loss, I love this quote by John Piper (I have it hanging up in my office): "Occasionally weep deeply over the life you hoped would be. Grieve the losses. Then wash your face. Trust God. And embrace the life you have."

Be Careful How You Interpret Life

Number three: Be Careful How You Interpret Life. Don't be like Job's friends, don't equate temporal blessings with God's favor, or trials with His curse. That's not necessarily true. I've seen people that are not walking with Christ, and yet it seems like they're being blessed, their lives are easy, they're prosperous (according to the world's standards). Yes, God's blessings are upon them in a general *common grace* sort of way, but not certainly, not in a

special singular way. You can suffer and yet be living a life pleasing to Him (Job). Interpret life through the lens of Scripture.

Let Your Future Hope Center on That Which Doesn't Change

Number four: Let Your Future Hope Center on That Which Doesn't Change. Job had future hopes; those things were all subject to change. "I'll live a long life" (that may not happen); "My kids are going to outlive me" (that may not happen); "When I get to my deathbed I'll look back and have no regrets" (that may not happen). Let your future hope center on that which doesn't change. What doesn't change, class? The promises of God do not change. This Book does not change. Jesus Christ, the same yesterday today and forever (Hebrews 13:8), does not change. If this world is all there is for you, then you're in trouble. But we don't live like bitter naturalists who think that this is all there is: Whatever *vapor* that is my life, whether it be short or long, it still a vapor and that's all there is. Christians, we don't live that way; we're not to live that way. We live in the glories of a future grace, future glory, with our eyes set on heaven knowing that this life could be gone like that.

Be Sure You Are Clothed in Christ's Righteousness

Last: Be Sure You Are Clothed in Christ's Righteousness. Job said, "I put on righteousness, and it clothed me." According to Psalm 132, verse 18, you can also be clothed with shame. It's one thing to be clothed with an outwardly righteous life, to look good, to do things that we know are good things, helping others. But that won't save anyone. These are the things we should be doing because we are saved. So we need to be first and foremost clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Galatians 3:27 "All of you who were baptized into Christ . . . [I don't believe that's water baptism, I think that spiritual baptism, to be made part of the

church] . . . all of you were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.” What does that mean? It means I'm clothed in Christ righteousness. It means I've been born again by God's grace; I've been converted. That's faith and repentance. Faith plus repentance equals conversion. That's to be clothed in the righteousness of Christ. And it's not a one and done sort of thing. There is that *already but not yet*. Yes, when we truly believe we are justified, we are saved. But we continue in the faith, we continue to trust. That is living the Christian life. Yes, I repented way back when, but I continue to live a life of repentance. We continue to pursue (that's present) the *future* prize (that's Christ). So *don't live life on the fuel or frowns of the past*. Live life in the beauties of that which does not change, the beauties of Christ, for delight in our God, that our joy be full in those things that have eternal significance, those things that do not (and cannot) change no matter what happens around us. Amen?

And so, Father, we come before You with that, our hope in mind, the hope of the cross, the hope that was ultimately Job's fulfillment; Job's fulfilled hope was ultimately in Christ. We thank You for this book, we thank You for this man of the past who has so much in common with us. And his friends there still out there. People like that are still out there. We encounter them. So teach us lessons from this book, lessons on life, lessons of living in the present, lessons related to tragedies, lessons related to the fact that You are Lord of time and You have us where we are for Your purpose – whatever stage we're in. And I pray for any here who are not clothed in the righteousness of Christ. For when their time comes they will stand naked in their sin and face eternity in hell. Holy Spirit smile upon those who are trusting in anything other than Jesus Christ, whose treasure is anything other than Jesus Christ, whose treasure is anything other than Christ. In the cross there's forgiveness and fullness of joy. For Christ sake, we pray. Amen.

Job's Defense Rests (Part 3): Singing in the Minor Key

Job 30:1-31

July 24, 2022

Christ Church of Clarkson

0722Job30.1-31(30) | Audio Length: 52:40

Job chapter 30. I want to read these (Job's) words, verse 25 to the end of the chapter. Job chapter 30 beginning in verse 25:

25 “Have I not wept for the one whose life is hard? Was not my soul grieved for the needy? 26 “When I expected good, then evil came; when I waited for light, then darkness came. 27 “I am seething within and cannot relax; days of affliction confront me. 28 “I go about mourning without comfort; I stand up in the assembly and cry out for help. 29 “I have become a brother to jackals and a companion of ostriches. 30 “My skin turns black on me, and my bones burn with fever. 31 “Therefore my harp is turned to mourning, and my flute to the sound of those who weep.”²⁰¹

May God add His blessing to the reading of His Word. And may He bless us as we pray and devote our time to him:

Father, that is what we do, we commit our time here in the Word to You. We pray Lord that You would use that Word to minister to each heart, to minister those things that are true, to reach people in their suffering and their discouragements; to reach Lord even those who have not yet come to bow the knee before King Jesus. We thank You Lord for the truth of Your Word. We pray Holy Spirit that you would You work in the heart and life of each one. We pray that You would work through the preacher this morning as well. We commit all these things to our Triune God in Jesus name, amen.

²⁰¹Scripture citations are taken from the NAS95 unless otherwise noted.

If you would note again that last verse of chapter 30 where Job says, “**Therefore my heart is turned to morning and my flute to the sound of those who weep.**” Job is saying that the tune of his life has changed to that of a funeral dirge.

Living in the minor key

Our lives can be likened to a songbook with the different chapters of our lives representing different songs. Some themes are upbeat and happy. Some are complicated; some songs are not easy to navigate (and such is our lives). At times, some are humdrum and monotonous, and such is our lives, at times. But then there are those times that we don't look forward to, or when we are in them, we look forward to getting out of, and that's when our lives are tuned to a funeral dirge. This is what I call *living in the minor key*. And such is Job.

Of course, it wasn't always that way for Job. We saw that last time when we looked at chapter 29, a chapter that could be summed up with the words “looking back at the good old days” – and that's what Job was doing. We called this Job's Past Prosperity; chapter 29, Job's Past Prosperity. He's looking back. And just an example of a few verses out of that chapter, verses two through five, he says:

2 Oh that I were as in months gone by, as in the days when God watched over me; 3 when His lamp shone over my head, and by His light I walked through darkness; 4 as I was in the prime of my days, when the friendship of God was over my tent; 5 when the Almighty was yet with me, and my children were around me. [29:2–5]

He's saying, “Life was good. At one time I was blessed with a content wife. I was blessed with ten kids, a thriving business, and a good reputation as a leader among men.” Job in chapter 29 is daydreaming of the past, thinking out loud. We call this a *soliloquy*.

The stark reality of chapter 30

But Job is brought back to stark reality in chapter 30. Note the first two words of verse one – which is the same in most translations – the first two words are, “**But now.**” Those words are repeated in verses nine and 16: “and now, or “but now.” These two words mark a change. Think about those words, “but now,” which can mark a change from bad to good or it can mark a change from good to bad. It could be “my marriage struggled for five years, *but now* it's so much better.” Or it could be “life was great for a long time, *but now* things are different (fill in the blanks). The tune of our lives changes, sometimes more quickly than the seasons change. Sometimes things are good and the tune is happy, it's upbeat. Other times things are not so good and the tune changes to sadness, sometimes even changes to regret. The tune of our lives changes. But note this: the Conductor of the orchestra does not change. The tune of our lives, those tunes, are played to God's orchestra.

The root idea of the word “orchestra” is “orchestrate,” which means “to coordinate.” Our steps are ordained by God. We read that several times, especially the Old Testament, such as in Proverbs 20:24. That is God's providence. He orchestrates the events of our lives, even orchestrates the tune. He is the Conductor, He's the Conductor over those seasons, those chapters of our lives. When things are good, when things aren't so good, when the music changes from upbeat and happy to a funeral dirge – yet the Conductor remains the same. And that's certainly something we see in this book. Job understood God's providence. He knew that his suffering was under the divine sovereignty of God, the Conductor of his life. Chapter 1 verse 21, putting things in perspective, he said, “Naked I came from my mother's womb, naked I will return there.” I was born with nothing. I will leave with nothing. And then he says “It is the

LORD who gave, it is the LORD that has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD.”

Sometimes the Lord gives; sometimes the Lord takes away. And no one is exempt from those times of lack, those times of suffering (and that by God's orchestration). Chuck Swindoll said this:

God doesn't have a 'wonderful plan' for everybody's life. Not here on earth, for sure. For some lives His plan is Lou Gehrig's Disease. For some lives (like Job's) His plan is a life of pain. For others, heartbreak and brokenness, blindness or paralysis, or congenital complications. For many, His plan is No to their requests for healing. But we don't like that. Some won't accept that. In fact, they go so far as to say, 'If you believe that, you lack faith.' On the contrary, if you believe that, you believe the Bible!²⁰²

Well, Job has at least a rudimentary understanding of God's providence, we see that in chapter 1 verse 21 (I just read that a moment ago). We see that in Job's response to his wife in chapter 2, verse 10, when she says, “Curse God and die” and he says, “Shall we not accept good from God and also accept *ra*?” That Hebrew word means “bad” or “calamity.” So *shall we not accept good from God and also affliction?* Job seems to understand God's providence, but I would argue that Job doesn't seem yet to understand God's love. And I suppose if you don't understand God's love then you don't really have a good complete picture of God's providence.

In chapter 30 a key word that reflects Job's attitude is “bitterness.” Job is very bitter and we see that in chapter 30. He's resentful for the way he's being treated at the hands of wicked men. He's resentful of the fact that he feels that God is not treating him any differently than those sinful men. And again that's evident and what we will see in chapter 30.

But remember we talked about this several times, we talked about Job's “windy words.” Remember that in Job in chapter 6? In his reply to Eliphaz he says, “Do you intend to reprove

²⁰²Chuck Swindoll, *Job: A Man of Heroic Endurance*, 206.

my words, when the words of one in despair belong to the wind?” When we’re hurting, when we’re suffering, we say things that aren’t true, we can say hurtful things. And we need to come alongside those that are suffering and we need to say, “You know what? I understand.” But don’t confront them for their windy words, let them *go to the wind*. And chapter 30 has its share of these sorts of windy words.

When living in the minor key sing the blues with clarity

But here's the main idea I want you to get as it relates to our lives, as relates to chapter 30: *When living in the minor key sing the blues with clarity*. By that I mean when things go sour in life sing the blues. Nobody is telling you to sing happy, chipper songs when you're undergoing serious trials and afflictions. That would be disingenuous. Sing the blues, but sing truth. Sing the blues, but sing honesty – be honest with God. Sing the blues but sing worship. So *when living in the minor key sing the blues with clarity*. Complain, yes. Lament, yes. But do so with faith and with worship. Share with God your thoughts, your disappointments, your fears. He wants to hear from you. He knows even before you ask Him.

An example of doing this, singing in the minor key with clarity, is found several times by King David in the Psalms. I was struck as I was going through my yearly reading of the Bible, struck by Psalm 31. And I ask you to turn there real quick. Psalm 31 stands as such a marked contrast to the 30th chapter of Job. David gets it right. David sings the blues with clarity. (Job not so much with the exception of how he ends this chapter.) We’re just going to read through it. Psalm 31 verse 1:

1 In You, O LORD, I have taken refuge; let me never be ashamed; In Your righteousness deliver me. 2 Incline Your ear to me, rescue me quickly; be to me a rock of strength, a stronghold to save me. 3 For You are my rock and my fortress; for Your name’s sake You will lead me and guide me.

You see the faith he has. *You will do this, You will lead me. I'm trusting in You.* Verse four:

4 You will pull me out of the net which they have secretly laid for me, for You are my strength. 5 Into Your hand I commit my spirit; You have ransomed me, O LORD, God of truth. 6 I hate those who regard vain idols, but I trust in the LORD.

Sometimes we don't know what to do, but one thing we can do is trust. God says, "trust Me."

Verse seven:

7 I will rejoice and be glad in Your lovingkindness, because You have seen my affliction [David is suffering, not unlike Job, not totally unlike him]; You have known the troubles of my soul, 8 and You have not given me over into the hand of the enemy; You have set my feet in a large place.

Note verses nine through 15:

9 Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress; my eye is wasted away from grief, my soul and my body also. 10 For my life is spent with sorrow and my years with sighing; My strength has failed because of my iniquity, and my body has wasted away [this sounds like Job]. 11 Because of all my adversaries, I have become a reproach, especially to my neighbors, and an object of dread to my acquaintances; those who see me in the street flee from me. 12 I am forgotten as a dead man, out of mind; I am like a broken vessel. 13 For I have heard the slander of many, terror is on every side [Again, these are words that sounds so much like Job in chapter 30]; While they took counsel together against me, they schemed to take away my life. 14 But as for me, I trust in You, O LORD, I say, "You are my God." 15 My times are in Your hand [He's the Conductor of the orchestra.]; Deliver me from the hand of my enemies and from those who persecute me.

Yes, when living in the minor key – and we all go through those times when the key of our life is in a funeral dirge – when living in the minor key sing the blues with clarity.

Job Claims He is Ridiculed by Irresponsible Men (1-15)

As you go back to Job, chapter 30, we'll see that Job isn't so good at this. In fact, his words stand in contrast to those of David in Psalm 31. Job's song is riddled with indictments against men – and worse – his song is riddled with indictments against God and His character. So chapter 30; we're looking at Job's Present Passion. That's the big idea, Job's present passion.

When we say “passion” were talking about “suffering.” Job's present suffering. There are four points below that heading, the first one is verses one through 15: Job Claims He is Ridiculed by Irresponsible Men. *Job claims he is ridiculed by irresponsible men*, by fathers and by their children. Look at verse one, **“But now those younger than I mock me, whose fathers I disdained to put with the dogs of my flock.”** We have two classes of men that are similar to what we saw in chapter 29 verses seven and eight. Remember, Job looking back on the good old days? He said, 7 “When I went out to the gate of the city, when I took my seat in the square [Job was a leader among leaders; that's where the leaders met, at the gate in the square of the city], 8 the young men saw me and hid themselves [they withdrew], and the old men arose and stood.” In a similar way, we have young and old here. We have children and fathers. Job used to get respect. Job used to get respect from children and their fathers. But that's all changed. It's all different. And we see that again with those first two words of verse one, **“but now.” “But now those younger than I mock me, whose fathers I disdained to put with the dogs of my flock.”** Job claims he is ridiculed by irresponsible men, young men and their fathers. And of the fathers Job says, “I wouldn't put them with my sheepdogs.” That's what he's saying. And that's an insult to be referred to as a dog. It was a great insult back in that time and that has not changed in some cultures, such as Arabic culture. That's a a big insult.

Today we think of dogs as pets. Dogs are man's best friend – and it used to be limited to that. But now people think they are children. I've said this before: I don't get it. So you go to the store – forgive me if you do this, but I just don't get it – you go to the store and there are people with their dogs; some have to have a dog with them. It used to only be a seeing-eye dog, but now it's as if they're children. And that's the young American family of today, an unmarried

couple with a dog or two, and no kids. But let's not forget this: animals are not humans. Dogs are not children. I'm sorry, but that is by the creational decision of God. Animals are not humans. And we live in a culture where children are viewed as a nuisance. We're not having enough kids to sustain our culture, and that's not just true here, it's true in Asia and it's true in Europe. But we have dogs galore! Well, your dog will not take care of you when you're elderly. And your dog will not give you the joy that children can give.

So this is an insult. A great insult. Even in Paul's day, Paul could say in Philippians chapter 3 verse three, "Beware of the dogs." He's talking about false teachers and he calls them *dogs*. That's a great insult. And to tell somebody that their father is not even worth being put with shepherd dogs? That was a real slap in the face. Dogs were not pets. Some worked on farms. Most were wild scavengers.

Interpretational issue

Well, verse one is pretty clear, but beginning in verse two we have an interpretational issue. In verse one we see two classes of people, right? We see children. (We don't know exactly how old these children are. I think mostly they were grown children. But there may have been some minor children as well.) So we have children. We have fathers. Pretty clear, right? But what follows is where we start to see issues. In the next 14 verses there are 23 third person plural pronouns. Words like *they*, *them*, and *there*. And we're not sure what the antecedent is of *they* *them* and *there*. Is this talking about the children? Is it talking about the fathers? Could it be talking about both? One example is verse 13 where we see these pronouns three times: "*They* break up my path, *they* profit from my destruction; no one restrains *them*." But who are they? Opinions are mixed. But the point is that Job is being ridiculed by those whom he considers

relatively worthless: children and their deadbeat dads (in Job's opinion). He looks at them as being relatively worthless, and that unfolds in verse two. Probably talking about the fathers, he says, **“Indeed, what good was the strength of their hands to me? Vigor had perished from them.”**

Homeless outcasts

Job next describes them as homeless outcasts. These are those that are attacking Job. Verse three, **3 “From want and famine they are gaunt who gnaw the dry ground by night in waste and desolation, 4 who pluck mallow by the bushes, and whose food is the root of the broom shrub.”** Job saying these people are such deadbeats that they live in the desert chewing on roots for food. That they are outcasts is evident from verse five: **“They are driven from the community; they shout against them as against a thief.”** These fathers, children, both, are driven from civilization while the townspeople shout at them as one shouted at a thief: “Thief!”

With these low-lives, as Job is describing them, it is like, “Get out of here! You don't belong with us in a civilized community.” And so where do you go? You go to the wilderness, verses six and seven: **6 “So that they dwell in dreadful valleys, in holes of the earth and of the rocks. 7 Among the bushes they cry out [Hebrew “bray” as in a donkey braying for food]; under the nettles they are gathered together.”**

Job calls them fools and no names in verse eight: **“Fools, even those without a name, they were scourged from the land.”** See now the tables are turned. Job was the mighty, respected one, “the greatest of the men of the East.” And now he is being mocked – and he is being mocked by those that he deems lower than him. Remember chapter 12 verse four? Job

said, “I am a joke to my friends, the one who called on God and He answered him, the just and blameless man is a joke.” And that's what we see here.

And if you look at verse nine we see the second use of that phrase (“and/but now”). This is really pulling it all together: “**And now I have become their taunt, I have even become a byword to them.**” You see the picture that Job is painting here? These are children who mock him, the fathers who are deadbeats, mocking Job. They're not even deemed to be worthy to take part in civilization; they're outcasts, they live in the desert. But Job says, “**I have become their taunt, I have even become a byword to them.**” Some translations have in verse 9, “I have become their song.” The idea is that they mocked Job with poetic, even musical taunts. And that's what especially kids do. As I was thinking through this, I thought of some of the songs that we sang, and I thought back to elementary school when I was in maybe the second grade. And you have those new kindergartners. I don't know if you ever sang this, but we would look at them and sing, *Kindergarten baby, stick your head in gravy, wrap it up in bubble gum and send it to the navy!* Have you ever heard that? I don't know what they were singing to Job, but I thought one up: *Job, Job, a once-great man; now he lives in a garbage can!* That's the sort of thing that's going on here. Job says, “I have become their taunt, but not just saying things they're taunting – even singing taunts to me.” One writer draws the analogy regarding Job being mocked by reprobates who consider him lower than they are: “[Job] is like a sex offender in a high-security prison full of serial murderers who regard him as worse even than they are.”²⁰³ And that's what hurts so much for Job. Like David in Psalm 69:12: “Those who sit in the gate talk about me, and I am the song of the drunkards.” In verse 10 the insults turn physical: “**They**

²⁰³Ash, *Job*, 302.

abhor me and stand aloof from me, and they do not refrain from spitting at my face.”

Literally spitting *in* my face, a tremendous insult (still is today).

God is sovereign

Yet, Job knows that these people can only do that which God permits, much like Satan and the demons. We saw that in the beginning of the book: they can only do that which God allowed (“you may go this far, but you may go no further”). And it's the same way with those that taunt Job. In verse 11, he says, **“Because He has loosed His bowstring and afflicted me, they have cast off the bridle before me.”** That's a very difficult verse. If you're following along in your Bible, unless you're using the New American Standard, you probably read something different, especially the first part of that verse. So we have an interpretation issue in verse 11. Just note, from three different translations, the way that this can be rendered:

- Because God has loosed my cord and humbled me . . . [ESV]
- Now that God has unstrung my bow and afflicted me . . . [NIV]
- Because He [God] has loosed His bowstring and afflicted me . . . [NAS95]

So what is it? Is it a cord? Is it a bowstring? Is it something related to tents? Is it God that's doing that? In what way? Which one is and what does it mean? Well, the Hebrew word that's used literally means “a tendon.”²⁰⁴ But a tendon was used to string a bow which is why some translations render this, “a bowstring.” Tendons were also used to uphold or raise tents and secure tents. This is why translators are divided. So this can be understood in the sense that God has unhooked the string on Job's bow – and that would render you defenseless. You could use a bow as a defensive weapon. And so if you had a bow in your hand, the arrows in your quiver, and God unstrung your bow, your bow would be worthless. You'd be defenseless. Job may be

²⁰⁴Hebrew ית ר.

saying that, or he may be saying – I favor this interpretation – that God has unhooked Job's tent cord, which would be a euphemism for impending death as tents were likened to one's life. Paul, in the New Testament, talks about the tent of this life being replaced with a heavenly re-created body. So I think this is probably talking about the cord of Job's tent being unstrung. Either way, the point is that God did this. And in the second half of the verse, He unleashed or unbridled these delinquents against him.

Military imagery

So we move from cords and bridles in verse 11 to military images in verses 12 through 14. You have got to appreciate how this unfolds in the imagery that Job is employing. Verse 12, **“On the right hand [Job’s strongest flank] their brood arises; they thrust aside my feet [a picture of being tripped] and build up against me their ways of destruction.”** Note that last part, **“to build up against,”** which pictures an attacking army building a siege ramp against a city. Job is looking at his life as a town or city under attack: “They’ve tripped me up and they’re building siege ramps against me as they attack.” Verse 13 has more military imagery: **“They break up my path, they profit from my destruction; no one restrains them.”** They’re unabated. This was another military tactic: breaking up the path, destroy the road from the town so there's no hope of escape.

We see the wall breached in verse 14: **“As through a wide breach they come, amid the tempest they roll on.”** Look at the picture here. Job is being attacked by an army of wicked men. God has left him defenseless. These wicked men have destroyed the roads, broken down the wall, and Job has been breached. So they pour in; death is imminent. Job says, “I’m done.”

Demonic attack?

Verse 15 may even be understood that Job is under demonic attack. The first word of verse 15, “terrors,” could be understood as “demons.” **“Terrors are turned against me; they pursue my honor as the wind, and my prosperity has passed away like a cloud.”** *And now . . . (chapter 29) . . . the good old days . . . That is gone.*

This is Job's Present Passion. Job claims (first 15 verses) that He's Ridiculed by Irresponsible Men. Job takes these attacks by those he deems worthless and he goes where he shouldn't go: he charges God with doing the exact same thing to him.

Job Thinks He's Being Punished by God (16-19)

Second point, Job Thinks He's Being Punished by God. Here is a reminder of his physical suffering in verse 16 (note the third use of “and now/but now”). 16 **“And now [again, contrasting with chapter 29] my soul is poured out within me; days of affliction have seized me.** 17 **“At night it pierces my bones within me, and my gnawing pains take no rest.”** Job is again reflecting back on his physical suffering, suffering pain that goes down to the bones. Job hurts constantly. Have you ever hurt so bad that you can't sleep? Or been in such physical pain that sleep would elude you and you would toss and turn all night? Well, that's what Job talked about in chapter 7, verse four: “When I lie down I say, ‘when shall I arise?’ But the night continues, and I am continually tossing until dawn.” You can do that, too, because of emotional anguish – and Job had both physical and emotional anguish.

Job in the hands of an angry God

In verses 18 and 19 we see, as Job would put it, *Job in the hands of an angry God*.

18 **“By a great force [what's the “great force?” It's God] my garment is distorted; it binds me about as the collar of my coat. 19 He has cast me into the mire, and I have become like dust and ashes.”** The picture, as far as Job sees it, is that God has grabbed him by the collar of his coat, picked him up, and thrown him into the mud. Look out verse 19 ends: **“... I have become like dust and ashes.”** I wonder if Job was still at the town dump at this point? I think he probably was; maybe he wasn't exclusively so. And what do we see at the town dump? Remember chapter 2 verse eight? Job, afflicted with these painful boils from the soles of his feet to the top of his head, where does he go? He went to the town dump, grabbed a broken piece of pottery, put ashes on it, and covered his sores with ashes. Here he says, “I have become like dust and ashes. I have become like those ashes in the town dump that I'm so familiar with.”

But something else. We cannot only look back, we can look forward to Job's repentance in chapter 42 verse six after God confronts him. What does he say? “I retract and I repent in dust and ashes.” Dust and ashes. *When living in the minor key sing the blues with clarity.* We see more evidence that Job isn't doing that in verses 20 through 23.

Job Thinks He's Being Ignored by God (20-23)

Third point, Job Thinks He's Being Ignored by God:

20 **“I cry out to You for help, but You do not answer me; I stand up, and You turn Your attention against me. 21 You have become cruel to me; with the might of Your hand You persecute me. 22 You lift me up to the wind and cause me to ride; and You dissolve me in a storm. 23 For I know that You will bring me to death and to the house of meeting for all living.”**

“My tent cord has been severed.” But note this, “I cry out to you, God, but you ignore me. And not only that, but you cruelly persecute me.” That's what Job is saying. “It's as if you have thrown me into a storm.” Remember how God answers Job in chapter 38? He answers Job out of a storm, a whirlwind. So again we have some language that used here that's looking forward. *When living in the minor key sing the blues with clarity.* Don't sing out of tune in your life. Sing truth. Sing worship.

To again use the example of David, Psalm 22 (which is at least partly messianic). We're familiar with verse one, the words of Jesus from the cross: 1 “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? Far from my deliverance are the words of my groaning.” That sounds like Job in verse 20. Then 22:2, “O my God, I cry by day, but You do not answer; And by night, but I have no rest.” That sounds again like Job in verse 20, “I cry out to you for help, but you do not answer me. You turn your attention against me.” David turns a corner in verse 3, “Yet You are holy, O You who are enthroned upon the praises of Israel. 4 In You our fathers trusted; they trusted and You delivered them.” [you see, again, there's faith] 5 “To You they cried out and were delivered; in You they trusted and were not disappointed.” We see that David, in Psalm 22, laments with faith. We said up before as we looked at Job chapter 3, it is okay to lament. Lament is Godly complaint. Lament is complaining with faith, complaining with honesty, complaining with truth. It's singing the blues with clarity. So when you're suffering, yes, sing the blues, but sing truth, sing worship, sing with honesty.

Job Laments to the Minor Key of His Life (24-31)

Fourth point. Job Laments to the Minor Key of His Life. That's verses 24 to the end of the chapter, verse 31. And here we see Job at his honest best. *Job laments to the minor key of his*

life. This is truly a lament. And I've broken this down into two sections (verses 24 through 31): The Lyrics of an Unfair Life (24 through 26); and then, secondly, The Lyrics of a Painful Life (verses 27 through 31).

The Lyrics of an Unfair Life (24-26)

Look with me at verse 24, The Lyrics of an Unfair Life. Job appeals to the themes of common need and the charity, his charity toward others when they were suffering. This is the common need out there: people suffer, people need help. And then his role in providing help to those who are suffering. Verse 24: **“Yet does not one in a heap of ruins stretch out his hand, or in his disaster therefore cry out for help?”** This is a rhetorical question. The answer is, “Yes.” When someone is in a heap of ruins, a building collapses around them and they’re still alive, they reach out their hand for help, they cry for help. And Job is saying, “That’s me; I’m crying for help here. Rescue me, Lord!” And then verse 25 – he shows his empathy: **“Have I not wept for the one whose life is hard? Was not my soul grieved for the needy?”** “Isn’t this how I lived my life? Someone was suffering in a physical way, they cry out for help, I’m crying out for help and I helped others that were crying out for help. God, why aren’t you helping me?” Verse 26, in words that sound like those he uttered in chapter 29 verse 18 (words of optimism for the future): **“When I expected good, then evil came; when I waited for light, then darkness came.”** “I was optimistic. I thought things would be good. I thought my life would multiply like sands through the hourglass. But it all fell apart.” These are The Lyrics of an Unfair Life. *It doesn't seem fair*, Job is saying. And think about it from the perspective of humanity. We rescue those who suffer. We do what we can, don't we? We see someone suffering and we do what we can to rescue them. We don't see a car crash and casually ignore it,

we call 911, or if we can, we stop and we help. (I'm thankful for those unknown friends who pulled me and Giana out of the burning wreckage on that fateful Christmas Eve.) But the point is, when even the worst of sinners do that, and when we have done that ourselves, is it unreasonable to expect God would rescue us when we're suffering? That is what Job is saying here. This is the song of Job's life and he doesn't think it's right.

I don't have any great answers, but it's okay to let God know when you feel this way. That's how I felt as I cried out to Him night and day for our daughter. “This doesn't seem right and You could do something about it, but You won't!” Lament, but do so with faith. And know that His ways are not our ways. And that's a lesson Job learned long before us. The Lyrics of an Unfair Life.

The Lyrics of a Painful Life (27-31)

And then, secondly, The Lyrics of a Painful Life (verses 27 to the end of the chapter). Literally, Job says, verse 27, “My bowels boil.” (the literal Hebrew). **“I am seething within and cannot relax . . .”** Bowels are a common euphemism for the seat of inward emotions. Job was certainly suffering emotionally. The second half of verse 27, **“ . . . days of affliction confront me.”** The first half of verse 28: **“I go about mourning without comfort . . .”** The New American Standard takes this figuratively. Other translations render it literally and you may have the word “darkened” in your translation. 28b, **“ . . . I stand up in the assembly and cry for help.”** Verse 29: **“I have become a brother to jackals and a companion of ostriches.”** The prophet Micah uttered similar words when he prophesied of coming judgment against Israel. And he said in the book named after him, Micah chapter 1 verse eight: “. . . I must make a lament like the jackals and a mourning like the ostriches.” Jackals and ostriches were

two animals that were known for their mournful cries. Job says, “I’m one of their tribe. You can hear me cry out and wail – and I sound just like them. That’s the suffering I’m going through, that I’m going through emotionally.” Job refers again to his physical distress in verse 30: **“My skin turns black on me [some translations add “peels”], and my bones burn with fever.”** These were the result of the physical malady that Satan had afflicted him with. The music of Job’s life – the last verse: 31: **“Therefore my harp is turned to mourning, and my flute to the sound of those who weep.”** Clines writes: “Job has been mourning his dead children, so the sounds of lament and of weepers have been echoing through his house. But the music that has changed its key is more than the sound of instruments: it is the music of his life.”²⁰⁵ “The music of my life is tuned to a funeral dirge.” But, *when living the minor key sing the blues with clarity.* That rhymes: When living in the minor key sing the blues with clarity – easy to remember.

So Job ends on a clear, albeit painful note. This is Job’s Defense Rests (part 3): Singing in the Minor Key.

The Song of Jesus

But I want up and by looking at some of the parallels we see between Job and Jesus. And I call this The Song of Jesus. Did Jesus sing the blues? If there was a man who could sing the blues with clarity, it was Him. He knew suffering. One of the phrases that describes Him in His ministry is found in Isaiah 53:3, “a man of sorrows acquainted with grief.” The King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, was “a man of sorrows acquainted with grief.” He suffered for us, He was tempted for us – yet lived a sinless life that was in all ways pleasing to the Father.

²⁰⁵David J. A. Clines, 1011.

There are many parallels to Job that have been pointed out. We know the Job suffered, that he suffered unfairly in that it wasn't directly a result of his personal sin that he was suffering. But we know that in a far greater way that Jesus, the sinless Lamb of God, suffered, and that He suffered unfairly. Beyond that, from this chapter, we see more parallels to the life of Christ. We will look at five of them very quickly.

Job was mocked by sinners, as was Jesus

Number one we saw that Job was mocked by sinners. We read in verse one that he was mocked. In verse nine that he was taunted. We also know that Jesus was mocked by sinners. In Matthew chapter 26, after Jesus affirmed his divine role as the Son of Man, we read in verse 68 of that chapter that the people taunted him, saying, "Prophecy to us, You Christ; who is the one who hit You?" And then later, upon his crucifixion, more taunts (Matthew 27:39-43):

39 And those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads 40 and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross." 41 In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking Him and saying, 42 "He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him. 43 "HE TRUSTS IN GOD; LET GOD RESCUE Him now, IF HE DELIGHTS IN HIM; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.' "

Job was mocked by sinners and so was Jesus.

Job was spit upon, as was Jesus

Number two, Job was spit upon. In verse 10 Job said of his enemies, "They do not refrain from spitting at my face." We know from the Gospel accounts that Jesus was also spit upon. Matthew chapter 26, before the High Priest, the people ". . . spat in His face and beat Him with their fists; and others slapped Him." Matthew chapter 27 verse 30, the soldiers under

Pilate, “. . . spat on Him, and took the reed [they had put in his hand] and began to beat Him on the head.” Job was spit upon. Jesus was spit upon.

Job was afflicted by God, as was Jesus

Three, Job was afflicted by God. We see this throughout. God is the first cause, the primary cause. And so we saw in verse 11, Job says that his cord, his tendon, has been cut by God. And we know that Jesus was afflicted by the Father. Isaiah 53:4 “. . . Smitten of God, and afflicted.”

Job felt the weight of delayed prayer, as did Jesus

Job felt the weight of delayed prayer. Verse 20, “I cry out to You for help, but You do not answer me . . .” Well, Jesus felt the weight of delayed prayer as well. Mark 14:36 (Jesus in Gethsemane) Jesus was saying, “Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will.”

Job felt forsaken in his sin; Jesus was forsaken for our sin

And lastly, Job *felt* forsaken *in* his sin (there is a little bit of difference in wording; you gotta catch it). Job *felt* mistaken *in* his sin. For example, verse 22, “You lift me up to the wind and cause me to ride; and You dissolve me in a storm.” In verse 28 he says that he “mourns without comfort; cries out for help with no answer.” Job *felt* forsaken *in* his sin. That is, he wasn't forsaken, God had not forsaken him. It was Job's sinful attitude and lack of faith that made him feel that way. But Jesus *was* forsaken for *our* sin. Gotta catch the difference: Jesus *was* forsaken for *our* sins. Psalm 22:1 (we saw that earlier), “My God, my God, why have you forsaken Me?” Jesus cried out from the cross (Matthew 27:46 is the parallel). Christopher Ash, in his excellent commentary in this book, observes:

[Job's] sufferings foreshadow the pain of a Man who had to go right down to death, even death on a cross, before his cries would be answered. There is a terrible divine necessity about redemptive suffering. God is doing something so ultimately wonderful that unanswered prayer is the necessary price of achieving it, and Job begins to experience this. His prayers will be answered but only when his sufferings have achieved that for which God purposes them. In a deeper way it was the same for Jesus Christ."²⁰⁶

Christ the wounded surgeon

T.S. Eliot said that "Christ is the wounded surgeon who operates on people's hearts."

The wounded surgeon, the suffering servant, who operates on people's hearts. In what ways has He been at work operating on your heart? At work as someone you can identify with, one who suffered – He suffered in a way that He can understand our suffering. He suffered in a way for us, ultimately, on the cross. How has he been operating in your heart? *So Christian, when living in the minor key sing the blues with clarity.* Some of you may be living in the minor key right now. Sing the blues, but sing them with clarity. Sing biblical blues; sing with faith, sing with worship. And if you have not been born again I can only pray that Christ, that wounded surgeon, would operate on your heart by virtue of the Holy Spirit, bringing you to new life, causing you (as Peter writes it) to be born again to new life. If you've not bowed the knee to King Jesus, He's demanding that men everywhere repent. He is calling you to repentance, unto repentance, before it's too late.

And so, Lord, we pray that you would encourage us with this hope, the hope of the gospel, the hope of sins forgiven solely by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, the One who died for sinners. Oh, we will still lament in this life. We will struggle in our humanness. We will struggle in our sinful frame. But that flame within the light of a believer

²⁰⁶Christopher Ash, *Job*, 305]

will not be extinguished. That hope will not be jettisoned by you. Oh, Lord, may we, when we suffer trials, afflictions, as we suffer them, may we hold fast to the light of the gospel of Christ. Something we can do that Job could not: pray, cry out, plead, in the name and authority of Jesus Christ our Lord. And it is in that precious name that we pray as we close.

Job's Defense Rests (Part 4): Job's Closing Argument

Job 31:1-40

August 7, 2022

Christ Church of Clarkson

0822Job31.1-40(31) | Audio Length: 56:40

Job chapter 31. We're just reading verses four through eight:

4 “Does He not see my ways and number all my steps? 5 “If I have walked with falsehood, and my foot has hastened after deceit, 6 let Him weigh me with accurate scales, and let God know my integrity. 7 “If my step has turned from the way, or my heart followed my eyes, or if any spot has stuck to my hands, 8 let me sow and another eat, and let my crops be uprooted.”²⁰⁷

May God add His blessing to the reading of His Word, as we pray.

Father, we thank You for this time. It is indeed challenging, the times in which we live. And we pray, Lord, that as we look at this man of suffering, this man named Job, that You will continue to build into our lives those disciplines that will help us to better face suffering, to better face affliction, and to do so to Your glory, knowing that You are in control of all things, all of the details of our lives. And so we entrust the entirety of our lives, all of those details, to You, to will and to work according to Your good pleasure. To the praise of Your glorious grace we pray. Amen.

Overview

Well, this is the fourth part of a series within the book, the fourth part of Job's Defense Rests. This part we're calling “Job's Closing Argument.” And that relates to chapter 31.

The very first part of Job's Defense Rests was when we were in chapter 27 – and that was more than a few months ago when we were in chapter 27. We looked at Job's Vow of Innocence. And Job begins that chapter with an oath before God saying that he is not guilty. He

²⁰⁷Scripture citations are taken from the NAS95 unless otherwise noted.

says, “. . . Till I die I will not put away my integrity from me” (verse 5); “I hold fast my righteousness and will not let it go. . .” (verse 6). That was Job's Vow of Innocence in chapter 27.

Chapter 28 was what we called An Interlude on Wisdom. That chapter expands upon what is true wisdom. Man's search for it – going to great depths – making a parallel to the work of miners going to great depths and great work to find precious metals. And how much more so – even in those depths where wisdom cannot be found – how much more so should we search for true wisdom, knowing that the fear of the Lord is true wisdom. So we had that little excursus after part one, we had the interlude in chapter 28.

Then part two was chapter 29, which we called A Soliloquy on Past Blessing. And remember in that chapter Job looks back to the good old days. He's looking back to the way life was before tragedy struck, before he lost his estate, before he lost his children – and his reputation. The good old days. That was chapter 29.

Chapter 30 was part three. We called that Singing in the Minor Key. This is Job complaining. He complains about how he's been mistreated by others who once respected him. And most of all, he complains that he is being mistreated by God. That's the way he sees it. That was part three, chapter 30.

Job's Closing Argument

Today we're in chapter 31. This is part four and we're calling this Job's Closing Argument. This chapter concludes with the simple statement, “The words of Job have ended.” This is a challenging chapter. It is the second longest chapter in the entire book of Job. And it is just very challenging as far as studying it, as far as structuring it, as far as thinking, “How in the

world am I going to get through this long chapter? How am I going to outline it? And how am I going to make this relevant, so much of it seems kind of repetitive.” And so it has been a big challenge. I have struggled immensely studying it. And I have lot of angst as we come to it this morning. So bear with me. It's a challenging chapter. I'm praying that God will guide this humble preacher in presenting it, that it kind of comes together. There's some good stuff here, but there are some things that you have to slog through, and so hang with me. This is the challenge of expository preaching, hang with me and follow along in your Bibles.

When we talk about the structure of this chapter, much of it, not all of it, but much of it follows a structure of “if / then / because” or “if / then / for.” In other words, “If I did this” – and that's what Job is saying – he's saying *I didn't do this*, but he says *if I did then let me be judged for God is not mocked*. It follows that sort of structure. Sometimes it's just an “if / then” – *if I did this then let God judge me*. And the whole chapter follows along in that general pattern.

A good example, if you look at verse 21 (verses 21 through 23). You look at how verse 21 starts

**21a If I have lifted up my hand against the orphan,
Because I saw I had support in the gate,
22 [then] Let my shoulder fall from the socket,
And my arm be broken off at the elbow.
23“For calamity from God is a terror to me,**

So we have this “if / then / for” that tends to repeat itself in one form or another throughout this entire chapter. And Job does this, again, to undergird the fact that he is indeed innocent, that he has done nothing to warrant the calamities that have happened to him. And remember, as we have seen throughout the book, his friends are constantly harping on him that “you must have sinned because calamity has struck you.” That's the worldview that they live in, where if you

suffer you did something to deserve it. Well, Job's suffering, but he did not do anything to deserve it. And so here he proves his innocence.

This chapter also gives us another side to the coin that is Job's life. Remember, we're told that Job was a righteous man. He feared God. He is a man that walked in perpetual repentance. But we're not told much about what he did in his life. We know he had great possessions, that he's called "the greatest of the men of the East." We know he was blessed materially. He was blessed with a large family. But this chapter shows us some of the good deeds, the good works that summed up Job's life.

Live for the freedom of a clear conscience

But we also see in this chapter, what we seen throughout, is it brings us back into that metaphorical courtroom setting. And here we have Job playing defense attorney. He's giving his closing argument. And we could sum up his closing argument by saying that *Job's conscience is clear*. Job has a clear conscience. He can't look at any area of his life and say, "You know what? I have really failed big time here. I failed big time as it relates to hospitality. I failed big time as it relates to my attitudes, my relationships, my looking upon other women." Job says, "No, I have not failed; my conscience is clear." And so for us the idea I want you to get is this: *live for the freedom of a clear conscience*.

You know, believer, how important it is to have a conscience that's clear. Jonathan Edwards, a great American theologian from generations past, had his list of resolutions, things that he resolved to do in his life. And he would go over those regularly. And one of his resolutions was to live as he wished he would've lived when he comes to die. In other words, if God so plans it that you are going to be on your deathbed and aware of your impending death,

are you going to be able to look at your life and say, “Yes I have lived as I wish I would've now that I have come to die.” Is your conscience clear? And I’ll admit to you, even as a Christian leader, there times that my conscience is not very clear, times when I say, “Lord I am not ready to face you. I have some areas of my life where there's been lots of apathy, where there's been indifference and shallowness. I haven't prized Jesus Christ above everything else,” And I want to be able to do that so that when I come to die, I will have no regrets. So live for the freedom that indeed is freedom: live for the freedom of a clear conscience.

A dirty defiled conscience is spiritually suffocating. I'm sure you know that. Times when your conscience has plagued you and it is a plague, it is suffocating. And there's nothing like the clear air of a good conscience before God. Nothing like that. It gives us confidence, it gives us peace, it gives us joy. So live for the freedom of a clear conscience even as Job lived in his day for that same freedom.

Another thing we've noticed over the past couple of weeks in Job is that these last three chapters (29, 30, and 31) follow a past-present-future structure. Chapter 29, we called Job’s Past Prosperity. Remember, that's where Job looks back on the way things used to be when life was good. Chapter 30 we called Job's Present Passion (that is, his suffering) as he looks at what he’s going through now. And then chapter 31 looks to the future. This we called Job's Prospective Pardon. This is where he looks for exoneration from God.

Job Claims Innocence Over Nine Categories of Sin (1-34, 38-40a)

Sexual Sin: Lust and Adultery (1-3, 9-12)

The first thing we see (and this covers the bulk of the chapter, this is where it gets a little tricky) is that Job claims innocence, as I've organized it, over nine categories of sin. You can

count about 14 different sins that Job lists here that he claims that he has not committed. I've put them together categorically and so we're going to skip around a little bit and not necessarily go sequentially through each verse, but will cover, at least touch upon, or read, each verse in this chapter. So the first category that Job claims innocence over is *sexual sin*. That would include, on the one hand, lust, and on the other hand, adultery. Lust and adultery. Look at verse one. Job says, **“I have made a covenant with my eyes; how then [in light of that covenant] could I gaze at a virgin?”** Job made a purity covenant with his eyes. Especially men – not only men but especially men – this is something we need to be aware of. Make a purity covenant with your eyes. A covenant is a binding contractual agreement. Job made a binding contractual agreement with his eyes. Obviously, there's some metaphorical language being used here. He's talking about his heart guarding his eyes. But the Hebrew phrase here is literally *Job cut a covenant*. And *cutting a covenant* is demonstrated in Genesis chapter 15 where God has Abraham cut sacrificial animals into two parts (and God passes between them). That's the idea of a covenant. In that sense, of a blood covenant, a unilateral blood covenant; cutting a covenant – and that's the phrase we have here in Hebrew. A covenant symbolically made with the eyes to specifically avoid the sin of lust. Here it is to gaze with the eyes, to gaze at an unmarried, a young unmarried woman.

The eyes – this was a common idea seen in the Old Testament – that the eyes are the gateway through which sin occurs. That began with our first parents, Genesis chapter 3 verse six. The woman, Eve, when she saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the what? The eyes. 2 Samuel chapter 11 verse two. David got up in the middle of the night to walk around the roof of his king's house and from the roof he saw what? He *saw* a young

woman bathing who was very beautiful in appearance. David *saw* and lust took root in his heart and he took. The psalmist could say in the 37th verse of Psalm 119, “Lord, turn my eyes away from looking at vanity.” So we guard our eyes.

And the penalty should Job be guilty of this sin (he, therefore, would be lying) is in verses two and three. And so he asked the question in verse two, **“And what is the portion of God from above or the heritage of the Almighty from on high?”** Job is asking, “What would God give me as my just reward for doing such a thing, for gazing desirously of a young woman to whom I have no right, or of whom I have no right?” Job answers that question, what would God give me as a just reward? And he says, 3 **“Is it not calamity to the unjust and disaster to those who work iniquity?”** How interesting. Job connects the sin of lust with iniquity, with unjust behavior, with calamity and disaster. Is Job getting a little carried away here? Just looking with desire is an unjust action that can bring calamity, disaster? Aren’t you getting a little carried away here Job? What did Jesus say about the gravity of the sin of lust? Matthew chapter 5 verse 29, “If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.” Does Jesus take this one, what we consider ‘a little sin of lust,’ seriously? Yes indeed He does so. That's the lust that Job claims freedom from in verses one through three. Job is living for the freedom of a clear conscience.

We see his innocence of adultery in verses nine through 12. And here again we see that “if / then / for” structure. Look with me at verse nine, 9 **“If my heart has been enticed by a woman, or I have lurked at my neighbor’s doorway, 10 [then] may my wife grind for another, and let others kneel down over her. 11 For that would be a lustful crime;**

moreover, it would be an iniquity punishable by judges. We have another “for” in verse 12, **For it would be fire that consumes to Abaddon, and would uproot all my increase.”**

The word we saw when we looked at verse one, “gaze at a virgin,” that word in Hebrew is *bethulah*, which literally means “a virgin.” A different word is used here in verse nine, it's *ishah* which in this context is talking about a married woman. So look at how Job covers all of his bases: *I have not lusted after a young woman, a young unmarried woman. I have not committed adultery with an older married woman. My eyes have been pure my heart is been pure. I've been devoted to my wife.* And it all begins with that same sin of the heart, verse nine, **“If my heart has been in enticed by a woman.”**

This hypothetical woman is complicit in this sin. The word “enticed” has the idea of “being seduced” – “if my heart is been seduced by this woman.” And the second half of the verse goes with the first half, **“Or I have lurked at my neighbor’s doorway.”** That pictures a man who is carrying on with his neighbor's wife, lurking around, waiting for the woman's husband to leave so that he can go in. Job says, “No, I’ve not lurked at my neighbors doorway.” You see that there’s secrecy there. Job, speaking of the wicked back in chapter 24 said this, “The eye of the adulterer waits for the twilight, saying, ‘No eye will see me.’ And he disguises his face.” [24:15] That’s true. Adultery is a secret that is attempted to be kept by two people. But God knows. Job says, “No. I have lived with the freedom of a clear conscience as it relates to sexual sin.” And he says, “If I'm guilty, here's the penalty (v. 10): **“May my wife grind for another, and let others kneel down over her.”** Well plainly Job means *may my wife become a slave*. Grinding was one of the lowest tasks on the list of what slaves did. But an interesting interpretation of this word that goes back to the ancient rabbis. That is understanding the

word “grind” as a euphemism for sex. And so did Job maybe has a little double entendre here. Job may be saying, “May my wife become another man's.” He may be saying that. And we have words and phrases that have double meaning. We see in the Old Testament, with Joseph and Potiphar's wife, where she says, “lie with me.” What does that mean? It's a euphemism for sexual relations. And this word “grind” may also be understood in that way.

But the question that people have asked is, why would Job make his wife the object of the penalty for his sin? “If I committed the sin, may my wife become a slave, or may my wife become another man's sexual possession.” Why would Job do that? Some have said that this is unfair, that this is very patriarchal; this is unfair. A benign example might be me saying, “If I get a traffic ticket may my wife do 20 hours of community service.” Well, that doesn't really make sense. But this is misunderstanding what Job is saying. He's making a very strong point here that I think demonstrates the value that he has for his wife. Listen to Leyton Talbert. He says:

Some are offended that Job's curse would unjustly victimize his wife rather than him. But this criticism misses the whole point. Job is not wishing any evil on his wife; he is asserting his innocence in this area in the strongest possible terms. His wife is completely safe because he has never met the condition.²⁰⁸

It's saying that “I'm willing to risk something of treasure to me in an oath because there is no risk.” It's like a man who's been loyal to his wife over the years saying, “If I've slept with another man's wife, may my children be accursed.” He really loves his children. He's just stating something in the strongest possible terms. He could do that because he knows that he is not guilty. And that's what Job is doing here.

²⁰⁸Leyton Talbert, *Job*, 156.

And he gives that double explanation word “for” in verses 11 and 12: 11 **“For that would be a lustful crime; moreover, it would be an iniquity punishable by judges.”** Well that's interesting because this was before the time of the Law of Moses. This is before the nation of Israel. And yet Job says this would've been recognized as a community crime that could be punished by civil authority. Interesting.

We see that second “for” in verse 12: **“For it would be fire that consumes to Abaddon [death], and would uproot all my increase.”** Well, think about that. Calling the sin of adultery “a fire that consumes to death itself and uproots one’s wealth” (whatever degree of wealth that one has). And that is true. How many lives have been destroyed by the sin of adultery? I think we probably all know of someone, a family member, a neighbor, a friend, who’s run off with somebody that they're not married to, another person's wife, another person’s husband, and the havoc that has come upon families – and even individual lives when that happens. We know of examples: lives destroyed, children hurt, Christian testimonies thrown in the mud, churches torn apart, souls destroyed. Yes, adultery would be a fire that consumes to Abaddon and uproots all one's increase. It's a consuming fire. Listen to Proverbs chapter 6 verse 27, 28, 29. Here's the warning:

27 Can a man take fire in his bosom and his clothes not be burned? 28 Or can a man walk on hot coals and his feet not be scorched? 29 So is the one who goes in to his neighbor’s wife; whoever touches her will not go unpunished.

Fire that consumes to Abaddon. Don't fly close to that flame!

You can read chapters five, six, and seven of Proverbs. What a wonderful lesson for us all to read and think about and meditate upon. Chapter 5, beginning in verse three:

3 For the lips of an adulteress drip honey and smoother than oil is her speech; 4 but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. 5 Her feet go down to

death, her steps take hold of Sheol. 6 She does not ponder the path of life; her ways are unstable, she does not know it. 7 Now then, my sons, listen to me and do not depart from the words of my mouth. 8 Keep your way far from her and do not go near the door of her house.²⁰⁹

Job says, “No, I’ve not lurked at my neighbor’s door. *Live for the freedom of a clear conscience.*

So Job Claims Innocence Over Nine Categories of Sin. The first one we see is *sexual sin* (lust and adultery). We’ll move rapidly through the rest.

Hypocrisy: A Duplicitous Life (4-8)

The second one is Hypocrisy. I call this A Duplicitous Life. First, Job affirms in verse four that God sees everything, “**Does He not see my ways and number all my steps?**” Note 14:16, “For now You number my steps . . .” God knows every action that you take. God knows. Job affirms that with another “if” in verse five, “**If I have walked with falsehood, and my foot has hastened after deceit.**” We see several times the words “step, foot, walk.” Verse six, “**let Him weigh me with accurate scales, and let God know my integrity.**” Verse seven, we have again “step,” but we also have “heart, eyes, and hands.” “**If my step has turned from the way, or my heart followed my eyes, or if any spot [stain] has stuck to my hands.**” So Job is saying, “If I’ve walked away from the paths of righteousness and my heart has followed the lust of my eyes, or if my hands have been stained with sin, then . . .” verse eight, “**let me sow and another eat, and let my crops be uprooted.**” Well that’s a big deal in an agrarian society. You’re talking about your livelihood, you’re talking about food on the table. This would be like saying, “If I’ve done this may I become poor and destitute.” You see a similar curse in Micah chapter 6. The minor prophet Micah, chapter 6 verse 15, God’s condemnation of Israel: “You

²⁰⁹Proverbs 5:3–8.

will sow but you will not reap. You will tread the olive but will not anoint yourself with oil; and the grapes, but you will not drink wine.” You will work, but you're not going to have any of the fruit of the produce of that work. This is a big time curse in an agrarian society. So Job claims innocence over hypocrisy. For us, *live for the freedom of a clear conscience*.

Exploitation: Abuse of Power (13-15)

Third (this brings us to verse 13): Exploitation: The Abuse of Power. Job says in verse 13, **“If I have despised the claim of my male or female *slaves* when they filed a complaint against me.”** The New American Standard has “slaves.” I would prefer translating this as “servants.” Slaves, for one thing, has such a negative racist connotation in our culture. And we’re told in chapter 1 verse three that Job had “very many servants.” So as other translations do, I would render this “servants:” **“If I have despised the claim of my male or female *servants* when they filed a complaint against me.”** This is the claim of abuse or neglect. And you get the impression from what we’ve seen of Job that he never would not have knowingly abused one of his workers. But we also get the impression that if there were – if there was a concern over something – Job acted. Job acted, he listened. After all, Job had a large estate, he could not micromanage everything. I'm sure he had foreman, people managing different workers, different fields, that sort of thing. And who knows what foreman may be acting unjustly? But apparently Job's workers had access to this man and he would get complaints. If he got a complaint he didn't despise the claim, no, he acted. There was no exploitation, no abuse of power.

And what's that grounded in in this passage? It's grounded in Job's understanding that we are all created equal. I don't think it's a stretch to say that Job understood that we are created in

the very image and likeness of God as we see in the book of Genesis. Verse 14, **“What then could I do when God arises? And when He calls me to account, what will I answer Him?”**

15 **“Did not He who made me in the womb make him, and the same one fashion us in the womb?”** We all start the same. That's what Job is saying. Job had earlier described God creating him in the womb, in chapter 10 – very picturesque language, poetic language used there. He said, 10 “Did You not pour me out like milk and curdle me like cheese; 11 clothe me with skin and flesh, and knit me together with bones and sinews? 12 ‘You have granted me life and lovingkindness; and Your care has preserved my spirit.” [10:10–12] Job is very much aware of God as Creator; the sanctity of life. Job is very much aware that we are all created equally in the image and likeness of God. And he recognized, as we all should, that our prosperity in life is all of God's grace, we are all born equal. That some are born, I'll grant you this, some are born into great advantage, some are born into disadvantage as far as their circumstances. But when we talk about who you are, who I am, who anyone is at their very nature, we are equally humans born in the image and likeness of God. And we have lost that in today's identity politics. Nobody wants to think about a Creator. Everybody wants to think about who they are in their little oppressed subgroup. And all that does is further divide us. The great equalizer is the Christian worldview, that we are all created in the image and likeness of God. We have one Creator, one Judge with whom we will have to do. That's the great uniter. And Job understood that. Proverbs 22:2, “The rich and the poor have a common bond, the LORD is the maker of them all.” The Lord is maker of them all, rich and poor (we could say, “black and white,” or “male and female”). We all have a common bond that the Lord has made us all. So Job did not abuse his power or exploit those who were under his charge.

Social Indifference: Stinginess (16-23, 31-32)

Job Claims Innocence Over Nine Categories of Sin. The fourth is Social Indifference. I call this Stinginess. Job was not stingy. And here we have two general classes of those who are in social need, especially in that day. We have widows and orphans, on one hand, and then we have aliens (travelers) on the other. We see the aliens addressed in verses 31 and 32: 31 **“Have the men of my tent [his “household”] not said, ‘Who can find one who has not been satisfied with his meat’? 32 The alien has not lodged outside, for I have opened my doors to the traveler.”** This is one of the things that Job's friends accused him of falling far short in. Eliphaz in chapter 22 verse seven accused Job of “denying water to the weary” and “withholding food from the hungry.” There was no basis upon which to base that accusation. They were just assuming that was true. But the fact is, Job was lavish with his hospitality. Clines observes: “At Job’s table, of course, there could have been lamb or beef on the menu every day of the week (he has seven thousand sheep and one thousand oxen . . .). We are to imagine Job entertaining guests on the pattern of Abraham in Gen 18:2–8.”²¹⁰

Hospitality was a big thing in the Ancient Near East. It was big almost to a fault. There are instances where you would neglect family before you would neglect somebody in need, a traveler and alien. And Job was lavish with his hospitality. That which was true of the traveler was also true of orphans and widows, another oppressed class in that day (in New Testament times, as well). We have a long run-on sentence here, but again we have that “if / then / for” construction. “*If* I did this, *then* let this be done to me, *for* or *because* it would be wrong.”

²¹⁰David J. A. Clines, 1029

Note that Job shared his wealth and his food. Look at verse 16, **“If I have kept the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail, 17 or have eaten my morsel alone, and the orphan has not shared it** – then you have this parenthetical statement in verse 18, **(but from my youth he grew up with me as with a father, and from infancy I guided her).**” That has to be hyperbole. Either it’s hyperbole or Job is talking about his household growing up.

Job shared his wealth. He shared his food. He also clothed and sheltered the poor, verses 19 and 20, **“if I have seen anyone perish for lack of clothing, or that the needy had no covering, 20 if his loins** [some translations have “hearts”] **have not thanked me, and if he has not been warmed with the fleece of my sheep . . .”** And we see the fourth “if” in verse 21, **“If I have lifted up my hand against the orphan, because I saw I had support in the gate . . .”** You see why I said this is a long run-on sentence? But what's Job talking about in verse 21? Remember, Job was a leader. He was a leader at the town gate. He was leader at the town square. And he says, **“If I lifted up my hand against an orphan because I saw I had support . . .”** We’re not exactly sure – I’m certainly not exactly sure – what Job is saying here. He may be saying that even if he had political support to oppress an orphan, he would not have done so, he would not have raised his hand against him. Again, he is denying these things. “If I have done this” – and *then* verse 22, **“let my shoulder fall from the socket, and my arm be broken off at the elbow.”** That's the curse. The NIV application commentary is this to say about verse 22:

The ramifications of this idiomatic expression reach beyond anatomical casualty: both arm and hand are metaphors for power. If Job had possessed the power to help and failed to do so, his power would be revoked.²¹¹

So we have the “if,” we have the “then,” and here verse 23 we have the “for” or “because:”

“For calamity from God is a terror to me, and because of His majesty I can do nothing.”

This is Job putting into practice the last words of chapter 28, the wisdom chapter: “. . . Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; And to depart from evil is understanding.”²¹²

Materialism: Trust in Wealth (24-25)

So Job claims innocence over nine categories of sin: Sexual Sin, Hypocrisy, Exploitation, Social Indifference. Numbers five and six are grouped together. Number five Materialism, number six Idolatry. But note verse 24 (this is under the heading of “materialism” or “trust in wealth”) – another “if” – 24 **“If I have put my confidence in gold, and called fine gold my trust, 25 if I have gloated because my wealth was great, and because my hand had secured so much . . .”** Again, this was a sin that Eliphaz accused Job of in chapter 22. Eliphaz, exhorting Job:

23 “If you return to the Almighty, you will be restored; if you remove unrighteousness far from your tent, 24 and place your gold in the dust, and the gold of Ophir among the stones of the brooks, 25 then the Almighty will be your gold & choice silver to you.”²¹³

Eliphaz is saying that Job was glorying in his gold or in his wealth. Job is saying, “No, God has been my wealth, God has been my treasure.” So, Materialism or Trust in Wealth? Job says, “No I’ve not done that.

²¹¹*NIV Application Commentary: Job*, 326.

²¹²28:28.

²¹³22:23–25.

Idolatry: Worship of Idols (26-28)

Related to Materialism is Idolatry. Number six, The Worship of Idols. Here specifically, the astral deities of the sun and the moon. Again, note verse 26, **“If I have looked at the sun when it shone or the moon going in splendor, 27 and my heart became secretly enticed, and my hand threw a kiss from my mouth . . .”** That's an act of worship – that's an act of idolatrous worship, throwing a kiss. The Roman historian Tacitus²¹⁴ wrote that it was a Syrian custom to salute the rising sun. The Nabataeans, according to Strabo, honored the sun, with altars in each house and daily libations. The Greeks, according to Lucian,²¹⁵ would kiss their hands to the sun as it rose.²¹⁶ These were common idolatrous practices. And Job says, “No, I have not done that.”

So note the “if / then” sequence that begins in verse 24:

24 **“If I have put my confidence in gold . . .**

25 **“If I have gloated because my wealth was great . . .**

26 **If I have looked at the sun when it shone or the moon going in splendor, 27 and my heart became secretly enticed, and my hand threw a kiss from my mouth . . .**

28 **THEN - that too would have been an iniquity calling for judgment, for I would have denied God above.**

Job knew that God will have no rivals. God is a jealous God. He will not have any rivals to His worship. Those who are His will worship and love Him above and beyond anything else.

Worship Him alone. Put away your idols! We all have idols in our culture. We have idols in our lives. No, not little statues that we bow down to, but it could be a relationship, it could be

²¹⁴*Histories*, 3.24.

²¹⁵*The Dance*, 17.

²¹⁶Cited in Clines, 1026.

materialistic. Whatever it is, put away your idols that Jesus Christ be your sufficient treasure. And in doing so, live for the freedom of a clear conscience.

Vengeance: Hatred of Enemies (29-30)

The seventh category of sin that Job claims freedom from is Vengeance: Hatred of Enemies. versus 29 and 30: 29 **“Have I rejoiced at the extinction of my enemy, or exulted when evil befell him? 30 No, I have not allowed my mouth to sin by asking for his life in a curse.”** This is talking about personal enemies (adversaries). So don't relish in the misfortune or suffering of others, particularly those that you feel are opposed to you, or you feel you are opposed to. The Germans had a word for this *schadenfreude*. Schadenfreude was pleasure in other's affliction. No, that is not to be the heart attitude of the worshiper of the Triune God Job says, “No, I have not done this. I've not been filled with vengeance, I've not cursed or hated my enemies.” Later, in Proverbs chapter 24, we read, “Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles; or the LORD will see it and be displeased . . .”²¹⁷ The apostle Paul puts it succinctly in Romans chapter 12, verse 14, “Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.” Job says, “No, I have not cursed my enemy and do not have a heart attitude of vengeance toward those who were my opponents.”

Deceit: Secret Sins and the Fear of Man

Number eight is Deceit: Secret Sins and the Fear of Man. Just look at verse 33 for a moment. Job says, **“Have I covered my transgressions like Adam . . .”** *Like Adam*. Most translations don't render this Hebrew word literally, unless you're using the New American Standard or the King James. Most translations have something like this: “Have I conceal my

²¹⁷Proverbs 24:17–18.

transgressions as others do?” Or, “Have I concealed my sin as people do?” It could be translated either way. The Hebrew noun *adam* can be translated as a proper name, Adam, or it can just simply stand for man in general, people in general. I think that Job, even though he didn't have the book of Genesis – this was before it was written – knew of Adam and Eve. That would've been the godly, true tradition, oral tradition, that would've risen up in cultures where God was recognized, where God was served. Job knew about that. It could be translated either way. But the point is that the man Adam in hiding his sin (literally hiding from God) is the father of all men and women who do the same thing. Job says, “I did not do that/ And I didn't do it out of fear of others, as well.” Verse 34, **“because I feared the great multitude, and the contempt of families terrified me, and kept silent and did not go out of doors?”** That’s a little tricky, but think about what he’s talking about. Here's the fear of man. How many of us struggle with the fear of man? You might be an *approval junkie* as I am. You know, you just have to have that approval from others. Well, that's a form of fearing man. Maybe it’s that you are a people pleaser. It may be that you just have a hard time saying no. That’s common. “I just can't say ‘no.’” Why? Because you're afraid of what someone will think about you, or you have to look good (because I'm afraid that somebody will think bad of me, or think less of me). What you have to consider is that this is wrong, even sinful. Fear God and no one else! That is the secret of wisdom. Job says, “No, I have not lived a life of deceit. I've not had secret sins covering my transgressions like Adam, or I've not lived in the fear of man” (verse 34).

Brothers and sisters, live for the freedom of a clear conscience. If we could all go through a list like this and have the same degree of dogmatism that Job has, that “my conscience is clear, I’ve not done this, or this. In fact, I’ve done the opposite where it's been the right thing

to do, like taking care of those in disadvantaged situations.” If we could all have such confidence we would all have such clear consciences.

Corruption: Mistreatment of Tenant Farmers

The last category of sin is Corruption. I call this the Mistreatment of Farmers. Again we have a double “if / then.” Verse 38, **“If my land cries out against me, and its furrows weep together; 39 if I have eaten its fruit without money, or have caused its owners to lose their lives, 40a let briars grow instead of wheat, and stinkweed instead of barley . . .”** In other words, *let my crops be cursed*. This is not a passage to use in defending ecology. Job is personifying the land and it's furloughs as crying out against him, *if* he were guilty of taking the produce of others, or removing them from the land that is rightly theirs thus causing them to lose their lives. This doesn't have the same punch with us because we're not farmers. But in that day this was a big thing.

So Job claims innocence over nine categories of sin:

- Sexual Sin: Lust and Adultery (1-3, 9-12)
- Hypocrisy: A Duplicious Life (4-8)
- Exploitation: Abuse of Power (13-15)
- Social Indifference: Stinginess (16-23, 31-32)
- Materialism: Trust in Wealth (24-25)
- Idolatry: Worship of Idols (26-28)
- Vengeance: Hatred of Enemies (29-30)
- Deceit: Secret Sins and the Fear of Man (33-34)
- Corruption: Mistreatment of Tenant Farmers (38-40a)

Well, Job has made his case. What is left?

Job Signs His Affidavit (35-37)

First, Job invites God to answer: 35a **“Oh that I had one to hear me! Behold, here is my signature; let the Almighty answer me! . . .”** *Let Shaddai answer me!* I found this really

interesting, though I'm not sure what to make of it. The word "signature" is simply the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, *tav*. And in old paleo-Hebrew it looked like an X. (This is similar to saying to someone, "sign this document," and they write an "X." You see that in cartoons as a kid.) And that's what this *tav* looked like in old script Hebrew. Now, in Ezekiel 9 a *tav* was placed on the foreheads of those whom God would spare punishment. And it's interesting that this looks like an "X." And so when Job says, "here is my signature," it's literally "my *tov*," an X. That X is also a symbol for the Greek *chi* / X (this is later) which is, or stands for, the name of Christ. I don't want to make a big deal of that, but I just found it was interesting.

So, *Job signs his affidavit*. Job is so confident in his innocence that he invites God to hand down a written indictment. Job signed his affidavit. He claims he is innocent of all these things. Now, this is pretty bold, Job is going little too far here. 35b "**. . . And the indictment which my adversary [he's referring to God here] has written.**" But he doesn't think that God can hand an indictment against him.

And he's so confident of his innocence, thirdly, that if God could show him to be guilty, Job would publicly display the indictment. He says, verse 36, "**surely I would carry it on my shoulder, I would bind it to myself like a crown.**" "God prove me guilty, hand down your indictment and I'll wear it on my shoulder. I'll wear it like a turban on my head. I'll walk around in public with it on."

Fourth, Job would boldly approach God. Verse 37, "**I would declare to Him the number of my steps; like a prince I would approach Him.**" In other words, "I would be bold." Yes, Job is going a little bit too far here.

Job's Defense Rests (40b)

Yet Job's Defense Rests. How does the chapter end? Verse 40b, **“The words of Job are ended.”** At this point we would almost hope to go right into God's response in chapter 38. Job has set himself up. Certainly we can take at face value the fact that he wasn't guilty of these sins, that he acted righteously. He refrained from those things that God forbid, he did those things that God commanded. So you almost expect to go right into chapter 38. But no, we have the words of Elihu the fourth friend to contend with first, chapters 32 through 37.

Concluding Thoughts

1. Job is concerned with sins of the heart in an age of deeds

But I just want to give three concluding thoughts. . . Number one, *Job is concerned with sins of the heart in an age of deeds*. Job is concerned with sins of the heart in an age of deeds. By that I mean – and this is common with the Pharisees – it was so often about what you did, not what you thought. It would be very easy for me, I could be very dogmatic, if I was just talking about physically doing the act of killing somebody. I could stand before you and say, “May my children be accursed if I've ever literally murdered somebody, if I've ever literally committed adultery.” It's easy to speak with dogmatism about things like that. Didn't Jesus address this whole issue of sins of the heart? If you've lusted you committed adultery, if you hated you committed murder. Yeah, that's different. So Job is concerned with sins of the heart, not just the deeds. In that way Job is way ahead of his time.

2. What we see in this chapter parallels the teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount.

And his conduct, what we see here in this chapter, *parallels the teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount*. Note this: Job made a covenant with his eyes that he would not look with

desire, with lust, on a young woman; or that he would not commit adultery. Job knew that the eyes were the gateway to the heart. Jesus taught in Matthew 5:28 that to look – the eyes – to look on another with lust was committing adultery in the heart. Job was not glad when his adversary suffered loss, he would not curse his enemy. Jesus taught in Matthew 5 that murder did not end with the physical act, but hatred of another was tantamount to murdering that person in your heart. Well, Job's on board there. Job put no confidence in his wealth and was not proud of his status. In Matthew 6, Jesus warned about storing up treasures on earth and exhorted us to store up heavenly treasure, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Job was not stingy but freely shared his resources with the needy. Jesus in Matthew said, “Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.” Job was sincere, free from the fear of others. Jesus warned in Matthew 6 about practicing our righteousness before men to be noticed by them, being pretentious. So Job is concerned with sins of the heart and age of deeds. Job's conduct parallels the teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount.

3. Job was righteous, yet sinful.

And third (this is just a theological point), *Job was righteous, yet sinful*. I'll argue that his ultimate righteousness, even though he did not have the knowledge of this, but his ultimate righteousness was grounded in the future work of Jesus Christ on his behalf. The next verse, chapter 32, verse one, says that the three friends ceased answering Job because he was righteous in his own eyes. Was Job righteous in his own eyes? Maybe in that he didn't have a full understanding of God's holiness. When God reveals Himself to Job at the end of the book, Job's response is this, chapter 42 verses five and six, “I've heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but

now my eye sees You. Therefore, I retract and repent!” You see, if Job didn't understand it before, he comes to understand the words of the psalmist that in God's sight no man living is righteous. So yes, Job ultimately, his righteousness was in Christ who would die for him some 2000 years later. So he was yet sinful and I think he comes to understand that. So live, brothers and sisters, like Job. Live for the freedom of a clear conscience. Let's pray.

Father, it's hard not to look at a chapter like this and see a man who is so confident in his good conduct that we don't feel like we fall far short. Are we always hospitable? Do we ever trust in our wealth or our abilities? Do we ever have hatred of our enemies? Are we ever socially indifferent? Have we ever lusted over something that is not rightly ours to desire? There so many things here, Lord, that are lessons for us and what it means to have the freedom of a clear conscience. So Father I pray that as we have gone through this challenging, challenging chapter, I pray that it will continue to undergird – for we who have been immersed in this study of Job – that it will continue to undergird our understanding of what it means to serve a Triune God, to fear Him, to serve Him above all else. And to recognize, Lord, that You are in control of our very steps, even when those steps are going through dark, dark, difficult valleys. You are there. You have ordained that for us and You'll see us through it. And so, Lord, I pray you continue to impress these things in our hearts and that we retain these things that we are learning. To retain them not just for knowledge sake, but for the sake of understanding, applying these things to wisdom. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

The First Speech of Elihu: God Is The Sovereign

Job 32:1 - 33:33

May 21, 2023

Christ Church of Clarkson

0523Job32:1-33.33(32) | Audio Length: 56:40

Elihu

Well, here we are introduced to a fourth friend. I pronounce it “Elihu.” You can pronounce it differently if you like. Pronunciation of these Hebrew names is sometimes tricky, and even scholars don't agree. I'm going to call him “Elihu.” The name means, “He is my God.” And Elihu joins Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar who have given up on the debate. In chapter 32, verse two, we see that Elihu's father, Barakel was a Buzite, likely a descendant of Abraham's nephew Buzz. And you can see that recorded in Genesis chapter 22, verses 20 and 21. Elihu was one of the bystanders that had gathered around Job at the town dump. And chapter 32 marks the beginning of a series of speeches by Elihu that continue through chapter 37. His name has not come up before chapter 32. His name will not be mentioned after chapter 37.

Several weeks ago, I had said something to the effect that there are three ways that we can be identified, or three persons within us. There is who we think we are. There's who others think we are. And there's who God *knows* that we are. You might remember that. And that comes to mind when it comes to Elihu.

What do people think about you?

There may be a lot of opinions, good and bad, when it comes to you. What do people think about you? Some, hopefully most, would have good thoughts about you. But there may be some who aren't so positive.

Opinions about Elihu

Well, this is true of Elihu. There are lots of opinions about him. He may be the most misunderstood character in all of Scripture. On the one hand, you have United Bible Society's Handbook, which writes this: "Job does not reply to his long speech, and Elihu's words add little of substance to the book." You've got Henry Morris, the venerable Henry Morris, who calls him "a braggart, spoiling for a theological fight. A tool of Satan, even a false messiah." The great expositor Chuck Swindoll refers to Elihu's speeches as "another long winded monologue." On the other hand, Matthew Henry, the Puritan, sees Elihu as "a man of great modesty and humility, of great sense and courage." The late Old Testament scholar Elmer Smick: "We find a more balanced theology than that of the three counselors . . . a warmer personal response to the greatness of God." . . . And then another commentator observes, "Elihu is the most courteous speech of the debate, and undoubtedly surpasses all of the preceding speeches in spiritual grasp."

Who is this man, Elihu?

Well, who is this man, Elihu? Is he a pompous, arrogant young upstart who lends little to the debate? Or is he a refreshing voice of truth? Well, before I really started digging into this part of Job, I shared Swindoll's attitude: Okay, here comes another long winded attempt to set Job straight. But my attitude toward him as I have studied these six chapters has changed.

Let me give you six reasons, six reasons why I think Elihu is actually more of a hero than a villain. *Number one*, when God admonishes Job's critics in chapter 42, verse seven, He refers to the three, He admonishes the three, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, but He doesn't say

anything about Elihu. Argument from silence? Maybe. But I think it's worth considering in light of the other points.

Number two, Elihu has been given a place of prominence. He has six chapters in the Book of Job. His speeches are longer than 12 other Old Testament books and 17 letters of the New Testament. His four speeches in these six chapters are about as long as Job's final speech, which ran from chapter 26 to chapter 31. His words comprise more content than the combined speakers of any of the three alleged friends who've gone before.

Number three, Elihu is more sensitive to Job's plight than the other three are. Elihu focuses on God's character and offers more substantive hope for Job.

Number four, Elihu addresses Job's words rather than his actions. He doesn't focus on Job's supposed sins that caused his suffering. He takes Job to task by what he heard Job say, those words that served as an indictment against God's character. Very important. Keep in mind (I'll repeat this later): *There's a difference between suffering because of your sin and sinning because of your suffering*. Job does the latter. Certainly there are times when we suffer because of our sin, but not all of our suffering is related to personal sin. Job's wasn't. We know that because we've read the book. But sometimes we sin because of our suffering. More on that later.

Number five, Elihu speaks not from experience, as does Eliphaz, or from tradition, as does Bildad; but he speaks from wisdom, youthful wisdom, but wisdom nonetheless.

And then *lastly*, much of what Elihu says is later repeated by God. And this is what really convinced me that Elihu is overall a good guy. God repeats what Elihu says, not verbatim necessarily. . . Let me just give you a few examples. In chapter 35, verse 16, Elihu says this: "So

Job opens his mouth emptily; he multiplies words without knowledge.”²¹⁸ (That's the words of Elihu.) In chapter 38, verse two, God says, “Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?” Elihu is critical of Job for defending his own righteousness at the expense of God's righteousness. Chapter 34, verses five through six, Elihu, quoting Job: “Job has said, ‘I am righteous, but God has taken away my right. Should I lie concerning my right? My wound is incurable, though I am without transgression.’” Well later, God, in addressing Job in chapter 40 says this: “Will the faultfinder contend with the Almighty? Let him who reproves God answer it.” . . .

Elihu also stresses the indescribable glory of God in creation. Just listen to these few verses out of chapter 36:

26 “Behold, God is exalted, and we do not know Him; The number of His years is unsearchable. 27 “For He draws up the drops of water, they distill rain from the mist, 28 Which the clouds pour down, they drip upon man abundantly. 29 “Can anyone understand the spreading of the clouds, the thundering of His pavilion? 30 “Behold, He spreads His lightning about Him, and He covers the depths of the sea. 31 “For by these He judges peoples; He gives food in abundance. 32 “He covers His hands with the lightning, and commands it to strike the mark. 33a “Its noise declares His presence . . .”²¹⁹

These are lofty, weighty words from Elihu as to the majesty of God in creation. God reflects this through so much of His discourse to Job. Just a little example from chapter 38, God asks,

4 “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding, 8 “or who enclosed the sea with doors when, bursting forth, it went out from the womb; 25 “Who has cleft a channel for the flood, or a way for the thunderbolt, 35 “Can you send forth lightnings that they may go and say to you, ‘Here we are’?

²¹⁸Scripture citations are taken from the NAS95 unless otherwise noted.

²¹⁹Scripture citations are taken from the NAS95 unless otherwise noted.

Elihu accuses Job of speaking “words without knowledge,” which stands parallel to God's opening statement to Job in chapter 38, verse two, “Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?” And then lastly, Elihu questions Job about his knowledge of creation in relation to God's knowledge. You see that in chapter 37 verses 14 through 18. And God does the same as He in rapid fire succession asks Job some 80 questions.

So I now see Elihu much more positively than I used to. I see his speeches rather than not having or adding anything to the debate, as some say, but as forming a transition to God's statements when He begins addressing Job in chapter 38. It's a transition. It's like a tag team where Elihu softens Job up for God's conclusive blows that lead Job to repentance.

The First Speech of Elihu: God Is The Sovereign

Well, we're calling this, The First Speech of Elihu: God is the Sovereign. God is the (note the definite article) He is *the* sovereign. Chuck Swindoll has this right when he says,

The major theme of all that Elihu has to say can be stated in three words; God is sovereign. He is not only good all the time, He is in control all the time. . . . God is never shocked or surprised. Our lives, therefore, are never out of God's control. And furthermore, God doesn't feel obligated to explain Himself.²²⁰

Yes, God does not feel obligated to explain himself. So it's a lesson for us. Here's the lesson in a sentence: *Keep trusting your sovereign and good God – especially when life hurts.* Keep trusting. Trust. Faith. Belief. If you're a believer, He's your God. . . . He is King. King over all, in control of all things, your sovereign and good God. He's not a wicked despot. He is a good, holy, righteous God who has your best interests, believer, in heart. And *keep trusting your*

²²⁰Swindoll, *Job*. 251.

sovereign and good God – especially when life hurts. That is the time when it is most challenging. Many of you know that (I certainly do).

Two main points

We're going to look at two main points. Chapter 32: Elihu's Introduction. Chapter 33: Elihu's First Speech. As far as chapter 32 is concerned, Elihu is speaking to the three friends and does not address Job directly, at least until around verse 15. He addresses Job formally in chapter 33.

Chapter 32: Elihu's Introduction

So Chapter 32: Elihu's Introduction. We get an introduction to Elihu (introducing and defending his role in the debate), and then Chapter 33: Elihu's First Speech. So looking at chapter 32, Elihu's Introduction, there are three points under this heading. We're using, as in our outline, *The Ambition of Elihu*; *The Awareness of Elihu*; and, *The Arguments of the Three* (the three other friends).

The Ambition of Elihu (vv. 1-5, 16-22)

So looking . . . beginning in verse one, The Ambition of Elihu – and I mean by “ambition” a strong, passionate desire. And that's what we will see from Elihu. He has a strong, passionate desire to enter in to this debate. The first thing we see that Elihu is angry. Look at verse one:

1 Then these three men [Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar] ceased answering Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes. 2 But the anger of Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram burned; against Job his anger burned because he [that is, Job] justified himself before God. 3 And his anger burned against his three friends because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job. 4 Now Elihu had waited to speak to Job because they were years older than he. 5 And when Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of the three men his anger burned.

Well, the first thing we see is in verse one, **“these three men ceased answering Job because he was righteous in his own eyes.”** These three men, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar. And remember, if you've been with me in this study, we have endured three cycles of speeches, beginning with Eliphaz in chapter four, three cycles whereby each friend has a shot at trying to set Job straight as to why he's suffering. They fail because their faulty worldview maintains that if you're suffering, you did something to deserve it. All suffering relates to sin. So even if you claim to be righteous, even if you *claim to be* a God follower and walking in obedience, if you suffer, it's because you did something to deserve it. That's their faulty worldview.

So we have these three cycles where each friend speaks to Job, and Job replies to each friend. Round one. Round two. Round three. In the third round, remember, Zophar does not speak. He's the youngest and he does not speak – probably because he's just exasperated; he's the most impetuous of the friends. . . . So what we've seen more recently is that Job replies to Bildad in chapter 26, then in chapter 27 through 31, Job gives his last, final answer to the three. Okay, the three are done talking. That ends with Bildad.

In chapter 26, Job gives his final answer. Those five chapters we covered in four weeks, and we entitled those four messages, “Job's Defense Rests.” This was Job's final defense (the last line of chapter 31, verse 40 says, “The words of Job are ended”). So the three friends are done speaking. Job, for now, is done speaking. Then we come to chapter 32, verse one, and we're introduced to Elihu. . . .

Elihu is angry

So note the transition. We go from “the words of Job are ended” in chapter 31, verse 40, to the next verse, chapter 32, verse one, **“Then these three men ceased answering Job,**

because he was righteous in his own eyes.” And note the transition in verse two, the word *but* – **“But the anger of Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram burned; against Job his anger burned because he justified himself before God.”** . . . Now Job was righteous positionally. His position, ultimately in Christ, was righteous because of what Christ did on his behalf. . . . Job was righteous positionally. And his conduct, as far as what everyone knew about him, and even what God knew of him, was that he was a good man. He was a righteous man. We saw that established very early on in the book. So he was righteous positionally. He was righteous practically. . . . Suffering [did not change] his position. That doesn't change if you're in Christ, for example, that does not change, your position is in Christ. Your practice may not always match your position, and that's the battle of living in this fallen world, in this fallen body. Our practice ought to match our position, and that's what we fight for, that's discipleship, that's sanctification. Our position is justification: We are declared righteous in Christ. So our practice may change. And one of the things that may change our practice is suffering, intense suffering, tragedy. (What did my practice become after the tragedy that struck our lives? My position didn't change, but my practice was often far from righteous.) *Suffering can change everything.*

But again, there's a difference between suffering because of your sin and sinning because of your suffering. Tragedy in your life does not necessarily mean that you did something wrong to deserve it. That's not a fixed rule. But when you suffer under the providential hand of God, you may sin in how you react to that suffering. Do you get the difference? And again, using my circumstances, there was nothing – I'm confident of this – there was nothing that my daughter (14 years old) did, or nothing that I did that God was getting back at us by permitting, or

ordaining, this car crash that injured both of us so badly (and ultimately took my daughter's life). But how I responded as the survivor to the suffering was a different matter, because I did not always – like Job – did not always respond in the most godly fashion.

So *Elihu is angry*. We see that's part of his passion. The words “anger” and “burned” are used four times in three verses; really emphasizes the fact that Elihu is raring to go. Look again at chapter 32, verse two, three and five:

2 But the anger of Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram burned; against Job his anger burned because he justified himself before God. 3 And his anger burned against his three friends [why?] because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job. And then verse 5 And when Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of the three men his anger burned.

You think Elihu's angry!?! The question is, is this righteous indignation? Or is this like Zophar, just sinful, youthful anger? I think it's more righteous indignation. He was angry at Job for Job's self-righteousness. He was angry at the three because they condemned Job with their faulty theology. What was their faulty theology? *You're suffering. You sinned.* “What's your sin? Come on, Job, fess up.” That was their faulty theology. So we see The Ambition of Elihu [and that] *Elihu is angry.*

Elihu is anxious

Secondly, *Elihu is anxious* (and we're going to skip ahead to verse 16). Elihu is very anxious to act. He's angry and he's anxious. Verse 16 of chapter 32:

16 “Shall I wait, because they [“they” meaning the three friends] do not speak [remember, they were done speaking], because they stop and no longer answer? 17 “I too will answer my share, I also will tell my opinion. Verses 18, 19 and 20: 18 “For I am full of words; the spirit within me constrains me. 19 “Behold, my belly is like unvented wine, like new wineskins it is about to burst. 20 “Let me speak that I may get relief; let me open my lips and answer.

Elihu is so raring to go he is about to explode. Not unlike when you were a little kid in class. Do you ever do this? Teacher asks a question, you've got the answer, and you raise your hand and you bounce up and down hoping that you get called on. Well, maybe a little bit – you probably weren't angry when you did that – but maybe a little bit. . . . When I was thinking about this, I thought about a story that goes back to my sixth grade year at Bowmansville Elementary School outside of Buffalo, New York. When I was in the sixth grade, I got really tired of holding my arm up. You know, sometimes teachers, they'll ask questions, you've got something to add, and you put your arm up and they just go on and on and on and ignore you, and you've got your arm up and you're not willing to put it down. And what happens after several minutes? Your arm gets tired. And then, did you ever do this? You put your other arm behind your head. (I can't even do it anymore. I'm too big.) You put your other hand behind your head and you hold your arm up. It's like a support. . . . So I got tired of that. And I had this ingenious idea: I got a tall piece of construction paper and I made a cone out of it. And at the top of the cone, I put my hand and I traced around my hand, cut that out. And I had a third arm! And I didn't have to raise it like this; all I had to do was just basically put it, put my hand on my desk, leave my hand relaxed with the cone in the air. So I had my trusty cone. The next time Mr. Tibollo asked a question and I wanted to answer, I got out my trusty cone and I proudly put it up there on the desk, and there was my hand in construction paper. Well, Mr. Tibollo looks at me and he says, “Bartolucci, what is that?” And I explained it to him and he laughs and he grabs me, takes me out of class to across the hall to the other sixth grade class, interrupts that class, has that teacher come out into the hallway just so Mr. Tibollo could tell him what I did. That's how much of a kick he got out of it. (Mr. Tibollo also once told me that “I had more crust than a loaf of bread!”)

I wasn't sure what that meant in the sixth grade; I do now.) But Mr. Tibollo confiscated my paper arm. After that, I was not able to use it anymore.

So Elihu is anxious. He's ready to burst. He's about to burst like **“unvented”** or **“new wineskins”** (32:19). That should bring, Bible student, into your mind, Jesus. And, for example, Luke chapter five, verse 37: “. . . no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled out, and the skins will be ruined.” Well, why? Well, if your wineskins weren't vented or if they were new and you put wine in them, if you weren't careful, the pressure would cause them to burst. And so that's the picture that Elihu is painting here. He is like new wine in old wineskins. He's about ready to burst, to explode.

Now we come to verses 21 and 22, and Elihu defends his motive, especially as a younger man. These four older guys, Job and his three friends, probably looking down at him, especially in that culture where age was so esteemed, and Elihu defends his motive. In verse 21, he says, **“Let me now be partial to no one, nor flatter any man. 22 “For I do not know how to flatter, else my Maker would soon take me away.** In other words, “I'm not partial. I'm not here to flatter. In fact, I don't know how to flatter. I don't make that my practice because God looks over me. He knows the heart and He may take me away.” I understand that [to mean] God will remove him from the scene, or more likely, may discipline him by taking him off the face of the earth. So Elihu defends his motive. We see that Elihu is angry. We see his anxious. We see The Ambition of Elihu, that he's *angry* and *anxious*, and he's also (another “A”) he's also Aware. He's angry; he's anxious; and, he's Aware.

The Awareness of Elihu (vv. 6-12)

So this I call The Awareness of Elihu. He's aware of his age as it compares to the other four men. Look at verse six of chapter 32: **So Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite spoke out and said, "I am young in years and you are old; therefore I was shy and afraid to tell you what I think. 7 "I thought age should speak, and increased years should teach wisdom.** He says, "I am younger in years." The Hebrew phrase is literally, "I am younger in days," but he doesn't mean just a few days. He's talking about many days. Elihu may have been in his 20s or 30s. At any rate, he was younger than the other four men, and he's aware that with age should come wisdom. You know, there's a reason for the graying hair. You know, it's a reminder of the fact that you should be growing in wisdom. You've experienced much in life. You've learned a lot of lessons. So we try to tell our kids, "Listen, I've been there. I remember what it was like to be your age, believe it or not. And I know now what it's like to be an adult and to go through lots of experiences. You know, you need to listen to me." So he's younger in days. He's aware that with age should come wisdom.

Elihu, however, does not consider age as a necessary proof of wisdom. That's obvious around him, isn't it? And so he says, verse eight. **"But it is a spirit in man and the breath of the Almighty that gives understanding."** Age does not guarantee wisdom. Sometimes it goes along with foolishness and godlessness. But on the other hand, Elihu is aware that youth doesn't guarantee foolishness. Yeah, age doesn't guarantee wisdom, but because you're young doesn't mean you're a fool either. You can be very wise as a young person. And so chapter 32, verses nine and ten, he says: 9 **"The abundant in years may not be wise, nor may elders understand justice."** 10 **"So I say, 'Listen to me, I too will tell what I think.'** "Listen to me,

the youngster.” Verse 11: **“Behold, I waited for your words, I listened to your reasonings, while you pondered what to say. 12 “I even paid close attention to you; indeed, there was no one who refuted Job, not one of you who answered his words.** So Elihu has been around early on in the debate. He's listened to what's been going on. He's been hesitant to talk because he was the youngster, and especially in that culture. And in a lot of cultures today, you don't speak up over your elders, you respect your elders. But they stopped (they stopped talking). . . . [It was] Elihu, who said, “I need to speak up now.” So we see The Ambition of Elihu (angry; anxious to speak). We see The Awareness of Elihu (he's aware of the sometimes fickle relationship between age and wisdom).

The Argument of the Three (vv. 13-15)

And next we see The Argument of the Three (verses 13 through 15). Here is where Elihu sums up how the other three, Bildad, Eliphaz, Zophar [have spoken] . . . probably their closing words that maybe aren't reflected in the text. But I think Elihu sums that up in verse 13 (verse 13 of chapter 33). Now he's talking to the three friends and he says, 13 **“Do not say, ‘We have found wisdom; God will rout him, not man.’** This is a very difficult verse. I mean, you read different scholarly commentaries on it and they can be all over the place. But boiling it down, this is what I think. Elihu was quoting the three men as saying this: **“We have found wisdom.”** Well, what wisdom? “God will take care of Job, not us.” And that seems to go along with verse one, **“These three men ceased answering Job because he was righteous in his own eyes.”** They were so exasperated they gave up, their final thought being, “We can't change Job. God will do that. We see that as wisdom.”

Look at verse 14 and verse 15: **“For he** [that’s Job. This is Elihu speaking] **has not arranged his words against me** [So Job was replying to the other three. He was ignoring Elihu . . .], **nor will I reply to him with your arguments** [That is, the arguments of the three]. Then, turning to Job, Elihu adds in v. 15: **“They** [that is, the three] **are dismayed, they no longer answer; words have failed them.** Okay, so hopefully that clarifies the pronouns and who's talking and who's talking about who.

Chapter 33: Elihu’s First Speech

Chapter 33 is Elihu's First Speech. Three points using the letter “A” – 1) Allegations Made by Job; 2) Answers Given by Elihu; and, 3) Appeals for Job to Listen to Wisdom.

Allegations Made by Job (33:1-11)

Okay. First point: Allegations Made by Job. These are allegations that Job made against God that Elihu heard, that he's bringing up in the conversation. These allegations are specifically laid out in verses nine through 11. But before Elihu gets there, there's a call to Job to listen: “Listen to me, Job. We are equals, okay? Yeah, you're older, I understand that. But foundationally we are created in God's image.” So look at verse one of chapter 33: **“However now, Job** [so he's specifically addressing Job], **please hear my speech, and listen to all my words.** Only Elihu, of the friends, actually uses Job's name. “However now, *Job*, listen to me.” The others don't use Job's name. They refer to him, but never by name. And Elihu uses Job's name a few times.

Verse two: **“Behold now, I open my mouth, my tongue in my mouth speaks. 3 “My words are from the uprightness of my heart, and my lips speak knowledge sincerely.** “I'm a

man of integrity, okay? Upright in heart.” . . . It's kind of like chapter 32, verse 21, where Elihu says, “Let me now be partial to no one, nor flatter any man.” He's talking about his integrity.

Then he talks about how God has created all of us equally. Beginning in verse four, he says, “**The Spirit of God has made me . . .**” Here it's a capital “S” talking about the Holy Spirit. “**The Spirit of God has made me and the breath of the Almighty . . .**” These are parallel ideas: “Spirit” / “breath.” “. . . **the breath of the Almighty gives me life.**” Elihu speaking of God's work in creation. Going back to Genesis chapter two, verse seven, “The Lord God formed man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being.” Here Elihu says, “**The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.**” In other words, “We are all equals. We are all created in the image and likeness of God. We're adults here. We share the *imago Dei*, the image of God.” And what he means is evident from the verses that follow, verses five and six: 5 “**Refute me if you can; array yourselves before me, take your stand.** 6 “**Behold, I belong to God like you; I too have been formed out of the clay.**”

Interesting, verse six. One writer says that, “Elihu uses an expressive word for the creation of humans from clay. They have been ‘pinched off’ . . . from a lump of clay, as a potter nips off with the fingers the piece of clay to be worked into a pot or plate.”²²¹ Elihu uses an expressive word for the creation of humans from clay. They have been “pinched off” from a lump of clay as a potter nips off with the fingers the piece of clay to be worked into a pot or plate. “Pinched off” – that's the figure that Elihu uses that's reflected in some of your translations, such as the ESV: “I too was pinched off from a piece of clay.” But the idea is, *we're*

²²¹David J. A. Clines.

equals, Job. Therefore, verse seven, **“No fear of me should terrify you, nor should my pressure weigh heavily on you.”** Relax!

Now here we come to a reminder of Job's allegations, beginning in verse eight, and then specifically moving on to verse nine. Verse eight of chapter 33: **“Surely you have spoken in my hearing, and I have heard the sound of your words: . . .”** “Surely you have spoken in my hearing, Job. I've heard the sound of your words.” And what follows are Elihu's citations. They're not always word for word. Sometimes they're general, and that's okay. That was the custom in the Ancient Near East. So Elihu cites Job's allegations against God. Number one, first allegation: *Job is faultless.* Job's saying, “I am faultless.” Number two” *God is unfair.* Number three: *God is aloof.* And Elihu answers each of these beginning in verse 12.

Job is faultless (v. 9)

But look at verse nine: *Job is faultless.* Elihu, quoting Job in verse nine, Job said, **‘I am pure, without transgression; I am innocent and there is no guilt in me.** Now, Job may have been blameless from the standpoint of being above reproach, but he wasn't faultless. He wasn't sinless, especially in his conduct and in the words he says after his suffering. In chapter 40 verse eight, God says this, “Will you really annul My judgment? Will you condemn Me that you may be justified?” Job is calling God's righteousness into question and exalting his own righteousness over God's. So Job is saying, “I'm faultless.”

God is unfair (v. 10)

Number two: *God is unfair.* Verse ten: **“Behold, He [God] invents pretexts against me; He counts me as his enemy.”** What are one of the first words that our kids learn? Yeah, they learn “Dada.” “Mama.” [But what is one of those words] they learn in defiance? Simple,

one syllable word beginning with “N” ending with an “O.” “NO!” But if that's the first defiant word they learn, what is probably one of the first defiant sentences they learn? Three words: “That's not (what?) fair!” *That's not fair.* As a parent I've heard that dozens of times. *But that's not fair!* It's interesting. We have a sense of fairness, don't we? As children, we have a sense of fairness. As adults, we have a sense of fairness, of right and wrong. That's part of our being created in God's image. That's not necessarily a bad thing, but central to Job's complaint against God is that He is not being treated fairly, i.e. “God is not good.” When we don't trust God, we question His fairness and His goodness. That was integral to the fall. Going back to Genesis chapter three . . . question God's Word: “Has God said?” Question His Word and then question whether He's really being good and fair. “Here, I've given you all these trees, I've supplied all this for you, this beautiful garden. *But just don't eat from this one.*” But maybe God's cheating us? Maybe we're not getting His best? You see, we do that now. God's given us all this, but He must not know what's going on because I'm not getting this, what I really need. No. Trust Him, trust Him. Job calls God's fairness into question. What did I say? The main idea sentence for this message? “Keep trusting your sovereign and good God – especially when life hurts.” So God's not fair [and] Job is faultless.

God is aloof (v. 11)

And number three: *God is aloof.* Verse 11: “**He puts my feet in the stocks** [an imprisonment device, a torture device]; **He stands watch over all my paths.**” And what you see here is *indifference*. Job thinks God is indifferent. He's not fair *and* He's torturing me *and* He doesn't care! There's a parallel to Job's words in chapter 13 earlier, where Job says to God:

24 “Why do You hide Your face and consider me Your enemy? 25 “Will You cause a driven leaf to tremble? Or will You pursue the dry chaff? 26 “For You write bitter things

against me and make me to inherit the iniquities of my youth. 27 “You put my feet in the stocks and watch all my paths; You set a limit for the soles of my feet.”

“It's all your fault, God. You put my feet in the stocks. You watch all my paths. You set a limit for the soles of my feet.” (That's chapter 13, verses 24 through 27.) Then a few chapters later, in chapter 19, verses six and seven, Job says: 6 “Know then that God has wronged me and has closed His net around me. 7 Behold, I cry, ‘Violence!’ but I get no answer; I shout for help, but there is no justice.” *God is unfair. God is aloof.*

Answers Given by Elihu (33:12-33)

Now Elihu gives his answers. Beginning in verse 12, as to Job's first contention that he's faultless, Elihu points out that *God is the standard for righteousness*. Verse 12 begins with the word “behold,” used three times (v. 7, v. 10, and here in v. 12): **“Behold, let me tell you [Job], you are not right in this. For God is greater than man.”** Not just greater in stature, but greater as to nature. This word can be translated “abundant.” God is abundant; way beyond man. He is the standard for all things; for what philosophers call “the transcendentals:” truth, morality, goodness, beauty, all of those things. God is the standard. You think you're faultless? No, God is the standard for morality, for holiness.

As to Job's second contention, that God is unfair, Elihu points out *God answers to no one*. Again, He is the standard. Verse 13: **“Why do you complain?”** (some translations have “contend”) . . . **“Why do you complain [or contend] against Him that He does not give an account of all His doings?”** Well, the New American standard translates it “complain.” It's the Hebrew word *rib* (the “B” kind of has a “V” sound to it). And *rib* is translated “dispute” in chapter nine. So it has a semantic range that varies: *dispute, complain, contend*. It's a word that means “to argue a legal case,” or “to accuse.” Later in chapter 40, verse two, God says to Job

(using the same word *rib*): “Will the faultfinder *contend* [that's the word] with the Almighty? Let him who reproves God answer it.”

This is the Creator / creature distinction. We talk about that sometimes. God is God and you are not. There is a distinction between God and His creation. He is the standard. That is why it's so ludicrous when you see skeptics, people who hate God, call Him into question. They don't understand the Creator / creature distinction. They're fault-finders trying to find fault with the Almighty who is the standard. It's really silly as we understand it; as believers, it's silly. There is a Creator / creature distinction.

We see this, for example, in Romans nine . . . Paul says, “What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! . . . For He says to Moses . . .” – and note the prerogatives of God in these verses that I'm going to read, note the prerogatives of God, the sovereignty of God, and the distinction between God who is the standard, who is the sovereign, and man who has fallen and is not deserving of anything but eternal hell – “For He says to Moses [God says to Moses], I will have mercy on whom I have mercy; I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” Paul then says that “it does not depend on the man who wills, or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.” So “He has mercy on whom he desires, and He hardens whom He desires. You will say to me then, ‘Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?’” We hear this all the time . . . you know, this was addressed in the first century. And yet you talk to people today, even Christians, and they bring up the same thing when you bring up God's sovereignty or Calvinism or predestination, any of those things. *Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?* That's what Paul says. But you may hear it like, “Well, why bother evangelizing then?” Or, “Well, we're just robots then.” Come on, you've

heard that, haven't you? These feeble attempts to confound God's perfect sovereignty. Romans nine, as a young believer, sealed it for me. Verse 20, Paul's response: "On the contrary, Who are you, O man, who answers back to God?" The Creator / creature distinction. *Who are you?* (One day every knee will bow, every tongue confess. Some people will get away with it now. God is long suffering. But if they don't repent one day, every knee will bow to the sovereign Lord of the universe.) "Who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, why did you make me like this, will it? Or does not the potter [God] have the right over the clay [us] to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?" *Clay*. Chapter 33, verse six, *pinched off*, pinched off like a piece of clay.

Then thirdly, as to Job's contention that God is aloof, Elihu points out that *God provides*. That's related to the word for "providence." God provides. He guides us and He communicates. "No, Job. God is not aloof. He's not misleading you. He's not unfair. He's not silent."

He guides through two things. Number one: *revelation*. God guides through revelation. Look at verse 14: **"Indeed God speaks once, or twice, yet no one notices it. 15 "In a dream, a vision of the night, when sound sleep falls on men, while they slumber in their beds, 16 then He opens the ears of men, and seals their instruction."** This is one way that God communicated with people in antiquity: dreams and visions. This is part of special revelation. In theology you have general revelation, think "the creation," that testifies to the greatness of God, and then you have special revelation, we think in this age, "the Bible." But God also, as a means of special revelation, used things like dreams and visions. We see this in the Old Testament. Abimelech, Genesis chapter 20, verse three; Jacob, Genesis 31, verse 11; Laban, Genesis 31:24; Solomon, 1 Kings 3:5. Of course, Isaiah had that great vision in Isaiah chapter six; and Daniel in

chapter seven, verse one. But it's not exclusive to the Old Testament. We also see it in the New Testament. Joseph, Jesus' earthly father, Matthew 1:20, 2:13. Ananias, Acts chapter nine, verse ten; Peter, Acts chapter ten, verse nine through 16; and Paul, in Acts chapter 16. Job earlier reported his experience with dreams in chapter seven, verse 14: "You [God], frighten me with dreams and terrify me by visions." So that is one way that God communicated, through dreams, through visions.

But that wasn't always reliable. Not all dreams were messages from God. They may simply be random imaginations. Or maybe a Jew who ate a bad bagel the day before and had a bad dream! Okay, I tend to think that when God communicated through dreams, those dreams were visionary, they stood out. They weren't your run of the mill dream. "Well, I had a dream. I'm going to take this as a message from God." No. These were spectacular dreams. They were detailed. And you look at some of the dreams – Joseph – you see how they're outlined? There's a lot of detail to them. They're not your normal dream. There's something different. But there are warnings about false dreams and visions. Again, in the Old Testament, Zechariah 10:2 speaks of the diviners "seeing lying visions and having false dreams." Deuteronomy warns about "false prophets who dream dreams." How are they judged? Ultimately? By the law, by the standard of God's Word. The New Testament warns about it, such as in Colossians chapter two verse 18, "Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize, by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen inflated without cause by his fleshly mind." Some of these visions, some of these dreams, are just caused by one's "fleshly mind."

After the death of the last Apostle and the closing of the biblical canon – the 66 books we have – God communicates through His Word. That is the normative means of special

revelation, the Word of God. Everything else is judged by this. *Sola Scriptura*. This is the final arbiter, the final say.

Dreams and visions are not normative. People claim them today. Most of them, really about all of them, any that I have seen that claim dreams and visions as being normative for today, are false teachers, people with bad theology, and outright heretics. At the head of that class is Joseph Smith, who had a vision.

Now I know there are numerous reports of Muslims over in the East that have dreams about Jesus, who then come to faith. What do I think about that? I think God can do that. God can use that. I think He works differently in different places. The Bible's still the foundation, it's still the standard. But in the case of Muslims who have heard the gospel, then they have a dream about Jesus and they come to faith, and God is sovereign over all of that, and He's using that. There are a lot of reports of supernatural healings in Islamic areas, much more legitimate stuff, much more than we see here. I think God works as He will, but still *everything is judged by the Word of God*.

So going back to Job's time, around the second century BC, we're talking before Moses, before the Law, before the Bible, God communicated one way through dreams and visions. And the reason for these revelations is found in verses 17 and 18: **“that He may turn man aside from his conduct, and keep man from pride; 18 He [that is God] keeps back his [that his man's] soul from the pit, and his life from passing over into Sheol [the grave].”** But the word *sheol* isn't used there. If you're using the New American standard, it has *sheol*. If you're using something else, it probably has something like *perishing by the sword*. I don't know why the

New American Standard uses *sheol* here, because it's not the Hebrew word *sheol*, it's a different word that means “sword, instrument of war.”

But keep in mind, what are the reasons for the revelations? What are the reasons? Are they punitive? Are they punishment or are they corrective? They're corrective, right? They're not punitive. God hasn't taken out his wrath on these people. . . . No. They're corrective. That's what verse 17 says – verse 18 says – these are correctives. That's what it is in Job's life.

For an example of a dream that wasn't heeded, go to Matthew chapter 27, verse 19. Pilate sitting on the judgment seat. What happens? His wife sends him a message saying, “Have nothing to do with that righteous man [with Jesus]. For last night I suffered greatly in a dream because of Him.” That was to be corrective. But it didn't correct. Pilate did it. So God guides through revelation, through dreams and visions.

Secondly, he guides through *affliction*, pain and suffering. We see that in verse 19 and following:

19 “Man is also chastened with pain on his bed, and with unceasing complaint in his bones; 20 so that his life loathes bread, and his soul favorite food. 21 “His flesh wastes away from sight, and his bones which were not seen stick out. 22 “Then his soul draws near to the pit, and his life to those who bring death.

So note: bedridden, in pain (verse 19); no desire to eat (verse 20); skin and bones (verse 21); near death (verse 22). Well, that's Job, isn't it? That's Job. Several times he speaks of his unsparing pain, gnawing pains (30:17). . . . He talks about the fact that he couldn't eat (3:24), “My groaning comes at the sight of my food.” And then he was emaciated (19:20), “My bone clings to my skin and my flesh.” And Job also thought death was near – and even longed for it. So these descriptions in verses 19 through 22 do apply to Job.

And they also state that God speaks to us in our pain. That's true today. (I'm not going to point you toward dreams and visions. I'll point you toward God's Word.) But He also speaks to us in pain. C.S. Lewis, in his book, *The Problem of Pain*, said this: “God whispers to us in our pleasures, but He shouts in our pain.” Right? God gets your attention when you suffer. Again, you may not be suffering because of your sin, but don't sin because of your suffering. Job maintained that God is aloof, but yet God provides. He provides guidance. He guides through revelation, at this time, dreams and visions. He guides through affliction, pain, and suffering.

And *God also provides a mediator*. . . . Fascinating section here. I wish I had more time to spend on it. Lots of different views. But look at verse 23 and following. Elihu says: 23 **“If there is an angel as mediator for him, one out of a thousand, to remind a man what is right for him,** 24 **then let him** [that is, the mediating angel] **be gracious to him** [that is, the sufferer], **and say, ‘Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom’;** Fascinating section. We don't have time to really go into it, but there are a couple of basic views that scholars take on this. Is this a literal angel? Is this a human messenger? Or is this the Messiah? And syntactically it could be either one (even though Jesus isn't an angel, but “angel” can mean “messenger”). Some say this is a literal angel. Some say this is a human messenger. Some commentators think Elihu is speaking of himself, that he has been sent for this very purpose. And then there are others who say this is a proleptic look at Jesus Christ. . . . Old Testament scholar Bruce Waltke held this view, that this was kind of a Christophany. Remember, it was Job that said in chapter nine, “There is no umpire between us, between me and God. I have no mediator, I have no arbiter, no one who can lay his hand on us both.” Well, who do we have? This side of the cross we have Jesus. Jesus is the **“one out of a thousand”** – that's like saying

it's 1 in 1,000,000 – He is one out of a thousand who is gracious (look at the text, verses 23 and 24). He is gracious and He can deliver from the pit, hell, by means of the ransom which is His very life. There's a lot to unpack there. We don't have the time. We're about done. So hang onto your seats.

Look at the result of this. It's spiritual healing. God communicates. God guides. He speaks to us. Special revelation. He speaks to us in our pain. He provides a mediator. What's the result? Spiritual healing (verses 25 through 30). We'll just read them:

25 Let his flesh [the sufferer] become fresher than in youth [Well, what happened to Job's flesh? Covered with boils; head to the sole of his feet.], Let him return to the days of his youthful vigor [But I think this is talking spiritually, okay, not necessarily physically]; 26 Then he will pray to God, and He will accept him, That he may see His face with joy, And He may restore His righteousness to man. 27 “He will sing to men and say, ‘I have sinned and perverted what is right, And it is not proper for me. 28 ‘He has redeemed my soul from going to the pit, And my life shall see the light.’ 29 “Behold, God does all these oftentimes with men, 30 To bring back his soul from the pit, that he may be enlightened with the light of life.

That is what we see physically, and more importantly, spiritually, of Job at the end of the book: “Now I know that You are God. Now I know the Creator-creature distinction.” That's Job at the end of the book.

Appeal for Job to Listen to Wisdom (33:31-33)

The last point (and again, we're just going to read these as well). There's an Appeal for Job to Listen to Wisdom. This closes out the chapter, chapter 33. Beginning in verse 31: **“Pay attention, O Job, listen to me; keep silent, and let me speak. 32 “Then if you have anything to say, answer me; speak, for I desire to justify you.”** Elijah's desire. His purpose was to vindicate Job. He was looking out for Job's best interest. Verse 33: **“If not, listen to me; keep**

silent, and I will teach you wisdom.” So *keep trusting your sovereign and good God – especially when life hurts.*

Concluding Thoughts

1. For the believer, suffering is not punitive

Three quick closing points. *For the believer, suffering is not punitive.* What does punitive mean? Punishment. For the believer, suffering is not punitive. Christ took the punitive punishment for you on the cross. The teaching of Job's three friends is that suffering was punitive. That is not true of us.

2. For the believer, suffering may be corrective

For the believer, suffering may be corrective. Maybe. That's the teaching of Elihu. And that might be true of us.

3. For the believer, suffering is always instructive

Number three, *for the believer, suffering is always instructive.* That's the teaching of Elihu. And that's always true of us. Job learned that lesson. We see that at the end of the book, chapter 42, where Job says to God,

2 “I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted. 3 ‘Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?’ “Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.” 5 “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees You; 6 Therefore I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes.”²²²

Yes, suffering is always instructive. *Keep trusting your sovereign and good God – especially when life hurts.*

²²²42:2-3, 5-6.

Lord, we do thank You for the fact that we have gotten through these challenging chapters. There's been a lot to go through, a lot for us to think about, a lot for us to digest. And I pray, Lord, that we can get a better appreciation, for this man, Elihu, a better, clearer understanding of him and his place in this book, part of your inspired Word. Lord, we face suffering. To live in this life is to face suffering, and the joy we have as believers is that our suffering is not punitive. It may be corrective, and it's always instructive, but it's not punitive. Help us to learn those lessons, we pray, Lord, by Your grace to the glory of our King, in whose name we pray. Amen.

The Second Speech of Elihu: God is Just

Job 34:1-37

June 4, 2023

Christ Church of Clarkson

0623Job34.1-37(33) | Audio Length: 56:40

Job chapter 34. I'm just going to read the first six verses of Job 34. This begins a Elihu's second speech. Beginning in verse one:

1 Then Elihu continued and said, 2 “Hear my words, you wise men, and listen to me, you who know. 3 “For the ear tests words as the palate tastes food. 4 “Let us choose for ourselves what is right; let us know among ourselves what is good. 5 “For Job has said, ‘I am righteous, but God has taken away my right; 6 Should I lie concerning my right? My wound is incurable, though I am without transgression.’²²³

Hear the Word of the Lord. Let's devote our time to Him in prayer (we have a lot to cover this morning).

So, Father, we are grateful. We are a grateful people. It is written into our hearts, Lord, we who have been born again, that we be grateful. And so, Lord, we are grateful to be here. We're grateful for Your word. We're grateful for how You sustain us in so many ways. I pray, Lord, that as this chapter, as so many have been, is especially challenging, I pray, Lord, that You would pour your Spirit out upon Your herald. I pray, Lord, that You would work in the minds and hearts of the hearers this morning, that You be glorified, that Your people be built up, as we learn more about this book and these things. We ask in Jesus' precious holy name. Amen.

We are in chapter 34, more than three fourths of the way through the Book of Job. I can see the light at the end of the tunnel. However, if you are new to this series, unfortunately you

²²³Scripture citations are taken from the NAS95 unless otherwise noted.

don't have the context which we have spent hours, many hours developing over the course of the past couple of years. And so if you're new to this book of Job, to this study out of the Christ Church pulpit, it's like you've been transported to the middle of a movie and you look around, you hear the dialogue, but you don't know what's really going on. And so if you have been transported into the middle of this series, I apologize. It's going to be a little hard to catch up. And even those of you that have been with us, again, you need to follow along in your copy of God's Word or you will quickly get lost.

But I will say, by way of a very brief review, for those of you that maybe aren't familiar with the book, that this book of Job is about a man by that name who, under the providential rule of God, encounters tremendous suffering. He loses all that is dear to him, including all of his children, ten of them. That's the beginning of the book. The main section of the book, or the big bulk of the middle, is a dialogue between Job and three friends, three friends who aren't always so helpful. And they're trying to convince Job that he's suffering because he did something to deserve it. That was their worldview, and it was common back then. If tragedy falls upon you, you must have done something to have that happen. You've offended God in some way, and He's bringing trials into your life as a result. Well, we know that's not true, and we know that's not true of Job. We're told in the very beginning of the book, and this is emphasized several times, that Job was a good, righteous man, that he feared God and he shunned evil.

Then in chapter 32 we're introduced to a fourth friend, a young bystander by the name of Elihu. And in that chapter, he defends his right to speak. He was the youngest, and youth deferred to the aged, especially in that culture. And in chapter 33, he gives the first of four

speeches directed at Job. And unlike the other friends, he doesn't criticize Job for what he did supposedly before tragedy struck. Unlike the other friends, he's not saying, "Job, you did something to deserve this." But also, unlike the other friends, he focuses on how Job has behaved, particularly the words he spoke after the tragedy struck.

Chapter 33 is where we finished last time, and it was in that chapter that we saw Elihu emphasized God's sovereign rule over creation. And in that light, Elihu brings up some of the accusations Job has made against God in the previous chapters. Namely, he brings up Job's claim to be faultless and his contention that God is unfair and aloof. That's chapter 33. And Elihu answers those charges by reminding Job of three things. Number one, *God is the standard of righteousness*. Number two, *God answers to no one*. And number three, *God provides*. He's not aloof. He's not indifferent. No, He communicates (and in those days, special revelation was communicated by way of dreams and visions). But He also communicates through suffering. He gets our attention in suffering. God provides, He provides guidance, and ultimately He provides a mediator, ultimately Jesus Christ.

God is the gold standard

Well, that brings us to new ground. That brings us to chapter 34, Elihu's second speech. And this speech parallels the first. It covers some of the same concepts, but elaborates upon it. And here Elihu especially focuses on God's justice, His justice. This chapter, chapter 34, falls into two main parts. Verses two through 15, Elihu speaks to everyone present. The pronouns, for example, are plural. He's speaking to Job, the three friends (Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar) and others who probably had gathered around. But then in verse 16, he turns specifically to Job, and in verses 16 through 37 he addresses Job specifically. In this chapter, this entire chapter 34, we see

that God is the standard by which everything is weighed. God is the standard by which everything else is weighed, gauged, judged, evaluated. And we're going to put it this way for simplicity: *God is the gold standard. . . .*

In the year 1900, Congress passed the Gold Standard Act, whereby our currency was measured by the standard of gold, which was then \$21 an ounce. And that lasted until 1971, when President Richard Nixon, in 1971, took us off the gold standard. Now our money is basically worth the paper it's printed on. It's a debt instrument. It's a promissory note. "We promise that this is worth a dollar, but it's not really based on anything." You see, the gold standard gave our currency something of real value. That was a foundation by which it could be measured. Well, in a far, far greater way, God is the gold standard in that He is the absolute upon which everything else is judged. God is the gold standard, and that fits into the context of chapter 34.

II. Elihu's Second Speech: Is God Fair? (34:1-37)

As far as the outline is concerned, let's give you a bit of a preview. This is Elihu's second speech. He's asking the question, "Is God fair?" And then there are four main points under that; all begin with the letter "A." There's an Announcement for All to Listen; Allegations Made by Job; Answers Given by Elihu; and then, Appeals for Job to Repent. So we have an Announcement, Allegations, Answers, and Appeals.

Announcement For All to Listen (vv. 1-4)

So again, looking at verse four, there's an Announcement. This is where Elihu begins, an Announcement for All to Listen. . . . So verse one, "**Then Elihu continued and said . . .**" He may have given a break to see if Job had anything to say. But here Elihu continues, in other

words, continues his discourse. We consider this the beginning of Elihu's second speech. And he says this (verse two): 2 **“Hear my words, you wise men, and listen to me, you who know.”** Elihu is speaking to everyone present. Yes, we had the three friends, we have Job gathered at the ash heap, and no doubt in the course of this time Job, being a very prominent man, others began to gather around and listen to the conversation (that dialogue that we've heard throughout the middle chapters of the book of Job). And here Elihu is speaking to everyone present: 2 **“Hear my words, you wise men, and listen to me you who know.”** The question is, “What is Elihu’s tone of voice?” That becomes very relevant here because some scholars think that Elihu is being sarcastic, that he's specifically looking at the three friends and saying it this way: “Hear my words you wise guys and listen to me you who know.” Well, is he being sarcastic? I don't know. This is a question of *tone* that comes up sometimes in interpreting the Bible. Some scholars think he is. But I do think his words here are a subtle criticism of the three friends. Remember he began his first speech – we looked at this last time in chapter 32 – criticizing them for their lack of wisdom, their lack of understanding. And here he calls out those who have it. So this has to be a little bit of a dig, a little bit of a slap in the face to the three friends, and probably looking past the three friends to other bystanders who no doubt had gathered there at the garbage dump where Job has been since chapter two.

So Elihu continues: 2 **“Hear my words, you wise men, listen to me you who know.”** And then he says, verse three: **“For the ear tests words as the palate tastes food.”** Well, we've heard this before. Job used the same proverbial expression back in chapter 12, verse 11, “For the ear tests words as the palate tastes food.” Well, think about it. Your mouth is discerning, is it not? There are foods you like and there may be foods you hate. Your mouth can discern between

that which is good or bad. You ever take a drink of something – maybe you're at a restaurant and you ordered iced tea and you take a drink and it's Diet Coke – it's a shock because you're not expecting it? Your mouth can discern. It can discern between food that is good or food that is spoiled, salty, sweet. You see, *our ears have taste buds*. Your ears test words like the mouth tests food.

So with that aphorism in mind, Elihu issues a challenge in verse four: **“Let us choose for ourselves [again, he's talking to everybody] what is right; let us know among ourselves what is good.”** In other words, let's search for that which is true, let that be our focus. And that's a good thing. We need to focus on truth. We live in a culture that focuses so much on error (even their warnings of disinformation *are* disinformation). We're told to focus on that which is good, that which is true (Philippians chapter four, verse eight). So we have this *announcement* by Elihu for all to listen.

Allegations Made by Job (vv. 5-9)

Then our second point: Allegations Made by Job. Elihu starts to outline, categorize, those things that Job has said, those things he has heard him say. Well, what did Job say? Elihu gives a few examples in verses five and six, and in verse nine. Verse five: **“For Job has said, ‘I am righteous, but God has taken away my right;’** (or it could be translated, “I am righteousness, but God has taken away my righteousness”). What sort of things has Job said in the past that reflect this quote? Well, chapter 27, verse two, Job says, “As God lives, God who has taken away my right.” A few verses later, verse six, “I hold fast my righteousness, and I will not let it go.” In chapter nine, verse 21, Job simply declares, “I am guiltless.” Now you’ve got to be discerning here. That is true in one sense. Job didn't do anything to deserve his suffering. And

we read that in the very first verse [of the book]: “There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, and that man was blameless, upright, fearing God, turning away from evil.” Job was blameless. He was a man of integrity. But of course he wasn't sinless. Job did nothing to deserve his suffering, but he nonetheless sinned in his response to suffering. (Like me with the loss of our daughter. It's coming on a seven year anniversary of her passing at the age of 14.) Job could say of his loss that included his wealth, his reputation and his ten children, he could say these words that I also said at Giana's memorial service, chapter one, verse 21, “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.” Yeah, that's the way that a believer ought to respond to tragedy. The Lord is the one who gave. The Lord is the one who has taken away. Blessed be His name. Well, the problem comes in the weeks and months after tragedy strikes. Things began to settle in your mind and heart after the initial shock. That was when I was guilty of windy words (and worse). And as far as we know of Job, it may not have been so much *the worse* (at least not as far as I was concerned) but certainly there were “windy words” (6:26), some of which could not be excused by God.

And so last week we spoke about the difference between *suffering because of your sin*, or *sinning because of your suffering*. Just the fact that suffering comes into your life doesn't necessarily mean that you did something to deserve it. But there's a difference between that and sinning because of your suffering. You get the difference. Suffering because of your sin, or sinning because of your suffering. That suffering may be totally undeserved per se, but yet your response to it could be sinful. Job didn't suffer because of his sin, but he did sin in response to his suffering (and he was in denial about that). In verse six he says, 6a “**Should I lie concerning my right? . . .**” (or “my righteousness”). “Should I lie? Should I just say, ‘Yeah, I'm a dirty,

rotten sinner and I deserve what I'm getting.” And then he adds, 6b “. . . **My wound is incurable, though I am without transgression.**” The words “my wound” is literally “my arrow.” Some translations reflect that. Back in chapter six, verse four, Job used that language, “The arrows of the Almighty are in me.” . . . And verse nine, even worse, Job claimed that it was useless to obey God. It was fruitless. Look at verse nine (Elihu quoting Job): **“For [Job] has said, ‘It profits a man nothing when he is pleased with God.’”** [The] Hebrew word for [pleased is] a word that could be translated “to delight.”²²⁴ *No use to have your delight to be in God?* In other words, to be a follower of His. . . . You don't get the benefit of that in this life, so why bother? Remember, we asked early in our study that [the book of] Job asks the question, “Why does anyone who truly knows God serve Him?” Why do we do it? Remember Satan's wager in chapter one, verses nine through 11: “Satan answered the Lord, ‘Does Job fear God for nothing?’” Is there nothing in the equation for Job? No, Satan says, “You have made a hedge about him. You bless the work of his hands and his possessions have increased in the land.” You blessed him with a lot of stuff – that's why he serves you! Verse 11, “Put forth your hand now and touch all that he has; He will surely curse You to Your face!” Well, God permits Satan to afflict Job as a test of whether or not . . . Satan's words – “Does Job fear God for nothing” – whether those words were true. Is there any value in serving God, even if there are few earthly benefits? And for some people, that's true.

Every morning I spend quite a bit of time reading. I do my Bible reading, and then I read through a systematic theology, a different systematic theology. And so this year I'm reading John Calvin's Institutes (the great Geneva reformer). I've never read the Institutes before. I've read

²²⁴*Ratsah*

parts of it, but I've never read it from cover to cover. And I just read through a large section where he demonstrates that the Old Testament patriarchs, men like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, served God for a greater reward, an eternal one, and not for the benefits of their earthly lives, because their earthly lives were filled with tragedy and suffering. And he outlines all the things that the patriarchs went through. Well, that's true. Think about the New Testament book of Hebrews, chapter 11, the heroes of faith from the Old Testament (Hebrews 11:13): "All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance" (that is, they had eternal eyes to see the fulfillment of everything, the fulfillment of a Redeemer). But the writer to Hebrews goes on to say, "Yeah, these guys lived great lives, right?" No, Verse 37ff.:

37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated 38 (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground. 39 And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, 40 because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect.

Well, what's that "something better?" It's Jesus. But his point is that these men did not live lives of luxury, of opulence. They lived lives of suffering, and yet they served God. They had their eyes on a greater prize. Their eyes weren't just on the earth, they looked past the earth to eternal reward.

Job said it profits nothing when "he is pleased with God" or "when he delights in God." And yes, we are to delight in the Lord. One of my favorite Psalms, Psalm 37 verse four, "Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart." But that doesn't mean that life is going to be easy. That doesn't mean that there's not going to be suffering, even

if you delight yourself in the God whom you know through Jesus. It was Jesus who went to the cross, who endured the shame. And yet He did that with the joy set before Him. He was looking past that moment to the fruit of all that that would bring.

These are allegations made by Job. Serious? Yes. Sinful? Yes. And we see that when God addresses him in chapter 38, verse two, when He says, “Who is this that darkens counsel?” (He's talking to Job) “by words without knowledge.” *You've been speaking . . . out of ignorance.*

The Old Testament scholar Walter C. Kaiser said this: “Job had not cursed God, as Satan wagered . . . but he was getting perilously close to falling into Satan’s trap and doing just that.”²²⁵ He’s talking about *Satan's wager*: “Take away all he has; he will curse you to your face!” No, Job did not curse God as Satan wagered, but he was getting perilously close from falling into Satan's trap and doing just that.

Answers Given by Elihu (vv. 10-30)

Well, [next] there are answers given by Elihu. These are answers in response to the things that Job has said that Elihu outlined in verses five through nine. Well, this section, his answers, runs from verse ten all the way to verse 30. And again he's speaking to everyone present. He's speaking in the plural. Look at verse ten: 10a “**Therefore, listen to me, you men of understanding . . .**” (“You men of understanding,” that parallels what we saw in verse two.) Then he says, verse ten: 10b “**. . . Far be it from God to do wickedness, and from the Almighty to do wrong.**” Far be it from God to do something wrong. This is Elihu’s axiom. An axiom is a foundational principle. It's the bedrock. It's the foundation. It's the logical first assumption. And for Elihu, it is this: “God cannot err.” God cannot err by virtue of his being

²²⁵Walter C. Kaiser, 188.

God. He can't make mistakes. He doesn't make mistakes. It's illogical for Him to make mistakes. It'd be like creating a round triangle or making $2 + 7 = 37$. No, God cannot err.

The same response was given by the Apostle Paul in Romans chapter nine, speaking of God's sovereign election. And in addressing God's absolute sovereign control over all creation, Paul asks this – anticipating that others will ask this question – he says in Romans 9:14: “Is there injustice with God? By no means!” That phrase (familiar to some of you) in the Greek, *mē ginoita*: “No way!” And that's what Elihu was saying here (10b): **“Far be it from God to do wickedness or from the Almighty to do wrong.”** That phrase is also found in Genesis chapter 18, verse 25. Here we have Abraham speaking with God in response to God's coming judgment on Sodom. And Abraham says this, “Far be it” – same phrase – “far be it from you, God, to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike.” *Far be it from you.* “Shall not the judge of all the earth deal justly?” Note that last phrase. That's a good line to memorize for you. Genesis 18:25, the last line, “Shall not the judge of all the earth deal justly?”

So Elihu's axiom: “God cannot err.” He judges with a righteous, correct, wholly true judgment. God is, as we said it before, *God is the gold standard*. God is the gold standard. That is hard for us sometimes to accept (I think if we're honest, most of us would agree with that).

There was nothing unjust on God's part in allowing us to be slammed into – my daughter and me – to be slammed into by a drunk driver on Christmas Eve of 2015. Nothing unjust in God. Nothing unjust in Him calling Giana home the following June, while allowing me to survive. And I had a horrible time accepting that. How often has my wife heard me say, “Why wasn't it me? Why didn't I die and she live?” But Giana was a true believer in Jesus Christ. She

had been born again by His grace – I'm confident in that – and that is what gives us great comfort. But what happens when we lose loved ones and we have no such confidence? What happens then? Think about it. Other religions cover this base. You have the false religion of Mormonism that has its proxy baptism: “Oh, you lost a grandpa, but he wasn't, he wasn't a Mormon? Well, you can be baptized so that grandpa can attain.” Roman Catholicism has its purgatory: You can pay money to attempt to redeem someone who may not have been redeemed. Both of those are a lie of Satan. Both of those are outside the scope of our axiom, the Bible. They're based on extra-biblical thoughts, revelations, declarations. No, we don't go there. We have the Word of God as our axiom. And so what do we do when we've lost someone dear to us and we're not sure where they stood? Or maybe we think, “You know what? No. My dad was not a believer in Jesus Christ. We shared with him for years and he died rejecting the faith.” What do we do? *We rest in God's good judgment.*²²⁶ We have to just simply trust Him. Yeah, it goes without saying, sometimes we don't know. Could there be a deathbed confession? Certainly. That's that's not outside the realm of possibility. And if that did happen, it was because the Holy Spirit worked that way. But we just have to trust God with those things that we don't necessarily understand, or think that we would, if we were God, do differently. We're not. That's the Creator / creature distinction. God is just, end of story.

Interesting, as we talk about justice, that all people have universal sense of fairness and justice, all people everywhere. That just seems to be a universal thing. We learn it as kids: “That's not fair!” But then we carry it on as adults: “That's just not fair! That's just not fair!” We have this universal sense of fairness and justice. Even the atheist gets upset when somebody

²²⁶Again, see Genesis 18:25.

steals from him: “That's just wrong! That's not fair that that should happen!” Well, this sense of justice is part of our being created in God's image. That sense isn't always accurate. Sometimes we say “that's not fair,” and maybe it really is fair, or we don't understand what we *really* deserve. But there's that universal sense of justice that would make no sense, apart from an ultimate standard for justice, the Triune God.

This struck me how common it is for people who have no fear of God – you read about this in the headlines – usually a man, he does something (just as an example), he kills his family, turns the gun on himself. Kills his own children. His wife. We read about that fairly regularly. And sometimes people will respond with, “Well, the jerk, he killed himself, so he basically got away with it.” You see, people have a sense that there ought to be justice, but they don't have a sense of God. So they think, “you turned the gun on yourself? Well, you got off.” No you didn't! Terrors are just beginning. He is the standard, He is the gold standard and He will settle every account.

Verse 11: **“For He pays a man according to his work, and makes him find it according to his way.”** Romans chapter two, verses six through eight:

6 [He will] WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS: 7 to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; 8 but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth [that is, they're not converted], but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation.

This doesn't mean that heaven is gauged or earned by good works. And we can be thankful, because if it were earned by good works, none of us would be able to earn it because none of us are good enough. God doesn't grade on a curve. His standard is 100%, perfectly holy, and if you can't meet that standard, then you lose. You lose literally. So we can be thankful that we don't

get perfect justice. Those who know Jesus Christ . . . we know what perfect justice is. Believers, we who know this Book, we know what perfect justice is. Perfect justice is that I deserve eternal hell. That's perfect justice. You want God to be fair by His standards? Or do you want God to be merciful and gracious? I take grace and mercy, thank you!

Elihu. Points to God's nature in verses 12 through 15. In verse 12, we hear a repeat of what Elihu said in verse ten: 12 **“Surely, God will not act wickedly, and the Almighty will not pervert justice.”** No, as we've been saying, *God is the gold standard*. But he's also answerable to no one. Verse 13, Elihu asks the question, kind of a rhetorical question: **“Who gave Him authority over the earth? And who has laid on Him the whole world?”** Well, who gave God the authority to be God? Go to the higher up: “I want to talk to your supervisor.” Well, who's the supervisor for God? No one. He's as far as you can go. He created the world. He's the authority. He's the sovereign. Job reflected this earlier chapter nine, verse 12, “Were He [that is, God] to snatch away, who could restrain Him, who could say to Him, ‘What are you doing?’” We have no right to say to God, “What in the world are you doing here? You need some lessons on running the planet.” I mean, that is ludicrous. It's scary. It's blasphemous.

This made me think of a story back when I was around 13, that adolescent age when we tend to get a little more brazen with our parents, a little more attitude comes out of our mouths. And I was upset with my dad's authority. I remember this vividly, standing in our living room, and I looked at him and I said, “Who died and left you, boss?” He wasn't laughing. As soon as those words (have you ever done this? The words come out and you wish you could just go and suck them back in). As soon as those words came out of my mouth, I thought, “Oops.” Well, in no uncertain terms, my dad verbally and physically let me know who was boss. A lesson

learned. Well, there's an even greater authority than dads, magistrates, or kings. And that is God, our Triune God. Again, the Creator / creature distinction.

The Bible uses the analogy of the potter (God) and the clay (us). The prophet Isaiah in chapter 45, verse nine: “Woe to the one who quarrels with his Maker— an earthenware vessel among the vessels of earth! Will the clay say to the potter, ‘What are you doing?’ Or the thing you are making say, ‘He has no hands?’” A little more succinctly, chapter 64, verse eight of Isaiah: “But now, O LORD, You are our Father, We are the clay, and You our potter; and all of us are the work of Your hand.” Now, if you're familiar with Romans chapter nine, you know the Apostle Paul uses that analogy of the potter and clay. And he says, in the context of God's elective choice of salvation, he says: “. . . Does not the potter have the right over the clay to make from the same lump, one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?” Potter / clay. Creator / creature distinction.²²⁷ God is *ex lex* (Latin term). He is outside of, He is above, the law. God is constrained by no laws, even laws He makes, unless they are part of His very nature. He is constrained by his nature, but He is not constrained by mere external law. He is *ex lex*. He is the top. . . .

Our very continued existence depends on Him. Verse 14 of Job 34: **“If He should determine to do so, if He should gather to Himself His spirit and His breath, 15 all flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust.”** If God stopped actively willing the existence of all things? “Poof be gone!” It reminds me of Paul in Colossians chapter one, talking

²²⁷“[This] can make sense in the context only if we understand that God’s undisputed sovereignty over the world ensures that whatever he wants to happen does happen, and thus, implicitly, that if some humans are rewarded and some are punished, that is God’s implementation of his ruling principle . . .” [Clines]

about Jesus as the Creator. “He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.” Well, [what] if He said, “. . . Things [are] no longer going to hold together in Me; everything's going to disappear!”²²⁸ And that's what Elihu says here: 14 **“If He should determine to do so, if He should gather to Himself His spirit and His breath, 15 all flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust.”** *God is the gold standard.*

So these are the answers given by Elihu. Remember, he's speaking to everyone up to verse 15. And now he turns his attention to Job. I can just picture him talking to the three, talking to Job, talking to others who had gathered. Well, now he's zeroing in on Job beginning in verse 16. And he warns Job that he is sitting in judgment over God: 16 **“But if you [singular] have understanding, hear this; listen to the sound of my words. 17 “Shall one who hates justice rule? And will you condemn the righteous mighty One?”** (Here we have “Mighty One.” In verse ten we had “Almighty” / *Shaddai*.) 17b **“Will you condemn the righteous, Mighty One?”** “Will you stand in judgment over God? Are you going to switch places with Him?” Later, God says to Job in chapter 40, “Will you really annul my judgment? Will you condemn me that you may be justified?”²²⁹ The expected response from Job would be an emphatic “No!” – God is the King. He's the standard upon which everything else is based. And He's a good king. He's a righteous king. *God is the gold standard.*

And we see we're going to follow some subplots in our outline under the heading God is the Standard of Righteous Judgment. Verses 18 through 35, subpoints:

²²⁸“From an ecological point of view, it is breathable air that sustains all life on earth. From a theological point of view, it is God’s mercy that sustains the life of rebellious humanity. Imagine an uninhabited earth.” [Robert L. Alden, *New American Commentary: Job*]

²²⁹40:8.

- He Judges Without Partiality (vv. 18-19)
- He Judges Without Uncertainty (v. 20)
- He Judges Without Ignorance (vv. 21-25)
- He Judges Without Secrecy (vv. 26-28)
- He Judges Without Impatience (vv. 29-30)

He Judges Without Partiality (vv. 18-19)

So follow along. Beginning in verse 18, He Judges Without Partiality. Elihu asks the question: 18 **“Who says to a king, ‘Worthless one,’ to nobles** [that would be “princes”], **‘Wicked ones.’”** In that time and place, who says that sort of thing? – Elihu asks. That was a death sentence! They didn't have free speech. You called a king worthless and you were subject to being killed for it. But yet God has that right. He says to the king, “worthless one,” to nobles or princes, “wicked ones.” He's the standard.

Verse 19: **“He shows no partiality to princes . . .”** literally, “does not lift up the face of princes,” **“ . . . nor regards the rich above the poor, for they are all the work of His hands.”** This is God's authority. This is His impartiality. Yes, He judges without partiality (verses 18 and 19).

He Judges Without Uncertainty (v. 20)

And He Judges Without Uncertainty, verse 20: **“In a moment they** [most scholars think that Elihu is still focusing on rulers here, leaders] **die, and at midnight** [note that word “midnight”] **people are shaken and pass away, and the mighty are taken away without a hand.”** There's no uncertainty in God's judgment. “Midnight” can stand for just the uncertainty of the time. Interestingly, Exodus chapter 11, it was at midnight that the Angel of the Lord executed judgment against Egypt. But the emphasis isn't so much on the time as it is on the certainty of it. Certain judgment is coming. It may come now, it may come later, but it's coming.

He Judges Without Ignorance (vv. 21-25)

Thirdly, He Judges Without Ignorance. He is not only omnipotent, all powerful. He is omniscient, He knows everything. No ignorance in God. Verses 21 and 22: **“For His eyes are upon the ways of a man, and He sees all his steps. 22 There is no darkness or deep shadow where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.”** Jeremiah the prophet asked the question in chapter 23 of his book, ““Can a man hide himself in hiding places so I do not see him?” declares the LORD. ‘Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?’ declares the LORD.”²³⁰ Do you see? This is God's omnipresence; this is God's omniscience. He's everywhere present. He knows everything. He's all powerful. Nothing escapes his notice. Therefore, verse 23: **“... He does not need to consider a man further, that he should go before God in judgment.** Verse 24: **“He breaks in pieces mighty men without inquiry, and sets others in their place.** Well, that sounds like Daniel 2:21, “It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings . . .” God is sovereign over the authority figures of our planet. Verse 25 (these words echo those of verse 20):

“Therefore He knows their works, and He overthrows them in the night, and they are crushed.

He Judges Without Secrecy (vv. 26-28)

Fourthly, He Judges Without Secrecy. Verse 26: **“He strikes them like the wicked in a public place, 27 [why?] Because they turned aside from following Him, and had no regard**

²³⁰Jeremiah 23:24.

for any of His ways; 28 So that they caused the cry of the poor to come to Him, and that He might hear the cry of the afflicted—” Christopher Ash writes about this section:

“ . . . he will judge publicly, ‘in a place for all to see. . .’ There will be nothing secretive about his judgment. When men and women turn ‘aside from following him . . .’ he will give them the punishment they deserve, and he will do so publicly, so that the whole universe will see his justice.”²³¹

Well, that *will* happen. That doesn't always happen now. I mean, we could wish that it would, that we have some leader, at whatever level – could be a world leader, could be a national leader, could be a state leader who is acting wickedly – and we could wish that God would bring forth judgment now. Sometimes He does. Often He's patient, but we know . . . about the Great White Throne judgment in Revelation. That's a public judgment (great and small gathered before Him). It'll be public. God is patient.

He Judges Without Impatience (vv. 29-30)

And that brings us to our fifth point: He Judges Without Impatience. I'm glad these verses are in here. Follow along with me verse 29a: **“When He keeps quiet, who then can condemn?”**

Okay, when? When He doesn't act, doesn't judge. 29b **“And when He hides His face, who then can behold Him, that is, in regard to both nation and man?— 30 “so that godless men would not rule nor be snares of the people.** This is such a difficult verse. Reading books like the Book of Job – which can be so difficult – I would encourage you (if you're using a more wooden translation like the ESV or the NASB, which is what I use the NASB), look at some of the other translations. It can help smooth it out. Don't stone me for this, but, you know, read the

²³¹Ash, 349.

NIV when you have problems with passages like this. (I love the Holman Christian Standard Bible.) It helps clarify things. But listen to the the NIV on these two verses, verse 29 and 30: 29 **But if he remains silent, who can condemn him? If he hides his face, who can see him? Yet he is over individual and nation alike, 30 to keep the godless from ruling, from laying snares for the people.** This is saying there is a restraining aspect to what God does. He does restrain; not always to the degree that we would like. But we know what would happen if the Spirit of God and the people of God were removed from this planet entirely. What would happen? I mean, it would be utter, utter dystopia should that happen. I mean, we're becoming de-civilized in the United States because we have shunned God's Word. Even the existence of God we have shunned in the United States. And we're in moral free-fall. We are devolving. But it's just ludicrous where our nation is going, and it's because we have removed God from the equation. So all of that under the heading of the restraining nature of God and how He restrains evil and how He withdraws that restraint. But overall, God is patient. Overall, God is patient.²³²

So we're the last section. Verses 31 through 37. Almost done. This is Elihu's Second Speech. Again, chapter 34 (just refreshing your memory). Elihu's Second Speech, chapter 34, asking the question, "Is God fair?" There are subpoints for each of them, beginning with the letter "A":

- Announcement for All to Listen (vv. 1-4)
- Allegations made by Job – that is Elihu bringing up things; not always word for word. Sometimes they were concepts of things, paraphrases of things that Job has said about God and about himself. (vv. 5-9)
- Answers given by Elihu – his answer to Job's allegations (vv. 10-30)
- Appeals for Job to Repent (vv. 31-37)

²³²Cf. 2 Peter 3:9, The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

Elihu's Proposition: Change Your Ways Job (vv. 31-33)

These verses are considered some of the most difficult in the entire book, because of the words that are used, the multiplicity of definitions that are used. They're very tricky. So hang on to your seats. I'm going to look at it this way: Elihu's Proposition – verses 31 through 33 – Elihu's Proposition: Change Your Ways, Job. And Elihu gives an example. You can take this different ways, but I think he's giving an example of how someone like Job *should* act: verses 31 and 32:

31 **“For has anyone said to God, ‘I have borne chastisement; I will not offend anymore;**

32 **Teach me what I do not see; if I have done iniquity, I will not do it again’?** That's the

New American Standard. It's cumbersome, kind of difficult. Compare the Holman Christian

Standard Bible, verse 31: **Suppose someone says to God, “I have endured my punishment; I**

will no longer act wickedly. 32 Teach me what I cannot see; if I have done wrong, I won't

do it again.” Well that's better, that's smoother. I think I get a handle on that. Well, here's the

Bartolucci paraphrase: “Suppose someone like you, Job, said to God, ‘I have endured my

suffering. I will no longer offend; if I'm wrong, help me to see; and if I've sinned, I will stop.” I

think (and this can be taken different ways), but I think Elihu is giving this as an example of

what he *wants* Job to do. And Job, ultimately, at the end of the book, Job does that. So Elihu's

Proposition: Change Your Ways Job.

Elihu's Challenge: The Trial Must Continue Until Job Reforms (vv. 34-37)

Elihu's Challenge (verses 34 through 37): The Trial Must Continue Until Job Reforms.

The Trial Must Continue Until Job Reforms. I use the word “trial” with double meaning: trial as

in test, trial as in a court of law. The Trial Must Continue Until Job Reforms. Verse 34: **Men**

of understanding will say to me, and a wise man who hears me. In other words, if you've been listening and you're truly wise, if you have understanding, this is what your opinion of Job will be.

Verse 35: **“Job speaks without knowledge, and his words are without wisdom. 36 ‘Job ought to be tried to the limit, because he answers like wicked men. 37 ‘For he adds rebellion to his sin; he claps his hands among us [apparently an ancient sign of derision, clapping the hands], and multiplies his words against God.”** This is the opinion that Elihu believes the wise will have of Job, and it centers on two things: *Job’s speech* and *Job’s attitude*. And our speech reflects what's in our hearts, right? So Job’s speech, 35 **“Job speaks without knowledge; his words are without wisdom; he multiplies his words against God.”** That's speech. And then his attitude, 36b **“He answers like wicked men.”** This is not saying he is a wicked man. It almost parallels chapter two, verse ten, when Job says of his wife, remember that? – “You speak as the foolish women speak.” *You're not a foolish woman, but you're speaking like them.* And that's what this is saying. Job answers like wicked men, like they would answer. And then 37 **“he adds rebellion to his sin; he claps his hands among us.”** So *Job's speech, Job's attitude*. Therefore, verse 36, **“Job ought to be tried to the limit.”** Job's trial will be to the limit, and he will stand before God. That's true. That trial begins in chapter 38. And, Lord willing, we'll get there this summer. So God is the gold standard. *God is the gold standard.*

Three Concluding Thoughts

Let me just give you three closing points of application.

1. You can't know a standard without a voice

Number one, *you can't know a standard without a voice*. You can't know a standard without a voice. You don't know the will of an authority if that authority doesn't make that will known, right? You don't know what the speed limit is if you don't see a sign. For the most part, you don't know what the rules are unless you can read the rules. And in the United States, we have a foundational document. Our foundational written authority is the United States Constitution. Well, God has a higher authority, His *vox Dei*, His voice, and that is the Bible. That is our standard, the Word of God. That is our axiom. So you can't know a standard without a voice. We have that voice right here, Amen?

Last week there was a headline news from Uganda in East Africa. I don't know if you saw this. The government passed legislation criminalizing same sex sexual behaviors. Not the inclination, but the practice of which, and around the world, as it could be expected, there was outrage. And I noted what President Biden said, quote, “a tragic violation of universal human rights.” *A tragic violation of universal human rights*. Of course, what did the philosopher in me say? *By what standard?* By what standard do you make that declaration that this is universal? It applies everywhere at all time, and it's a violation of human rights. By what standard? It didn't always be that way.

Take this example of how quickly the sexual revolution has impacted our culture since the 1990s. In former Tonight Show host Johnny Carson's opening monologue, this is in the 90s in light of history. Now, if you're young, that sounds like ancient history. You know, if you're

20, you weren't born then. But in light of history, this is nothing. This is, this is a blink of an eye. So in the 1990s. Johnny Carson, in his opening monologue, expressed astonishment at a recent TV stunt where two men were married in a civil ceremony. And he brings this up – I saw it – he brings this up in his monologue. And people [in the audience] are like, “oooh,” like, you know, “we don't believe this.” That this was 25, 30 years ago. And he said this:

"Today, during a civil ceremony on the Donahue Show, two men married each other. It is true; I'm not making this up. . . . I mean, what the [heck] is the world coming to - two men got married on television on a daytime show? I'm not lying to you. . . . Where are our standards?"²³³

I'm quoting what he said. “I'm not lying to you. Where are our standards?” (the last thing he said). That is just mind blowing. I could go on, but we don't have time. That is mind blowing. This is what happens when you don't have an absolute standard in an absolute God. This is what happens, every man does what's right in his own eyes. It's what culture deems to be true. And that could be something that is totally unthinkable now. As Francis Schaeffer said, “today's unthinkables are tomorrow's realities, just as yesterday's unthinkables are today's realities.” People will come in line and say, “this is the way it should be.” We could say – I could maybe make up some hypotheticals – and people would say, “that'll never happen.” If enough people come together saying *yes*, the lemmings will convince the lemmings because there is no standard upon which to ground truth or morality. We have the highest authority. We have an absolute standard in God's Word, and He has clearly criminalized same sex behaviors. In fact, He has criminalized all violations of His law and nature. *God is the gold standard*. So you can't know a standard without a voice. We have a voice.

²³³Program dated May 16, 1991.

2. *Standards Are Violated, We Call That Sin*

Standards are violated (number two), *we call that sin*. God's standard is His perfect holiness. His holiness reflects his glory. Romans 3:23, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Ezekiel 10:4, “The soul who sins will die.” Listen: the default position we enter this earth with is the default position of death. We're all born that way. We're all born spiritually dead. We will all one day die physically, and apart from a Savior, we will all die eternally. That's hell.

3. *The Ultimate Standard Came to Set Us Free*

But that brings us to Jesus Christ and our third point: *The Ultimate Standard came to set us free*. The Ultimate Standard came to set us free. “In the fullness of time, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, in order that He might redeem those who were under the curse of the law.”²³⁴ Jesus came and lived the life that we could not live, died the death that He didn't deserve – but we did. Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity, Himself God, took on human flesh, representing both God and man. He was that mediator, that umpire that Job pleaded for, who could lay hands on us both, who could represent God, represent man. That is Jesus Christ. And He came, lived a sinless life, died a death for crimes that He did not deserve. Ultimately, He died for our sins, our crimes, that if we believe in Him, if he is our Lord and our Savior, by faith, repenting of our sin – that is evidence that we have been born again – and our sin is no more. God now sees us in Christ as if we had lived His

²³⁴Galatians 4:4-5.

perfect life. That is the crux of the gospel. We have a standard. Standards are violated. But the Ultimate Standard came to set us free.

And so, Father, it has been a bit of a whirlwind going through this chapter. I'm glad we made the time at least that we made. And, so much to cover and so much of it difficult. I'm grateful for the patience of my hearers, especially the younger ones, their attentiveness. And I just pray, Lord, that You continue to build upon this series. It really is something that builds upon that which has come before and ties into that which comes after. And we're just taking a one look at one chapter out of 42 this morning. And so, Lord, we just pray that You would bless this to the hearts of your hearers and further equip us, help us, to further live in the realm of that Creator / creature distinction, knowing that You are the gold standard and that we have the axiomatic truth of Your Word. For that we are thankful. We're thankful for Jesus. And I pray, Lord, for anyone that has not been born again, I pray, Holy Spirit, that You would move as You will in hearts, bringing the light, regenerating grace, that they could believe and be saved. And we pray all these things in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Third Speech of Elihu: God is Indebted to None

Job 35:1-16

June 25, 2023

Christ Church of Clarkson

0623Job35.1-16(34) | Audio Length: 56:40

Job chapter 35 (one of the shorter chapters in the book). This Elihu's third speech. We will read all 16 verses together, so follow along with me as I read:

1 Then Elihu continued and said, 2 “Do you think this is according to justice? Do you say, ‘My righteousness is more than God’s’? 3 “For you say, ‘What advantage will it be to You? What profit will I have, more than if I had sinned?’ 4 “I will answer you, and your friends with you. 5 “Look at the heavens and see; and behold the clouds—they are higher than you. 6 “If you have sinned, what do you accomplish against Him? And if your transgressions are many, what do you do to Him? 7 “If you are righteous, what do you give to Him, or what does He receive from your hand? 8 “Your wickedness is for a man like yourself, and your righteousness is for a son of man. 9 “Because of the multitude of oppressions they cry out; they cry for help because of the arm of the mighty. 10 “But no one says, ‘Where is God my Maker, who gives songs in the night, 11 who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth and makes us wiser than the birds of the heavens?’ 12 “There they cry out, but He does not answer because of the pride of evil men. 13 “Surely God will not listen to an empty cry, nor will the Almighty regard it. 14 “How much less when you say you do not behold Him, the case is before Him, and you must wait for Him! 15 “And now, because He has not visited in His anger, nor has He acknowledged transgression well, 16 So Job opens his mouth emptily; he multiplies words without knowledge.”²³⁵

This is the Word of our God. Let's pray.

Father, in the quietness of this moment we quiet our hearts before You. We quiet our hearts in humility as we seek to listen to Your voice. And so we pray that You would continue to build into our hearts, into our heads, into our conduct, those qualities that we can glean from the book of Job. Those reminders of Your sovereignty, Your transcendence, Your greatness. Those reminders of Your grace, Your nature. And so, Lord, now as we turn to chapter 35, we

²³⁵Scripture citations are taken from the NAS95 unless otherwise noted.

pray – even if it's not mentioned by the preacher – that you will show us Christ. And we pray these things in His name. Amen.

Nehemiah chapter 8 and the legacy of biblical exposition

Well, if you have a mind to, I'm going to ask you to turn by way of further introduction to Nehemiah chapter eight. One of the things that has marked my ministry, and as I was preparing for ministry in college and in seminary, as I entered ministry as a young man some time ago, one of the things that I was committed to, and one of the things that I think has marked my ministry – especially my pulpit ministry – is a commitment to biblical exposition. My preaching and teaching is focused on expounding the biblical text, being grounded in the biblical text with as much careful scholarship as I can muster. That's not unique to me. That's the legacy of the 16th century Protestant Reformation.

Before the time of the Protestant Reformation, the Roman Catholic Church kept men in darkness by not only perverting God's Word, but also keeping it hidden from them. Well, *post tenebras lux*, after darkness came the light, the light of the Reformation and the Bible. The gospel was unleashed and went forth with power, transforming lives one heart at a time. It's still doing that. And that is the legacy of the Reformation.

But even more importantly and more centrally, it's the legacy of the Bible itself, going back two millennia – more than that, to the Old Testament. We find the nation of Israel returning to their land after years of exile (we're in the fifth century BC). The people had for the most part lost their native language, which was Hebrew, which is also the language of the Old Testament. And we read in the book of Nehemiah, one of the last books written in the Old Testament economy, in chapter eight, verse one:

1 And all the people gathered as one man at the square which was in front of the Water Gate, and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses which the LORD had given to Israel. 2 Then Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly of men, women and all who could listen with understanding, on the first day of the seventh month.

So, all that could *listen with understanding* were brought forward. I take it that excluded small children. Maybe they went to children's church! I don't know. But verse three:

3 [Ezra] read from it before the square which was in front of the Water Gate from early morning until midday [we're talking several hours], in the presence of men and women, those who could understand; and all the people were attentive to the book of the law.

And Ezra spoke from a pulpit of sorts (verse four):

4 Ezra the scribe stood at a wooden podium which they had made for the purpose. 5 Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up [as we characteristically do in the opening reading of Scripture]. 6 Then Ezra blessed the LORD the great God. And all the people answered, "Amen, Amen!" while lifting up their hands; then they bowed low and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground.

Note the words of verse 7:

7 [the leaders of Israel] explained the law to the people while the people remained in their place. 8 They read from the book, from the law of God, translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading.

This is, in part, the legacy of biblical exposition and translation. The people didn't know the Hebrew language, much like people don't know it today (or the Greek). And I'm thankful that we have those that train others, those that know the languages. I'm thankful for the some of the expertise that I have in the original languages. And I'm also thankful for our translators that give us faithful translations of the Old and New Testaments. So the leaders, men like Ezra, translated the word . . . they translated it from the Hebrew and explained it to them so that they could understand it. So there was interpretation, there was translation. And the people were crying when they heard the words of the law. That shows repentance. They're hearing the voice

of God and what God required in that time. And they were told to grieve no more, but to rejoice in the Lord. (“Stop your grieving!”) And the result is all the people went and they celebrated. Why? Verse 12, *because they understood the words which had been made known to them*. They understood. And that is the goal of the teacher, the goal of the preacher, and that is to teach and preach in a way that you can understand even the deep things of God's Word.

So I am committed to expository preaching, and that again involves a familiarity with the languages, the original languages of the Bible that sums up our exegesis. Martin Luther said this: “We shall not long preserve the gospel without the languages. The languages are the sheath in which the Sword of the Spirit is contained.” And so this all becomes our focus. We go through books starting in chapter one, verse one, and we sequentially work our way to the last verse of the last chapter. And that usually, as far as preaching is concerned, takes the better part (or the full part) of an hour.

Well, with that little caveat in mind, I want to go back to Job. So you can turn back to Job chapter 35 (if you're not there already). Just by way of reminder, we were introduced to Job's fourth friend, Elihu, back in chapter 32. Elihu had witnessed much of what had gone on between Job and his three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. He had witnessed most of that. He has been back in the shadows. There were three cycles of dialogue, beginning in chapter four between Job and his friends. Job talked, the friends talked, Job responded, friends responded. And you go through those three cycles through most of the book. And that all ended with Job's last defense, which runs from chapters 27 through 31. Well, then you get to chapter 32, and there's a bit of a logjam. No one is saying anything. Job had finished talking, and the narrator tells us chapter 31, verse 40, “the words of Job are ended.” And we read in chapter 32, verse

one, the next verse, the next chapter, *these three men, again, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, ceased answering Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes.* Who will break the logjam? Who will speak up and prepare Job for God's correction that we see starting in chapter 38? Well, that would be a young man named Elihu.

In chapter 32, verses two and three, we are introduced to him. And we're introduced to his anger: 2 "But the anger of Elihu . . . burned; against Job his anger burned because he justified himself before God. 3 And his anger burned against his three friends because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job." So after a defense of his right to speak, Elihu begins what is the first of his four speeches, starting in chapter 33. And in that first speech, chapter 33, we were asking the question, "Is God sovereign?" Is God sovereign? Back when we were in that chapter, I cited a quote from Chuck Swindoll where he says:

The major theme of all that Elihu has to say can be stated in three words; God is sovereign. He is not only good all the time, He is in control all the time. . . . God is never shocked or surprised. Our lives, therefore, are never out of God's control. And furthermore, God doesn't feel obligated to explain Himself.²³⁶

That was Elihu's first speech: "Is God sovereign?"

Elihu's second speech, chapter 34: "Is God fair?" Well, God is not only fair, He's the *standard* for what justice means. And we said, God is the gold standard for everything. He's the absolute upon which everything else is judged. So chapter 33, is God's sovereign? Yes. Chapter 34, is God fair? Yes.

²³⁶Swindoll, *Job*, 251.

Elihu's Third Speech: Is God Obligated?

And you might get the impression from the fact that God is fair that He's also in some way obligated. And that's our culture. I'm treated fair when you give me what I think I deserve. That's fairness: you are obligated to me in some way or another. And we call that *entitlement*. And we have a whole category of political categories that relate to entitlements. Well, our question this morning is . . . and this is Elihu's Third Speech: Is God Obligated? *Is God obligated?* The previous two speeches, the questions were in the form in which the answer was “yes.” [In this speech] the answer is an emphatic, thunderous “no!” God is not obligated to anything other than His own nature.

You are not entitled and neither am I

So our title, The Third Speech of Elihu: God is Indebted To No One. The main idea that will come up over and over again is, *you are not entitled and neither am I*. You are not entitled and neither am I. This chapter is short (16 verses) and God's attributes are prominent throughout. We see, for example, God's justice, His immutability (that He does not change), His impassibility (He's not driven or controlled by emotions), His sovereignty, His omnipotence, His holiness, His imminence (that He is near), but especially his transcendence – that He stands above and apart from everything.

And that includes an attribute that we don't often hear about. And I'll define it for you. That is His *aseity*. . . . God's aseity, which means that He is totally self-sufficient in Himself. He is dependent on no one or no thing. Christopher Ash and his excellent commentary on the book of Job says this:

. . . two things follow [from God's nature]: Negatively (v. 6) you can sin as much as you like, but you won't damage God; you cannot cause him to suffer or damage his essence.

Positively (v. 7) you can be as good as you like, but you can never put God in your debt; he doesn't need your good deeds, and your good deeds do not give him anything.²³⁷

You see that relates much to God's *aseity*, His independent self-sufficiency, depending on nothing outside of Himself. And I think the Trinity comes into play here. The great doctrine of the triunity of God. Some people think that God needed to create, that He needed sentient beings, angels and men, in order to experience fellowship, in order to express love. How can a wooden singular monad express love if there's no object of that love? Well, within the eternal triunity of God, there existed fellowship and love between the three persons of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. So God has His self-sufficient independence, His aseity. That's one side of the coin.

Another side is His creation. God is not dependent on us, we are dependent on him. . . . And one thing that that doesn't mean is that God owes us anything. It's all by grace. That we get anything is by grace. We talk about common grace that all of the creation experiences. And then we think of special grace, that which God bestows upon his elect. *And grace is grace*. It's undeserved (Romans chapter four, Paul goes to great lengths to outline that). So again, The Third Speech of Elihu: God is Indebted To None. And the idea, *you are not entitled and neither am I*.

I've heard otherwise well-meaning Christians say things like, "When the fall happened, God obligated himself to provide a way out." Or, "When Adam and Eve sinned, God was obligated to come up with a solution." Well, that's almost blasphemous. You may say *that is blasphemous*, and I wouldn't disagree with you! God is obligated to no one. And yet we live in

²³⁷Ash, *Job*, 354.

an age of entitlement, do we not? We all feel like we deserve something; we all desire and deserve freebies.

I sold some sports cards recently on an online auction. One card that I was selling had an opening listing of \$2 with \$6 shipping and handling. Well, the card sold for two bucks. The winner writes me, asking me if I could lower the shipping charge, which was \$6. I replied that I have to consider, you know, packaging, my time, gas, all of that. But no, I won't lower the postage, but I'll cancel your order without consequence if you want me to do that. Well, he wrote back, and I misread his reply. He said, "I do want the card" – but to paraphrase what he said – "the shipping is absurd." And so I read it, "I don't want the card" and I cancelled his order. Well, then he comes back and says, "why did you cancel?" I said, "I'm sorry." I looked at the email again, the note, and I said, "you know, I'm sorry, I thought that you said to cancel, but to show you what an upstanding guy that I am, I'm going to ship you the card for free." So I canceled the order. He didn't have to pay, or if he paid, he was getting refunded. And I'm going to ship you the card for free on my dime just to show you what kind of guy that I am. His reply was a simple "thank you." That was on a Friday. He writes to me early on Monday to ask, "have you shipped the card yet?" And I replied, "no, but I'm planning to." And he writes back, "the post offices are closing soon." Well, thank you for that reminder! The next day he asks again if I shipped the card, and I told him I did. And then he says, "well, you didn't mark it shipped." And I'm like, "well, I canceled the order, remember?"... You know, this is the dialogue going back and forth. And [then he asked] "send me the tracking info," which I have to go and manually, you know, send that to him. And my reply was this: "Dude, do you realize that I'm shipping this card on my dime and you're getting it for free?" His reply? "Just send the tracking." I didn't. He got the card

and at least said “thanks for the card.” But then he added, “I’ll take more freebies.”

Unbelievable! Unbelievable! But that's the spirit of our age. I want my reparations. I want my college debt paid. I want government health care. I want everything for free. I don't want to work for it. Whatever it is, you name it. And when it doesn't happen, we cry “foul! That's not fair!” Fair? Are you kidding me? Fair? Well, those are more egregious examples of entitlement.

But sometimes entitlement takes a subtler form, like when we suffer . . . when we truly suffer and are hurting. We have to use caution in our attitudes toward God. New Testament scholar D.A. Carson said this:

If you live long enough, you will suffer. If haven't suffered yet, you will. The only alternative is not living long enough. If you live long enough, you will be bereaved. If you live long enough, you'll contract cancer, consumptive heart failure. . . . You might have a road accident or get fired from a job or two. If you live long enough, you will suffer.

If you live long enough, you'll lose children. Almost every family lost some children 150 years ago. We don't expect that anymore in the medicalized West. In many parts of the world, people still lose children, If you live long enough, you will lose some too. A church where I served some decades back in Canada had a woman in it who was 94 when I knew her, a widow ... three times ... who had lost all her children by the age of 94.

I knew a man, Norman Anderson. He eventually was knighted by the queen, so he was Sir Norman Anderson. He had been a missionary in the Muslim world and a brilliant scholar in Oriental studies. His first child was a daughter who went on to become a medical doctor and went to the Congo as a missionary as it then was, the Belgian Congo. During the upheaval in which the Belgian Congo become Zaire in 1959, she was gang raped. She was furloughed home and eventually went to California to get more medical training. She tripped, fell down some stairs, and drowned in her own spittle.

The second child died in circumstances no less bizarre. The third . . . went to Cambridge University about the time that I went, and he contracted a brain tumor and died of the age of 21 before he graduated. All three kids [gone]. I knew Norman and Pat pretty well for the next 15-20 years until they died. Not once, not once, did I ever hear him say that

God wasn't fair or complain about his loss. How do you do that? Does that even make sense?"²³⁸

How do you do that? By the grace and power of the Holy Spirit. Doesn't always make sense, not from our human perspective. But if we remember that we are not entitled, that everything is by grace, then we realize – we need to realize, at least intellectually, and also with our hearts – that it's not unfair. God does bless. That is grace. *You are not entitled and neither am I.* There's no such thing as obligatory grace. Grace, by its very definition, is undeserved. It is unearned. God is not obligated to grant it (it is a gift). To whom He grants it (His special grace) and to whom He doesn't is His own prerogative, because no one deserves it. And so we read in Romans 9:18 that God has “mercy on whom He desires and He hardens whom He desires.” Tough words, right? But you're not entitled, and neither am I!

So this brings us back to Elihu's Third Speech: Is God Obligated? And here Elihu speaks directly to Job:

- Job's Arguments (vv. 1-3)
- Elihu's Answers (vv. 4-15)
- Elihu's Assessment (v. 16)

So we have Arguments, Answers, and Assessment.

Job's Arguments (vv. 1-3)

Beginning in verse one: Job's Arguments. Verse one says that, “**Elihu continued and said.**” That same phrase is used at the beginning of Elihu's second, third, and fourth speeches. Verse two, “**Do you think** [again, talking to Job] **this is according to justice? Do you say, ‘My righteousness is more than God’s’?**” 3 “**For you say, ‘What advantage will it be to**

²³⁸D.A. Carson, *Making Sense of Suffering*, Part 1, p. 1.

You? What profit will I have, more than if I had sinned?” Elihu was pointing out that, in a backhanded sort of way, Job is claiming a greater righteousness than God. He's standing in judgment over God. Now, that's not what Job said directly, but it's the implication of what he has said. And so Elihu asks, verse two, **“Do you think this is according to justice?”** Other translations have, **“Do you think this is just?”** The word “just” or “justice” is the Hebrew *mishpat* a word that has judicial elements but also carries along with it the idea of sovereignty. It's more than simple fairness. The same word is used by God in chapter 40, verse eight, translated by the New American Standard as “judgment:” God's speaking, “Will you really [Job] annul my *mishpat*, my judgment?” It's a sovereign, righteous, judicial judgment. And Job gets the idea at the end, of course, we know that. We know how the book ends. Chapter 42, verse six, Job sums up and says, “Therefore I retract and I repent in dust and ashes.”

Job claims a greater righteousness than God (v. 2)

So Elihu, going back to verse two, adds, **“Do you say, ‘My righteousness is more than God's?’”** Well, Job all along has been claiming innocence, right? We've seen that as we've gone through this book. And that's true as far as not having done anything to directly deserve the calamity that fell upon him. But he also has been critical that God has not come through. Job seems to believe that God is not keeping His end of the agreement, of which there really wasn't one, but namely that God was entitled to deliver Job because Job deserves that. And that wasn't happening and Job was getting more and more frustrated as time goes on. And in the end, he is placing himself as God's judge. Christopher Ash writes:

“Although at the start of the book Job firmly rejected this [idea that God will bless him because of his goodness and showed that he worships God purely and simply because he is God and is worthy of his worship, [I'll remind you at the beginning of the book, the Lord gave, the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord. That's what Job

said in the face of his calamity. But Ash goes on to say that] it would seem that Job has faltered in this as his sufferings have continued.”²³⁹

So Job claims a greater righteousness than God.

Job claims that being good doesn't matter (v. 3)

And then Job claims again – this is under Job's arguments – Job claims that *being good doesn't really seem to matter*. That's verse three. Elihu, saying this, **“For you say, ‘What advantage will it be to You? What profit will I have, more than if I had sinned?’”** So in other words [Job is saying], “Would it be any different if I had sinned? I've been trying to walk a righteous walk and look what I've got. So what difference does it make?” *Obedience is no advantage according to Job*. Job is being inconsistent here, if not outright illogical, because on the one hand, he believes that being good means God will vindicate him. Then he claims it doesn't really matter if he's good or bad. So he's at a conundrum. And the problem is twofold. Job has bought into this false worldview that was demonstrated by the three friends that good people don't suffer. If you suffer, then it means you did something to deserve it. If you suffer, it means you're not really good. And Job seems to have bought into that and he's confused. And he also thinks that the reward for obedience is *lack* of suffering, and that confuses Job because he continues to suffer. This doesn't make sense to him. He wants vindication. He wants it now and it isn't happening, so he thinks, “why bother? Why bother living a life pleasing to God when you suffer? When He seems so far away. Why bother?” In the previous chapter, verse nine, Elihu quoted Job as saying, “It profits a man nothing when he, that is the man, is pleased with God.” In other words, there's no benefit for having your delight focused in God. Well, back to the fact

²³⁹Ash, *Job*, 353.

that Job claims a greater righteousness, he's in effect placing himself in a position of judge over God.

And if you say – if you think about this – if you say that God is acting unjustly, you're placing yourself above Him as his judge. Unsaved people do that all the time. “Well, I would never believe in a God who . . .” (fill in the blanks). They're placing themselves above God as His judge, which we who can appreciate the existence of our Triune God and His nature, we can look at that and say, “that is utterly absurd, utterly, utterly absurd for the creature crying out to the Creator and standing judge over Him.”

So Job claims the greater righteousness than God, and Job claims that being good doesn't matter. He implicitly claims to exceed God's righteousness and justice by claiming that he has fulfilled his obligations. “I've checked all the boxes, God, but You have not come through. You're not keeping Your end of the bargain.” Do good and suffer? Why bother? says Job. Had the song been around, Job may have sung in his misery:

They say there's a heaven for those who will wait, some say it's better, some say it ain't.
I'd rather laugh with the sinners than cry with the saints. The sinners are much more fun.
You know that only the good die young.

You're probably familiar with that song from 1977. That's kind of the sentiment that Job has here. And Elihu points out to him that, you know, “you're kind of tracking like the unrighteous do, like the unbelievers do.” And that song certainly demonstrates the way unbelievers think.

But undeserved suffering – and enduring undeserved suffering – is a mark of genuine faith. I think I've been tested in that about as much as I could be. But think about Jesus in the parable of the soils in Matthew 13, “The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, the rocky soil, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy. Yet he has

no firm root, but it's only temporary. And when affliction, suffering, affliction, or persecution arises because of the Word, because of his profession, immediately he falls away.” Enduring undeserved suffering is a mark of true saving faith. When you don't endure, when you fall away, when you deny Christ because of your suffering, you not only stand above God, but you demonstrate that you don't have true saving faith. So this is Job's Argument.

Elihu's Answers (vv. 4-15)

Elihu, in the bulk of this chapter, verses four through 15, gives “His Answers.” And so he says, verse four, “**I will answer you.**” The antecedent of you is Job (and your friends with you, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar).

God's transcendent aseity (vv. 4-8)

And the first answer that Elihu gives refers to *God's transcendent aseity*. (Now, if you are thinking, “aseity, what in the world is that?” you weren't paying attention earlier.) Okay, God's transcendent aseity . . . and Elihu who focuses here, starting in verse five, with God's transcendent glory. And he says, “**Look at the heavens and see. Behold the clouds. They are higher than you.**” This is a picture of God's transcendent glory. Here's Job, a minuscule fallen man objecting to God's justice, to God's righteousness, objecting to the way he's been treated. And Elihu says, “Job, take a big look around. Look up. Look at the clouds.” The same word clouds is used in chapter 38, verse 37, where God says to Job, “Who can count the clouds by wisdom?” Job, you and I are nothing compared to this transcendent, glorious God.

I don't know that there's a greater testimony of God's transcendent glory than creation itself. And I mean creation in total, everything that isn't God was created by and for Him. Keep that in mind. And so we have creation proper: Psalm 19:1, “The heavens are telling of the glory

of God; their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.” And this is why all are without excuse (Romans chapter one). Everyone, whether they've heard the gospel or not, everyone who can “hear with understanding” is without excuse, because God's glory is revealed in creation. So we have creation proper, and then we have the creation of man, created in God's image. Psalm chapter eight:

4 What is man that You take thought of him, And the son of man that You care for him?
5 Yet You have made him a little lower than God, And You crown him with glory and
majesty! 6 You make him to rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things
under his feet.

We have the uniqueness of man. People are certainly unique as it relates to the rest of living beings. We stand far above the rest of creation. In fact, there's no comparison. What animal can write great works like Shakespeare? What animal can paint like da Vinci? What animal can analyze and reflect on his own thought the way we do? What animal can know God and His thoughts? What animal can know and enjoy Him – not just now, but forever? Man is set apart from the rest of creation; a demonstration of God's transcendent glory. “Job, look at the heavens and see. Behold the clouds. They are higher than you. Look around. Look up. God is gloriously transcendent.” When you look at a beautiful sunset, when you look at beautiful landscapes (even when you're out people watching), think of God's transcendent glory in creation.

This is a focus of God in His response to Job in chapters 38 through 41: His unique glory and sovereignty and providence in creation. The implication being, “Job, can you do this?” We see God's *aseity*, His self sufficiency in verses six through eight. Verse six, **“If you have sinned, what you accomplish against Him? And if your transgressions are many, what do you do to Him?”** On the other hand, verse seven, **“If you are righteous, what do you give to Him? Or what does He receive from your hand?”** Well, what did Elihu say Job's attitude

was, in verse three? **“For you say, ‘what advantage will it be to you; what profit will I have more than if I had sinned?’”** In other words, “I’ve been trying to act good – but what advantage – what would be the difference if I had acted bad?” Well, this was looking at things from Job’s perspective. What does Job get if he’s good or bad? Elihu turns the tables: *what about God’s perspective?*

Our sin does not do damage to God

There’s a positive and a negative here in verses six and seven. Negatively, *our sin does not do damage to God*. Our sin does not do damage to God. 6a **“If you have sinned, what do you accomplish against Him?”** And it’s a parallel thought; these parts of verse six line up one under the other: 6b **“And if your transgressions are many,”** transgression paralleling sin, **“what do you do to Him?”** . . . Our sin does not do damage to God. It does not affect Him, not ontologically, not as it relates to His essence.

Our Righteousness does not improve God

Positively, *our righteousness does not improve upon God*. 7 **“If you are righteous, what do you give to Him, or what does He receive from your hand?”** “Are you giving him things, Job? Does your righteousness blow Him up as if He’s a balloon with a slow leak and He needs constant undergirding? Do you help God by being so righteous?” (Today’s English Version understands and translates this question in kind of an ironic sort of way.) No, God cannot be affected by anyone’s actions, good or bad. We cannot hurt or damage Him. Wiersbe says this:

“Certainly God grieves over man’s sins (Gen. 6:6) and delights in the obedience of the faithful (Ps. 37:23); but our good deeds can’t bribe Him, and our misdeeds can’t threaten Him. God’s character is the same whether men obey Him or disobey Him. God can’t

change for the better because He is perfect, and He can't change for the worse because He is holy."²⁴⁰

God is ontologically static. He is the same. He is perfect in all of His attributes and nothing can affect Him positively or negatively. Nothing can damage Him.

Now, does that mean our conduct doesn't affect anything? No, it affects other people.

That's verse eight: **“Your wickedness is for a man . . .”** – and again these are parallel – there's parallels going on here. A parallel idea:

- 8a **“Your wickedness is for a man like yourself . . .”**
- 8b **“. . . and your righteousness is for a son of man.”**

Your wickedness, your righteousness, affects other people. It doesn't affect God. The NIV renders this: 8 “Your wickedness only affects humans like yourself and your righteousness only other people.” One writer puts it this way

When God shows mercy it is not because man has persuaded Him to do so, and if He inflicts judgment it is not because man has injured Him. God is sovereign and therefore self-determining. He is not bribed by man; His standards for judging people are firm, impartial, and uninfluenced . . .²⁴¹

So the first answer that Elihu gives to Job's argument, Job's position, Job's complaining, is this: *God's transcendent aseity* (His transcendence). He's big. He stands over everything. Look at the clouds – and His aseity, that He is entirely self-sufficient in Himself. Nothing can damage Him, nothing can hurt Him, and He doesn't need anything.

²⁴⁰Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Patient*.

²⁴¹*Bible Knowledge Commentary*.

Job Has Become Proud (vv. 9-15)

The second answer we can sum up this way: *Job has become proud*. And that brings us from verse nine to verse 15. Elihu begins with an example of pride in those who suffer (verses nine and 12). This is speaking of the unrighteous, . . . verse nine: **“Because of the multitude of oppressions, they [that is, the unrighteous] cry out; they cry for help because of the arm of the mighty . . .”** [probably referring to human oppressors]. In verse 12, the NAS has, **“there they cry out”** – probably better, **“consequently, they cry out, but He [God] does not answer because of the pride of evil men.”** This is about the unrighteous. This is about those who are evil, who are saturated with pride. Elihu is saying, “Job, you are acting like this. Not that you are this, but you're acting like this.” Elihu said the same thing in chapter 34, verse 36: “Job ought to be tried to the limit, because he answers like wicked men” (and here are those answers that . . . are characterized by pride and unbelief). . . .

But Elihu gives an example of how we *should* respond in verses ten and 11: **“But no one . . . [and again, he's talking about the wicked] . . . no one says, [the implied thought, “as they should”] ‘Where is God my Maker, who gives songs in the night, 11 who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth and makes us wiser than the birds of the heavens?’”**

That's the way we should respond. And he's saying, “the wicked don't do this.” But the implication is that those who are righteous, those who are true believers, they ought to do this.

God as Creator, Comforter, Counselor

There needs to be a recognition of three things. *God as Creator* (v. 10a). **“No one says, ‘Where is God, my Maker?’”** That's humility. That's understanding the creature-Creator distinction. I am man, I am lowly, I am fallen, I am finite; God is transcendent, He's glorious,

He's omnipotent, He's holy. **“No one says, ‘Where is God, my Maker?’”** God is sovereign. He's King. All things come through Him, and we are to humble . . . ourselves under that knowledge. And so Elihu, again, talking about creation, said, “look up at the clouds, look around.” And here he's saying, “You’ve got to humble yourself and say, ‘Where is God, my Maker, my Creator.’”

Paul, in Acts 17 before the philosophers of Athens, refers to the creation. He says, verse 24, “The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands.” That is, He's transcendently glorious. “Nor is He served by human hands as though He needed anything.” That parallels what we just saw a moment ago. “And He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined [His sovereignty], their appointed times, and the boundaries of their habitation.” This is *God as Creator*.

[*God as Comforter*]. In verse ten, it says **“He is the one who gives songs in the night”** (10b). *Songs in the night*. What's that about? Well, *night* would indicate times of suffering, times of darkness. Songs? This is the joy that God alone can give during those times. No one who is not righteous says, **“Where is God, my maker?”** They don't say that. The righteous say that. **“And who gives songs in the night,”** that is, brings joy in times of suffering.

And sometimes that's literal songs. Paul and Silas in Philippi (remember that in Acts chapter 16)? They had been beaten with rods, thrown in prison, feet fastened in the stocks. And about midnight Paul and Silas were praying, singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. After all of this suffering, after all of this darkness, God gave them *songs in the night*. So that's the proper response . . .

And then *God as Counselor*. 11 **“Who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth and makes us wiser than the birds of the heavens?”**

God does not heed the prayers of the wicked

And [then] the fact, verse 13, *God does not heed the prayers of the wicked*. Again, this is an object lesson for Job. This is an illustration for Job. “Job, maybe this is why God is not answering your prayers, because He doesn't hear the prayers of the wicked.” And even when the righteous are acting wickedly, you know, we're told that in Scripture, “Husbands live with [your wives] according to knowledge, so that . . . your prayers not be hindered.” The Psalmist: “If I regard wickedness in my heart, He will not hear.” Verse 13: **“Surely God will not listen to an empty cry, nor will the Almighty regard it.”** Another parallel thought:

- 13a **“Surely God will not listen to an empty cry . . .”**
- 13b “. . . *nor will the Almighty* [Hebrew *Shaddai*²⁴²] **regard** [or see] **it.**”

13a **“God will not listen to an empty cry . . .”** That word “cry” is the Hebrew form for “vanity” or “nothingness” – hence, “empty cry.” The cries of the wicked toward God are addressed to a nobody, a god of their own making; so their cries are useless. They're empty if they're not given out of faith and repentance.

Overcoming the effects of Marxism

Well, how can it be that God ignores the cries of the oppressed and the innocent?

Whenever you ask a question, you say, “Is this question accurate?” These people may be oppressed, these hypothetical people, but they are not *innocent*. They're depraved; therefore proud, therefore an empty cry. The sin of pride runs parallel to God's aseity where God is

²⁴²That word, *Shaddai*, is used more times in Job than any other Old Testament book.

independent, self-determining, self-sufficient. Unrighteous man *thinks* he is and *acts* as if he doesn't need God – until he does. And then the cry for help comes from a sinful heart. There's no repentance, only an expectation that something is deserved. Seeking comfort, not the Comforter.

And our culture is driven by this Marxist concept of the oppressed versus the oppressors. In fact, I hate to tell you, but if you're of European descent, as am I, you're probably “an oppressor.” So . . . down come the statues of historical figures, even Christopher Columbus, Columbus Day being a bad thing now. (That day was given in recognition to Italian Americans, a tip of a hat to Italian Americans who themselves had endured much suffering.) This is one reason why our culture is so divided. We fall into disparate categories, and I could go through all of those categories (there are lots of them). But one of them is that you're either an oppressor or you are the oppressed. Layton Talbot says this:

This . . . is symptomatic of contemporary liberation theologies [and we could say it's also symptomatic of contemporary liberalism], which canonized the poor and oppressed simply because of their poverty and oppression.

The social justice movement. Take down Columbus, put up George Floyd. Reparations for the oppressed. Affirmative action. All of that.

And Talbot continues,

“The assumption is that God is necessarily and invariably on the side of the oppressed and owes them relief regardless of their personal relationship or attitude towards Him. This perverts the biblical picture of God’s posture toward the oppressed. . . . Suffering itself is not a virtue that commands the compassion and protection of God, nor does it entitle a person to a claim on God. It is the attitude of the poor that determines God’s posture toward them . . .”

The bottom line is *you are not entitled and neither am I.*

This doesn't mean that God doesn't care. He's merciful, He's gracious. . . . And we're not entitled. This doesn't mean that we don't do what we can to help our modern day widows and

orphans. We certainly want to see justice and righteousness prevail, but that's according to God's standards. And that always includes the gospel. Because what good does it do to help somebody who's suffering and pat them on the back, let them go to a better life, only to face eternity in hell? We've got to tell them about Jesus. We've got to give him the gospel. Yes, give them a cup of water, give them clothes, help them, give them a job. But give them the gospel of Jesus Christ so that they can glorify God with their clothes, with their job, with their lives.

Application to Job (vv. 14-15)

So Elihu answers Job. The first answer: *God's transcendent aseity*; the second answer: *Job has become proud*. Now we see *the application to Job* in verses 14 and 15. Verse 14. **“How much less . . . [okay, he's talked about the wicked – so in comparison to the wicked, *how much less . . .*] when you [Job] say you do not behold Him, and that the case is before Him, and you must wait for Him!”**

There are two things that make up Job's complaint here: 1) He can't see God (this implies God's inactivity, God's not acting); and 2) he can't wait for God (God is taking too long). Again, that is absurd on its face. “Sorry God. I can't be patient. Come on! Can you speed it up a little?” The case is before the Judge and Job has to wait? Listen, we're not entitled, and neither is Job for that matter.

Verse 15 is hard so let's see if I can make it easy, but it's hard, a very tricky verse. Elihu continues, **“And now, because He has not visited in His anger, nor has He acknowledged transgression well . . .”** . . . That is from the New American Standard, which is a very literal translation. But you could take that and run with it in all sorts of different directions. After having studied this, it seems to indicate that Job is upset that he suffers while the wicked don't.

That was Job's complaint back in chapter 21. Job is comparing himself to others, and that's always a bad thing. Don't compare yourself to other people. Be thankful for what you have, not what you don't. But the NIV translates these two verses (and I think this helps) . . . (Keep in mind, every translation is an interpretation. I don't care if you're translating from Spanish to English or Italian to Russian. Every translation is an interpretation. Greek to English, Hebrew to English.) So the NIV has,

verse 14:

How much less, then, will he listen when you say that you do not see him, that your case is before him and you must wait for him,

And then tricky verse 15:

and further, that his anger never punishes and he does not take the least notice of wickedness.

I think that that really helps clear what verse 15 is saying as we read it in a more literal translation.

Elihu's Assessment (v. 16)

So we've got Job's Arguments; we see Elihu's Answers (verse four through 15); and then Elihu's Assessment. Verse 16 says, “**So Job opens his mouth emptily, and multiplies words without knowledge.**” Elihu's assessment is God's, as we will see later.

Well, there's one more speech by Elihu, chapters 36 and 37. That's going to be a challenge to try to get through in one message. And then it's God's turn starting in chapter 38. But again, *you're not entitled, and neither am I*. And that's why we're grateful for grace. Because grace is undeserved, getting what we don't deserve.

I mentioned Romans chapter four earlier. And I think it helps frame the whole issue of how are we saved? Do we somehow earn it? Is it by our being good, by some work that we do, or is it totally undeserved? In other words, are we entitled to grace? Have we worked for it? Have we gained it in some way? Well, Romans chapter four is one place where Paul clearly outlines the fact that it is undeserved, unearned, and he says, verse one,

1 What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found?
2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. 3 For what does the Scripture say? “ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.” 4 Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due.

So I say, you know, “mow my lawn and I'll give you ten bucks.” So you come, you mow my lawn and I give you ten bucks. Well, that wasn't grace. That was something you earned. And that's what Paul is saying here.

5 But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness, 6 just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: 7 “BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS HAVE BEEN COVERED. 8 “BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOSE SIN THE LORD WILL NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT.”

This brings us to the cross. Justification by faith. *You're not entitled and neither am I* – and that's why I'm thankful for the cross. The cross is for those who know they're not entitled, who know they're bankrupt sinners in need of a Savior. And so we have the cross, and we have Jesus, and we have grace. If you're a believer in Jesus Christ, if you've been born again, be thankful for that. Rejoice: your names are recorded in heaven! If you're not? Well, I can only pray that the Holy Spirit will show you that you can't bring anything to the equation. God will judge you either by you or by Christ. If it's by you, I'm sorry, you're not going to pass. If it's by

Christ, the Son of God who died for sinners, then you will be accepted in His sight totally by His grace. Amen! . . .

Lord, we just thank You for the cross. We thank you for Jesus. We know, Lord, that as Carson said, "to live any amount of time on this earth is to soon discover that this life is filled with suffering." When we're kids, we think we suffer when we don't get our way. We think we suffer when we bruise our knee on our bicycle. But then as we get older, we begin to realize what real suffering is, what devastating suffering can feel like. And so, Lord, we're thankful that while we're not entitled, no – but we are recipients of grace that which we do not deserve. In fact, we don't want what we are entitled to, and that is eternity in hell. By your grace, we are made recipients of heaven. Recipients of Jesus. Anyone with sound of my voice who has not been born again . . . I pray, Holy Spirit, that You would, according to Your sovereign will . . . that You would work in those hearts, bringing new life, enabling faith, the faith that justifies and an understanding, "I was not entitled to this. This is the grace of Jesus, the grace in which I stand." And so we thank you for that. And we pray these things in Jesus name. Amen.

The Fourth Speech of Elihu: God is Great and Good

Job 36:1 - 37:24

September 17, 2024

Christ Church of Clarkson

0923Job36.1-37.24(35) | Audio Length: 56:40

Job chapter 36. I just want to read the first four verses:

1 Then Elihu continued and said, 2 “Wait for me a little, and I will show you that there is yet more to be said in God’s behalf. 3 “I will fetch my knowledge from afar, and I will ascribe righteousness to my Maker. 4 “For truly my words are not false; one who is perfect in knowledge is with you.”²⁴³

Let's pray.

And so, Father, You are the One that is perfect in knowledge. And You have revealed that knowledge of who You are to us in Your Word. Your inspired, Your inerrant Word that guides us, that's a lamp to our feet, that instructs us in our way, that guides our hearts and our lives and all that we do as a church. And so, Father, we pray as we come to Your Word that You would guide. That You would guide the speaker; guide me, Lord. This is a difficult, difficult passage. And I pray, Lord, that You would also guide the hearers, that they would follow along in their own Bibles, and that You would work in their hearts as we get through this last speech of this man from long ago, Elihu, as he speaks to Job. And so bless our time. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

Well, to just give you a little bit of a background to the book of Job, some of you may not be all that familiar with the book, or haven't been with us in the course of our study. Others of you just maybe need a reorientation of the book of Job, a book about suffering, but it's a book

²⁴³Scripture citations are taken from the NASB95 unless otherwise noted.

about so much more. It's a book about God, God's sovereignty. It's a book that answers the question, "Why does a true believer in God serve God?"

And as we've gone through this book there have been three cycles of speeches. Remember, Job has his three friends: Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. And after the beginning chapters of the book, we see that a Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar each address Job in turn, and Job replies to each one in turn. And there are these cycles, these three cycles of speeches between Job and the friends.

And then we get to the point where Job's three friends are finished talking (in fact, Zophar doesn't participate at all in the last cycle of speeches). And the three friends have finished talking: you have Bildad's last speech (that was chapter 25), and Job replies to him in chapter 26. (Again, Zophar doesn't speak. He usually follows Bildad, but he doesn't speak.) And then Job goes into a five chapter monologue. We've gone through that, Job speaking from chapters 27 to 31. And then we get to the end of chapter 31, the last verse, and it says, "The words of Job are ended."

It's at that point that we've been introduced to this fourth friend, Elihu. Job chapter 32, verses one through five, introduces him. . . . We read:

1 Then these three men ceased answering Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes. 2 But the anger of Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram burned; against Job his anger burned because he justified himself before God. 3 And his anger burned against his three friends because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job. 4 Now Elihu had waited to speak to Job because they were years older than he. 5 And when Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of the three men his anger burned.

So Elihu was upset. We see that phrase, "his anger burned" a number of times in that passage.

The four speeches of Elihu

And Elihu goes on to give four separate speeches (that's the way we've divided them up). We've covered three of them. The First Speech of Elihu: God is the Sovereign; that was the title, that was the theme: God is *the* Sovereign. That's chapters 32 and 33. And the main idea of that passage, as we framed it, is *keep trusting your sovereign and good God, especially when life hurts*. Chapter 34, The Second Speech of Elihu: God is Just. He's righteous. And we said that *God is the gold standard*. He's the standard for everything else. Chapter 35 was The Third Speech of Elihu. And we said that *God is indebted to none*. God is indebted to none. The idea: *you are not entitled and neither am I*.

The Fourth Speech of Elihu: God is Great and Good (36 - 37)

God's greatness and goodness lead the believer to repentance

And now we come to The Fourth Speech of Elihu: God is Great and Good (chapters 36 and 37). And my main idea here is that, *God's greatness and goodness lead the believer to repentance*.

We often think of that word “repentance,” and we think it's something that applies to the person that's not a believer in Jesus Christ. They need to believe and repent. But repentance is part of our very lives as Christians, as believers. We note that in our church confession.

Paragraph 12, Personal Integrity:

We endeavor to live with Spirit-filled integrity, living holy lives in this present world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our conduct; to make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts, believing repentance as normal to the Christian life.

Yes, God's greatness and goodness lead the *believer* to repentance. That's Elihu point to Job in this section.

As I said, this is the longest of the four speeches, 57 verses. Some key themes that come out of these two chapters:

- 1. God watches over his people.
- 2. God disciplines his people when they go astray.
- 3. God blesses his people when they correct their course.

Yes, *God's greatness and goodness lead the believer to repentance.*

God's transcendence and immanence

But there's another thing we see in these two chapters, and that is *God's transcendence*. When we talk about God, sometimes we talk about His transcendence versus His immanence. God is transcendent [means] He's "big," He's "out there," He stands over and apart from His creation. When we say transcendence, we're talking about the bigness of God, that He's incomparable to anything else that we know or see. But our God, the God of the Scriptures, is also *immanent*. He's not just out there, He's not just big, He's also among us. He dwells with us. He is near. And so we see the transcendence of God in these two chapters. But we also see His imminence when He directly appears to Job out of a whirlwind in chapter 38.

It's important, the concept that we have of God. In 1955, J.B. Phillips published his classic book, *Your God Is Too Small*, and he emphasizes the importance of what we think about God. That's what the 16th century reformer Martin Luther was getting to when he made the accusation of Erasmus: "Your thoughts of God are too human." Think about that! This is in part what Elihu has been teaching Job: "Job, your thoughts of God are too human."

A. Introduction: A Prophetic Voice (36:1-4)

There's an introduction in verses one through four of chapter 36. If you follow along, beginning in verse one of chapter 36: "**Then Elihu continued and said . . .**" That phrase, "and

Elihu continued,” that marks off his second, third, and this fourth speech. 2 **“Wait for me a little, and I will show you that there is yet more to be said in God’s behalf.”** And then verse three: **“I will fetch my knowledge from afar, and I will ascribe righteousness to my Maker.”**

“Knowledge from afar,” what does that mean? Well, some have said that means that Elihu was well-schooled; he had received training in one of the great learning centers. But more likely he's simply speaking prophetically. His knowledge is God's knowledge. And it's interesting, as we've noted before, that when you look at Elihu’s speeches and then you look at how God addresses Job afterward, God brings up a lot of the same things that Elihu brings up. There's a strong parallel there.

So Elihu, 3 **“I will fetch my knowledge from afar, and I will ascribe righteousness to my Maker.”** He's not defending himself; he's defending God, or his Maker's righteousness (or His justice). This has been central to Elihu’s complaint against Job: that Job was complaining that God has treated him unfairly, Job was questioning the goodness of God. In chapter 19 verse six, Job says, “Know then that God has wronged me . . .” *God has done me wrong.* He's questioning the justice of God, the goodness of God. And Elihu is going to correct that.

And he expands on the idea in verse three and verse four. He says, **“For truly my words are not false; One who is perfect and knowledge is with you.”** This has been greatly misunderstood (this verse). It sounds like arrogance on Elihu's part: “My words are not false, Job. I'm perfect in knowledge.” I don't think we have to read it that way (but many do).

Listen to the words of those that have been critical. These are some scholars (I take their comments seriously). One says, “[Elihu is a] stranger to modesty [who] frequently finds it

necessary to certify his own genius.”²⁴⁴ Another says, “Elihu [attempts] to vindicate God [and] falls into the trap of playing God.”²⁴⁵ Another says, “His presumption reached an apex with this verse.”²⁴⁶ And then lastly, “His claim is extravagant, presumptuous, and absurd.”²⁴⁷ (This idea of what Elihu says in verse four.)

But I think Old Testament scholar Walter Kaiser has it right when he says:

Some insist on charging Elihu with being arrogant and somewhat pompous when he claims, ‘my words are not false; One perfect in knowledge is with you’ (4). But that assessment of Elihu depends on attributing Elihu’s words to himself and is therefore a misinterpretation of the text as I see it. Instead, however, Elihu is speaking only of God as the ‘One perfect in knowledge’ and not of himself at all, as a glance forward in 37:16 informs us.²⁴⁸

The passage he's talking about is where Elihu speaks of “One perfect and knowledge.” He's talking about God. So Elihu may be saying here that in addition to speaking prophetically, God, who is “perfect in knowledge,” is there also.

God Is Good (36:5-25)

Well, that brings us to our first big point: God is Good. And we're going to see three areas that demonstrate God's goodness, or two areas (and then there's an appeal):

1. God's Goodness in Justice (36:5-7)
2. His Goodness in Discipline (36:8-10)

And then on the basis of this,

²⁴⁴Rowley.

²⁴⁵Habel.

²⁴⁶Alden.

²⁴⁷Strahan.

²⁴⁸Kaiser, *Job*, 201.

3. An Appeal to Job (36:16-25)

But again, the idea that God is Good. This is part and parcel with the attributes of God. We talk about *God's greatness* and *God's goodness* in systematic theology. I've taught theology several times in the past. We often, usually, attribute God's attributes as being “communicable” and “incommunicable.” That is, we say God has attributes, He has characteristics of Him, those things that mark Him off in His nature. He has those things that are *communicable*, that is, we can share in them as men and women created in His image: love, mercy, things like that. But He also has *non-communicable* attributes. They don't communicate to anyone else; they're only true of God. And those would be things such as His omnipotence, His omniscience, His absolute sovereignty.

But some theologians have described God by looking at His attributes under the two categories of “goodness” and “greatness.” For example, He displays His *goodness* in mercy and love and forgiveness. He demonstrates His *greatness* in His holiness [and] in the “omni” characteristics (omnipresence, omniscience, and in His sovereignty).

Well, we see so many of God's attributes in these two chapters. And that is Elihu's boast, going back to that idea of goodness and greatness, those two ideas which will frame part of our outline, Elihu boasts in God. In fact, Elihu can't say enough about his God. If he lived this side of the cross, he would echo the Apostle Paul's words, “May my boast never be in anything other than the cross of Jesus Christ.”²⁴⁹

That is *our* boast. Do you boast in God? Do you boast in the glorious Savior, Jesus Christ? Does our conversation with others touch upon His *goodness* and His *greatness*? We

²⁴⁹Galatians 6:14.

boast about a lot of things, hopefully not about ourselves. But we can, we can boast. We take pride in our family and our kid's achievements, our favorite sports teams, our hobbies, things we enjoy. But do we boast in our God who gives us those things to enjoy to His glory? That's what this is about: God's goodness as well as His greatness.

His Goodness in Justice (36:5-7)

And we see His Goodness in Justice, verses five through seven. *Goodness in His justice.*

“Behold . . .” Note that first word, “behold.” It's the Hebrew word *hen*. And it introduces four statements by Elihu about God's power. *Behold, God is powerful!* You see it here in verse five. You see it in verse 22. You see it in verse 26 and verse 30.

5 Behold, God is mighty but He does not despise any [of His creatures]; He is mighty in strength of understanding. 6 He does not keep the wicked alive, but gives justice to the afflicted. 7 He does not withdraw His eyes from the righteous; but with kings on the throne He has seated them forever, and they are exalted.

Behold! Marvel! Marvel at God's omnipotence! The word *hen* could be translated “look, or “pay attention.” Check it out! Pay attention to what? God's power. He's mighty, but yet He condescends to man.

And we see this contrast that develops between two categories: the wicked on one hand and the righteous on the other. Think about those words, “wicked” and “righteous.” Well, we don't have too much trouble talking about people in the sense of them being *wicked*, if we're talking about those that are truly evil, those that commit egregious crimes. Yes, they are wicked. But from God's perspective, all of those who do not believe in Him according to His standards (this side of the cross, through Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior) they are wicked. . . . We have a hard time looking at our neighbor who's good, maybe an atheist or an agnostic, but he'd give you the shirt off his back, and we have a hard time saying he's wicked. But we have to look at what

God's standard is. But what about those who are *righteous*? That is something we shy away from. Yeah, my good friend, instead of saying “he’s a Christian,” I say, “Oh, he's righteous.” Well, that just kind of leads us to the wrong conclusion, doesn't it? But yet the Bible uses these categories, particularly in the Old Testament. Those who are *wicked* are those who don't believe in God and follow His ways; they don't believe in Yahweh. Those who are *righteous* are those who are truly believers and they're rightly related to Him. And like I said, on this side of the cross, it's through faith in Christ.

But we see this contrast. And there are some metaphors here. “**The wicked,**” (verse six) often, but not always, meet with untimely deaths. It says, 6a “**He does not keep the wicked alive.**” Well, that's metaphorical. “**The righteous,**” (verse seven) “who are seated with kings” (7b), they're metaphorically so seated. . . . And again, if I could draw from a New Testament [passage], Ephesians chapter two, verses five and six, talking about believers. Well no, we're not seated on thrones with kings and presidents, literally. But figuratively we're seated in the heavenlies. That's Ephesians chapter two, verses five and six, “seated with Christ in the heavenly places.”²⁵⁰ So God is good. We see God's Goodness in Justice, verses five through seven.

His Goodness in Discipline (36:8-10)

Then we see His Goodness in Discipline. And here we're talking about the discipline of erring believers. The upshot of this is that Elihu is using this for Job's benefit. Speaking again, if you go back to verse eight, speaking of the righteous, we have some more metaphorical language (for suffering): 8 “**If they** [that is, the righteous, those who believe] **are bound in**

²⁵⁰Ephesians 2:6.

fetters, and are caught in the cords of affliction [that is they're suffering], 9 **Then He declares to them their work and their transgressions, that they have magnified themselves.**" In other words, the context is clear: they're suffering because they're in sin in some way or fashion. 10 **"He opens their ear to instruction"** [He teaches] **and commands that they return from evil."**

But the central idea here is that *they have magnified themselves*. What's another word for that, that begins with "P?" *Pride*. They're filled with pride. You see, God does not appreciate it when we magnify ourselves. Pride is one of the biggest, perhaps the biggest sin issue that we battle. And not only the attitude of pride, but the actions that accompany it. How it flowers into sin.

Jonathan Edwards called pride, "the worst viper that is in the heart, and the greatest disturber of the soul's peace and sweet communion with Christ." Pride. He ranked pride as "the most hidden, secret, and deceitful of all lusts." He once wrote, "What a foolish, silly, miserable, blind, deceived, poor worm am I when pride works!" And he warned against *spiritual pride*, which he viewed as the greatest cause of the, as he saw it, premature ending of the Great Awakening. Pride: it's really in some way, shape or form at the root of our sin. When we don't believe, it's because we think we know better (like our first parents in the garden). And God disciplines us when we go astray. He disciplines us when we raise up ourselves in pride, when we magnify ourselves.

And so we see that, in verse ten, **"He opens their ear to instruction, and commands that they return from evil."** This is God's continuous work in our hearts and our lives. And Elihu, whose application is Job – this is, you know – Job has not sinned so much in deed as he

has in word and attitude. No, Job did not cause these calamities to fall upon him. And by that I mean he didn't sin. He wasn't being judged for his sin like the three friends said, but he did sin in his attitudes that followed. And we see that in the dialogue that he has with the three. But no, that's not where Job started. Job's response to suffering initially was spot on.

Back to chapter one: Job loses his possessions, he loses his children, he's going to lose his health. But what's Job's response? Chapter one, beginning in verse 20: Job arose – he hears about his children, all ten of his children have died in this calamity – and he rises, tears his robe, shaves his head, falls to the ground and . . . worships! How do you worship in the face of calamity like that? By the power of the Holy Spirit of God and [by] trusting in God's sovereignty. Job is called a righteous man three times in the first two chapters, and he remains guiltless when he goes on to lament in chapter three. But it's after that that Job starts to go sideways. It's after that that bitterness begins to settle into his heart. And I think there's something that we can learn from that.

I don't know if you've ever gone through a calamity (like losing a child like my wife and I have) when Giana, subsequent to our encounter with a drunk driver on Christmas Eve a number of years back, was called home to Jesus in 2016. That shakes you to your core! And you're in shock, initially. And I know how I responded at first. Her memorial service, I read that passage by Job, “Naked I came from my mother's womb, naked I shall return there. The Lord gave [He gave us our beautiful daughter, Giana], now the Lord has taken her away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.” But it was after time went on that I began to grow bitter, that my behavior, my attitudes, my words. were sinful. That's something we have to be aware of when

we go through trials, especially calamities. Yeah, how do we respond initially. But then how do we respond in the days, the weeks, the months, the years that follow?

You see, Job became bitter. He didn't sin initially. His sin didn't cause the calamities that fell upon him. But he did sin as he goes along and ascribes injustice, a lack of kindness, to his God. But unlike the three friends, Elihu recognizes that the righteous Job – believers as we put it today – (Christians) do suffer. We're not exempt from suffering. And sometimes we suffer through no fault of our own. It's just part of living in a fallen world when disease strikes, when a drunk driver takes your kid. But it's how we respond. And that's where Elihu goes next in chapter 36, beginning in verse 11.

And we have this further contrast between those who are good and those who are not, a contrast between the righteous and the wicked. Again, verse 11, if you follow along (speaking of the righteous): **“If they hear and serve Him, [who's the “him?” God] they will end their days in prosperity and their years in pleasure. 12 But if they do not hear, [they don't repent] they shall perish by the sword and they will die without knowledge.”**

I like how one writer kind of sums this up (if you listen to his words):

A godly sufferer, Elihu suggested, who will listen to God and will once again obey and serve Him will then prosper and enjoy contentment. Learning from suffering and turning from pride was Elihu's point earlier (33:23–28). This sounds like the theology of the three, but they stressed that Job was guilty of sinful actions whereas Elihu was concerned more with Job's sinful attitude of pride. . . . Job should not think of his calamities as proof that he was essentially ungodly (the view of the three agitators) or as evidence that God had forsaken him (as Job maintained). Instead he should see his afflictions as a means of helping him become humble before God.²⁵¹

²⁵¹Roy B. Zuck, “Job,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*.

“As a means of helping him become humble.” Pain humbles us. You take the biggest, strongest, toughest guy who’s brought to his knees with a diagnosis of terminal illness. Pain humbles us. It was C.S. Lewis who said, “God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain. It is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world.” So the righteous, they heed God's discipline.

But on the other hand, the godless, verse 13, “. . . **the godless in heart lay up anger;**” they just get mad. They do not cry for help when He, when God, binds them. As we saw in chapter 35 a few months ago, their cries are empty. No, verse 14, “**They die in youth, and their life perishes among the cult prostitutes.**” Well, that seems kind of an odd thing to stick in there, but cult prostitutes (which included males) likely died premature deaths. Robert Alden, in his commentary said, “[I]t is likely that sexually transmitted diseases claimed the lives of many, then as now.”. . . Cult prostitutes became a proverbial expression of being a victim of an untimely death. So that's the godless.

But then again, another contrast, back to the godly in verse 15, “**He delivers the afflicted in their affliction, and opens their ear in times of oppression.**” *God's greatness and goodness lead the believer to repentance.*

Well, how does all of this apply? Elijah starts bringing it directly to Job beginning in verse 16: “**Then indeed, He enticed you [Job] from the mouth of distress, instead of it, a broad place with no constraint; and that which was set on your table was full of fatness.**” Well, that's the New American Standard. The New International Version kind of helps dispel some of the dust. It's really a picture of being delivered from extreme distress. Listen to the NIV: “He [that is, God] is wooing you from the jaws of distress to a spacious place free from

restriction, to the comfort of your table laden with choice food.” He's saying, “Job, there's a way out. No, you can't get your kids back. You're going to grieve. You're not going to get your estate back. But God's going to bless. You don't have to be bitter. You can begin to find some restoration and some refreshment.”

And he may be alluding here (or suggesting) that if Job had ceased complaining earlier, he may have seen that restoration come upon him before it does by the end of the book. He says . . . **“But you [on the other hand] were full of judgment on the wicked; judgment and justice take hold of you.”** *You're obsessed with others. You're obsessed with how you are treated in light of really bad people.*

Well, don't we do that? We compare ourselves to others. Don't we do that all the time? “Why me? Why do I suffer this? And yet I know somebody else, they're not a follower of God, and they they don't suffer these things.” *Why me, why me, why me?* Well, stop comparing yourself to others. Don't skew your concept of justice or pervert the idea of God's goodness.

And there's a warning here very relevant to all of us: 18 **“Beware that wrath [this discipline] does not entice you to scoffing.”** Again, don't become bitter. We've got to guard our hearts from bitterness when we suffer those difficult providences of God. When we suffer, when we're under trials, when we are tempted to ask the question of “why?”, don't become bitter.

And he adds: **“Do not let the greatness of the ransom turn you aside”** (“ransom” being the difficult cost of repentance). Verse 19: **“Will your riches keep you from distress, or all the forces of your strength?”** Wealth can't save. 20 **“Do not long for the night [that is, death] when people vanish in their place. 21 Be careful, do not turn to evil, for you have**

preferred this [evil] to affliction.” He's suggesting that Job would rather walk in disobedience than suffer pain.

Well, how do you feel about *that*? Would you suffer pain for righteousness sake? Would you suffer pain to be in the will of God? It's really not a question for Christians. To be a Christian is to, in one sense, choose to embrace suffering. It's to embrace the cross: “If anyone wishes to come after me,” Jesus said, “he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me.”²⁵² “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22b). The Bible says a lot about the fact that believers are going to endure a life of hardship and persecution, the life of the cross, following after their Master.²⁵³ Living the Christian life is not only to be subject to cancer and catastrophe, it's to be a fool for Christ's sake. It's to die daily. It's to follow the pattern of Jesus, “the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”²⁵⁴ There's shame, there's suffering.

But after that comes glory! John Piper: “The call of Christ is to live a life of sacrifice and loss and suffering—a life that would be foolish to live if there were no resurrection from the dead.”²⁵⁵ Well, Paul says as much, doesn't he? If there's no resurrection from the dead, we're

²⁵²Luke 9:23b.

²⁵³Cf. Philippians 1:29; 2 Timothy 3:12.

²⁵⁴Hebrews 12:2.

²⁵⁵John Piper, *Desiring God*, 262.

fools. Eat, drink, be merry for tomorrow we die. What's the purpose of life if there's no resurrection from the dead? And Job knew that, chapter 19, verse 26.²⁵⁶

But we have the best teacher that we can learn from: God who is at work in our lives. Verse 22, “**Behold . . .** – there's the second use of that Hebrew word *hen* – “**Behold, God is exalted in His power; who is a teacher like Him?**” Who is an instructor like God? 23 “**Who has appointed Him His way, and who has said, “You have done wrong?”**” Who's like God in his power? Who's like God in His instruction? He sets the example ultimately through His Word that we're to follow, to live life to the fullest.

But, “**who has said, ‘You have done wrong?’**” In light of that, who said that? Well, Job said that in chapter 19, verse six: “God has wronged me.” Keep in mind that Elihu differs from Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, and that he focuses not on what Job did before tragedy struck, but on his attitudes and words afterward. And that's why he quotes Job so often in these four speeches.

“**Remember [Job, verse 24] that you should exalt His work, of which men have sung.**” Well, where do we see that? Men sing of the great works of God? We have an entire book in the Old Testament devoted to that, the Book of Psalms. 25 “**All men have seen it; man beholds from afar.**” *God's greatness and goodness lead the believer to repentance.*

God Is Great (36:26-37:20)

God is Good (verses five through 25), but God is also Great (chapter 36, going into chapter 37, verse 20). And here we start seeing God's greatness in creation; specifically in

²⁵⁶“Even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh I shall see God.”

nature, in the seasons. And demonstrating God's greatness, or looking at God's greatness in creation, is something that's common. We see that throughout Scripture. We see that in the Old Testament: "The heavens are declaring the glory of God, their expanse declaring the work of His hands" (Psalm 19:1).

God's sovereign glory in the autumn storm (36:27–33)

But then we see *God's sovereign glory in the autumn storm*. There's an introductory statement, verse 26: "**Behold . . .**" (there's a third use of that word, "behold), "**Look, God is exalted, and we do not know Him; the number of His years is unsearchable.**" "Your years have no end" (Psalm 102:27).

Now, of the last 34 verses of this speech, 24 concern weather: wind, rain, clouds, lightning, sky, thunder – and we're going to go through them quickly. Verses 27 and 28: "**For He [that is, God] draws up the drops of water [evaporation], they distill rain from the mist, which the clouds pour down, they drip upon man abundantly.**" This is God's power, God's providence.

Verses 29 through 33: 29 "**Can anyone understand the spreading of the clouds, the thundering of His pavilion?**" Well, at that time nobody knew how the weather worked. "**Behold,** verse 30 – there's the fourth use – **He spreads His lightning about Him, and He covers the depths of the sea.**" Thunder, rain, lightning. And scholars surmise that while Elihu was speaking, an actual storm was forming over their heads. Can you imagine that? And we can only guess whether that happened or not, but it would have been a wonderful illustration and fitting for God, who follows Elihu in chapter 38, to answer out of a what? – a storm (38:1)! 31 "**For by these [by the weather, by the rain], He judges peoples; He gives food in abundance.**

32 He covers His hands with the lightning, and commands it to strike the mark. 33 It's noise declares His presence; the cattle also concerning what is coming up."

Verse 32: **"He covers his hands with the lightning . . ."** – the storm. Gods of the Ancient Near East were often portrayed as having lightning coming from their hands. And Elihu uses this same imagery, much like we might use Lady Liberty to illustrate justice. But here is the majesty of God: His majesty as Creator.

And what God does, Jesus Christ as God does. After affirming that the Word (Jesus Christ) was and is God (in John chapter one), verse three goes on to say, "All things came into being through Him [through Christ], and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being." Listen, that's creation. He is Creator. You can also look at Colossians 1:16.

Swindoll puts it this way:

God is transcendent [we talked about what that means a moment ago], He is magnificent. He is mighty. He alone is awesome! He is all around us, above us, and within us. Without Him there is no righteousness. Without Him there is no holiness. Without Him there is no promise of forgiveness, no source of absolute truth, no reason to endure, no hope beyond the grave.²⁵⁷

So we see *God's sovereign glory in the autumn storm*. That brings us to the end of the chapter. *God's sovereign glory in the winter (37:1-13)*

And then we go into chapter 37, *God's sovereign glory in the winter*. Look at how Elihu responds, the first five verses of chapter 37: 1 **"At this also [God's glory in nature] my heart trembles, and leaps from its place."** Have you ever had a moment, believer, where you just saw a beautiful sunset, or you visit someplace, like the Grand Canyon, and your heart just is in awe of the majesty of the Creator? I've told the story about how we went to Mount Rushmore.

²⁵⁷Swindoll, *Job*, 260-61.

And what you see this amazing architectural creation by man. Then we went to Yellowstone National Park. Mount Rushmore paled in comparison. And I thought at the time, “Wow, Mount Rushmore. This is what man can do.” Then you go to Yellowstone National Park and you say, “This is what God can do!” No comparison.

Elihu’s heart trembles. And he says, 2 **“Listen closely to the thunder of His voice, and the rumbling that goes out from His mouth.”** Maybe there was thunder going on as he was speaking. 3 **“Under the whole heaven He lets it loose [His lightning], and His lightning to the ends of the earth. 4 After it, a voice roars; He thunders with His majestic voice, and He does not restrain the lightnings when His voice is heard. 5 God thunders with His voice wondrously, doing great things which we cannot comprehend.”** Job said earlier (chapter 26, verse 14): “But God’s mighty thunder, who can understand it?”²⁵⁸

It was interesting to read that nothing so terrified Jonathan Edwards, considered by most the greatest American theologian . . . (anyways, he died in 1758). And I was interested to read that nothing terrified him as a boy as did a thunderstorm. But he wrote this, after his conversion to Christ, he said

that scarce any thing, among all the works of nature, was so sweet to me as thunder and lightning; formerly nothing had been so terrible to me. Before, I used to be uncommonly terrified with thunder, and to be struck with terror when I saw a thunderstorm rising; but now, on the contrary, it rejoiced me. I felt God, so to speak, at the first appearance of a thunderstorm; and used to take the opportunity at such times to fix myself in order to view the clouds, and see the lightnings play, and hear the majestic and awful voice of God’s thunder, which oftentimes was exceedingly entertaining, leading me to sweet contemplations of my great and glorious God.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁸26:14b (paraphrased).

²⁵⁹Cited in Talbert, 193.

And it was, as I was working on this section a few weeks ago, that a thunderstorm came upon us. And here I'm in my office and I'm listening to this, and I'm seeing lightning in a whole new way. Try that next time a storm comes through.

But what about snow? Well, we're familiar with that here. *God's sovereign glory in the winter?* We don't think of that, normally. 6 **“For to the snow He says, ‘Fall on the earth,’ and to the downpour and rain, ‘Be strong.’”** And the point is, we can't control the weather. It's under the sovereign control of our God. Verse 7: **“He seals the hand of every man, that all men may know His work.”** Walter Kaiser, going back to that Old Testament scholar, he says:

Elihu also points in verses 6-7 to how a heavy snowfall, or a downpour of rain, coming as well at the command of God, can “stop every man from his labor.” Mortals are familiar with such impediments, for many have often been driven from their labor in the fields by a heavy rainstorm and others have seen how a heavy snowfall or a blizzard will snarl traffic or sequester folk in their homes for days at a time. Even the animals take cover in their dens during such weather patterns as well (8) when “the breath of God produces ice” or frost (9-10), Indeed, the very clouds of the sky along with the storms in the natural world are controlled by God (11-12). No human being could control or regulate the weather or such storms; only God is in charge of these elements which He has stored up often in great quantities in His heavenly reservoirs.²⁶⁰

Yes, it even affects animals. They know enough to take cover during storms. That's chapter 37, verse eight: **“The beast goes into his den and remains.”**²⁶¹

Well, verses nine through 12. Let's just read through those:

9 Out of the south comes the storm [again, this is God's work in creation], **and out of the north the cold. 10 From the breath of God ice is made, and the expanse of the waters is frozen. 11 Also with moisture He loads the thick cloud; He disperses the cloud of His lightning. 12 It changes direction, turning around by His guidance, that it may do whatever He commands it on the face of the inhabited earth.**

²⁶⁰Kaiser, 205.

²⁶¹Paraphrased.

Verse 13 is a summary statement: “**Whether for correction, or for His world, or for lovingkindness, He causes it to happen.**” Now note those three. There are three areas there: 1) correction; 2) His world; 3) lovingkindness. Regardless, God causes it to happen and it covers those three areas. God can sometimes use the weather for *correction*, for discipline. Go back to Exodus (chapter nine) and the plague of hail. Or for *His world*. That's God's general providence in how things work in our world. Or for *lovingkindness*. That's blessing. That's common grace. Acts 14:17, God's witness: “He gave rain and fruitful seasons, satisfying hearts with food and gladness.”²⁶² That's for everyone.

God's sovereign glory in the summer (37:14-18)

And after that summary statement, we see *God's sovereign glory in the summer* (verses 14 through 18):

14 Listen to this, O Job, stand and consider the wonders of God. 15 Do you know how God establishes them, and makes the lightning of His cloud to shine? 16 Do you know about the layers of the thick clouds, the wonders of one perfect and knowledge, 17 you whose garments are hot when the land is still because of the south wind? [think of that desert environment] 18 Can you, with Him, spread out the skies, strong as a molten mirror?

Every one of those questions has an implied answer of “no.” Job doesn't know, Job can't control these things that are under the providence of God's sovereign glory.

Job's inability to understand God's ways (37:19–23)

Job's inability to understand God's ways (verses 19 and 20). They're difficult. I'll try to smooth it out as we read through them, beginning in verse 19: “**Teach us** [talking to Job] **what we shall say to Him** [God]; **we** [Elihu and others] **cannot arrange our case** [as in a court

²⁶²Paraphrased.

case], **because of darkness** [a lack of understanding]. 20 **Shall it be told Him** [that is, God] **that I** [now it's singular, Elihu] **would speak? Or should a man say that he would be swallowed up?**” That's another way of saying “confused” – should a man say that he's confused? There's an inability to understand, to comprehend, to embrace all of God's ways.

Going to the sun in verse 21: **“Now men do not see the light which is bright in the skies; but the wind has passed and cleared them** [clouds]. 22 **Out of the north comes golden splendor; around God is awesome Majesty.** 23 **The [Shaddai] Almighty – we cannot find Him; He is exalted in power and He will not do violence to justice and abundant righteousness.”**

You can't look into the sun – you can look up at it when there are clouds – but you can't look up into it when the sky is clear. . . . And I remember as a boy when there would be a solar eclipse; it was a big deal in the family: *We're going to have a solar eclipse!* And my mom just went out of her way to reinforce to me, “do not look up at the sun” (as if I customarily always looked up at the sun). I was a foolish little boy, but not that foolish! But, you can't look at the sun unobstructed. And if that's true, and here's the point, how can we ever hope to look at the blazing holiness of God? He is majestically transcendent in His sovereign glory!

Well, we're almost to the end. Listen to this summary by Warren Wiersbe:

. . . Elihu was doing much more than delivering a poetical, scientific lecture on the . . . seasons. He wanted Job to consider the greatness of God and the wonders of nature and realize how little Job really knew about God and His working in this world. Elihu asked Job three rhetorical questions—about the clouds, the lightning, the wind, and the rainless skies. “Can you explain these things?” he asked. “Can you control them?” This led to Elihu's final thrust: “If you can't explain to us the everyday things of nature, then how will you ever prepare a court case to defend yourself before God?” . . . “You can't even look at the sun,” says Elihu, “and yet you want to meet God face to face!”

And of course, Job will meet God face to face. That's the next chapter.

Conclusion: God is to be feared (37:24)

But there's one more verse, and this is the conclusion: *God is to be feared*. In the rather pessimistic book of Ecclesiastes, we see a pessimistic statement right at the beginning: “Vanity of vanities! All is vanity.” But the book ends with this: “The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person.”²⁶³ Fear God, keep His ways. Fear God, walk in obedience. It's a warning against being wise in your own eyes. And Elihu ends with a similar warning here: 24 **“Therefore men fear Him; He does not regard any who are wise of heart.”** The Bible tells us that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”²⁶⁴ This is what it means not to be wise in heart, not to be wise in your own eyes, with your own little pea brain, but to be wise in the truth of God.

What does it mean to fear God? Well, for the believer, it's reverential awe. Reverential awe. But for those outside of Christ? It's foreboding terror – or at least it should be a foreboding terror. And if you're outside of Christ, God's wrath is / will be upon you. Your only hope is to believe in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, as the one who satisfied God's wrath. . . .

From the Bible we learn who God is. And we see a glimpse of that greatness just scurrying through these two chapters, which has been difficult, I admit it. But we learn who God is. And we learn from the Bible, Old Testament and New Testament, we learn that God is triune – that there's one God (the *shema*, “Hear, O Israel, our Lord is one”) – but also that He is triune, that He exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three distinct persons, each fully God. There's one God, but three persons. And we learn that God is holy, perfectly holy, a consuming fire. I mean,

²⁶³Ecclesiastes 1:2 and 12:13.

²⁶⁴Eg. Proverbs 9:10.

you think staring at the sun is something? You don't want to imagine what it would be like to stand face to face with God, and to do so in your sin. And that's the problem. We're created in God's image, an image marred by sin. Sin that separates us from God. Sin, which God by His very nature cannot overlook. We have violated God's holy standards, His very nature, and stand condemned. And that's true of everyone. Romans 3:23, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." That's the bad news. But the good news is the free gift of salvation, which is in Christ. That's chapter six, verse 23 of Romans. The only hope we have is saving faith in Christ.

2000 years ago, this individual, Jesus, came to earth in fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures. Jesus Christ, God, came on a mission to save a people from their sin. (He Saved me as a rebellious teenager back in the 1980s.) Jesus, the second Adam. And He did what the first Adam could not do, what none of us could ever do, what no one has ever done since: He lived a perfect life and kept all aspects of God's law. Tempted to sin, but never once fell to that temptation. Yet He was crucified, put to death for crimes that He never committed. Put to death for crimes, ultimately, that I committed, that you committed. He is the substitute, the Lamb of God that came to take away the sin of the world, the one that died, that received the wrath of the Father rather than me. And so now God sees me, sees you, believer, through the blood of Jesus Christ as one who has the righteousness of Christ credited to you, credited to me, even as our sin was credited to Jesus Christ on the cross. That's the inroad to new life. That is the upshot of the new birth, the work that only God can do. . . . We believe. And in believing, we turn from our sin, and we're new creations in Christ. Everything starts to make sense in this nonsensical world. And whether you die at the age of 14, like my daughter, or you live to be in your 80s or 90s, in Christ you have the hope of eternity – this life is nothing compared to eternity – you have the

hope of eternity in heavenly bliss with Jesus Christ. Some of you? That may not be appealing. God has to put that hunger in your heart. But if that hunger *is* in your heart, if the message is no longer foolishness (and the Bible says that it's foolishness to those who are perishing²⁶⁵). . . . I've spoken at funerals where you have all sorts of people, and a lot of people that aren't Christians, and I can read their faces: "You are an idiot! Shut up, you religious nut!" The Bible tells us that that's the way that the average unbeliever is going to see the message of the cross: "It's foolishness; I don't believe that!" But to we who are being saved, it's the power of God. And many of us were once there ("I don't believe that; that's foolishness"). That's what I thought of my dad when he came to faith in Christ and his life was turned upside down: "You're just a religious zealot. Come on!" Well, God had me in His sights. You can run, but you can't hide! And now that which I ridiculed, I will die for – for the One who died for me.

And so, Father, we have gone through so much here this morning. It's been difficult. Not the fare of what we classically call "good preaching" to try to cover so much. But out of, really necessity, wanting to do justice to the text and not wanting to spend three or 4 or 5 weeks in these two chapters, we have just had to go on a marathon. And I thank You for the patience of my hearers, and I trust that through some of it, Lord, people have been blessed. Your Word will not return void. It accomplishes the purpose You have for it. And I pray, Lord, for any who may be listening – maybe it's a recording, maybe it's the radio, maybe it's here right now – I pray, Lord, for any that maybe have thought that this whole message is one of foolishness, but are wondering, wondering in light of eternity, wondering in light of how fast and unpredictable life is, "What does lie on the other side? Can we know? Is there a way to be right with a terrifyingly

²⁶⁵1 Corinthians 1:18.

holy God?" And Lord, for those in whom your Holy Spirit works, Lord, bring new life. Change that attitude of the cross being foolishness to being the power of God for their salvation, solely received not by works, not by religiosity, not by church membership or baptism, but received by faith. Faith alone, the fruit of which is repentance, a turning from sin and embracing Jesus Christ as the great treasure of the world, the great treasure of life. Continue to build your church, Lord, and use fallen men and women like us – fallen, imperfect creatures like me – to make that happen. Build Your church. To the glory of our triune God, we pray. Amen.

God's First Reply to Job: Not “Why” but “Who” (Part 1)

Job 38:1-11

October 1, 2023

Christ Church of Clarkson

1023Job38.1-11(36) | Audio Length: 56:40

Beginning in verse 1 of chapter 38,

1 Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said, 2 “Who is this that darkens counsel By words without knowledge? 3 “Now gird up your loins like a man, And I will ask you, and you instruct Me! 4 “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding, 5 Who set its measurements? Since you know. Or who stretched the line on it? 6 “On what were its bases sunk? Or who laid its cornerstone, 7 When the morning stars sang together And all the sons of God shouted for joy? 8 “Or who enclosed the sea with doors When, bursting forth, it went out from the womb; 9 When I made a cloud its garment And thick darkness its swaddling band, 10 And I placed boundaries on it And set a bolt and doors, 11 And I said, ‘Thus far you shall come, but no farther; And here shall your proud waves stop’?²⁶⁶

This is the voice of our God. Let's pray.

Lord, we've been anticipating this time for quite a while. I know I have. And here we come to, as I said, a pivotal point in the book of Job, as we look at you – as we look at who you are and what you said to Job; a reminder, again, of your nature and your glory (and this, Lord, in light of our finiteness). Teach us lessons, Lord, as we work our way through this first address over the next several weeks. We pray, Lord, that you would glorify yourself among the words that are proclaimed. For Christ's sake, we pray. Amen.

Five chapters left! Can you believe it? With that, there's great anticipation. We have endured – those of you that have been here throughout this series which I began (it's been a few years ago) – you've endured what seemed like an endless cycle of repetitive speeches. We've persevered through the four messages of Elihu. That's where we left off last time, Elihu, that

²⁶⁶Scripture citations are taken from the NAS95 unless otherwise noted.

fourth friend. And now the time has come for God to speak. He gets the final word. What do you expect him to say?

The Things Left Unsaid

Picture that you've never read this book before. And you're reading and you get to this point, "Oh, God is speaking." If you just stop there and didn't look ahead, what might you expect Him to say? Well, the things that you might expect are left unsaid. Interesting. Here are some of the things that are *not* said, that are *not done* in God's two speeches.

Number one, *the initial evaluation of Job in chapter one is not reversed by God*. That is, we learn in those early chapters that Job is called a blameless, upright man who fears the Lord. God does not cancel that description. Job is a man of repentance, he's a man of faith, he turns from evil. And God does not cancel that out and say, "You know what, what I said about you earlier, what was spoken there is not really true. You've just sort of polluted that whole idea."

No, that doesn't happen. Even though we do see that Job is accused of great misunderstanding, and we'll see that as we move forward: he has a darkened knowledge about God. But the initial evaluation isn't reversed.

D.A. Carson writes this,

It is important to recognize that God does not here charge Job with sins that have brought on his suffering. He does not respond to the 'whys' of Job's suffering, nor does he challenge Job's defense of his own integrity. The reason he calls Job on the carpet is not because of Job's justification of himself, but because of Job's willingness to condemn God in order to justify himself.

In other words, God does not here answer' Job's questions about the problem of evil and suffering, but he makes it unambiguously clear what answers are not acceptable in God's universe.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁷D.A. Carson, *How Long O Lord*, 151.

Number two. Number two of the list of things that are not said or done in God's two speeches: *There are no apologies to Job*. As Larry Crabb put it:

Job apparently expected God would listen to what he had to say, pull slowly on his beard, and reply, “Job, thanks for sharing your perspective on things. You’ve got a point. Frankly, I really hadn’t seen things quite the way you see them. Look, I’ve made a bit of an error but I’ll straighten it all out right away”²⁶⁸

Of course, that's a humorous observation, but nothing even remotely like that happens.

Number three: *there are no great words of encouragement to Job*. No attaboys.

“Attaboy, Job, you've passed the test.” God doesn't metaphorically put his arm around Job's shoulder to tell him it's all going to be okay.

Lastly: *no explanations of why Job was chosen to endure great suffering*. Listen to these observations by other authors. Sam Storms writes this:

This is perhaps the most shocking omission of all. At the very least you would expect God to lay it all out in black and white before Job. But nowhere do we find something like this: “Job, let me begin by explaining to you how this whole thing came about in the first place. You see, one day Satan came to me and insisted that the only reason you worship me is because I treat you so well. I couldn’t let him get away with that. I had to prove him wrong, and, well ... the rest is history, as they say!”

Nor do we find: “Job, I know you’ve been wondering how I could permit this to occur and not be guilty of injustice and hard-hearted cruelty. Well, it’s like this ...” Nor do we find: “Job, you’ve struggled with why the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper. Sit down and take out pen and paper. You’ll undoubtedly want to take notes. There are ten reasons why you, a righteous man, suffered so horribly.”²⁶⁹

Don Baker, pastor of a generation ago, said this:

I have long since quit seeking the answer to that question [“why?”] in my own life.... God owes me no explanation. He has the right to do what He wants, when He wants, and how He wants. Why? Because He’s God!... Job didn’t need to know why these things

²⁶⁸*Inside Out*, 146.

²⁶⁹Sam Storms, *Biblical Studies: Job* (Edmond, OK: Sam Storms, 2016), Job 38–42.

happened as they did—he just needed to know Who was responsible and Who was in control. He just needed to know God.²⁷⁰

If I Were God . . .

Have you ever heard someone say (or maybe you've said it in your darkened past), “Well, if I were God, here's how I would run the world . . .” Or, the flip side of that is, “I wouldn't run the world the way God does, that's for sure!” Maybe you've heard that before. To some degree, Job has been saying just that. Chapter after chapter, he's been crying out, “God, put yourself in my place for a while. This isn't the way it's supposed to be! Why is this happening to me? Why are you doing this?” And we come to chapter 38. Now God responds and says, “No Job. You asked the wrong question. Until you have the knowledge and the ability to make the sun rise each day, or command the lightning, or design a peacock, don't judge how I run the world.” God shows Job who He is, and silences Job's questions.

The Questions We Ask

But we still have that question, don't we? I'm not saying it's wrong to ask questions. Ask away. But sometimes there aren't answers, and that's when we trust.

I used this story back at the beginning of our study, I think it was back in chapter one. I want to use it again because it applies so well. It's a true incident going back to February 15th of 1947, when an Avianca Airlines Douglas D-4 crashed into Mount El Tablaso en route from Bogota, Colombia, and it killed all 53 people on board.

Mount El Tablaso was shrouded in a fog when at 12:18 am local time, the aircraft crashed into it at an elevation of about 10,500 feet. The DC-4 disintegrated with a metallic

²⁷⁰Don Baker, cited in Sam Storms, *Biblical Studies: Job* (Edmond, OK: Sam Storms, 2016), Job 40:3–5.

scream and flamed crazily down the mountainside into a deep ravine. And what was left of that one awful moment illuminated a cold Colombian mountain. And then as the fires went out, the darkness returned in the silence.

There's a side story. And that is, before leaving the airport earlier that day, a young New Yorker named Glenn Chambers, who was on that flight, scribbled a note on a piece of paper he found on the floor of the terminal. It was a scrap of paper, part of a printed advertisement, which had the word “why?” in the center of it. When needing paper, he used that scrap and wrote his note around that word, printed word, “why?” He dropped it in a mailbox. There would be more notes to come, he thought. More about the budding of a lifelong dream he had to begin a ministry with the Voice of the Andes in Ecuador. But there would be no more to come, because between the mailing and delivery of his note, El Tablaso snagged his flight and took his life and his dreams.

However, the envelope arrived later than news of his death. And when his mother received the envelope, after she learned of his death, what burned up from her on the page, on the scrap that was in the center of the note? The word “why?”

That's the question that hits first. It's the question that lingers the longest – when you encounter trials – when you encounter calamities. Why? Why me? Why now? Why this? Why in this way?

How many times I have asked that question? How many times have I said “why?” Why Giana and not me? Why in the world did she not live and I die? Why? She was only 14 years old! And why Christmas Eve? It seems so cruel. Why? Why? Why?

And you've no doubt, if you've lived on this planet for any length of time, you've asked those questions. No doubt, we asked those questions as a child. Children are always asking the question of why? “But why?” “But why?” “But why?” And sometimes we just say, “Because I said so!”

But as adults, we ask those questions with a greater sophistication in light of calamity and suffering. Job asked those questions.

Tough Questions Melt in the Light of God's Nature

The title is for today and for the following weeks (this is just part one): “God's First Reply to Job: Not ‘Why’ but ‘Who.’” And then the main idea that we'll revisit time again: *Tough questions melt in the light of God's nature.* That is, the tough questions we have. They melt away in the light, in the light of truth, and in the light of who God is.

The Courtroom of God

To give you a bit of an overview for the next few weeks, we're going back to the courtroom of God. We've touched upon that theme throughout the book of Job, a lot of courtroom types of language, a lot of legal sorts of ideas in the book of Job. And we return to that here.

The big point that we'll follow is: God's First Reply to Job: Who Are You? This is God's first reply. He is asking Job, “Who do you think you are?” As I put it, “Who are you?” But we have – as you would have in a court – you have an opening statement. And then you have God prosecuting, as prosecuting attorney *and* judge.

And there are five questions. You know how in a court of law, the prosecuting attorney asks questions. Well, here are, topically arranged, the questions. They're arranged around:

- Job's finiteness; the question being, “Were you there?”
- Job's experience; “Have you?”
- Job's ability; “Can you?”
- Job's knowledge; “Do you know?”
- And Job's impotence; “Who is Almighty?”

And then after that, this is kind of book-ended, there was an *opening statement*, then there's a *closing argument* (that's in chapter 40, verses one through two).

But I want to bring you back to the idea that those tough questions, those “why” questions, melt in the light of God's nature. Wiersbe wrote this:

God’s address to Job centered on His works in nature and consisted of seventy-seven questions interspersed with divine commentary relating to the questions. The whole purpose of this interrogation was to make Job realize his own inadequacy and inability to meet God as an equal and defend his cause.²⁷¹

God's Opening Statement (38:1-3)

So back to God's First Reply to Job, “Who Are You?” God's Opening Statement, verses one through three (we'll spend a bit of time here). So if you will follow along, chapter 38, verse one, **Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind**. Now, remember, Job had previously bemoaned the fact that he could not get a hearing in God's presence. For example, chapter 23, verse three, “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come to His seat.” Again, the idea of a courtroom, His seat, a seat of judgment. That was chapter 23, verse three. Earlier, Job was even bolder, chapter 13, verse three, he said, “I would speak to the Almighty and I desire to argue with God.” Job is getting his wish. He's going to have a face-to-face meeting with God.

²⁷¹Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Patient*, "Be" Commentary Series (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 144.

The Whom: YHWH

So you go back to verse one and you note who's speaking: **Then the LORD answered Job . . .** – and in your English Bibles, that's probably in all capitals. If anyone listening (by far stretch of the imagination) would be using a Hebrew Bible, it would be the word “Yahweh.” Interestingly, we call “Yahweh” the “Tetragrammaton.” That is, it's made up of four consonants, Hebrew being originally a consonantal language. So you have what in English equivalent would be YHWH (YaHWeW). We have anglicized this, I'll argue, falsely into “Jehovah.” And “Jehovah” actually comes out of Germany and a misunderstanding of the vowel pointings of Yahweh, which were the vowel pointings for the word Adonai (Lord). That a Jew, who would not speak the Sacred Name, would see the vowel pointings, and not say “Yahweh,” but “Adonai.” But that's a lesson for another time.

Almost exclusively, the three friends and Elihu refer to God using forms, not of Yahweh, but using forms of Elohim, God, or Shaddai (Almighty). But here, like in the first two chapters, where you see Yahweh – again, we see Yahweh. Well, that's the name that God much later revealed to Moses. What occurs in Job (the name YHWH) happened very early before the Pentateuch was written by Moses. But you go into the Pentateuch, you go to the book of Exodus, and you note the context there: Moses is being raised up to lead this fledgling nation that's going to be led out of Israel. These people have suffered under slavery before the Egyptians. And God appears to Moses – we call this a “theophany” (more on that later) – God appears to Moses in a burning bush, a bush that is burning but is not consumed (but it's God appearing in that form) and Moses says to God (Exodus 3): “Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you.’ Now they may say

to me, ‘What is His name?’ What shall I say to them?’ Well, that was a very common sort of thing back in antiquity where you had many, many gods, false gods – one true God – but the gods had names. And Moses says, “What is his name? What shall I say to them?” And in verse 14 of Exodus 3, God said to Moses: “‘I AM WHO I AM;’ and He said, ‘Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

Jesus, the “I Am”

“I Am.” This is the origin of that term “Yahweh,” the Tetragrammaton. Now, interestingly, Jesus in John chapter eight, verse 58, following the discussion with the Jews of His existing before Abraham, and they say, “Well, how can that be possible? You couldn't have existed before Abraham.” And He says, “Before Abraham was born . . .” – what does He say? Literal English translation from the Greek, what does he say? “I Am.” Might there be a connection there? “I Am,” *egō eimi*, it's emphatic: I Am! And *egō eimi* in the Greek is what is used in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament (that was in use by that first century group): *egō eimi* is what's used in Exodus chapter three, “I Am.” Why did the Jews pick up stones to stone Him? He was making himself out to be Yahweh.

So this is the Name. Yahweh speaks of God's self-existence. As far as theology is concerned, we call this *God's aseity*. He is self-existent, He needs nothing, He needs no one. I Am, I Am; and it also speaks of His covenant relationship to His people.

Well, I scribbled this down, kind of with a gleam in my eye, looking at this passage, kind of thinking, “Well, here God appears to Job, and it's kind of like: ‘Who are you? My Name's Yahweh.’” That kind of puts things into perspective, and this whole idea that tough questions melt in light of God's nature.

Theophanies and Christophanies

But what we have here with God's appearance is a *theophany*. A theophany is God appearing in a representative form. Remember, “No one can see Me and live” is what God told Moses. No one can see God in pure form. He always appears in representative form. And we call that a theophany, an appearance of God in a representative form, like a burning bush.

Some scholars – I really had to chew on this, and I was thinking of this before I really started getting into the academic books – but I got thinking, “I wonder if this is a Christophany.” And I was fascinated to find one scholar that thought that perhaps this is a Christophany. Well, if a theophany is God appearing in representative form, a Christophany is Jesus Christ appearing in a representative form, or as God, before the incarnation. That's very important.

Obviously, Jesus wasn't a Christophany when he was born in a manger and grew up those 33 years or so and lived the perfect life and died for our sin on a cross, was raised the third day. But when we talk about Christ appearing, such as the Angel of the Lord in the Old Testament, most scholars believe that the Angel of the Lord is a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus Christ. And if you look up the Angel of the Lord, definite article, *the* Angel of the Lord, you'll see that the Angel of the Lord speaks as God, is worshiped as God, is equated with Yahweh. So we believe that the Angel of the Lord was actually Jesus. Well, we're not told that this is the Angel of the Lord, but could this be Jesus appearing as God, as Yahweh, before he ever came to earth as a man, the eternal second person of the Trinity? Well, there's a couple of reasons why this is a very real possibility.

Four Reasons Why the God who Speaks Here in Job May be a Christophany

Number one (I'll give you four). Number one, Yahweh here addresses throughout these speeches *creation*; focuses much on creation, with the implication that the one speaking is The Creator. Well, we learn from the New Testament that Jesus Christ is the special agent of creation. John chapter one, verse three, "All things were created by him." We have Colossians chapter one, verse 16, "For by him," by Christ, "all things were created in the heavens, on earth, visible and invisible," microscopic things, things you can see, things you can't, "whether thrones, dominions, rulers, or authorities," angelic hosts, "all things have been created through him and for him."

Number two, Job earlier spoke of wanting *a mediator* between he and God, chapter nine, verse 32, where Job said, "He is not" (God is not) "a man as I am, that I may answer Him, that we may go to court together. There is no umpire, no mediator, between us who may lay his hand upon us both." And if you were here for that message, we appealed to 1 Timothy 2:5, "There's one God and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." It would seem to be fitting that this appearance here of this *umpire*, this *mediator* be Jesus Christ.

Number three, Jesus is the *apex of divine revelation*. He's called "the Word," John 1:1. And he is the one through whom the prophets spoke, first Peter 1:11.

And then, lastly, this idea of what we see in the Old Testament as it relates to God appearing, or a vision of God being Christ, is not without precedent. Isaiah's vision in Isaiah 6 is an example of an appearance of God attributed to none other than Christ in the New Testament. You go to John chapter 12, John's Gospel. Twice after quoting Isaiah, the apostle summarizes, "These things" (this is John 12:41 if you're taking notes) "These things Isaiah said because he

saw His glory and spoke of Him” (context: spoke of Jesus). So we can't be dogmatic, but Yahweh here in verse one may be a Christophany.

Always keep your Trinitarian Persons straight. Yes, Jesus can be referred to as Yahweh, the Father can be referred to as Yahweh, but Jesus is not the Father, the Father is not Jesus, the Holy Spirit isn't Jesus, the Holy Spirit isn't the Father, vice versa. Keep your Trinitarian Persons straight. That's biblical orthodoxy. However, there is nothing that would theologically negate the idea of Jesus being Yahweh (here). You look at Paul in Philippians chapter two, “Every knee shall bow, every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord.” If I remember right, that's quoting Isaiah. In the context there it's Yahweh who says “every knee will bow, every tongue confess.” So that's the Whom, Yahweh.

The Where

What about the Where? The Lord answered Job out of the what? Whirlwind, or you may have “storm.” Where did we see storms just a little bit ago? Chapters 36 and 37, where Elihu speaks of the thunder of God's voice. He speaks of God being Lord over lightning. And here we see God's appearance accompanied by a storm. Possibly – and I said this at the time – there was an actual storm coming into the region as Elihu was speaking to Job. Well, there may have been that continual storm that was happening as God spoke. Not that I think this was a natural storm, I think this is supernatural, this whirlwind. The word “storm” translates a Hebrew word meaning “a tempest (or storm) accompanied by violent wind.” Hence, some translations have “a whirlwind.” The same word is used in 2 Kings chapter two, verse one, “the LORD was about to take up Elijah by a whirlwind,” same word. And then chapter two, verse 11, where that becomes reality, Elijah went up by a whirlwind to heaven. The same word is used in Psalm 107, verse 25,

“for he spoke and raised up a stormy wind.” It's translated “storm wind” in Ezekiel chapter one, verse four. And then you might also note Nahum chapter one, verse three, “The LORD is slow to anger and great in power, and the LORD will by no means leave the guilty unpunished. In whirlwind [there's the word] and storm is His way, and clouds are the dust beneath His feet.”

One other thing you might note: what took the life of Job's 10 children? A storm, a whirlwind. It's kind of ironic, now we have a whirlwind accompanying God's communication, God's appearance here. One was an occasion of tragedy resulting in unspeakable sorrow. This whirlwind is the occasion of God's revelation resulting in unspeakable repentance. (We'll see that in chapter 42.)

So as one writer observes,

The power and majesty of God are evidenced most dramatically in the forces of nature. “Whirlwind” and “storm” are often expressions of his judgment. . . . For all their grandeur, however, these mighty forces are dwarfed in the presence of the Lord, whom the highest heavens cannot contain; the tempest is but the disturbance caused as he marches by, and the dark storm clouds are merely dust stirred up by his feet.²⁷²

Another thing I thought of is that we have in the New Testament, Jesus as God who stilled the great storm (Matthew 8:24-27), here it may be Jesus as God, pre-incarnate, who appears before Job in a great storm.

Darkened Knowledge

Now what does God ask (this brings us to verse two)? What does God ask (this is the first of over 70 questions)? **Who is this . . .** (he's talking about Job, not about Elihu) **Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?** Job's words were “without knowledge.” In other words, they were false. And Elihu said that at least twice in Elihu's speeches, chapter

²⁷²*Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Volume 7 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1985, 462).

34, verse 35, “Job speaks without knowledge.” Chapter 35, verse 16, “Job opens his mouth emptily. He multiplies words without knowledge.”

That word *knowledge* is key, it really is. A form of the word for knowledge occurs in verse two, verse three, verse four, and verse five. So this has something to do with knowing.

These verses that I just mentioned could be translated:

- 2 “Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?
- 3 “Now gird up your loins like a man, and I will ask you, and you will make me know!
- 4 “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me, if you know understanding?
- 5 Who set its measurements? Since you know.

I Believe That I May Know

This is foundational to what we refer to as *epistemology*, which is the whole study of things pertaining to knowledge. What is knowledge? How do we know? What do we know? What can we know? And the idea is we're *not* independent thinkers. We weren't designed by God to be independent thinkers. Some people think they're independent thinkers, but they're not. They just think they are. You know, as Augustine said, “I believe that I may know.” Think about that. I believe, I believe something. I believe God, I believe his Word, in order that I may know anything. You see, we have to believe something before we know anything. And God is the source of all knowledge, all wisdom, all ideas of what's moral and what's immoral. God is the source of that. When we attempt to be independent of him, we do silly things like put a man in a dress and call him a woman. Apart from God's voice, we are foundationally ignorant, and you take ignorance and you blend that with sinfulness and depravity. What do you get? Well, you get what you kind of see as you look around you today.

What kind of knowledge can man have compared to the One who is the source of all knowledge and everything true? This was an emphasis of Elihu earlier:

36:22 “Behold, God is exalted in His power; who is a teacher like Him?”

Interesting. Who is a teacher like God?

37:19 “Teach us what we shall say to Him; we cannot arrange our case because of darkness.

Well, we just saw that word, didn't we? “Who is this, the darkens counsel?” And Elihu confesses that, you know what? “Yeah, we do, apart from God, we are in darkness.”

Who are you?

So God asks, “**Who is this?**” This could be translated, “Who are you?” The apostle Paul, after speaking of God's sovereignty over the salvation of sinners – that He has mercy on whom He wills, He hardens whom He wills, God dispenses grace as He wills – Paul asked that same question in Romans chapter nine, verse 19: “You will say to me then,” that is, you're arguing from an Arminian perspective, “you're going to say to me then, why does God still find fault for who resists His will?” And what does the apostle Paul say in the next verse? *Oh, well, no, it's just God's prescience. He looks ahead in time and sees who chooses Him and He chooses that person.* No, of course, that's not what Paul says. Paul doubles down on God's nature and he says, “On the contrary, who are you, oh man who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the Molder, ‘Why did you make me like this, will it?’” We're back to that Creator-creature, distinction: God is God; we are not. God is perfectly, awesomely, holy. Holy, a word that we have a hard time even defining in human terms. We are not holy, we are far from that, we are sinful and depraved. “*Who are you?*”

And Job has done much complaining about God's ways. Job's initial question of “why God would do this to me?” festered into complaints of “how could you do this to *me!*?” Well, boy, I've been there. Have you? Have you ever been there in suffering? *God, how could you do this to me?* Interesting, the Hebrew noun *siach*, consistently translated “complaint” throughout Job, always comes from his mouth.

God Meets Job in Court

So now it's God's turn, that begins in verse three. God meets Job in court, which is what Job asked for. Remember chapter 31, beginning in verse 35, where Job says,

35 “Oh that I had one to hear me! Behold, here is my signature; Let the Almighty answer me! And the indictment which my adversary has written, 36 Surely I would carry it on my shoulder, I would bind it to myself like a crown. 37 “I would declare to Him the number of my steps; Like a prince I would approach Him.

Well, that's pretty bold, isn't it? “Yep, I'm ready to take God on in court for what He has done to me and why I am unjustly suffering. Here's my signature, the affidavit; let's go God! Carson writes,

Job had wanted an interview with the Almighty. He had, as it were, sworn an affidavit demanding that the Almighty appear and put his indictment in writing (31:35). But God's defense wasn't quite what Job had in mind.²⁷³

Well, that brings us to chapter 38. Yes, *tough questions melt in the light of God's nature*. So verse three, “Gird up your loins, Job, and man up!” **Now, gird up your loins like a man, and I will ask you, and you instruct me.** “**Gird up your loins**” is literal. Some of your translations may not have that, but that's a literal rendering of the Hebrew. The “loins” refer to the part of the body that lay between the waist and the upper thighs. And to “gird them up” in

²⁷³Carson, 151.

antiquity – men would wear out long outer coats – and if they had to engage in some strenuous activity, they would pull their coat up or their outer garment up and tuck it into their belt so that they could freely run and move. It was something that men did.

This, I know, is not popular in our PC culture. But this is to “man up for a task.” Because there is a difference, a creational difference, between men and women.

This is also warrior speech. David Clines, in his exegetical commentary, says this, “Yahweh’s call to Job to gird up his loins is a call to combat, to the combat between warriors, to the combat of heroes. If he is to gird up his loins, he must be expected to fight . . .”

“Gird up your loins, Job, like a man. I will ask you to man up. Like a man, I will ask you, you to instruct me.” Well, Job, the plaintiff now becomes Job the defendant. Job is on the witness stand and God is examining him.

God as Prosecuting Attorney and Judge (38:4-39:30)

Here's our second sub-point: *God as prosecuting attorney and judge*. God is the prosecuting attorney and He is the judge in this final court case. And kind of like an attorney who would ask, “Where were you on the night of March 3rd, 2012?” God is asking questions of Job. Questions relating to Job's finiteness.

Were you there?

That's our first sub-point. *Were you there?* It takes us through verse 11. *Job's finiteness: were you there?*

Questions about the earth and creation (vv. 4-7)

And under that outline point comes questions about the earth and creation. And we see here in verses four (and in the first part of verse five): *God is the architect*. He is the architect of

creation. Again, go back to verse four. **Where were you** (There's the question) **when I laid the foundation of the earth, tell me if you have understanding, who set its measurements since you know?** Well, verse four, the words **understanding** and **knowledge**, they parallel each other. But the point is *God is the architect*. The foundation is laid, the measurements are made.

This is poetic language, by the way. Remember Job is poetry. So you're being foolish, to put it kindly, (an idiot, to be more the way I would like to put it) if you think that somehow this mitigates against modern scientific theory. This is not speaking in scientific terms. This is speaking in poetic language.

So where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Who set its measurements, since you know? God as architect. This speaks of Job's finiteness. "Job, were you there?" Verse four, **Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Who set its measurements since you know?** Well, obviously, the implied answer is "no, I wasn't there."

So God is not only architect, He's also *surveyor*, second half of verse five, **who stretched a line on it?** One of the first things done in a construction project: stretching a line across two points to ensure that everything is straight and square. Sort of like a horizontal plumb bob. This [phrase] was used of the rebuilding of Jerusalem in the sixth century BC. Zechariah 1:16 speaks of "a measuring line stretched over Jerusalem."

God is architect. God is surveyor. And thirdly, *God is the engineer*. Verse six, **On what were its bases sunk or who laid its cornerstone?** You see, God is the master craftsman. Listen to Psalm 33 using similar metaphoric language – Psalm 33 verses six through nine,

6 By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, And by the breath of His mouth all their host. 7 He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap; He lays up the deeps in

storehouses. 8 Let all the earth fear the LORD; Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. 9 For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.

But note that: “by the word of the Lord” these things happened. He spoke and it happened. What's the Latin term? *Creatio ex nihilo*, creation out of nothing. God created something out of absolutely nothing. How do you do that? Well, you can do it if you're God. You can speak things into existence. I can put you in a concrete bunker with nothing else in it and say, build me a piano. “I need pre-existing materials.” Well, God built the universe by the word of His power *ex nihilo* – and that's wonderful! Hebrews 11:3, “By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.” Out of nothing, *ex nihilo*.

And God had witnesses to His spectacular work of creation. Verse seven: His work is applauded by angels, **when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy.**

When the foundation was laid for the second temple in Jerusalem, the Israelites celebrated with joy, with music, with singing (Ezra chapter three, Zechariah chapter seven). Here we have a heavenly chorus worshiping our Triune God for His work in creation, what I believe are two celestial bodies. **Morning stars** may refer to angels or it may be a figurative use of stars, stars applauding God (similar to how Jesus talked about “if these be silent, the stones will cry out”). I think it's probably parallel to **sons of God** and just referring to another class of angelic beings.

And then **sons of God** are mentioned. We saw that back in chapter one, verse six. This is God's heavenly angelic counsel seated before His throne. But the point is God created for His

glory. Had there been no angelic beings when God created the heavens and the earth, it still would have been for His own glory.

Sometimes you hear skeptics say things like, “Well, it doesn't make sense, God existing, and God as creator, because we've got the earth, but you look outside the earth, you've got this vast space. The earth is nothing; it's the point of a pin. The earth is nothing compared to the universe. Well, that just seems like wasted space. Why would God waste so much space? The Milky Way alone has billions of stars and planets.” Well, the false assumption in that line of thinking is that God created exclusively for us, created for man. No, God created for His pleasure. He created for His glory.

Think about all the unseen creatures in the world's oceans. They're discovering different creatures – because only, as I heard it recently, only 5% of the oceans have been mapped. There's so much that we don't know about what lies down in the deeps. Why would God create these creatures that no one may ever see? For His pleasure. For His glory. Because He glories in being God. As John Piper put it so well,

My conclusion is that God's own glory is uppermost in His own affections. In everything He does, His purpose is to preserve and display that glory. To say that His own glory is uppermost in His own affections means that He puts a greater value on it than on anything else. He delights in His glory above all things.²⁷⁴

And this, I think, ties in so well to Orthodoxy, Trinitarian Orthodoxy. There is no Orthodoxy apart from the Trinity. You deny the Trinity, you deny the Gospel. But it fits into it, the idea, again, people say, “Well, God had to create in order to demonstrate love.” No! There

²⁷⁴John Piper, *Desiring God* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2003), 41–42.

was inner-Trinitarian love for all eternity! There was inner-Trinitarian glory for all eternity! And it was by God's mercy, His good pleasure, His glory that He created anything, angels or men.

But you see how lofty this is. And this speaks back to our first point, *Job's finiteness*. “Were you there, Job, when I did this? You wanted a court hearing, now you got it. Now you got it, can you even answer the first question?” No. *Tough questions melt in the light of God's nature*.

Questions about the sea (vv. 8-11)

Questions about the earth, verses four through seven, then questions about the sea in verses eight through 11. These four verses, eight through 11, comprise one long question in Hebrew. Follow along with me, verse eight,

8 “Or who enclosed the sea with doors when, bursting forth, it went out from the womb; 9 when I made a cloud its garment and thick darkness its swaddling band, 10 and I placed boundaries on it and set a bolt and doors, 11 and I said, ‘Thus far you shall come, but no farther; and here shall your proud waves stop’?”

Well, “proud waves stop” – it's at the end of that that the question mark comes.

We have the birth of the sea, birth imagery. Again, look at verses eight and nine: **Who enclosed the sea with doors when bursting forth it went out from the womb?** You have a parallel to the breaking of waters in pregnancy. And then after the birth, verse nine, **when I made a cloud its garment and thick darkness its swaddling band**. So we've jumped metaphors. We've gone from the metaphor of erecting a building, as it relates to the creation of the earth, to the metaphor of childbirth, as it relates to the sea.

The noun translated **swaddling band** by the New American Standard is only used here in the Old Testament. The verb is used in Ezekiel 16:4. But the illusion is to wrapping a

newborn infant with strips of cloth – customarily done – was done to the infant Jesus, Luke chapter two, verse seven. Robert Alden said,

The sea is like a newborn child, conceived “behind doors” (v. 8), emerging “from the womb” (v. 8), and now “dressed” in a “garment” of “clouds” and “wrapped in the swaddling clothes” of “darkness.” [And I’ll add contrary to ancient paganism:] The sea is not the hostile monster whom the supreme god must subdue but part of Yahweh’s created dominion, submissive to his will.

Verses eight and nine, we see *the birth of the sea*. Then verses 10 and 11, we see *the boundaries of the sea*. Follow along in verse 10, **And I placed boundaries on it and set a bolt and doors. And I said, thus far you shall come, but no farther, and here shall your proud wave stop.** This is separating the land from the sea, Genesis chapter one, verses nine and ten, “God said, let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place and let dry land appear, and it was so. And He called the dry land earth, and the gathering of the waters He called seas, and God saw that it was [what?] good.” Proverbs 8:29, “God set for the sea its boundary so that the water would not transgress His command when He marked out the foundations of the earth.”

Christopher Ash in his excellent commentary says this,

Picture a wild ocean coastline, with huge waves crashing against the cliffs under dark brooding skies, with wild winds and storm clouds. How are we—how is Job—to think of this symbol of all that has made his life a misery? With a strange dark humor, we are invited to think of this sea as being like a baby! Picture the breaking of the mother’s waters at the end of pregnancy, and then her baby bursting out of the womb on its day of birth and causing havoc from that day on. . . . But here is a baby who is put in clothing and a “swaddling band” to restrain him (v. 9). and then put in some kind of playpen so that he cannot roam free and cause chaos everywhere (v. 10).²⁷⁵

Really is a beautiful picture that we have here.

²⁷⁵Ash, 380.

Sam Storms adds this,

God clearly asserts his absolute sovereignty over all of creation. He knows and controls every square inch of the universe, whether animate or inanimate. No snowflake or drop of rain escapes his providence. Every force of nature and every living thing within it are subject to his purposes. Such being the case with God's relation to nature, it stands to reason that he cares even more for those created in his image. It now seems ludicrous that a mere creature like Job would demand explanations from God. If Job cannot comprehend or control creation, what makes him think he can comprehend God's control of mankind?²⁷⁶

Tough questions melt in the light of God's nature.

So this is part one of God's First Reply to Job: Who Are You? God's opening statement, we looked at that, verses one through three of chapter 38. And then the second big sub-point – we've got several points that align under each other – but the second main sub-point, God as Prosecuting Attorney and Judge, and that'll take us all the way to chapter 39, verse 30.

But then there are five important questions, remember? That we only looked at one, Job's Finiteness: Were You There? That took us from verse four to verse 11. Questions about the earth, questions about the sea. Then a couple more questions that we'll look at in the coming weeks, Job's Experience: Have You? Job's Ability: Can You? Job's Knowledge: Do You Know? And Job's Impotence: Who is Almighty? And after that comes God's Closing Argument on this first speech.

Three Closing Ideas

But before we pray, I want to leave you with three closing ideas. If we are in Christ – this is the first – *if we are in Christ, we are clothed with Christ*. Very important (talking about we who live in this age of the gospel of Jesus Christ) we don't have to gird our loins for battle

²⁷⁶Sam Storms, *Biblical Studies: Job* (Edmond, OK: Sam Storms, 2016), Job 40:3–5.

against God. Our dirty garments, our sin, have been replaced by white robes, the white robes of Christ's righteousness. Romans chapter five, verse 10, "For if while we were enemies . . ." "Enemies." Apart from Christ, you were an enemy of God. If you're not in Christ, you are an enemy of God. And from what we see in Job, that's not going to be a good thing when you come face to face with Him. Again, Romans 5:10, "If while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." So we are moved from the class of "enemy" (darkened in understanding, enemies of God, those who are heirs of hell) to being "friends." From darkness to light.

Number two (we'll spend most of our time here): *Beware of treading too deep into questions of why.* Beware of treading too deep into questions of why. That's hard, I know. Most of you know that. Why doesn't God tell Job why he suffered? Why doesn't God tell Job what happened behind the scenes with Satan's wager, that if Job were to suffer calamity he would curse God to His face. God could have given Job the reason, but He doesn't. Layton Talbert, "We are not alone when we ask 'why.' But answering our 'why' is never God's primary concern nor our chief need." [Talbert, 201]

Why doesn't God answer all of our why questions? Let me give you three reasons. Number one, *so that we trust Him completely.* Number two, *because in our finiteness, we could never understand all of God's ways.* And number three, *because the answers He might give would cause us to ask more questions* (we would just backtrack). Maybe if God told Job that this is what was happening behind the scenes, "Job, here is Satan's wager," Job might have said, "Okay, but why did you let Satan attack me? Didn't you know anyway what I would do? Couldn't you have chosen some other way?" You see, we would end up – you can look at your

own life and the why questions you have, the answer probably wouldn't ultimately satisfy you – you would end up in a stream of endless questions, digressing from one to the other to the other.

Maybe if God told us why Giana was tragically taken from this world at age 14, we wouldn't have been satisfied with the answer. What if (I've thought of this) what if God would have said, "You know, she was a very sensitive gal. She was mine, but she was destined for a lot of hardship. And she would have really struggled in this world." Or, "She would have struggled in this world and fallen away from Me." Well then, my question would be, "Lord, you're sovereign. You could have kept her from doing that. Why didn't you do that?" See? I would just go from question to question to question.

Sometimes the way God works doesn't fit comfortably in our tight Calvinistic boxes. God does as He will. If God wants to take someone, because they're going to default from the faith down the road, that's His prerogative. Don't get stuck in your perseverance of the saints. That's true within that which we know, but that which we don't know, that is God's prerogative. Sometimes the answer to *why* – let me change that – always the answer to *why* is *Who*. Final answer: Who. Capital W: God. Maybe we had just trust God, knowing that what he does is for our good and His glory. We sang about that a moment ago. Those who are unsatisfied with God's silence in answering their why questions, according to D.A. Carson, have a flaw in their thinking: "They assume that everything that takes place in our universe ought to be explained to us. They assume that God owes us an explanation, that there cannot possibly be any good reason for God not to tell us everything we want to know immediately." [D.A. Carson, cited in Talbert, 201]

Here's number three. *Every one of us will stand before God*. Every one of us. Job was unique in that he stood before God twice, here at the end of the book of Job, and then when Job died, clothed in the righteousness of Christ. It's highly doubtful that any of us will ever stand

before God twice as Job did, but we will all stand before Him at least once. We will stand before Jesus Christ with whom we have to do. Judgment has been given to the Son (John 5:22), “For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son.” Acts 10:42 “And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead.” And you can go to the final judgment in Revelation chapter 20 where John says,

11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. 12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. 14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.²⁷⁷

As a new Christian I told a man I worked with that either his name was written in the book of life right now, from all eternity, “either your name's written in there or it isn't.” And that really freaked him out. (I can't remember if I told you this story before. It's hard to keep track of stories that you've told when you've been in the same church for as long as I have.) But this really freaked him out. And I remember I took him to lunch and shared the gospel with him as much as I knew how at that stage in my life. And I remember as we got out of the truck he looked at me and said, “Really? It's either there or it isn't?” I think his name was Larry Maguire. He was an inspector at Redman Mobile Homes. And Larry, if you're out there, I'd love to hear from you. But Larry ended up believing in Christ, joining a church and was baptized. But I don't know whatever became of Larry after that.

²⁷⁷Revelation 20:11–15.

Is your name written in the Lamb's book of life? Mine is. Because of what I've done? because of how good I am? No. Because of Jesus Christ and how great, perfect and holy He is. We are justified, we are saved, by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

What does that mean for you? Well, if you're not a born again believer, your only hope is in Jesus Christ – believing that he died for you, taking the punishment you deserve – and in believing turning from your bad ways, your sin. That's repentance. Following Christ as your treasure, your treasure in life, your treasure in death.

And so Father we thank you for this time. And we pray, Lord, that you will take all that we've looked at – we've gone in so many different directions and talked about so many different thing – just a lot of data overload. But I trust, Lord, that you'll by the power of the Holy Spirit use that which you will in the lives of my hearers. Thank you, Lord, for getting to chapter 38 when I had really contemplated quitting this series back long before we got to Elihu. Thank you Lord for persevering me in this series. We look forward to what comes.

I pray for any, Lord, that have not been born again and that's a work that you do. That's the work of the Holy Spirit bringing regeneration. So I pray, Lord, that those who have not been born again, I pray that the Holy Spirit would convict them to see that they will one day stand before a Holy God (and they don't want to stand before God naked in their sin) facing eternity, eternity, forever in a place called hell. I pray that they would see the truth, the wonders of the gospel, the beauties, the treasures of Jesus Christ, and that they would believe in Him as Savior and as Lord, turning from their sin, turning from their unbelief, to follow Christ as the treasure, the treasure hidden in a field that brings great joy. And so we pray that you would undertake these things for your glory. For your glory in Christ's precious name. Amen.

God's First Reply to Job: Not “Why” but “Who” (Part 2)

Job 38:12-30

October 22, 2023

Christ Church of Clarkson

1023Job38.12-30(37) | Audio Length: 55:44

Job chapter 38, beginning in verse 12. Again, the Lord speaking to Job, asking him a series of questions, which in total ended up being over 70. And here that line of questioning continues. Again, verse 12:

12 Have you ever in your life commanded the morning, and caused the dawn to know its place, 13 that it might take hold of the ends of the earth, and the wicked be shaken out of it? 14 It is changed like clay under the seal; and they stand forth like a garment. 15 From the wicked their light is withheld, and the uplifted arm is broken. 16 Have you entered into the springs of the sea or walked in the recesses of the deep? 17 Have the gates of death been revealed to you, or have you seen the gates of deep darkness? 18 Have you understood the expanse of the earth? Tell Me, if you know all this. 19 Where is the way to the dwelling of light? And darkness, where is its place, 20 that you may take it to its territory and that you may discern the paths to its home? 21 You know, for you were born then, and the number of your days is great! 22 Have you entered the storehouses of the snow, or have you seen the storehouses of the hail, 23 which I have reserved for the time of distress, for the day of war and battle? 24 Where is the way that the light is divided, or the east wind scattered on the earth? 25 Who has cleft a channel for the flood, or a way for the thunderbolt, 26 to bring rain on a land without people, on a desert without a man in it, 27 to satisfy the waste and desolate land and to make the seeds of grass to sprout? 28 Has the rain a father? Or who has begotten the drops of dew? 29 From whose womb has come the ice? And the frost of heaven, who has given it birth? 30 Water becomes hard like stone, and the surface of the deep is imprisoned.²⁷⁸

Hear the voice of our God. Let's pray.

We continue to quiet ourselves before You, dear Lord, under the awesome voice of Your Word. We pray that You would be lifted up. We pray that Your people would be encouraged, challenged, in the end edified to better serve our triune God, in whose name we pray. Amen.

²⁷⁸Scripture citations are taken from the NAS95 unless otherwise noted.

A man by the name of Robert Dick Wilson served years ago as professor of Old Testament in Semitic languages. He served from 1900 to 1929 at Princeton Theological Seminary, and that was back in the days when it was a fortress of theological orthodoxy. Serving on that same faculty had been some great minds of history, men like B.B. Warfield, J. Gresham Machen, and other notable theologians. When Machen later left and began Westminster Seminary, Robert Dick Wilson left with him, and together they formed the new school. The great expositor Donald Grey Barnhouse was a student at Princeton from 1915 to 1917. Barnhouse later went on to the 10th Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia to serve as senior pastor for 33 years. But before his pastorate, about 12 years after he graduated from Princeton, the school invited Barnhouse to come back to the seminary to preach in chapel.

Well, with trepidation Barnhouse accepted the invitation. The day finally arrived, and he noticed just before he got up to preach, his former professor, Robert Dick Wilson, walked in and came all the way down to the front, sitting very close to the chapel pulpit. There was his old professor sitting right up front. Now that can be pretty intimidating. I remember when I was a rather new preacher in a small church back in Tempe, Arizona, having my systematic theology professor come for a visit, he and his wife – and sitting down – and me preaching before my systematic theology professor. Me, you know, around the age of 30. It was it was intimidating. And so you can imagine Barnhouse. Barnhouse was intimidated, as great and strong as a preacher as he was. And he said later that when he finished his message, Dr. Wilson walked up to him, shook his hand, and said, “If you come back (that is, come back to preach in chapel), I will not come hear you preach. I only come once to hear my boys, and I only come to see if they're big Godders or little Godders. Not sure that he understood what Dr. Wilson meant by

that, Barnhouse asked for an explanation. “Oh,” he said, “it's very simple. Some men have only a little God, and they are always in trouble with Him. He can't do the miraculous, He can't take care of life's details, He doesn't intervene on behalf of his people. They have a little God, and so I call them ‘little Godders.’ Then there are those who have a great and mighty God. He speaks and it is done. He commands and it stands fast. He knows how to show Himself strong on behalf of those who fear Him.” Barnhouse, anxious to know in which category he was, breathed a sigh of relief when he heard the man's final statement: “You, Donald, have a great God, and He will bless your ministry.”²⁷⁹

I don't know how you can honestly preach any significant text of Scripture without being brought face to face with the fact that we are “big Godders” – are we not? And we see that in the book of Job, Job chapter 38: Job being confronted by Yahweh, a very, very big God. “Big” doesn't even do justice to what we're talking about. But that's the point that is being driven into Job's mind. And that's not all, of course.

Another story I recently read told of a man by the name of Benjamin Jowett when he was headmaster of Balliol College in Oxford. Someone asked him the question, “Dr. Jowett, we would like to know your opinion of God.” His reply: “The only constant anxiety of my life is to know *what is God's opinion of me.*”²⁸⁰ That speaks to this passage. What is God's opinion of Job – and by extension, what is God's opinion of you and me?

²⁷⁹Adapted from Swindoll, *Job*, 263.

²⁸⁰Taken from Ash, *Job*, 374. Emphasis mine.

God's First Reply to Job: Not "Why" but "Who" (Part 2)

Well, to give you a bit of a review because it's been a few weeks, our title (we're in part two): God's First Reply to Job: Not “Why” But “Who.” In other words, Job – and we do the same thing, it's been true throughout the history of the human race – we have “why” questions: “Why God? Why this? Why now? What is going on?” . . . And God shows Job, even as He is showing us, the question is not “why?” but “Who?” Who is behind all of Creation? Who stands behind your life? So our title, God's First Reply to Job: Not “Why” But “Who.”

Tough questions melt in the light of God's nature

And kind of the main idea we've been teasing out is that *tough questions melt in the light of God's nature*. We have . . . we have questions. We have questions that sometimes are hard to answer. We have questions for which that we will have no answer this side of heaven. And yet, when we come face to face with the reality of who God is, those questions begin to melt away.

An overview of our outline that will take us all the way to the beginning of chapter 40 (big idea), this is: God's First Reply to Job. Under that we have God's Opening Statement (that's the first three verses of chapter 38). And then, taking us through the bulk of this text, we have God As Prosecuting Attorney and Judge.

- I. God's First Reply to Job: Who Are You? (38:1-40:2)*
 - A. God's Opening Statement (38:1-3)*
 - B. God as Prosecuting Attorney and Judge (38:4-39:30)*

Again, this courtroom idea that we've seen throughout the book of Job; courtroom language. And here we have God, who is not only the Prosecuting Attorney, He's questioning Job, but he's also the Judge of all things.

And several questions that are asked in this passage that we'll look at: Job's Finiteness – this is the way I've outlined them – Job's Finiteness (and the question is, *Were you there?*); and we'll see that, “Were you there?” Well, actually, we went through that last time in verses four through 11, “Were you there,” for example, “in creation.” Then Job's Experience – that brings us to where we take it up today – (*Have you?*). Job's Experience: Have you done this? Have you done that? Then Job's Ability (*Can you?*); Job's Knowledge (*Do you know?*). That brings us into chapter 39 and Job's Impotence: Who is Almighty? (through the end of chapter 39). And just as we had an Opening Statement in chapter 38, then we have a Closing Argument in chapter 40, verses one through two. So again, *tough questions melt in the light of God's nature.*

Job's Impotence: Who is Almighty? (39:5-30)

But again, go back to chapter 38, the first verse. This is after Job's last words in chapters 27 through 31. This is after the subsequent four speeches by Elihu, chapters 32 through 37. Then we have God speaking: 1 **“Then the LORD [YHWH] answered Job out of the whirlwind . . .”** This is the *tetragrammaton*. We talked about that before. Hebrew being a consonantal language, we have “YHWH” to anglicize it. The name Yahweh that's revealed later to Moses in Exodus chapter three. And we noted also how when Jesus in John 8:58 says, “Before Abraham was born, *ego eimi* [I Am] . . .” He is using that phrase, the Greek equivalent of that phrase, to say that He is Yahweh. This speaks of God's self existence. The name Yahweh speaks of His, as we call it in theology, His attribute of a aseity. Again, that's self-existent, self sufficiency (“I AM that I AM”). and it also speaks of His covenant relationship to his people. So I think there's only one time outside of the first two chapters [of Job] that Yahweh is used. The preferred word in the big middle part of the book is “Elohim,” or “El,” just a more of a generic term for “God.”

But here we see God talking to Job, and He's using his covenant name, "Yahweh." And we teased out the idea also last time that this is quite possibly a Christophany. If you were here, I think you would remember talking about that. A Christophany is a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus Christ. A pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus Christ, most commonly in the Old Testament as "the Angel of the Lord." And we see the Angel of the Lord, that individual who is more than an angel, who speaks as God, who is worshiped as God, who is identified as the LORD throughout the Old Testament. The Angel of the Lord ceases to be with the coming of Christ. So we think that the Angel of the Lord was the pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus Christ. Well, this could be – though it is not the Angel of the Lord – but this could also be Jesus appearing before His incarnation, appearing as Yahweh. And that's not without precedent. Isaiah chapter six, attributed to being a Christophany, the appearance of Jesus, in John chapter 12, verse 41. So we talked about that in some detail, and if you missed the message, I would encourage you, rather than rely on the review, to go to the website and listen to it.

So then what does God ask? The first of over 70 questions that He asks Job, verse two: **"Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?"** Job's words were "without knowledge," as Elihu said twice in his address to Job.

And then there's this *warrior speech* in verse three: **"Now gird up your loins like a man, and I will ask you, and you instruct Me!"** So again, with the court analogy, Job the plaintiff, now becomes Job the defendant Job is on the witness stand, and God is examining him as both Prosecuting Attorney and Judge. That's our next big point.

God as Prosecuting Attorney and Judge (38:4-39:30)

God meets Job in court, which is something that Job asked for back in chapter 31, beginning in verse 35, where Job was bemoaning, saying:

35 “Oh that I had one to hear me! Behold, here is my signature; let the Almighty answer me! And the indictment which my adversary has written, 36 surely I would carry it on my shoulder, I would bind it to myself like a crown. 37 “I would declare to Him the number of my steps; like a prince I would approach Him.

Very bold, Job saying, “I want my day in court with the Lord. I want to see his indictment; here's my signature. And when I get the indictment, I'm going to wear it like a turban on my head. I'll put it on my shoulder and walk proudly around.” Well, that's one thing to say that when God isn't immediately before you in visible presence, it's another when God does make an appearance. And so Job is getting his day in court.

Job's Finiteness: Were You There (38:4-11)?

So we categorize the first series of the questions that God asked Job under this heading (this was last time): *Job's Finiteness: Were You There?* These questions are designed to demonstrate the finiteness of Job as compared to God's omnipotence, as compared to His awesome omniscience and providence. And there were questions that were asked, questions about creation in verses four through seven. And we saw that in creation God is the architect. These are some of the images that were used that we look at. *God is the architect* (verse four through the beginning of verse five); *God is the surveyor*, stretching a line across (second half of verse five); and then *God is the engineer* (in verse six). These were questions about the earth, verses four through seven. Then there are questions about the sea, verses eight through 11. And we go from the metaphor of constructing a building, the earth, to a metaphor of childbirth. That's the sea likened to a newborn infant that is emerging from the womb and is then wrapped

in cloths. This is the indescribable magnificence of God in this poetic imagery (and we'll see more of it to come). But again, *tough questions melt in the light of God's nature*. Job's

Finiteness: Were You There, Job? (verses four through 11).

Job's Experience: Have You? (38:12-30)

And now we come to verse 12: *Job's Experience*. “What kind of experience do you have, Job, in running the universe?” *Have you?* – that's the key question, “have you?” And that'll take us to the end of our passage today. We see that phrase over and over again: *have you, have you?* We'll see it in our passages, as in, “Have you ever done this?”

Questions About Light and Darkness (38:12-15)

The first set of questions that take us to verse 15 are Questions About Light and Darkness. Light, as in the morning or dawn. Look at verse 12, would you? Notice the first two words: **“Have you have you ever in your life commanded the morning, and caused the dawn to know its place?”** Look at that word “commanded.” The Hebrew [word *tsevah*]: “to command, to cause to do, to charge someone to do something.” God commands morning to appear. All of creation is under God's control (this is all that we talk about in sovereignty).

This contradicts deism. Listen, we're not deists. Christianity is not deism. Deism is the idea that God created everything to run like a well-oiled machine, and He steps back and doesn't have any interaction in it, it all just works according to natural laws. That is not biblical Christianity. It May be pop unbiblical Christianity, may be the way that a lot of people think today, but that is not a biblical understanding of our God. You see, all actions subsist in God's sovereignty. All actions. Nature, human actions, angelic. They subsist within God's sovereign control.

One of the things we do – it's called *inductive inference* – we infer from the past that the future will be the same. The basis for science is inductive inference. But you can read David Hume, the philosopher. He had quite a problem with induction and inductive inference, because it's something that can end up being a dead end as far as explaining it. You know, we can say the sun rose this morning and we assume by induction because it happened in the past it's going to happen the same way tomorrow and the day after. . . . I could hold up a heavy object and ask you, “What's going to happen if I let it go?” “Well, what are you, an idiot? What's going to happen if you let it go? It's going to fall to the ground.” Well, how do you know that? It's by inductive inference. But you see, that is taken, at least in part, on faith that this is going to happen because it happened before. You sit in a chair, a chair that you sit in every night before your television, and you, by inductive inference, believe that it's going to support you. Well, you have faith. You have faith that your car is going to get you from point A to point B. Well, the Christian has a basis or a ground for that assumption that what happened yesterday is going to happen today: because of a providential, awesomely sovereign God.

And so here we have God pictured as a commanding general. Remember some of the other metaphors that we looked at last time. I just kind of went over them a moment ago as it related to creation. God is the architect. Verse four and five, He set the foundations of the earth. God is the surveyor. Verse five, He stretched a line across it. God is the engineer. Verse six, He laid the cornerstone. And even the analogy . . . of a parent over a newborn, verses eight through 11, where the seas are likened to the birth of an infant, gushing forth from a womb and wrapped in cloths.

Well, here God is seen as a general commanding the morning to appear. To what end?

Verse 13: **“that it might take hold of the ends of the earth, and the wicked be shaken out of**

it? 14 “It is changed like clay under the seal; and they stand forth like a garment. 15

“From the wicked their light is withheld, and the uplifted arm is broken. Well, you might

wonder what that is all about. What is that saying? There are two things going on in these three

verses. First, you have daylight that is likened to a blanket, a poetic picture of the dawn reaching

to the ends of the earth as though it were a blanket or a garment, shaking the wicked out. It's like

taking a blanket you've used on a picnic. The kids have been on it, you've been on it, and at the

end what do you do? You pack up all your stuff, you take the blanket and you shake off the

debris. You shake off the grasses and everything. That's the picture. The dawn comes and it's

like the light is taking hold of the end, the ends of the earth, and shaking the wicked out from

among it. Well, what does that mean? Well, when are the most violent crimes committed, day or

night? Most violent crimes are committed at night. It's after dark that you're most concerned to

be out in unfamiliar places, right? And we see this in Job 24, a passage we went over many

months ago. Job replying to Eliphaz, and he speaks of the wicked

13 . . .who rebel against the light; they do not want to know its ways nor abide in its paths. 14 “The murderer arises at dawn; he kills the poor and the needy, and at night he is as a thief. 15 “The eye of the adulterer waits for the twilight, saying, ‘No eye will see me.’ And he disguises his face.

As the commentator Robert Alden said:

As the day grows brighter, evil doers who love darkness and practice their crimes under its cover find themselves looking for places to hide. As a bright light scatters cockroaches, so each new day presents a threat to the murderers, adulterers, and burglars that Job mentioned in 24:14–17.

And so what do we see in that parallel in our passage here in chapter 38? Daylight comes and what happens to the wicked? Verse 15 (you've got to see the word "light" in quotation marks): **"Their 'light' is withheld, and the uplifted arm is broken."** You see the night is light to them, for the sinful people that Job is talking about, the godless. They're committing their crimes at night. That is, when they're comfortable. That's when they operate. . . . Their "light," when daylight comes, is withheld, and their uplifted arm is broken. Well, an uplifted arm pictures defiance. That it's broken is just another way of saying that the defiance is broken.

As I looked at this, I thought of a movie that I saw as a kid about a vampire. (Okay, I'm not promoting vampire movies here, parents, but I did see this as a child.) And an investigative journalist found where this demonic being was living. And he goes into an otherwise abandoned home in the early morning hours. It's still dark. He thinks he's alone and he's looking around, and all of a sudden what appears? The vampire in the shadows, with fangs bared. Well, morning light has come, but there's a big curtain, heavy curtain over the window, the picture window. And so the investigative journalist, as the vampire approaches, reaches and grabs, tears that curtain off of its hangers. Light beams into the room. And what does the vampire do? Ah, he cowers back into the shadows. That's sort of the picture that we get here.

And we have that picture in Scripture, even to the extent where literal darkness, light . . . becomes metaphorical darkness and light. In other words, Proverbs chapter 2:13 warns about those who leave the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness. The ways of darkness, not literally nighttime. It's talking about the ways that are dark. We see the contrast in Romans 5:8, "For you were formerly darkness . . ." talking about Christians. You're in the dark, but now you are light in the Lord: "Walk as children of light." Dark, light.

Now, I said, there are two things going on in these three verses. The first is that you have daylight likened to a blanket that shakes away evildoers. The second is that poetic picture in verse 14 where it says it well, what is it? **“The earth is changed like clay under a seal; and they [who are the “they,” the wicked] stand forth like a garment.”** Now what does it mean, that the earth is changed like clay under a seal? In antiquity, you had a stamp, such as a hard piece of pottery that had embossed edges on it, and you could use that to impress a three dimensional image on something like clay. Picture a child using a plastic stamp to put a 3D image on a piece of flattened Play-Doh, so that which is flat all of a sudden now with the stamp has features on it. Now imagine this from the perspective of a culture without electricity in night time. It's like a flat piece of clay. You can't discern a whole lot about the landscape or about buildings, that sort of thing. Well, as the sun comes up, as a stamp on a piece of clay, all of a sudden you start seeing things take shape. The darkness turns to gray features in the landscape that begin to form in your eyes, changed (verse 14) “like clay under a seal.” That's what that's talking about. I love the way Christopher Ash pulls all this together in his commentary on Job. Listen to this, pulling all this together:

. . . the Lord pictures that beautiful scene when you watch a dark landscape appear as first light dawns. From a gray two-dimensional nothingness, it takes shape, rather as flat clay becomes three-dimensional when impressed with a seal, and its features become visible, and it has color and texture like a piece of clothing. What is the point and purpose of all this? The paradoxical “light,” (v.15) of the wicked (which is darkness, for darkness is their preferred environment . . .) is “withheld” and the arm they lift up to threaten and harm is broken. All of which is a vivid poetic way of saying that every time the sunrises, it is evidence that there is a judgment to come. Every time the light is switched on in creation reassures us that darkness will not last forever. Each new day is cosmic proof that evil has no enduring place in the created order. Sure, it must be part of this creation for now; it has a place in God's purposes, albeit a strictly limited one. But it will not be with us forever. There will come a day when the sea (in this symbolic sense) will be no more (Revelation 21:1). The wheat and the weeds may need to grow together

for the present; but the day of judgment will come, when the weeds will be burned and the wheat gathered into God's barns (Matthew 13 :24-30).²⁸¹

I like how he pulls all this together, and then talks about the fact that in eternity, there's eternal daylight.

So God sets before Job a vivid metaphorical portrait of the glories of the universe, a good creation. It's been tainted by evil, yes. God has a purpose for that evil to exist for a time, but only a time, then that which began at the cross, ultimately, that which began at the cross 2000 years ago will be consummated in final judgment and glory. That, again, is our sovereign God. . . . *Tough questions melt in the light of His nature.* So we see Job's Experience: Have You, Job? Do you have the experience that I have: Questions About Light and Darkness.

Questions about Unexplored places (38:16-17)

Then we have Questions About Unexplored Places (verses 16 and 17). Follow me there, beginning in verse 16: **“Have you entered into the springs of the sea or walked in the recesses of the deep? 17 “Have the gates of death been revealed to you, or have you seen the gates of deep darkness?”** In these two verses there's a progression. There's a progression from “have you, Job, been to the deepest parts of the sea,” to “have you, Job, seen the very gates of death?” We go from the deepest ocean to the gates of Sheol (that is death, or the grave). That's the progression. We look at it as downward, but these are two unexplored places by men, particularly in Job's time.

I said a few weeks ago that I understood that only 5% of the ocean has even been mapped, much less explored. You take the Pacific Ocean. In a limited sense. It's like outer

²⁸¹Ash, *Job*, 382.

space. I'm fascinated when they have documentaries about the Titanic, things like that, and you have these deep vessels that go thousands of feet down to look at this area that is largely, not exclusively, but largely unexplored (the seas). And yet there is this hulk of a wreck, a historic monument, the Titanic. Take the Pacific Ocean – and take all of the oceans – and you look at how they have been largely unexplored. And then you consider that most of our globe is water. From that perspective, the majority of Earth is unexplored.

The depths of the ocean are hard to fathom. According to the National Ocean Service, which is a government organization, the National Ocean Service, the deepest part of any ocean is in the western Pacific. It's known as the Challenger Deep and is nearly 36,000ft down (Challenger Deep). It was named after the H.M.S. Challenger, whose crew, back in 1875, first sounded its depths. 36,000ft is just short of seven miles. Well, in 2020, a crew of two descended in a specially equipped submersible to the bottom of Challenger Deep. They conducted a total of six dives in the submersible, which takes about four hours to go down. They spent another 2.5 hours exploring, then another four hours to go up. Now I have a little bit of claustrophobia, and I've seen pictures of this vessel, and I could not picture being buried 36,000ft in the ground, and taking four hours to get down and then another six hours to get back to the surface. I just cannot imagine that. But there are people that like that sort of thing, and it doesn't cause them any anxiety.

But you think about the oceans. At just a mere 650ft beneath the surface, you enter what could be called *the twilight zone*. All light visible to the human eye, 650ft down, has been filtered out, and the inky black water has dropped to just four degrees. Well, that's 650ft. You imagine 36,000ft where the temperature hovers just above freezing, while the enormous weight

of water above exerts a pressure equivalent to eight tons, eight tons per square inch. Yet there are creatures that exist in those depths and under those pressures. There are sea creatures that are alive and exist there. You say, “Well, why?” You know, we've talked about in the past. Why do these unexplored areas have things that can be seen and marveled at? Is it wasted? No. It's for God's glory. God enjoys it and it brings Him glory.

So back to the Challenger Deep. A woman in this 2020 expedition named Durdana Ansari, who was a commander in the British Royal Navy . . . accompanied the pilot on a dive. So you've got room for a pilot and one passenger. Afterwards, she said, “This [going to the Challenger Deep] has changed the way I think. It has changed the way that my mind works. You are a little drop in a huge ocean. . . . It has made me an even more humble person.”

I can just picture Job in the presence of God being asked these questions. Job, who probably never went beyond 100 miles from the place where he was he was born, and being asked, “Have you?” . . . He's being humbled. “Have you, Job, entered into the springs of the sea, or walked in the recesses of the deep?” *Tough questions melt in the light of God's nature.* And these are things related to land and sea and creation that only God can do.

Yesterday I read about Jesus (in Luke chapter five) in my daily Bible reading. And Jesus, standing on the lake of Gennesaret, sees two unoccupied boats lying there at the edge of the lake. And He gets into one, which happened to be Peter's. He takes the boat out a little and teaches the people from there. Then He tells Peter, “put down the nets for a catch of fish,” and Peter answers, “Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing. But I will do as you say, and I'll let down the nets.” So they end up taking in such a great catch that the nets begin to break! Now, how does Peter react? “Well, I'm going to start a new business. I'm going to invest

in some new fishing industry stock.” How does he react? He falls down at Jesus feet, saying, “Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man.” [He understands] that only God can direct the fish of His sea into otherwise empty nets. *Peter doesn't ask any questions. He's humbled under the weight of his own sinfulness. Yes, tough questions melt in the light of God's nature.*

So here we have questions about unexplored places, verses 16 and 17, the second of which is the place of the dead. So we're going to the deepest [place], we're going into *Sheol*, the grave, or the place of the dead. And that's verse 17: **“Have the gates of death been revealed to you, or have you seen the gates of deep darkness?”** So much of this that we see, especially in this section, there's parallelism here. So the second half of the verse is parallel to the first part of the verse. So you've got “the gates of death” paralleled with “deep darkness.” They're talking about the same thing, not different things.

While we scratch the surface of ocean exploration, there's really no such thing with death. *I'm going to go explore death and come back, and I'm going to tell you all about it, and I'm going to bring an expedition with me. We're all going to die, and then we're going to come back and we may even do a documentary!* No, it remains unexplored.

And death is pictured here as having gates which open for those who enter. “Gates of death” are mentioned elsewhere in Scripture, in the Psalms and in Isaiah. The New Testament equivalent is used in Matthew 16:18, where Jesus says that “the gates of Hades . . .” – that Greek word *Hades*, is the New Testament equivalent of the Old Testament *Sheol* – “The gates of Hades will not overpower the church” (“gates of Hades,” or the “gates of death”). The gates of Sheol, the gates of death, they will not overpower the church.

Death is a mystery. Yeah, we all face it. It fascinates me. Sometimes, as I look at the rank and file of mankind and think, “all these people are going to die” – unless obviously, you know, we say, “as long as the Lord tarries.” But they're going to die. And we don't even talk about death a whole lot in the church. Generations ago (I was reading) how the church looked as central to its mission preparing people for death. From the time you're born, we're going to prepare you on how to live the Christian life and how to die. Well, because generations ago (and this is true in some other cultures, but I'm talking about in the West) generations ago, you could go at any time. And while that's true today (and certainly our family is witness to that with the loss of a 14 year old daughter). But it was common [then]. It was common for women to die in childbirth. It was common for children to die of influenza. Death was all around you, so you were preparing people for death. We've sanitized death from our brains, the culture, and the church, but it's still something people think about. I mean, I talk about it, but they think about it. It's still something that people fear. Remember when we were back in chapter 14, Bildad, writing of the end of the wicked, said “He is torn from the security of his tent [a metaphor for life], and they march him before the king of terrors.” You remember that? That's stuck with me. The idea that death is “the king of terrors” (at least for those who don't know Jesus Christ).

But the point here God's knowledge, God's presence, reached to the deepest areas, furthest space, the depths of Hades, the heights of heaven. Again, in Psalm 139, David says:

7 Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? 8 If I ascend to heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there. 9 If I take the wings of the dawn, if I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, 10 even there Your hand will lead me, and Your right hand will lay hold of me.

Tough questions melt in the light of God's nature.

Questions about the Seasons and Weather (38:22–30)

[We have] Job’s Experience: Have You? [followed by] Questions About Light and Darkness, Questions About Unexplored Places, and then Questions About the Seasons and Weather. That takes us from verse 22 to verse 30 (and we're going to go through these quickly).

The expanse of the earth (v. 18)

First, we see *the expanse of the earth* in verse 18: **“Have you understood the expanse of the earth? Tell me if you know all this.”** *All this* isn't just “the expanse of the earth.” *All this* goes to that which preceded: “Okay, Job do you know all of this, including ‘do you understand the expanse of the earth?’” Again, Alden writes:

From God’s celestial perspective, somewhat analogous to the astronauts’ view from the moon, the entire globe can be seen at once. To the earthbound Job such a viewpoint was unimaginable. He may have traveled a hundred miles or more, but still he was far from “understanding/comprehending” what was beyond the last mountain range or desert he had seen at the most distant point of his travels.

Well, speaking of astronauts, in a book entitled *A Reluctant Icon: Letters to Neil Armstrong*, by James R. Hansen, former NASA historian, says that, speaking of Armstrong, “He was not a religious man in any doctrinal sense at all,” and that his mother, “a strongly devout evangelical Christian,” could not accept that about her son (that he was not a religious man). And according to the book, Armstrong said in an interview with Walter Cronkite on CBS's *Face the Nation* (August 17th, 1969), that he was, “certainly not an atheist.” But he did not elaborate further. The book also says that, according to Armstrong's brother, Dean, Cronkite asked him on another occasion whether he felt closer to God while on the moon, and Armstrong replied (some of us will appreciate this): “You know, Walter, sometimes a man just wants a good cigar.”

Armstrong reportedly was a deist (we talked about deism earlier).²⁸² Well, deism in no way describes the God of the Bible or the God that's being described here in Job chapter 38.

In verse 18 God says, **“Have you . . .”** – note that again – **“Have you understood the expanse of the earth? Tell me if you know all this.”** Later in chapter 38, verse 31 to 33, it goes beyond just the expanse of the earth to the heavens: “Can you bind the chains of Pleiades, or loose the cords of Orion? Can you lead forth a constellation in its season, and guide the Bear with her satellites? Do you know the ordinances of the heavens, or fix their rule over the earth?” Again, we're getting a picture of creation top to bottom, including the depths of death.

Light and darkness (vv. 19-21)

So we go from *the expanse of the earth* to *light and darkness*. Verses 19 through 21. 19 **“Where is the way to the dwelling of light? And darkness, where is its place, that you may take it to its territory and that you may discern the paths to its home.”** More poetic language with *light* and *darkness* personified as having homes. Each comes from its dwelling to which it returns.

Then you have snow and hail. Verses 22 and 23 (another “Have you”): 22 **“Have you entered the storehouses of the snow, or have you again seen the storehouses of the hail”** – both snow and hail pictured as having storehouses. These have been, verse 23, **“reserved for the time of distress, for the day of war and battle?”** Well, that sounds a little like Elihu in chapter 37. And again, this is one of the reasons why we think Elihu is not the bad guy he's often

²⁸²<https://www.reuters.com/article/factcheck-armstrong-bible/fact-check-neil-armstrong-refusing-to-swear-on-the-bible-is-not-proof-that-moon-landing-was-fake-idUSL1N2RG249> (accessed October 2023).

made out to be. A lot of things he says in his four speeches are reiterated by God in His addresses to Job.

Well, this idea of the snow, again Elihu chapter 37, verse six, “. . . to the snow He says, ‘Fall on the earth,’ and to the downpour and rain, ‘Be strong.’” And then verse 13 of chapter 37, “Whether for correction, or for His world, or for lovingkindness, He causes it [that is, the weather] to happen.” It could be for correction, judgment; it could be for His world, providence; or His loving kindness, again, God's love for all of creation. And He causes that to happen.

Well, here we have in verse 23: **“Which I have reserved for the time of distress, for the day of war and battle?”** (And that ends with a question mark connected to verse 22.) Hail in particular, is a weapon God used to fight for his people. That's something we see in the Old Testament. Hail was the seventh plague that fell on Egypt in an attempt to persuade Pharaoh to let Israel go free (Exodus nine). We read that “The LORD hurled large hailstones on the fleeing Amorites” in Joshua 10:11. 100 pound hailstones are recorded in Revelation 16:21 as part of the plague of the seventh angel. As far as snow, if you don't think snow can be a messenger of judgment, just think about Napoleon or Hitler, who suffered great losses in the frigid snows of Russia.

So we go from snow and hail to lightning and the east winds in Verse 24: **“Where is the way that the light is divided, or the east wind scattered on the earth?”** Some translators, like the NIV, take “light” to mean “lightning.” The NAS has “light,” probably better understood as “lightning” because it parallels east wind. That way, you know, these things stand in parallel, one with another. So lightning, it's literally the dispersion of light. And that happens with lightning.

And then we have rain in verses 25 through 27: 25 **“Who has cleft a channel for the flood. . . .”** Again, the New American Standard has “flood,” better understood as “rain.” The Holman Christian Standard Bible has “flooding rain:”²⁵ **“Who has cleft a channel for the flooding rain, or a way for the thunderbolt?”** The purpose: 26 **“to bring rain on a land without people, on a desert without a man in it, 27 to satisfy the waste and desolate land and to make the seeds of grass to sprout?”** But note, this rain that's being described here falls on a deserted land, uninhabitable land. And even if no one is there, no habitation, yet God sends his rain to water the grasses. And He does that again, class? For His pleasure, for His glory.

John Piper puts it this way:

[In] distant deserts millions of flowers [will] bloom, blush with vivid colors, give off a sweet fragrance and never be touched or seen or smelled by anybody but God! God, it seems, wanted Job to think about this very thing. . . . Creation praises God by simply being what it was created to be in all its incredible variety. And since most of the creation is beyond the awareness of mankind (in the reaches of space, and in the heights of mountains and at the bottom of the sea) it wasn't created merely to serve purposes that have to do with us. It was created for the enjoyment of God. . . .

Piper goes on to say,

One of the tragedies of growing up is that we get used to things. . . . What a wonderful experience it is when God grants us a moment in which we don't take anything for granted, but see the world as though it was invented yesterday. . . . We should pray for the eyes of children again, when they saw everything for the first time....These are the eyes we need to see the unending wisdom of God running through all the world.²⁸³

God does this for his pleasure. That's being communicated to Job here, but it also demonstrates God's love for us. What did Jesus say in Matthew chapter six? “If God so clothes the grass of

²⁸³Cited in Talbert, 207.

the field [even in places where nobody could see it] which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you, you men of little faith?"²⁸⁴

Ice and frost (vv. 28-30)

Well lastly, we have *ice and frost*. . . . We've got another metaphor here, we've got a father / mother metaphor. See if you can follow it, verse 28a: **"Has the rain a father?"** Well, that's pretty self-evident. And then second half of verse 28: **"Or who has begotten the drops of dew?"** Well, there we have a mother analogy. Verse 29: **"From whose womb has come the ice? And the frost of heaven, who has given it birth? 30 Water becomes hard like stone, and the surface of the deep is imprisoned."** Mother / father metaphor, speaking probably here with this metaphor, speaking against ancient paganism. One source said this. "This may possibly be an allusion to and a polemic against the Canaanite myth that viewed rain as the semen of the gods, by which 'mother earth' supposedly bears her 'children,' the crops."²⁸⁵ No, God is Lord of creation, of all things. Jeremiah chapter 14, verse 22: "Are there any among the idols of the nations who give rain? Or can the heavens grant showers? Is it not You, O LORD our God? Therefore we hope in You, for You are the one who has done all these things."

[This is] Part Two of God's First Reply to Job: Not Why but Who, [that idea] that *tough questions melt in the light of God's nature*.

²⁸⁴Matthew 6:30.

²⁸⁵*Bible Knowledge Commentary*.

Closing Thoughts

1. Jesus Christ, as God, providentially controls all things

Let me just give you a couple of closing thoughts. Number one, *Jesus Christ, as God providentially controls all things*. We talked about the fact that He is the Creator, we talked about that last time. He's also the Sustainer and Governor, that is, He providentially controls creation.

Our God, Jesus, can interrupt our *inductive inference*. Think about it. Peter and the disciples, they gave up fishing for the night. Why? Because they were trying and they weren't catching anything. See how inductive inference works? I'm not catching anything and I'm not going to be an idiot and keep casting the net over the boat, the side of the boat, and catch nothing. There's nothing there. Okay, so let's quit. Well, it's a miracle. The suspending of our inductive inference is at the heart of what is a miracle. Jesus tells them to go cast out – why, we've caught nothing? Do it! They go out, they get this huge catch. *Jesus Christ, as God, providentially controls all things*. And He goes on in that passage, in Luke five, to say, “Do not fear. From now on you will be catching men.” Their response? *They left everything and followed him*. Have you left everything to follow Jesus Christ, believing in Him by faith as Lord and Savior of your life?

The song I Bow Down by Twila Paris:

You are Lord of creation
And Lord of my life
Lord of the land and the sea
You were Lord of the heavens
Before there was time
Lord of all lords You will be

And what's our response in that song? *We bow down and we worship you, Lord.*

2. *Jesus conquered the king of terrors*

Number two, *Jesus conquered the king of terrors*. What's the king of terrors? According to the book of Job: death. Earlier, I said that death is one of those areas that remains unexplored. Not entirely accurate. Here's the other side of that. I have a good friend, much more than a friend, who died and came back to tell about it. Who's that? Jesus Christ. He died, He came back to tell about it. And He conquered the fear of death (Hebrews chapter two, verses 14 and 15). We are freed! We are freed from the fear of death, which was once something that held us in its slavery.

Do you know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? I've been following Jesus for the majority of my life. As a rebellious religious teenager right out of high school, having witnessed my dad's conversion, having fought against all that he stood for, hating all that he stood for, I was taken, kicking and screaming into the kingdom. I was made to bow the knee before Jesus Christ. And I have never looked back. . . . My interest in worldview, my interest in theology, dabbling a little bit in philosophy, nothing answers the questions of life like Christianity does. Biblical Christianity. And the crux of that *isn't* your best life now. The crux of that is what happens when you die. Nothing in comparison to the joys that await us in the kingdom, serving our Lord and our Master. If you don't know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, only the Holy Spirit can bring you to that point as He brought me to bow the knee. But it's simply by faith. You don't have to do anything but believe. And in genuine belief there is repentance. That is, you turn from your disbelief and you turn away from your life of sin and rebellion against God, and you submit yourself to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. And life is radically changed. If you haven't joined us, join us, join us.

And so, Father, we thank You for this time. A difficult passage, not easy to preach. But, Lord, I just thank you for my hearers that have stuck with it. And I pray most of all, Lord, that any that is not born again who has been listening to this, I pray, Holy Spirit, that You would do that work that You have done in millions of lives from the first century to the present, and that is bring eyes of faith. Eyes of faith, eyes to see, ears to hear, and a will, a heart upon which is written the law of God, to walk in obedience to it, and into the joy, into the joyous challenges – difficulties, yes – but the joys of serving God and having those big questions of life answered; having a sure destiny. So I pray, even in the quietness of the moment, for any that don't know Christ, that they would simply reach out to Him in faith, saying, “I have sinned. I have fallen far short of Your glory. Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity, died for me, took my place that I might live. Oh, I believe, I believe, and I turn from my sin.” Oh, I pray that You would do that work in the heart. And for we who believe, Lord, we thank You. The gospel still applies to us in our sanctification, and we continually rush back to the cross when we struggle, when we doubt, when we are burdened by sin. We go back to the cross where our hope is found. Bless this time, Lord. We pray for Christ's sake. Amen.

God's First Reply to Job: Not “Why” But “Who” (Part 3)

Job 38:39 - 39:4

November 12, 2023

Christ Church of Clarkson

1123Job38.31-39.4(38) | Audio Length: 53:19

We're going to read the passage that we plan to cover today, Job chapter 38, beginning in verse 31 through chapter 39, verse four. So follow along with me as I begin in verse 31 of chapter 38. This is God speaking to Job out of a whirlwind, continuing the conversation:

38:31 “Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades, or loose the cords of Orion? 32 “Can you lead forth a constellation in its season, and guide the Bear with her satellites? 33 “Do you know the ordinances of the heavens, or fix their rule over the earth? 34 “Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, so that an abundance of water will cover you? 35 “Can you send forth lightnings that they may go and say to you, ‘Here we are’? 36 “Who has put wisdom in the innermost being or given understanding to the mind? 37 “Who can count the clouds by wisdom, or tip the water jars of the heavens, 38 when the dust hardens into a mass and the clods stick together? 39 “Can you hunt the prey for the lion, or satisfy the appetite of the young lions, 40 when they crouch in their dens and lie in wait in their lair? 41 “Who prepares for the raven its nourishment when its young cry to God and wander about without food?

39:1 “Do you know the time the mountain goats give birth? Do you observe the calving of the deer? 2 “Can you count the months they fulfill, or do you know the time they give birth? 3 “They kneel down, they bring forth their young, they get rid of their labor pains. 4 “Their offspring become strong, they grow up in the open field; they leave and do not return to them.”²⁸⁶

This is the voice of our God. Let's pray as we commit our time to Him.

Loving Lord, we bow our our heads as we bow our hearts before You, thanking You for the truth of Your Word, thanking You for this book, the book of Job, and the weeks, the months we have spent working our way through this book. And I pray, Lord, that as we now are looking to find ourselves making the transition from chapter 38 to chapter 39, I pray, Lord, that You

²⁸⁶Scripture citations are taken from the NAS95 unless otherwise noted.

would guide and direct, that You would take that which I have prepared, take all of that, and may You guide me, Lord, by the Holy Spirit, guide the utterances of my mouth. To the praise of Your glory we pray. Amen.

We've been looking so much in God's speeches in His role as Creator. And this panorama that God is giving of His creation stands in stark contrast to Job's perception that the world is out of control. And it's easy to feel that way when your personal world is out of control, isn't it? When you're going through trials and tribulations, when things seem to be falling apart around you, it's easy to extrapolate that out into the world at large and think, "Well, the whole world is out of control." But that's not true. And God is demonstrating that to Job (among other things) [that] He is very much in charge of the world.

As we have embarked on God's two speeches beginning in chapter 38 (and the last one will end in chapter 41) we see God and His creative genius. We see the emphasis that Job – among other things – he can't do what God does, he can't know what God knows, he wasn't around at the time of the foundations of the earth. God is showing His creative genius and His omnipotence, who He is as God. And much of this revolves around creation which testifies to God's greatness.

Now we can look at all of the modern – from our perspective – the modern scientific advances, and it becomes even more evident how great our God is. Think about it. God speaks to Job as a man living in the Ancient Near East. If the creation was a marvel to Job at that time, the second millennium BC, how much more is it for we who live at the beginning of the 21st century AD with the scientific knowledge that we have. These modern discoveries have just

buttressed the truth that the universe is an intricate machine, so intricate that it demands a Designer. “Chance” cannot explain what is going on in creation.

We have not only the means to look far out into space, light years, millions of light years (I'm told) into space, but we can reverse the telescope and look deeply inward at the cellular level, microscopic. And at that level – where recent advances have really gone forth at that level – Bruce Alberts of the National Academy of Sciences has said this:

We have always underestimated the cell. . . . The entire cell can be viewed as a factory that contains an elaborate network of interlocking assembly lines, each of which is composed of a set of large protein machines. . . . Why do we call [them] machines? Precisely because, like machines invented by humans to deal efficiently with the macroscopic world, these protein assemblies contain highly coordinated moving parts.²⁸⁷

Another example is the bacterial flagellum that serves as a motor, kind of a whip-like tail that moves cells along. Molecular biochemist Dr. Michael Behe has said this about the flagellum:

. . . it was discovered in 1973 that the flagellum performs like a rotary propeller . . . Just picture an outboard motor on a boat and you get a pretty good idea of how the flagellum functions, only the flagellum is far more incredible. The flagellum's propeller is long and whiplike, made out of a protein called flagelin. This is attached to a drive shaft by hook protein, which acts as a universal joint, allowing the propeller and drive shaft to rotate freely. Several types of proteins act as bushing material to allow the drive shaft to penetrate the bacterial wall and attach to the rotary motor. . . . The whole system works really well—the flagellum's propeller can spin at ten thousand revolutions per minute. . . . Not only that . . . but the propeller can stop spinning within a quarter turn and instantly start spinning the other way at ten thousand rpms.²⁸⁸

Now some of [you who are] into cars and stuff, you know how incredible 10,000 revolutions per minute is. I mean, your family vehicle you'd blow up if you tried to spin the motor that fast.

²⁸⁷Cited by Lee Strobel, *The Case for a Creator*, 193.

²⁸⁸*Ibid.*, 204-05.

Well, Behe goes on to say [that] this propeller can stop spinning within a quarter turn and instantly start spinning the other way at 10,000 rpm. We have drawings of these flagellum that artists have constructed from the microscopic images, and they look like machinery; it looks like intricate machinery. It's really, really quite amazing.

And the cell itself is like a factory, a factory that covers a city block or more, with intricate machines operating at God's direction. This all speaks to the greatness, the greatness and the majesty of our God. And so much, when we look at creation (and the Scriptures testify about this) that we look into creation and we see the majesty, the beauty of our great God. And what God does, Jesus Christ as God does.

Well, we see here as it relates to His role as Creator – we see that – only with Job it's at the level of this man who lived in the second millennium BC. In an age that didn't have these high powered microscopes and telescopes and all of that. But if Job lived today and was a scientist rather than a rancher, God may ask him to consider His creation at the levels we can see it now. That's how great God is.

God's First Reply to Job: Not “Why” but “Who”

Well, we're moving on through this section. The title, God's First Reply to Job: Not “Why” but “Who.” This is our third part working our way through this first reply. And we've noted that God doesn't answer Job's questions of “why?” – that Job has laced those questions throughout his discourse in this book. He doesn't answer the questions of “why?” *Why is this happening to me? Why am I suffering?* Rather, God shows Job that He is the great Lord behind his suffering who loves him and has a purpose nonetheless for him.

Tough questions melt in the light of God's nature

And so we've said that, as an extension of that, *tough questions melt in the light of God's nature*. And by that I mean the questions we have about how God runs the world, how God operates in our lives. Those tough questions fade when the light begins to come on and we see God as He truly is, when we see Him in His greatness and in His goodness.

Some have unguardedly said things like this: “When I see God someday, I'm going to have a lot of questions for Him.” My response to that is, “No you won't.” If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you will understand all that He wants you to understand, and those things that you don't understand aren't going to make a hill of difference. If you're an unbeliever in Jesus Christ, you are going to be dumbfounded and you are going to be in terror of the One who has the power to cast you into hell. So no, you're going to have a lot of questions for Him? – no you won't. So tough questions melt in the light of God's nature (in the light of His presence).

Outlines are very important to sermons. They're the skeleton that hold them together. As we've been working our way through this passage, we've got God's Opening Statement (that was the first three verses of chapter 38). And then we've got a section that brings us all the way to chapter 39, verse 30, and that is God as Prosecuting Attorney and Judge. So He has an opening statement, much like you'd picture in a court, in a court of law (and that's what's pictured here, a courtroom setting). You've got God's Opening Statement, then you have God, who's not only a Prosecuting Attorney, He's also the Judge – and Job is on the stand.

And God brings out several things related to Job's finitude. Number one, [Job's] Finiteness: Were You There? “Were you there when I laid the foundations of the earth?” Job's Experience: Have You? Job's Ability: Can You? Job's Knowledge: Do You Know? And Job's

Impotence: Who is Almighty? (And that would be obvious by the time you get to the end of this first address.) But those questions that God is asking Job about really frame this passage. After that, then you've got (in chapter 40, verses one and two) God's Closing Argument. (But then we've got another speech beginning in chapter 40, verse three.)

One of the things that's interesting that I discovered as I was working this week through this passage, is that it's easy to look at Job as getting pummeled here. Like Job is nothing, he's just a worm. (You know, we have our “worm theology” – we're worthless, rotten worms who deserve hell.) There's an element of truth to that. But there's another side: that we're created in God's image. And humanity has a certain worth and dignity about him, even in a fallen state. So we have to balance that. But think about it. God asks these questions, asking them of Job, speaks of the dignity of man. God doesn't ask these questions of the rest of creation. God doesn't confront an albatross and say, “Have you considered how I laid the foundations of the world?” Out of all of His creation, only man is singled out to be able to address these questions. So it speaks of of man's inherent dignity and worth. And of course, Jesus Christ, who came to earth as man to redeem man.

God as Prosecuting Attorney and Judge (38:4-39:30)

Job's Experience: Have You (38:12-30)

Well, what we covered last time, again under that heading God as Prosecuting Attorney and Judge: We have Job's Experience: Have you? We covered that; questions about *light and darkness*, questions about *unexplored places*, like *sheol*, the grave. And then questions about the *seasons and weather* (that brought us to chapter 38, verse 30).

Job's Ability: Can You? (38:31-41)

And we moved from Job's Experience (as compared to God's experience in running the universe) to Job's Ability here in chapter 38, verses 31 through 41, Job's Ability. And the question is, as God would direct it to Job, “Can you?” *Now how does your ability match up to mine? Can you do this?* God is demonstrating, again, His omnipotence. He can do anything in keeping with His nature. Do you hear me? God can do anything in keeping with His nature and His will.

Questions about stars and clouds (38:31–38)

So we see some questions, and there are questions that begin in verse 31 with the stars. These are constellations created on the fourth day (Genesis 1:16). So focus with me on verse 31, we'll start there. So again, God speaking to Job, says: 31 **“Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades, or loose the cords of Orion? 32 “Can you lead forth a constellation** – Some translations have *mazzaroth* rather than *constellation*. And if you have that, “mazzaroth,” in verse 32, that's just a transliteration of the Hebrew word, because the translators weren't exactly sure, “Do we translate this constellation?” which I think it probably is safe to do that, and that's why most translations do. But it's a word that's only found here in Job, this word *mazzaroth*. So again, verse 32: **“Can you lead forth a constellation [or a mazzaroth] in its season, and guide the Bear with her satellites? 33 “Do you know the ordinances of the heavens, or fix their rule over the earth?** He's querying Job on the greatness of outer space and what goes on out there. Similar to what we saw back in chapter nine. Listen to this, this was Job's reply to Bildad, chapter nine, verses seven, eight and nine. Job again replying to Bildad: 7 “Who commands the sun not to shine, and sets a seal upon the stars; 8 Who alone stretches out the heavens and

tramples down the waves of the sea;” Now note this, chapter nine, verse nine: “Who makes the Bear, Orion and the Pleiades, and the chambers of the south.” So these are words that came out of Job's mouth that now God is bringing back to him by way of reminder. He mentions Orion. That was a constellation, or is a constellation located in the winter skies toward the north. The Pleiades, a cluster of stars located in the shoulder of the bull in the constellation Taurus. (Now I know nothing about astronomy, so this was all stuff I had to look up.) The Bear may refer to the Big or Little Dipper.

But note the verbs, again related to Job's ability, this goes back to “Can you?” *Can you do this?* Note again, beginning in verse 31: **“Can you bind [a verb], the chains of the Pleiades or loose [a verb] the cords of Orion? 32 Can you lead forth a constellation in its season, and guide the Bear with her satellites? 33 Do you know the ordinances of the heavens, or fix their rule upon the earth?”** We've got “bind,” “loose,” “lead,” “guide,” “fix.” All of this written in antiquity in the Ancient Near East to a man who lived in a world where the belief was commonly that there was a plurality of gods. Not just one God, not Yahweh, but a plurality of deities. And these deities had basically inscribed the stars on the underside of a heavenly dome. And far cry from that, no, God is the one who holds all of this together. Robert Alden says this: “These verses serve both as an apologetic for the uniqueness of God, as opposed to multiple celestial deities, and as proof of his creative artistry and control of all things terrestrial [that is, on the earth] and celestial [that is, in space].”

Interestingly, these constellations that are mentioned here were also associated with seasons of rain. Now that would connect them to what we saw last time, such as in verse 28: “Has the rain a father? Or who has begotten drops of dew?” So again, Job's Ability: Can You?

Listen to Isaiah chapter 40, verse 26. Talk about how great our God is! Isaiah 40:26, “Lift up your eyes on high and see who has created these stars, the One who leads forth their host by number, He calls them all by name; because of the greatness of His might and the strength of His power, not one of them is missing.” It's estimated there are 200,000,000,000 trillion stars. 200 billion trillion. You know, we talk about the grains of sand on the beaches? According to this (this just blows my mind): 10,000 stars for each grain of sand on the planet. 10,000. That's how many stars are out there. And that pales in comparison to how great God is! I mean, this *demonstrates* how great He is, but it pales in comparison to the *reality* of who He is.

Isaac Newton, who was a brilliant man but apparently held heretical beliefs on the Trinity, said: “This most beautiful system of the sun, planets and comets, could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful Being.” Yes, intelligent, powerful, omni-intelligent, omni-powerful. And in the face of this intelligent, powerful God, our tough questions melt. They melt in the light of His nature.

And so then we go, secondly, to the clouds. Look at verse 34: **“Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, so that an abundance of water will cover you? 35 Can you send forth lightnings that they may go and say to you, ‘Here we are’?”** The poetic picture is that the clouds and lightning operate at the beck and call of God. Clouds and lightning that we see regularly. The clouds – we go outside and usually that's all we can see at this time of year are clouds – but they operate at the beck and call of God. And even the lightning is as God's servant.

Note that phrase in verse 35, **“Here we are.”** This is what we see in Exodus three and first Samuel three as it relates to Moses and Samuel, when God calls them by name and they respond, remember this, “Here I am!” It's the same words; only here in verse 35 it's in the plural.

“Can you send forth lightnings that they may go and say to you, “Here we are.” This is poetic majesty here, it really is.

Now we come to verse 36, and there's a big question here with verse 36. Listen to the New American Standard (and follow along in your Bibles): **“Who has put wisdom in the innermost being or given understanding to the mind?”** . . . There's a significant translation issue. It may not be evident unless you're using the New International Version. Now I'm curious, is anybody using the NIV? Don't be bashful, there are no Bible Baptists here that will slap your hand and take your Bible away! Okay, I see at least at least one, maybe two, using the NIV. Well, if you have the NIV, you're reading something completely different. The NIV has (and listen to this, look at your version and listen to this): “Who gives the ibis wisdom or gives the rooster understanding?” Well, that's a huge difference, isn't it, from 35 **“Who put wisdom in the innermost being or has given understanding to the mind?”** You see, the words “wisdom” and “understanding,” they're clear and they're the same regardless of translation. The other two words are not and could be translated “ibis” (which is a bird) and “rooster.” And that's why you have this great difference. It's one of those occasions in Scripture – there aren't many that are really that significant – where we're just not sure, where it could go either way, and you kind of build an argument this way or that way. Most translators have taken what I have read and gone with that rather than “Ibis” and “Rooster.” And since this isn't a college or seminary class, I'm just going to leave it there. I don't think it's that important to go into.

But I want you to look again at the word “wisdom” in verse 36: **“Who has put wisdom in the innermost being . . .”** That connects to the same word in verse 37: **“Who can count the clouds by wisdom . . .”** And I think that's a little bit of a contextual clue that we ought to

translate this the way the ESV or the NAS does, because it seems to be referring to the mind. So, **“Who is who has put wisdom in the innermost being or has given understanding to the mind?”** Well, then we go in verse 37, **“Who can count the clouds – you need a mind to do that – “Who can count the clouds by [or “according to”] wisdom?”** The implied answer is, “God.” God's asking Job this. So it relates to Job's utter inability to even match God at any level. Only an omnipotent, omniscient God can number the clouds that are always changing around the world. Clouds aren't static. They're appearing, they're disappearing. But God yet knows in His omniscience all of the clouds.

“Or . . .” – the second half of verse 37 and 38 – **“Or tip the water jars of the heavens, 38 when the dust hardens into a mass and the clouds stick together?”** Again, another beautiful picture (it's poetic; remember, Job is poetry) of rain coming down from water jars, tipped water jars, bringing rain. And of course, in that desert environment, it's hitting parched ground. And you see the dirt clods and the ground, the cracking and all of that. I remember living in, the Phoenix area for so long, seeing dirt that was like that, that you could literally pick up peelings of it that were about a quarter of an inch thick, you know, that the water had curled and broken from the substrate underneath. This is the picture that's coming together. It's really, again, a beautiful, beautiful picture, all relating to Job's ability. *Can you do this?* Job has a lot of questions, but tough questions – even the questions we have – melt, they will melt in the light of God's nature. Really seeing God as God, as He really is, not necessarily how we may picture Him.

Questions about the animal kingdom, part 1 (38:39–41)

Now we move to an extended section about the animal kingdom. We've gone from space, stars, clouds, rain. Now we're looking at earth, at the terrestrial realm, the animal kingdom. Animals. Remember Job's words, chapter 12 seven through ten? In the midst of his suffering, he says: 7 “But now ask the beasts, and let them teach you; and the birds of the heavens, and let them tell you. 8 “Or speak to the earth, and let it teach you; and let the fish of the sea declare to you.” He's talking about all these animals, “Ask them.” Again, this is poetry. 9 “Who among all these does not know that the hand of the LORD has done this . . .” Done what? “Brought about my suffering.” It is so obvious that God is the sovereign who's in control that you can go and ask the animals, ask the donkey, ask the bird, ask the coyote, ask whatever and they will tell you that the hand of the Lord has done this, because: 10 “in whose hand is the life of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind?”

Well, now God speaks as the Creator and Sustainer of that animal kingdom that Job had mentioned earlier. These are largely non-domesticated animals. There are nine of them listed. The one exception is the horse, which some take to be not a farm horse, but a war horse. We'll see that later. But for the most part these wouldn't be found on anyone's farm, much less Job's. These aren't tame or domesticated; they're not under human control, but God's. So nine of them listed from verse 39 of chapter 38, to verse 30 of chapter 39. You've got the lion and the raven (that we'll look at today); then you've got the wild donkey, the wild ox, the ostrich, the horse, the hawk, and the eagle. David Clines writes this: “With the exception of the war horse, these are all wild animals that live their lives totally independently of humans: they are of no service to humans, and humans are comparatively ignorant of their ways.”

Well, who's animal number one in the list? The king of beasts, right? The lion. Verse 39: **“Can you hunt the prey for the lion, or satisfy the appetite of the young lions, 40 when they crouch in their dens and lie in wait in their lair?”** The Lion, the king of beasts, natural to start with him. The Old Testament refers to lions several times. Think of the account of Samson and the lion in Judges 14, where he kills a young lion that attempted to attack him. Lions, of course, in that shepherding community were a danger to the flocks, and David, 1 Samuel 17, recalls his killing a threatening lion to protect his sheep. Back in chapter four, verse 11 of Job, Eliphaz said this: “The lion perishes for lack of prey, and the whelps of the lioness are scattered.” And here God asked Job, 39 **“Can you hunt the prey for the lion, or satisfy the appetite of the young lions, 40 when they crouch in their dens and lie in wait in their lair?”** Got a similar thought in Psalm 104, verse 21, “The young lions roar after their prey and seek their food from God.” That’s interesting.

And then you have ravens, verse 41 of chapter 38, **“Who prepares for the raven its nourishment when its young cry to God and wander about without food?”** Well, a family of ravens, I'm told, includes 3 to 6 young birds. They're cared for by their parents who rarely leave them alone. But unlike the lion, ravens eat carrion. They eat dead meat, rotting meat. Yet it is God who is the author of their sustenance. God who is the author of the sustenance of all creation. Listen to these three passages from the Psalms:

- Psalm 104:14a He causes the grass to grow for the cattle . . .
- Psalm 145:15–16 15 The eyes of all look to You, and You give them their food in due time. 16 You open Your hand And satisfy the desire of every living thing.
- Psalm 147:9 He gives to the beast its food, And to the young ravens which cry.

And then Jesus in Luke chapter 12 also mentions ravens:

- Luke 12:24 “Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap; they have no storeroom nor barn, and yet God feeds them; how much more valuable you are than the birds!

God feeds all of His creation: humanity, animals, whatever.

Concurrence

Now somebody's going to object – maybe you've thought this not as an objection, but just a question: “Well, wait. How can that be? God isn't directly feeding anyone. It isn't like there's lion manna that falls for the lions, and raven manna that falls from heaven to the ravens where God is feeding them in that way. Uh, no a female lion kills another animal in order to feed her young. And the raven and other scavengers, they find something that's dead – and nothing else is eating it other than other scavengers. And they feast on that and feed their young with that.” Well, here we have – and we've talked about this before – the doctrine, the theological doctrine of *concurrence*. . . .

Wayne Grudem defines concurrence this way: Concurrence is an “aspect of God's providence whereby He cooperates with created things in every action, directing their distinctive properties to cause them to act as they do.”²⁸⁹ You get that? It's a cooperation sort of thing. God sovereignly superintending the actions of these creatures, whether they be man or beast. Again, Grudem: Concurrence is an “aspect of God's providence whereby he cooperates with created things in every action, directing their distinctive properties to cause them to act as they do.” So, God is the ultimate or final cause of everything, even though there (by concurrence) are some [other] causes at work. Yet God is the sovereign. He is the one who *actively ordains* by direct

²⁸⁹*Systematic Theology*.

action, or *passively ordains* by permission everything that happens in the universe. You take God, you take Jesus Christ, out of the creation and the whole world falls apart. Nobody's eating anything. In fact, nobody's even standing because all the atoms are going to fly apart. They're not going to be held together anymore. He holds all things together (Colossians chapter one). So yes, this is our great God. *Tough questions melt in the light of His nature.*

I don't want you to miss the bigger picture. So going back to our outline, just to pull this together before we move on to chapter 39, we've got God's First Reply to Job: Job Who Are you? Then we have God as Prosecuting Attorney and Judge. We've looked at Job's Finiteness. *[Job] were you there when I laid the foundations of the earth and brought the sea forth to her earthly boundaries?* That was Job's Finiteness. Then you have Job's Experience: Have You? *Have you commanded the morning? Have you entered into the springs of the sea? Have the gates of death been revealed to you? Job have you understood the expanse of the earth?* These are the things God is asking. And then Job's Ability: Can You (chapter 38, verses 31 through 41). *Can you keep the constellations in their orbit? Can you command the clouds, rain and lightning? Can you count how many clouds there are at any given moment? Can you provide food for the lion or for the raven? How's your ability measure up Job?*

Job's Knowledge: Do You Know? (39:1-4)

Well, that brings us to chapter 39 and Job's Knowledge. Jobs Knowledge: Do You Know? Those are the first three words of verse one. Follow along in chapter 39, verse one: **“Do you know [Job] the time the mountain goats give birth? Do you observe the calving of the deer?”** “Mountain goats” is literally “goats of the rock.” Some translations, however, have “ibex” which is a species of mountain goat. But as far as these mountain goats are concerned,

they're described as shy and elusive, well suited for life in harsh mountain environments. Their coat is light tan, providing good camouflage against desert terrain. Grown, they stand about 30 inches high at the shoulders, and the bucks have long horns, curved and weigh 130 to 200 pounds. The doe has shorter horns and weighs 65 to 110 pounds.

And so God asked, verse two, **“Can you count [better, “consider] – “Can you count [or consider] the months that they [the mountain goats] fulfill, or do you know the time they give birth? 3 They kneel down, they bring forth their young, they get rid of their labor pains. Their offspring become strong, they grow up in the open field; they leave and do not return to them.”** Well, this was something Job, in his sphere – he knew of mountain goats, but he didn't see what was going on behind the scenes; he wasn't privy to that. God is – God knows all things – He is. And so one source has this to say:

Job did not even know when certain animals give birth to their young or did he know their gestation periods. Totally apart from man's help or knowledge, but obviously under God's supervision, mountain goats and deer bring forth their young, who soon grow up, leave their parents, and fend for themselves . . . This mountain goat may be the Nubian Ibex, a goat in the wilds of the Middle East that hides when it bears its young. Even now relatively few people have ever seen these goats when they are bearing their offspring.”²⁹⁰

At another level, Warren Wiersbe writes this:

The providence of God is certainly remarkable . . . In His wisdom and power, God supervises the whole universe and makes sure that His creatures are cared for. “You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing” [Psa. 145:16, cited a moment ago]. We humans have a difficult time keeping the machinery of life operating successfully, but God runs the whole universe with such precision that we build our scientific laws on His creation.

²⁹⁰*Bible Knowledge Commentary.*

Now, next time – that was Job’s Knowledge (verses one through four) – next time it's going to be Job’s Impotence (lack of power). And the question is, “Who is Almighty?” That will take us from verse five all the way to verse 30, the last verse in chapter 39. Next time.

Closing Points

God is bigger than we can fathom

But not time to go yet. I've got three closing points. The first one I think is pretty obvious: *God is bigger than we can fathom*, bigger than our imaginations can take us. He is sovereign over every molecule in the universe. Those billions and trillions of stars, every molecule that makes up those stars, He knows. He is sovereign over all things that exist, and every action that occurs in creation subsists within His sovereign control.

Yet, as big as God is, this is the God we can know through Jesus Christ, the One who knows us with intimacy, the One who, as it's put, “can count the hairs on our heads” (or some of you, the empty hair follicles that, you know, that are there . . .). God is bigger than we can fathom. We can know Him (and John Milton qualifies that). John Milton, the Puritan, said this:

When we speak of knowing God, it must be understood with reference to man's limited powers of comprehension. God, as He really is, is far beyond man's imaginations, let alone his understanding. God has revealed only so much of Himself as our minds can conceive and the weakness of our nature can bear.²⁹¹

You can only imagine: if God could overload us, it wouldn't take much. Our minds would just explode all over the place. But even with the limited, faint, depravity-tainted knowledge we have, we can get a glimpse, just a glimpse of how great God is. And that's pictured so much in creation and knowing that God is sovereign over all of these things. Things

²⁹¹John Milton (1608-1674).

that were described to a primitive man named Job in the second millennium BC, or things that our scientists are discovering now (just as science is “seeking God's thoughts after Him). God is majestically greater than we can imagine. That goes along with God's First Reply to Job: Not “Why” But “Who.” You’ve got a lot of why questions at this level? Let's talk about the Who at *this* level. You know, *those tough questions melt in the light of God's nature.*

What about the “why” questions? John Calvin, in his *Institutes*, says this – get your minds ready to listen, okay? Calvin isn't always easy – he says this:

How exceedingly presumptuous it is . . . to inquire into the cause of the divine will, which is in fact, and is justly entitled to be, the cause of everything that exists. For if it has any cause, then there must be something antecedent on which it depends; which it is impious to suppose. For the will of God is the highest rule of justice, so that what He wills must be considered just, for this very reason, because he wills it. When it is inquired therefore why the Lord did so, the answer must be, Because he would. *But if you go further and ask why he so determined, you are in search of something greater and higher than the will of God, which can never be found.*²⁹²

Again, *not why, but Who.*

And I've got to tell you here, going off script: studying this section, and the ramifications of this section, has brought me to a greater appreciation – and I say this as someone who has studied the Bible and theology and has degrees and all of that – I have never quite grasped the greatness of God like I have through studying this section of Job and reading about it, reading others about it, and reading guys like Calvin (and some of the commentators). It is just kind of blowing my circuits to think that, you know, every lightning bolt hits the mark that God has designed it to hit. We think so often in terms of deists. I said that before, deists: God created all this stuff, and He wound up the clock, and now it goes tick, tick, tick, and arms move and the

²⁹²Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.23.2. Emphasis mine.

bell rings when it goes around and trips the little lever at 8:00 in the morning or whatever. You know, God designed that, but He's not really doing anything with it. It's just operating as He designed it. Well, it's far greater than that. It's far deeper than that. We're not deists; deism is a heresy. No. We're theists. We're evangelical Protestant theists who believe in the supremacy, the truthfulness, the foundational nature of God's Word. And this is what we are taught. This is what the great minds before us have upheld. *God is bigger than we can fathom.*

God's faithfulness is bigger than we can fathom

Number two: *God's faithfulness is bigger than we can fathom.* And aren't we thankful for that? Again, John Calvin said this: "The cross permits us to experience God's faithfulness and gives us hope for the future."²⁹³ The cross, faithfulness, hope.

I was thinking of, kind of pondering as I was studying this week, sending Sandy a note saying, "Hey, can we do can these songs?" And there were two I was thinking of. I never sent her a note, but one of the songs was Great is Thy Faithfulness, you know, because I thought it kind of really tied in to this, this last point: *God's faithfulness is bigger than we can fathom.* And here, you know, speaking of Calvin, as he would say, "What a great coincidence!", right? Yeah. You know, God is sovereign even over the choice of songs, that we make.²⁹⁴ Great is Thy Faithfulness based loosely off of Lamentations chapter three, verses 21 through 23: 21 "This I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope. 22 The LORD'S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. 23 They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness."

²⁹³Calvin, *Institutes* 3.8.3.

²⁹⁴Unbeknownst to me, Sandy had chosen Great Is Thy Faithfulness which we sang before the sermon.

That is that big, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient God that we can just marvel at and feel like we are nothing but the head of a pin in His sight. And yet He condescends to us. He stoops down. He loves us so much that He sent Christ to die for us. Great is his faithfulness.

You say, “What about suffering?” Yeah, that's the context of Job. And I like this short paragraph from Christopher Ash. He says this:

Is it possible that in the counsel of God this age is so ordered that suffering for some is necessary for the survival of others [think “lion” and “raven”]? Is this process of predation also a pointer to a deeper truth, perhaps even the true of redemptive suffering, that the day will come [now this is from Job’s perspective] when the suffering of one innocent man will be God’s means to bring life to a whole redeemed community?²⁹⁵

God demonstrated his faithfulness in the suffering of Another – capital A – Jesus Christ.

God's work on the cross is far greater than we can fathom

And that brings us to our third point: *God's work on the cross is far greater than we can fathom*. Listen, friends, God's justice and love, life and death, intersect at the cross. God's justice and love, life and death, intersect at the cross. Think about the life / death cycle. To live is to one day die. Ecclesiastes chapter three, familiar to us: 1 “There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven – 2a a time to give birth and a time to die . . .” So even life speaks of death. Where does the lion or the raven get their food? At the expense of an innocent animal, another life. The lion kills this animal, feeds her young. The raven feeds her young on the leftover carrion. Death yet is an unnatural intrusion into life, an unnatural intrusion. Suffering and death, however, have been conquered by the Cross of Jesus Christ.

Think about this: Job was even rescued from the town dump, where he was back in chapter two. Remember, he was sitting in the town dump and was scraping his sores with pot

²⁹⁵Ash, *Job*, 394.

sherds? Well, there's another town dump that we are rescued from, we who believe. And that's the Valley of Hinnom. Follow me here. The Hinnom Valley ran along the south and west of Jerusalem and served as the city's garbage dump. The gate at the south of the city which opened into the valley, was called the Potsherd Gate, because that's where people brought their broken pottery and other garbage and threw it into the valley. Fires regularly burned there. During the time of Christ, fires burned that garbage, some of it unclean. The Greek equivalent to the word *hinnom* is *gehenna*. Gehenna, which is used, I think 13 times – 12 out of the 13 in the Gospels by Jesus. Gehenna, translated in your English Bibles as what? Hell. When Jesus warned about the fires of Hinnom, the fires of Gehenna, everyone understood the picture. Gehenna stunk of death. And what is death but an unnatural intrusion into God's good creation, right? The lioness kills the animal to feed her young. But whoever thought that out of death would come life. That's the cross. That's where Jesus died to overcome the stench of Gehenna, the stench of hell. It's where God's justice and mercy meet. It's where death is overcome by the life, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. And that's what I mean when I say, we like Job, if we believe, we have been rescued from the Valley of Hinnom. Not the literal valley to the south and east of Jerusalem, but no, the place, a real place nonetheless, called “Hell,” the Gehenna of fire.

Have you been rescued from the fire? Have you been born again? If you've not been born again. Jesus said, His words (all of Scripture is His words), but His direct words to Nicodemus in John chapter three: “Unless you are born again, you will not see the Kingdom of God.” You're not going to go there unless you have been born again. Born again, that is being regenerated by the Spirit. The evidence of that is that you sense your sin, you sense that you fall

infinitely far short of this infinitely majestic God we have described. And that He has the power not only to keep constellations in space, but He has the power over your soul. And unless you come to Him in faith and repentance, believing in Jesus Christ as the One who took your place, who suffered God's wrath on your behalf, unless you believe in Him as Savior (yes, deliverer), but also as Lord, as God, as Master. He will not be bifurcated. This isn't about fire insurance. "Yeah, I'll take Jesus as Savior, but the Lord part I'll worry about later." No, you take Jesus in who He is in totality. And He is Lord – central confession of the Christian faith from antiquity: "Jesus is Lord." So you come to Him as Lord and Savior, believing in Him, that He died for you that you could live. You believe that? That's a Holy Spirit engendered belief in your heart. You *have been* born again to the praise of His glory. If not, what are you waiting for?

And so, Father, we thank You for this time that we've been able to spend in this passage. It's been a challenging, yes, but profitable, I trust. We're so thankful for Your greatness; but Your faithfulness – a God that is so great that we can't even imagine. And the majesties that we see in science are a pittance compared to the to the majesty of who You are. And yet, all of this, all of this in Your sovereign control. And yet You created us. And yet You permitted man to fall. It was part of Your plan. And You provided a Redeemer. There is a Redeemer – what a great Redeemer. Jesus Christ took on humanity, the Son of God becoming man to live among men, to be tempted to face the consequences of sin, yet never Himself having sinned. But tasting of the spittle and scorn of fallen men whom He created, tasting of death for everyone who would believe in Him unto eternal life. Great is Your faithfulness. Press it afresh in our minds. Sometimes, even as believers, we are so numb to Your greatness and what has been achieved for us by Your great grace. Save, Lord, any who are outside of the faith. Use the power of Your

Holy Spirit as You will to convict of sin, righteousness, and judgment, bringing that conviction and bringing that new life, enabling belief. I pray that You would do that to Your good and glorious name, a name in which we rejoice. And all God's people said, "Amen."

God's First Reply to Job: Not "Why" But "Who" (Part 4)

Job 39:5 - 40:2

November 19, 2023

Christ Church of Clarkson

1123Job39.5-40.2(39) | Audio Length: 56:40

So if you would, stand – if you have your place – stand out of the respect and honor of the reading of God's Word. Job chapter 39, picking it up where we left off last time in verse five:

39:5 “Who sent out the wild donkey free? And who loosed the bonds of the swift donkey, 6 to whom I gave the wilderness for a home and the salt land for his dwelling place? 7 “He scorns the tumult of the city, the shoutings of the driver he does not hear. 8 “He explores the mountains for his pasture and searches after every green thing. 9 “Will the wild ox consent to serve you, or will he spend the night at your manger? 10 “Can you bind the wild ox in a furrow with ropes, or will he harrow the valleys after you? 11 “Will you trust him because his strength is great and leave your labor to him? 12 “Will you have faith in him that he will return your grain and gather it from your threshing floor?”

Now, skipping ahead to verse 26:

39:26 “Is it by your understanding that the hawk soars, stretching his wings toward the south? 27 “Is it at your command that the eagle mounts up and makes his nest on high? 28 “On the cliff he dwells and lodges, upon the rocky crag, an inaccessible place. 29 “From there he spies out food; his eyes see it from afar. 30 “His young ones also suck up blood; and where the slain are, there is he.”

40:1 Then the LORD said to Job, 2 “Will the faultfinder contend with the Almighty? Let him who reproves God answer it.”²⁹⁶

This is the voice of our God. Let's pray.

Oh Lord, we are grateful (it's a season of Thanksgiving and maybe we think especially of that). But as we are commanded in Your Word, and as that which ought to be written upon our hearts, we are a thankful people, we who have been born again by the grace of our great

²⁹⁶Scripture citations are taken from the NAS95 unless otherwise noted.

God, made to be sharers in the riches, the glories of Jesus Christ. Those who have eyes to see and ears to hear, and who have Your precious Word, Your voice to guide us. And guide us, we ask in this next hour. To the praise of our God, to the enjoyment of His people we pray. Amen.

Well, this is the last part, part four of God's First Reply to Job. And we see God's role as Creator and Sustainer of the universe. From the deepest space to creatures of land and sea, all are dependent upon Him for their very being. This is again God's First Reply to Job: Not Why But Who.

Job has had lots of questions of “why?” beginning in chapter three, verse 11, Job's first question: “Why was I even born?” – and many more questions followed. Why did calamity fall upon Job? What about the suffering Job asking. “What did I do to deserve this?” And God doesn't answer in the first or second speech the questions of *why?* Rather, He turns Job to the person of *Who* – who He is. God is the omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, good, loving, sovereign, and holy Lord over his people. Just as God has purpose and direction for His creation (as we've seen in this text), so He has purpose and direction for each one of you. He has a purpose and He has a direction, in the joys and in the sorrows.

Tough questions melt in the light of God's nature

The big picture idea that we've been touching upon again and again is this: *tough questions melt in the light of God's nature*. And we've seen that those tough questions that Job has asked, they're beginning to melt away. He asks no more *why?* questions . . . questions that we have about how God runs the world, questions we have about how God operates within our lives. When we see Him in His power and majesty, those questions begin to fall away; those questions melt.

You know, that was something that I couldn't see very well in my suffering over the loss of our daughter, Giana. God was patient with me. God was merciful. And I'm sure had He appeared to me, as He did Job, my questions would have melted away. But I will say this: walking with Him through this time, over the months, over the years, many of those sharp questions, many of those accusations that I had when the pain was so brutal and fresh, those have indeed melted away. Yes, *tough questions melt in the light of God's nature.*

Back in chapter 38, beginning that chapter, we looked at God's Opening Statement (verses one through three). And then the bulk of our passage: God as Prosecuting Attorney and Judge. Again, we're back in a courtroom setting. And we've seen that throughout the book of Job. There's a lot of judicial elements. It's like there's a trial going on. And here we have God, as in this final trial where Job is the plaintiff or the defendant, God as Prosecuting Attorney and Judge. And so there are several questions that are asked here, and we framed them this way: Job's Finiteness, Job's Experience, Job's Ability, and Job's Knowledge. And that brought us into chapter 39.

So we had Job's Finiteness where God asked, Were You There? “Were you there, Job, when I laid the foundation of the earth, when my angels celebrated my glory? Were you there?” And Job's Experience (chapter 38, verses 12 through 30): “Job have you commanded the morning? Have you entered the springs of the sea? Have the gates of death, Job, been revealed to you? Do you understand the expanse of the earth? Have you commanded the rain? What about the lightning that strikes its mark at My command?” And then there's Jobs Ability: Can You? “Can you keep the constellations in their orbit? Can you command the clouds? Can you even count them? Can you provide food for My creation, for the lion or the raven?” And then

fourthly, Job's knowledge: Do You Know? "Do you know the time of the birth for the deer and the mountain goats? Do you know how these things that you consider natural operate within My providence and at My command?" And so we see, as we've gone through this, the immensity of God who holds the galaxies in the palm of His hand – and yet knows every intricate detail of our lives.

Well, that's where we pick it up with the last point, the fifth point: Job's Impotence, and the question, "Who is Almighty?" It's as if God is asking that question of Job (just as He asked the other four questions): "Who is Almighty here, Job?" And we continue with *questions about the animal kingdom* taking us through verse 30.

And I want to once again remind you that this is poetry. We're not getting a scientific discourse on animal behavior. This is phenomenological, that is, it is poetic description but it's based on observation. And here, in keeping with God's decree and God's design, there are ten animals listed in His first reply. (I think I said nine last week; I miscounted). Ten animals. We looked at four of them. We'll pick up the list with the fifth in verse five.

The Wild Donkey: Independent Existence (39:5–8)

So again, verse five of chapter 39, follow along with me. I have a two word description for each animal listed. So we have the wild donkey and my two word description is "independent existence." Verse five: **"Who sent out the wild donkey free? And who loosed the bonds of the swift donkey, to whom I gave the wilderness for a home and the salt land for his dwelling place?"** The wild donkey, sometimes referred to as the onager (was not domesticated). The wild donkey has a temperament unsuitable for domestic use. And that's the point here. These wild donkeys fed on brush and grass, living in the unpopulated salt lands. The

modern ones, I read, are as fast as a horse, reaching speeds over 40 miles an hour [which was] likely true of those of Job's day. But again, if we look at today in northwestern India, there's a salty clay desert of more than 10,000 miles that is the sole habitat of the Asiatic onager. And that's probably the beast that is in mind here in Job chapter 39, the Asiatic onager. And you see his independence – I said “independent existence” – you see his independence in verses seven and eight: 7a **“He scorns the tumult of the city . . .”** Some translations . . . have, “He laughs at the busyness of the city.” 7b:

“. . . the shoutings of the driver he does not hear.” (Because nobody can drive him.) Verse eight: **“He explores the mountains for his pasture and searches after every green thing.”**

Interesting. The same Hebrew word translated “scorns” or “laughs at” is used by Eliphaz in promising Job's restoration (and that was back in chapter five, verse 22). There the New American Standard translates it “laugh at,” but it's the same word: “You will *laugh at* violence and famine, and you will not be afraid of wild beasts.” This was Eliphaz promising Job restoration, probably hoping that Job would repent of sin, that at that point he didn't have anything to repent of, and Job would be ultimately restored. We see that at the end of the book. But here (5:22) you will *laugh at* violence and famine, and you will not be afraid of wild beasts. Well, what is God describing here but wild beasts? (The wild donkey, oblivious to civilization or human control.)

The wild donkey. We see that animal listed several times in Scripture. One of the earliest is Genesis chapter 16, verse 12, describing Hagar's son Ishmael, the father of the Arabs. Remember that? “He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone, and everyone's hand will be against him.” Well, that sort of describes the onager, a wild donkey.

We've seen references to the wild donkey before in Job chapter six, verse five: “Does the wild donkey bray over his grass?” asks Job rhetorically. Chapter 11, verse 12, Zophar says this (this is a good proverb to remember): “An idiot will become intelligent when the foal of a wild donkey is born a man.” I like that. And then chapter 24, verse five, Job said this: “Behold, as wild donkeys in the wilderness, they [talking about mistreated orphans and widows] go forth seeking food in their activity . . .” Uncontrolled. Independent of all – except God who controls him. “Who controls this beast, Job? Who made him to be as he is? Who is Almighty?” That's what God is asking.

The Wild Ox: Fearsome Power (39:9–12)

And then the second on our list for today is the wild ox. Here I have the two words “fearsome power.” Fearsome power. Verse nine: **“Will the wild ox consent to serve you, or will he spend the night in your manger? 10 Can you bind the wild ox in a furrow with ropes, or will he will harrow the valleys after you?”** The wild ox is generally identified today as the aurochs or *bos primigenius* (the scientific name), the ancestor of most of our modern cattle, now extinct. The last specimen [was] said to have died in 1627. This was a massive animal with curved horns, about ten feet long, weighing over a ton. And what really surprised me in reading about this was that they could, the males could, be as broad as six feet across at the shoulder. Well, think about that. That's wider than I can stretch my arms. That is a wide, massive beast. And as for verse ten, de Wilde reports Palestinian farmers calling out to their oxen, “Stay in the furrow, go in the furrow.” It took a lot of effort, even for domesticated oxen, to control them, to keep them going in the furrow during the plow. Well, that's the domesticated

ox. Can Job imagine tying a team of these massive wild oxen to the plow, and then trying to make straight furrows with them?

The wild ox was a legendary terror. Psalm 22:21 David puts being rescued “from the horns of the wild oxen” alongside being saved “from the mouth of the lion.” When the prophet Balaam spoke of how God fights for Israel with devastating power, he says that God “is for them like the horns of the wild ox.” (Numbers 23:22, 24:8). And such a massive, powerful, dangerous beast could not be trusted. And so we see that word “trust” used in verse 11: **“Will you trust him because his strength is great and leave your labor to him? 12 Will you have faith in him that he will return your grain and gather it from the threshing floor?”** Of course, these are all rhetorical questions expecting a “no” answer. Christopher Ash writes this:

There is therefore a wild irony in this description. ‘Why not try this?’ God asks the farmer Job. ‘Go into the wild and find a wild ox. Walk up to it, pat its head, let it eat some food out of your hand, talk to it, be an ‘ox whisperer,’ lead it quietly back to the farm to feed overnight at your feeding trough. Then watch as it bows its meek head to let you put a harness on it and willingly plods with its docile strength ‘after you.’²⁹⁷

Well, it's laughable. Absurd. . . . Not only that, but it would be suicidal to try to tame the wild ox. He will not submit to man. But according to verse eight, note this, *he serves Almighty God*. That's how great our God is! Again, this is our fifth point: Job's Impotence: Who is Almighty? When you recognize who really is Almighty . . . those tough questions begin to melt.

The Ostrich: Humorous Indifference (39:13–18)

Then here . . . we have the ostrich (this may be my favorite of the group). The two word description I have for the ostrich is “humorous indifference.” Humorous indifference. The ostrich gets a lot of attention here, second only to the horse. And it's a curious addition that

²⁹⁷Christopher Ash, *Job*, 396-97.

almost seems out of place. And interestingly, this section was skipped over by the translators of the Septuagint, the Septuagint, those who translated the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek just prior to (100 years or 200 years) . . . the coming of Christ. It was the Hebrew Bible that was commonly in use, the Septuagint, the Greek translation.²⁹⁸ Well, that translation skips this section. I'm not exactly sure why. But some modern scholars believe it to be an interpolation, that is, it was added by a later editor. . . . And as far as I've read, there's no Hebrew manuscript evidence for that omission. A lot of it is based on the fact that it stands out, it seems different, and there are no rhetorical questions associated with the ostrich like there are with the other beasts. Best to trust the evidence [that] the ostrich was part of God's reply to Job in this panorama of the animal kingdom. Plus, I have to believe the ostrich here points to God's whimsy, His sense of humor.

The word *ostrich* translates a word that can mean “shrill cries.” But the word here is found nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible. But we know from the context that we're talking ostrich here. This humorous bird was well known in the ancient Near East, found in desert regions of Syria and Arabia, and Palestine and Africa, often depicted in rock art, ancient rock art. Interestingly, I discovered that ostriches . . . were kept in Egyptian zoos as far back as 2000 BC. I didn't know zoos were *that* ancient, but they kept the ostrich. The largest of all birds, males can reach eight foot in height and weigh 200 to 300 pounds. They live in flocks of 5 to 50, normally in the company of grazing animals like the antelope and the zebra. The male ostrich is said to have an unusual voice – I've never heard one – but a deep roar like a lion with a strange

²⁹⁸I.e. the Old Testament canon.

hissing sound. Second only to the cheetah in speed among land animals, the ostrich is capable of 50 mph for short runs.

And here in verse 13 it says that their **“wings flap joyously . . .”** Now note the second half of the verse (some of you might notice a difference from what I'm reading): 13b. **“ . . . with the pinion and plumage of love.”** *The ostrich's wings flap joyously with the pinion and plumage of love.* Some translations have something quite different. For example, again the NIV: “The wings of the ostrich flap joyfully, though they cannot compare with the wings and feathers of the stork.” Well, that's really different. The Holman Christian Standard Bible, a really good translation, frames it as a question: “The wings of the ostrich flap joyfully, but are her feathers and plumage like the stork’s?” Well, the Hebrew is normally translated “stork.” I'll confess, my Hebrew skills are lacking; they're not what my Greek skills are. And I didn't want to spend too much time on this, so I really can't say more than what I've said. But as I've studied this, I think “stork” contextually makes more sense. So I would go with the NIV or the Holman Christian Standard Bible, or another translation that has something to the effect of the *wings of the ostrich flap joyfully, but they cannot compare with the wings and feathers of the stork.* (Obviously they can't, because the ostrich can't fly, for one thing.)

But I said, there's *humorous indifference*. The indifference is seen in verses 14 through 17. Look at verse 14: **“For she abandons her eggs to the earth, and warms them in the dust, 15 and she forgets that a foot may crush them, or that a wild beast may trample them.”** I read that up to 90% of ostrich eggs are destroyed by beasts. Verse 16: **“She treats her young cruelly, as if they were not hers; though her labor be in vain, she is unconcerned;”** verse 17, **“because God has made her forget wisdom, and is not given her a share of**

understanding.” Lamentations 3:4 speaks of the cruelty of the ostrich as it even relates to her young (listen to Lamentations 3:4): “Even the jackals . . . [this is the comparison] “Even the jackals offer the breast, they nurse their young; but the daughter of my people has become cruel, like ostriches in the wilderness.” *Like ostriches in the wilderness.*

The stupidity of the ostrich is notorious. An Asian proverb goes: “more stupid than an ostrich.” The first century Roman naturalist, Pliny, thought . . . the ostrich would thrust its head into a bush thinking that it was hiding its whole body (in the face of danger).²⁹⁹ I don't know if that's true, but that's the way it looked like to them.

But I will say this, contrary to cartoon depictions that I remember so well as a child, the ostrich does not, when it's threatened, plunge its head into a hole in the ground. It does not do that. It may plunge its head into a bush above the ground, but not in a hole in the ground. But I remember as a kid so many of those cartoons, you know, I thought it was so funny: the ostrich would get scared and plop (there'd usually be a sound that went along with it) as he stuck his head into the ground.

Well, what is the cause of the ostrich's foolishness? Verse 17: **“God has made her forget wisdom, and has not given her a share of understanding.”** This is not saying that she forgot (she once had wisdom but forgot it), but that she never really had it. And think about it: What animal do we equate with wisdom? The wise old owl, right? You see a picture of the owl, you think, “Oh, that speaks of wisdom.” And we portray owls sometimes as having clothing, like a collegiate professor, or like a graduate with a cap on its head. But you never see that with the ostrich. We don't say “the wise old ostrich!”

²⁹⁹*Natural History*, 10.1.2.

And then there's humor. Just look at the ostrich and think about the way an ostrich looks. Why would God make a bird that can't fly? It's a humorous bird. And yet look at verse 18: **“When she lifts herself on high, she laughs at the horse and his rider.”** This bird can't fly, but it can outrun a horse! And again, you could picture almost a cartoon humor where the ostrich passes by the horse and looks back with a smile on its face.

My old hometown in Chandler, Arizona, is looking forward to its 35th annual Ostrich Festival next year. We remember the Ostrich Festival; I don't think we ever went. . . . But you can go to OstrichFestival.com and see the Chandler Ostrich Festival. It is a big to do in the area. Chandler in its wild west days was home to ostrich ranches, and that's why they have the Ostrich Festival. And these birds were ranched for their meat (that was considered a delicacy), and for their feathers, and probably other things as well. But if you want to see humorous, go online. And there are actually races where people will mount an ostrich like a horse, and they race these things around a track. It is a humorous, humorous bird. So *humorous indifference* describes the ostrich.

The War Horse: Dark and Terrible (39:19–25)

But talking about horses and races we next turn to the war horse. My two word description is “dark and terrible.” *Dark and terrible*. Now I want you to just listen to the poetic majesty of this section simply being read here. I'm reading it from the Christian Standard Bible. Just listen to the descriptions here (many call this section the most brilliant of all the animal depictions in these chapters). One writer calls it “an eerie and haunting picture.” . . . Listen to this beginning in verse 19:

19 Do you give strength to the horse? Do you adorn his neck with a mane? 20 Do you make him leap like a locust? His proud snorting fills one with terror. 21 He

paws in the valley and rejoices in his strength; he charges into battle. 22 He laughs at fear, since he is afraid of nothing; he does not run from the sword. 23 A quiver rattles at his side, along with a flashing spear and a javelin. 24 He charges ahead with trembling rage; he cannot stand still at the sound of the trumpet. 25 When the trumpet blasts, he snorts defiantly. He smells the battle from a distance; he hears the officers' shouts and the battle cry.

It almost brings you into the scene, doesn't it? This is a war horse. Mounted with a rider or pulling a chariot, this was the Abrams tank of its day.

Again, Job's Impotence: Who is Almighty? Verse 19: **“Do you give the horse his might? Do you clothe his neck with a mane? Do you make him leap like a locust? His majestic snorting is terrible.”** Going forward into Israel's history, there were notable instances of frightful experiences with war horses. Just think back to the Exodus, Pharaoh's chariots chasing after the people, the fledgling people of Israel. Think about a couple of times that we read in the Old Testament, their defeat at the hands of foreign armies with their chariots. Perhaps, from Job's perspective, there were mounted riders on war horses among the Sabians and the Chaldeans who ravaged his estate back in chapter one. And then, **“Do you clothe his neck with a mane?”** – a symbol of the horse's might, the mane, its hair (such as Samson's hair, was symbolic of his strength).

Some of you have ridden horses (some of you are into horses). I've only ridden a horse once and that was a notable experience. I was about 30, I don't know, 30 years of age, I'll guess. And we went horse riding with some friends. And I was like, “Okay, I'll try it. I've never been on a horse other than maybe a pony when I was five, being led along at a circus or something. But anyways, yeah, I'll try it.” So we go (there were four of us) and they bring out one horse, you know, a pretty big animal, one for my wife. And then they bring out another one and another one. And then they bring out one for me that is like a Clydesdale! . . . And I was pretty big at age

30. Not quite as big as I am now, but pretty big. And they got this gigantic horse for me. And I just marveled at the power of this animal that could carry my rear end up and down ravines. And I'm just like, this is amazing! I couldn't carry myself across the street and this animal seems to just effortlessly move me. It just was amazing. But that was the only time that I've really been on a horse.

But that was no warhorse like this one. This one **“ . . . paws in the valley . . . verse 21 . . . rejoices in his strength; he goes out to meet the weapons. 22 He laughs at fear and is not dismayed; and he does not turn back from the sword.”** He's not going to run away. And, 23 **“The quiver rattles against him.”** Whether the quiver was mounted on the horse or just, you know, off the shoulder of the rider, you can get the picture of **“the flashing spear and javelin”** mentioned in verse 23. This horse laughs at fear, just like the fast ostrich laughs at the horse and rider in verse 18, just as the donkey at the noise of the city in verse seven.

He is unafraid (verse 24): **“With shaking and rage he races over the ground, and does not stand still at the voice of the trumpet, the trumpet”** [that calls forth the battle charge]. He's ready. He's anxious. He wants to go. Verse 25" **“As often as the trumpet sounds he says, ‘Aha!’ and scents the battle from afar . . .”** [he smells the blood] **“ . . . and the thunder of the captains and the war cry.”** I've tried to paint a good picture, but listen to how one writer does an even better job:

He is a massively powerful creature. For many centuries a warhorse whether carrying a warrior rider or pulling a chariot, was the epitome of ultimate power; it was the nuclear weapon of most past centuries.

We must expel from our minds all pictures of domesticity or tameness. His neck is clothed 'with a mane' (v. 19b). The word 'mane' is normally derived from the root 'to thunder;' his mane speaks of almost divine power. He can leap and jump with

astounding power; picture a locust scaled up many times (v. 20a)! When he snorts in anger, there is a dark majesty that 'is terrifying' (v. 20), giving to those watching a foretaste of the terror that comes from being in the presence of death and the God who can send body and soul into Hell.

Then in v. 21 we see him on the verge of battle, ready to charge, pawing the ground eagerly with his front feet, hyper-confident in his strength, itching to be let loose against the weapons of the enemy. He has no fear and experiences no terror or dismay (v. 22a); you will not see him fleeing from 'the sword' of the enemy' (v. 22b). Picture him as he charges, with 'the quiver' rattling against his flanks, 'the flashing spear' and 'javelin' against his side (v. 23). Feel the power of his 'fierceness and rage' as he metaphorically eats up the ground in his charge (v. 24a). When the trumpet sounds' for war, you cannot hold him back (v. 24b), for he cries 'Aha!' with joy that now, at last, he can do what he was created for, which is to bring death and destruction (v. 25).³⁰⁰

Job's Impotence: Who is Almighty? *Who is Shaddai?* Yes, *tough questions melt in the light of God's nature.*

The Hawk: Graceful Flight (v. 26)

Next we have the hawk. "Graceful flight" is my two word description. I'm not going to say a whole lot about the hawk as the text doesn't, but this is the first of two birds of prey, the other being the eagle that follows. Verse 26 (and God speaking to Job): "**Is it by your understanding that the hawk soars, stretching his wings toward the south?**" (probably speaking of southward migration).

The Eagle: Life, Death (27–30)

And then the eagle: "Life, death." *Life, death.* The word can mean "eagle" or "vulture" (there's one Hebrew word that does dual duty), so it's just a translational decision, a contextual decision. The only English translation I know of that translates it "vulture" is the New English Bible. However, interestingly, the before-mentioned Septuagint translates it "vulture." Boy, I

³⁰⁰Ash, *Job*, 399.

would be tempted – if I were translating – I would be tempted to translate this as “vulture” and not “eagle,” but we’ll go with the vast majority of translations that do read “eagle.” Verse 27: **“Is it at your command that the eagle mounts up and makes his nest on high?”** Note that. This majestic bird functions at the command of God. *Command* is literally the word for *mouth*. Then, beginning in verse 28: **“On the cliff he dwells in lodges, upon the rocky crag, an inaccessible place. 29 From there he spies out food; his eyes see it from afar.”** Yes, these eagles would build their nests up high in the crags of cliffs. And God granted them keen eyesight so that they could see their prey far down below and swoop down with their powerful wings, grabbing their prey to feed themselves and their young.

And speaking of their young, verse 30: **“His young ones also suck up blood; and where the slain are, there is he.”** That last part, **“where the slain are, there is he,”** does that remind you of a New Testament passage at all? Maybe like, Matthew 24:28 where Jesus said, “Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.” Maybe another clue that we could, maybe should, translate this “vulture.” (One thing I read is that the habit has been, when it's a positive portrayal, translate it eagle. When it's negative, translate it vulture. But I don't know that has to be a translational rule.)

But note, there's no attempt here to sanitize the scene. We see these majestic animals; they speak of life, but we also see death. The horse smells the battle scene, smells blood. The horse shouts, “Aha! Let me go!” The eagle captures live prey so that her eaglets can suck up their blood. This isn't the sort of picture that you hang on your wall in your living room. You don't see this adorning calendars: “Oh, look at February. We have eaglets sucking up blood.” This is a brutal, in-your-face portrait of life and death, and a reminder that as beautiful as the

creation is, the creation is yet fallen. It's as if God were saying to Job, "I alone am Shaddai (Almighty); you can't have life without death. Any plan of Mine is going to encompass life and death and joy and suffering."

But one day all sin and evil will be overcome. And that points to the cross of Christ which is the pinnacle, or the apogee. Think about it: Life. He lived a perfect life. Death. He suffered a horrible death (unjustly suffering – He suffered in life and in death). And then life again, in the resurrection and victory over all suffering and death. The cross where Jesus died; the cross empty, Jesus glorified. Yes, Job's shrinking into the shadows, isn't he (as you or I would)? This is Job's impotence, the opposite of omnipotence, his impotence. . . . And in the face of this indescribable Almighty God, tough questions melt.

That brings us to chapter 40 (isn't this fun?). So here we're in chapter 40, beginning and just looking at verses one and two before we close. But again, think about the outline. Here's the . . . big main idea that everything aligns under: God's First Reply to Job: Who Are You? Then you had God's Opening Statement (38:1-3). Then the bulk of the text, as we've been working our way through this first speech: God as Prosecuting Attorney and Judge. Job is on trial. But then you've got these first two verses of chapter 40 which bookend the first three verses of chapter 38.

God's Closing Argument (40:1-2)

Here we have God's Closing Argument. So again, [you have the] picture, a trial scene. . . . Courtroom activity. God gives his opening statement, chapter 38, verses one through three, and now He's giving His closing argument, which is chapter 40, verses one through two. And so follow in chapter 40, verse one (and note the two different words used for God here).

The first one, **“Then the LORD [that's *Yahweh*] said to Job, 2a ‘Will the faultfinder contend with the Almighty?’** – there we have *Shaddai*. We have *Yahweh*, the covenantal, personal name of God, and we have *Shaddai* describing His attribute of omnipotence. **“Will the faultfinder contend with the Almighty? Let him who reproves God answer it.”** So again, what did we see in the opening statement, chapter 38, verses one through three? 1 “Then the LORD [*Yahweh*] answered Job from the whirlwind. He said: ‘Who is this who obscures my counsel with ignorant words? 3 Get ready to answer me like a man; when I question you, you will inform me.’” Well, here we have the closing statement in chapter 40, verse two. The Lord asked Job, whom he describes as a “faultfinder” if he wants to continue to contend with the One who is Almighty; that's the question. God is saying, “Are you up for an answer, Job?” Well, in a court dispute, either Job will have to admit the truth of the opponent's reply, God, or he will have to offer some new arguments. We will take a closer look at how Job responds next time. But suffice to say. He doesn't quite give the response I think that God was looking for – and that is ultimate brokenness and repentance. So God goes on with a second speech that leads to Job's ultimate brokenness and repentance.

Concluding Thoughts

1. Tough questions melt in the light of God's nature.

But I want to give some closing thoughts. There are five of them. Number one (we've said this over and over again): *Tough questions melt in the light of God's nature*. I hope our trek through these chapters has led you to think more about the “Who” capital “W,” who ordains all that is your life, than the questions, the “whys,” (little “w”) that you have about your life. Here is a man, Job, who lost his wealth, his reputation, his kids, his health. And God says in summary,

“I know, Job, what I am doing. I am Almighty, I am Yahweh. I can order as I will the cosmos as well as your life.” I like the comment that Talbot made in his commentary: “We may not always see the signs of God's goodness in our immediate circumstances, but what we see is not all there is. That is a significant part of God's answer to Job.”³⁰¹

We need to be patient. That's hard. That's hard to be patient – even when we're healing from some tragedy – to patiently endure under it. Ash writes:

The problem with time is the waiting. As every human mother who has been granted a safe birth knows, there is a waiting for conception, there is a waiting and hoping during gestation, there are all manner of pains of pregnancy and labor, but in the end there is life and joy. If this is true for mountain goats, how much more is it true for human beings in pain struggling to remain believers. [citing another] ‘Yahweh’s veiled answer’ to Job ‘is that the rhythm of times which governs the perilous birth cycles of shy creatures also operates for human beings. If Job does not know the function of regular times in the natural cycle of things, he can scarcely appreciate the implications of proposing a time out of time when a mortal would return from the dead for personal vindication.’

Ash continues:

And yet, the time would come when days, months, and years of hatred and evil, indeed the apparent ultimate victory of that evil, will be reversed in one glorious morning of new life. Job needs to learn—and we need to learn—to entrust ourselves to the righteous Lord of time.³⁰²

So number one, *tough questions melt in the light of God's nature.*

2. *God delights in His creation—even in its fallen state.*

Number two: *God delights in His creation – even in its fallen state.* One commentator says,

This view of a few of the world’s fauna demonstrates that Job, unable to contend with creation, hardly qualified to condemn the Creator. At the same time these words point up

³⁰¹Talbert, *Job*, 206.

³⁰²Ash, 395.

God's delight in His creation. His stars and angels sang and shouted when He made the earth (38:7), and He apparently enjoys His animal world.³⁰³

Clines writes this: "Yahweh has filled his created world with a vast variety of life forms, each with its own qualities and peculiarities, in which he evidently takes a delight." Yes, God delights in His creation. Think about it, what we've looked at over the past few weeks. "Morning stars sang together and sons of God shouted for joy" (that was chapter 38, verse seven). They sang together and shouted, shouted for joy at God's work in creation. He watches as He keeps the stars in their orbit (chapter 38, verses 31 and 32). He satisfies the lion and the Raven (chapter 38, verses 39 through 41). The wild oxen serve him (39:9). He finds humor in the ostrich – I think that's apparent (chapter 39, verse 13), and majesty in the horse (chapter 39, verse 20). The wild oxen serve Him (chapter 39, verse eight), and the eagle flies at His command (chapter 39, verse 27). The next time you look at night and you see the stars shining brightly, or you see a herd of deer, or visit the zoo: marvel. Marvel at their uniqueness. Chuckle when you see the ostrich. Marvel at the lion. Think, "God has ordained all of this for your pleasure and for His pleasure and glory."

But we know the world has fallen. In Romans eight, Paul says:

. . . the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth until now. For the anxious lining of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption, into the freedom of the glory of the children of God."³⁰⁴

³⁰³*Bible Knowledge Commentary.*

³⁰⁴Romans 8:22, 19-20.

And the context of that passage (you can look at it in Romans chapter eight, beginning in verse 18): Paul says, “I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.” Whatever you're going through, whatever hard times, whatever suffering. We continue to suffer the loss of our daughter. And it's going to be a tough time of year, and it will probably always be a tough time of year.³⁰⁵ At least I know it will be for me until the day I die and see her again and see my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. But those sufferings of this present time are not worthy in comparison to the glories for the believer in Jesus Christ. Amen!

3. If God so enjoys the animal world, how much more people created in his image?

Number three: *If God so enjoys the animal world, how much more people created in his image?* In Isaiah 43 we read, “Bring My sons from afar and My daughters from the ends of the earth, everyone who is called by My name, and whom I have created for My glory.”³⁰⁶ God created us for His glory. And that leads me to number four.

4. If people are created for God's glory, how much more so those of us who have been re-created in Christ!

If people are created for God's glory, how much more those of us who have been recreated, who have been born again in Christ. So the mandate for us, 1 Corinthians 10:31: “Whether you eat, whether you drink, whatever you do, do it to the glory of God.” We ought to know in this church, with our Reformation tradition, we ought to know that our whole lives are lived to His glory. That we're living sacrifices, and we serve God, and we enjoy Him in

³⁰⁵The date of this message only being weeks away from the date of the car crash on December 24th.

³⁰⁶Isaiah 43:6b-7.

whatever we eat, whatever we drink, whatever hobbies we have (that are not sinful anyways), we do that to God's glory. I enjoy football, I can watch a football game to the glory of God. I can enjoy a cigar (like Spurgeon!) to the glory of my creator. Whatever you do throughout the week, whatever hobbies you have (again, that are that are good things), you do them to the glory of God.

Darn this idea that living the Christian life is all about Sunday! I don't like “Where do you go to church?” – kind of like “where do you go to the gas station when you need to be filled?” No, church is important, but I fellowship in a body. And I see my brothers and sisters more than just on Sunday. Not everybody can do that, but I see my brothers and sisters more than just on Sunday. And not always within the confines of church activity. You know, this is the fellowship of the body, getting together with brothers or sisters even outside of church activities. You know, this is a living, breathing organism that is the church lived to the glory of God – at work, at school, at rest, at play – to His glory alone. Soli Deo Gloria!

5. If the redeemed bring God glory, we ought to be driven to reach the lost so that they may be added to the chorus.

And five: *If the redeemed bring God glory, listen, we ought to be driven to reach the lost so that they may be added to the chorus.* Right? Luke 15:7: Heaven rejoices when a sinner repents. You think that's just the angels? No, I think God takes joy – our Triune God takes joy at the repentance of a sinner . . . (even as He is the author of that life).

That brings us back to the cross. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, take heart.

Spurgeon said this:

Do you believe that your sins are forgiven, and that Christ has made a full atonement for them? Then what a joyful Christian you ought to be! How you should live above the common trials and troubles of the world! Since sin is forgiven, can it matter what

happens to you now? Luther said, "Smite, Lord, smite, for my sin is forgiven; if thou hast but forgiven me, smite as hard as thou wilt"; and in a similar spirit you may say, "Send sickness, poverty, losses, crosses, persecution, what thou wilt, thou hast forgiven me, and my soul is glad."

Wow! To be able to live there gives me goosebumps.

Well, if you're not a believer, you need to heed the words of the Geneva reformer John Calvin. He said this . . . speaking of those who are trusting in righteousness of their own:

Let us, then, not be deceived by empty confidence. Even though we consider ourselves either equal or superior to other men, that is nothing to God, to whose judgment the decision of the matter must be brought. But if our wildness cannot be tamed by these warnings, he will answer us as he spoke to the Pharisees: "Ye are they that justify yourselves before men; but . . . what is exalted among men is an abomination to God" [Luke 16:15, cf. Vg.]. Go now and haughtily boast of your righteousness among men, while God from heaven abominates it!³⁰⁷

Well, Calvin never did mince words!

But the problem for many is they don't see their sin. I bemoan this. I was kind of tossing and turning last night just thinking about how often . . . I have proclaimed the gospel of grace from this pulpit, at activities, on the radio, at memorial services for those that have died – and I have seen scarce few that I know of that have come to faith. And I can tell when I'm in a context where I know that there are a lot of those there that aren't born again. I can tell when I'm talking, you know, it's just going in one ear and out the other. You talk about sin, you might as well be talking about some metaphysical quantum theory sort of thing. I mean, it just nothing; it doesn't register. I don't know what's going on and I cry out to God, "God, will you give me souls?" It gets frustrating after a while. To preach the gospel (and some of you have lived and proclaimed the gospel to loved ones, to family members, to neighbors) and . . . you can tell the light is not

³⁰⁷Calvin, *Institutes*.

on. And you first have to see that you are utterly sinful in the presence of a holy God. And people do not see that today. They don't sense that. They have no category for it. Everybody's good. Everybody's been sanitized by modern psychology.

Author and speaker Jerry Bridges, who toiled for many years working with young people through the ministry of the Navigators, was asked shortly before he died, “What is the biggest challenge in working with youth today?” His reply: “They don't see their sinfulness.” I hasten to add, that is the biggest problem not only among youth, but among all people today: *Sinfulness is the language of the ancient revivalist. We've evolved past that.* Have we? Until the Holy Spirit shows them the standard, . . . the consuming fire that is God's holiness, . . . they will see no need for a Savior. We're not holy. We are sinful compared to the standards of a holy God whose standard is His holiness. I don't care how good you think you are. It's one thing to compare yourself against other people. Compare yourself against the blazing fire of all-consuming holiness that is God! That angels even cover their eyes in the presence of His glory. Remember Calvin's words: “Go now and heartily boast of your righteousness among men, while God from heaven abominates it.”

We are terminally – we are all terminally ill. We will all die someday. You have one remedy, one hope to counter this devastating disease that is sin that will cost you your eternal soul in hell, in an eternity in hell. That remedy is the good news. It's not good news, it's great news! Jesus Christ, His person and His work. His person, who he is as the second person of the Trinity, God incarnate, who in the providence and in the decrees, eternal decrees of the Triune God, came down to earth as a man to rescue fallen men, to identify with us sinners. But He never sinned. His person is foundational to His work. And His work was the fact that He was

sinless. That He upheld all things, pleasing to God in every way – and yet suffered horribly. God in the flesh, suffering at the hands of [those He] created. And then He was put to death. Not for His crimes, but for yours and mine. Dying for everyone who would believe in Him, that they might have His life. He took your place, believer. He took your place. You deserved to go to the cross. You deserved to die; and not only die once, but die eternally. But He came. He lived for you, died for you. And all you have to do is receive the gift. . . . Admit you're sinful, admit you have no hope. No righteousness outside of Christ is going to save you. No church, no sacrament, no good work, no best intentions will save you. Only Jesus Christ. When He died, He said, "It is finished!" It is done. That is great news. You sense your sin, flee to the cross. Flee to the cross. Plead the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ on your behalf. And as I like to say, if you cry out in faith, believing that it's all of Jesus Christ, none of you, that you receive Him as Savior and as Lord of your life, boy, there's good evidence – evidence that you have been born again to new life in Christ. And your life will never be the same, both now and for eternity.

And so, Father, we pray that for those of us that believe, that, oh, we can take heart, that we can say, "Do whatever Thou wilt . . . 'for the sufferings of this present world are not worthy to be compared to the glory that's to follow.'" Oh help us, Lord. I know, I know, there's a part of me that doesn't want to face suffering and hardship; death. But yet, Lord, I know (we know) that suffering, suffering and death come before the crown of life. And Lord, I pray for any that has not been born again. And I can only pray, Holy Spirit, I can plead that You work and change hearts. That those who have not been born again will see – by the majesty of Christ and the work of You, dear Holy Spirit – will see their need, that they are one heartbeat away from a forever away from everything that is good, spending eternity in everything that is horrible and

torturous. And so I pray that they would see the Lamb of God slain before the foundation of the world, the Lamb of God slain for sinners. And that they would surrender to Him and His goodness, His greatness, His role as Savior and Lord. Do that work, we pray, to Your glory. May heaven rejoice. And it's in Christ's name we pray. Amen.

Job's First Response to the God of the Whirlwind

Job 40:3-5

December 3, 2023

Christ Church of Clarkson

1223Job40:3-5(40) | Audio Length: 54:38

Job chapter 40, follow along with me. Job chapter 40, beginning in verse one:

1 Then the LORD said to Job, 2 “Will the faultfinder contend with the Almighty? Let him who reproves God answer it.” 3 Then Job answered the LORD and said, 4 “Behold, I am insignificant; what can I reply to You? I lay my hand on my mouth. 5 “Once I have spoken, and I will not answer; Even twice, and I will add nothing more.”³⁰⁸

This is the voice of our God. Let's pray together.

Lord, we commit our time to You. We are grateful for how You have continued to bear us up. You have sustained us, Lord, through another week, and through weeks and months – and even as we sang about affliction earlier, Lord, we think of the afflictions that we have gone through, the sufferings – and yet by Your grace. We yet stand by Your mercy, and by the power of the Holy Spirit in the fellowship of Your church. We continue on serving our great God and Savior. And so, Lord, as we look at this passage, coming toward the end, the close, of the book, a book about Your sovereignty, a book about suffering, a book about why a righteous man or woman, for that matter, serves You, why one who is rightly related to You serves You. And so we ask, Lord, that You would have Your hand upon us and this time, that You would guide and minister Your word in the things that are said to each heart. Each heart has need. Glorify Yourself in the process, we pray, in Christ's name. Amen.

Just this past week I came across a story told by the New Testament scholar D.A. Carson, someone that many of you are familiar with, Dr. Carson. And I thought the story

³⁰⁸Scripture citations are taken from the NAS95 unless otherwise noted.

appropriate. As I read it, I thought, “this really kinda fits in with my point (one of my points anyways) for today.”

God hears the deafening roar of our silence

Carson tells a story. It's about a Christian family with a 15 year old daughter who lost her best friend to leukemia. That friend that was lost was a beautiful young girl, vibrant, smart, seemingly in perfect health – until leukemia struck. Despite the efforts of good medical care, this young woman was gone in six months. This [15 year old's] family was vibrant in their commitment to Jesus Christ, and they talked about what happened with their daughter. They prayed, they comforted her as best they could. But again, this was her best, closest, dearest, friend. Shortly after, the father went by his daughter's bedroom, and through the closed door he could hear sobbing. So he tapped on the door and he went in. And he put his arms around his daughter and said, “Come on honey, tell me about it.” And through the tears, she said, “Daddy, God could have saved my best friend and He didn't. I hate Him! As Carson tells the story, the father said,

You know, I'm so glad you told me this. There's no point in hiding it. In any case, God knows what you're thinking. He knows your thoughts before you actually think them yourself. You might as well be honest before Him. There's no point in pretending. I'm glad you felt free enough to tell me how you felt. But before you decide that God is a miserable wretch, I want you to think about two things. First, do you really want a God like the genie in Aladdin's lamp; he could do absolutely anything, perform any miracle, but was always under the control of whoever holds and rubs the lamp. Do you want a God like that? So God can do absolutely anything, but always at your beck and call. In which case, who is God? Do you really want a God like that? Are you wiser than God to tell him what He should and shouldn't do?” Then the father said, “Another thing is this: before you decide that God doesn't love you, you have to face the fact that in the Bible, God's love is measured by a little hill outside of Jerusalem. When nothing else seems fair, when nothing else seems right, and when the pain is unbearable, yes, you remember that you lost your dear friend. But don't you dare forget that God lost his Son. In fact, He did lose Him, but He gave Him. When you can't pull it all together, at least fasten on that, because nothing else will stabilize you.”

Well, that is wise advice. But you see, this wasn't just *any* father. Dr. Carson was talking about his very own daughter.

You see, when we suffer, we often think bad things, negative things, sinful things. We think bad things about others, and sometimes we think bad things about our God. It's almost like we have the attitude, "Well, God doesn't know what's in my heart, so I won't say it." But then when we do say hurtful things, bad things, the cat's out of the bag, so to speak. Or is it?

You see, God knows what's in our hearts. Carson is right: God knows what you're thinking. He knows your thoughts before you actually think them yourself. You might as well be honest before him. God knows. God knows you and your heart with greater intimacy, greater understanding, greater knowledge than you can even fathom yourself. *God hears the deafening roar of our silence.*

I think this is Job here at this pivotal little point in chapter 40. Job doesn't have much to say. He admits such. But I think there's still much on his mind and heart. Yes, *God hears the deafening roar of our silence* – including Job's.

God's First Reply to Job: Who Are You

Our outline bookends the first part where we started in chapter 38 several weeks back. And there, back when we started chapter 38, our main point was this: Number one, God's First Reply to Job: Who Are You. . . . That was the main heading that took us all the way to chapter 40 verse two. And God's first reply indicates that there is at least one more. If we say, "this is God's *first* reply," than we're assuming that there's something else, because we didn't say, "this is God's *only* reply." And indeed, there is another, there's a second that we will bump up against after we finish this morning. And the fact that there is a second reply to Job, after Job's brief

response here, indicates to me that Job still had much to learn. He clearly repents in the end, but he's not quite there yet. Hence, God's second address to him.

So we have this main heading, God's First Reply to Job: Who Are You, that goes back to the beginning of chapter 38 where we were a number of weeks back, chapter 38 verses one and two: "Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind and said, 'Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?'" This was after Elihu's speeches, after Job's final speech. And now God acts. God speaks. But not just "God."

The Tetragrammaton

If you look in your Bibles, no doubt, in your English Bibles, [what you have is] "LORD." That tells us, when we look at the English, that we're talking about the *Tetragrammaton*, that is, the name of God, the four consonantal name Y-H-W-H, or "Yahweh." This is the covenantal name of God. It's the personal name of God that was revealed to Moses in Exodus chapter 3 at the burning bush. And so we have Yahweh who answers, the Lord, and He does so out of the whirlwind. And he asked the question, "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?" And who is he talking about? Job. It could be understood in the sense of, "Who are you" – like, "Who do you think you are, the one who darkens counsel without knowledge?"

God as Creator

In chapters 38 and 39, God lectures Job on His (God's) greatness, and who He is as God, namely, as Creator. God goes through a panoply of His created order. How He not only created the galaxies, He providentially holds them all together. And that's true of *all* creation, whether inanimate matter such as the earth and stars, or things that are animate, living beings, fish, birds,

animals – even people, the crown of His creation. God is behind it all. God created it all. God sustains it all. That is how big God is in His sovereignty and in His providence. So again, as a reminder of where we've been.

God as Prosecuting Attorney and Judge

This takes us to where we are now. We looked at God as Prosecuting Attorney and Judge. And that's where we've been for the previous four weeks. God as Prosecuting Attorney and Judge. We're in God's courtroom again. I'll remind you that courtroom language dominates the book of Job; legal language. And so we're in God's courtroom. But God is now the Prosecuting Attorney. Job is on the stand, and God is not only the Prosecuting Attorney, God is the Judge. He functions in both ways.

Job's finiteness

And the first thing that God brought up to Job, going back to chapter 38, were questions about the earth (and we're talking creation). Chapter 38 verses four, five and six, God asked Job, "Were you there when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me if you have understanding! Who set its measurements, since you know? Or who stretched a line on it? On what were its bases sunk? Or who laid its cornerstone?" Again, He's talking about the creation of the earth. And God is saying [that He] is the *architect*, God is the *surveyor*, and God is the *engineer*.

His work is so spectacularly glorified, that is, so spectacularly glorified and pleased Him, that it was applauded by angels (38:7): and witnessing God's creative activity, the morning stars gathered together, and all the sons of God shouted with joy! God's creation.

Job's finiteness

But not just His creation of the heavens and the earth. But then we have the birth of the sea *on* the earth. Chapter 38 verses 8 and 9 where the sea is likened to a woman giving birth: it burst forth from the womb, it's wrapped in swaddling clothes. Again, this is all God's creative activity in poetic form. The sea even has boundaries upon it, verses 10 and 11 of chapter 38, God placed boundaries on it, on the sea, set a bolt and doors. He said, "Thus far you shall come, but no farther. Here shall your proud waves stop." All of this paralleling God's creative activity that we read about in the first chapter of Genesis, when God declared His creation to be "very good." So that was *Job's finiteness*. "Job, were you there when I did these things?"

Job's experience

And then we looked at *Job's experience*. "Have you done this, Job?" Again, questions about light and darkness, verse 12: "Have you ever in your life commanded the morning and caused the dawn to know its place?" Questions about unexplored places, "Have the gates of death, that is Sheol, the grave, been revealed? Or have you – there is that phrase again – have you seen the gates of deep darkness?" Questions about the seasons and weather, everything in chapter 38, from the expanse of the earth, to light and darkness, to snow and hail, lightning and the east winds, rain – and then using another father-mother metaphor in verses 28 through 30 – we have ice and frost. All of this meteorological phenomena. "Job, have you done any of this?"

Job's ability

And then God questions *Job's ability*. So we go from "have you" to "can you." Can Job bind the chains of the Pleiades, or loose the cords of Orian? Can Job lead forth a constellation in its season, and guide the bear with her satellites. Can Job control these constellations and keep

them together. That's the question that's being asked there in chapter 38. Can Job further call rain upon the earth, or cause lightning to strike its ordained mark?

And then, after that, we had a wonderful time exploring God's work among the animal kingdom. Remember the questions about lions and ravens toward the end of chapter 38? Can Job provide food for the lion and her cubs? What about the raven and her young?

Job's knowledge

And then God goes from *Job's ability* to *Job's knowledge*. “What do you know, Job?” There were questions about the animal kingdom, mountain goats and deer. Does Job know the time they give birth according to His timetable? What about *how* their young grow strong, and *when* they grow strong enough, to leave and set out on their own.

Job's impotence

And then, lastly, we looked at *Job's impotence*. The question, “Who is Almighty?” That word, “Almighty,” the Hebrew word *Shaddai*, is also used in chapter 40 verse two of God described as “the Almighty.” So who truly is Almighty? [Who is] omnipotent?

[We saw] more questions about the animal kingdom. We had two word descriptions, if you remember back with me, of these six different animals. We had the wild donkey, which we characterized as *independent existence*. The wild oxen, *fearsome power*. The ostrich, *humorous indifference*. The warhorse, *dark and terrible*. The hawk, *graceful flight*. The Eagle, *life, death*. All of that under the heading of “God's First Reply to Job: Who Are You.”

Job's First Reply to God: I Am Insignificant

Okay, with that in mind, here's Job's First Reply to God. So we had God, God's First Reply to Job: Who Are You? and *Job's First Reply to God: I Am Insignificant*. “That's who I

am; I'm insignificant." Yes, *God hears the deafening roar of our silence*. He knows what's going on in our hearts, even when we say things like, "I'm insignificant, and I'll say no more." But He knows what's really going on within our souls.

Job's admission: short of repentance

Two points under this heading: *Job's admission* and *Job's declaration* [as we look at] verses three, four, and five. [First], *Job's admission*. This is short of repentance. Again, he says, "I'm insignificant." He admits that, but he is not yet to the point of complete repentance.

As far as speeches go, this is the shortest in the book. Note that this short speech admits little. The Old Testament scholar David Clines says this: "The absence of any note of regret and the reference to his previous speeches without any qualification of them suggest that he [that is, Job] still stands by what he has said." We are going to elaborate on that in a moment.

So again, go with me and look at verse three. Note that first word, "then," that is, after God's first speech, 3 **"Job answered the LORD and said,** (note the first word) 4 **'Behold, I am insignificant. What can I reply to you? I lay my hand on my mouth.'**" Job's admission: short of repentance. What does Job admit? Insignificance. But that's a bit ambiguous, don't you think? In fact, the first word of verse four, which is overlooked in some translations – some don't even translate it – the first word is "behold." It's the Hebrew word *hen*. The word is often translated "behold," or "see," or "look." But it's also translated "since" or "if." In fact, "if" is a common translation for the word *hen*. And so this could be translated this way, as a question. Rather than "Behold, I am insignificant," it could be translated "If I am significant" (the implied idea "as You have demonstrated") "what can I reply You?" You see, Job's admission is short of repentance. The word "insignificant" literally means "light in weight" in contrast to another

word that means “heavier in weight.” It’s sort of like saying, “I’m a lightweight . . . so what can I say to you?”

Job . . . adds in verse four, **“I lay my hand on my mouth.”** We’ve come across this gesture two other times, both uses were by Job. Chapter 21 verse five, Job pleads for sympathy from his friends as they look upon him and his destitute, sickly condition. And he says in chapter 21 verse five, “Look at me, and be astonished, and put your hand over your mouth.” A few chapters later, in chapter 29, Job speaks of the good old days, as he sees it, when God was with him, when Job had his children, when Job was prosperous. And he goes on to say, “When I went out of the gate of the city, when I took my seat in the square, the young man saw me and hid themselves, and the old men arose and stood.” *Going to the gate of the city.* City gates at that time were where the elders of the city would hang out. It was kind of the political center of the day. And Job says, “When I would go and take my place among the elders of the city, I got great respect back in that day” (implying no longer). Young men saw him and hid – and even the old men stood. And then he says, in verse nine of chapter 29: “The princes stopped talking *and put their hands on their mouths.*”

So what is this? Job says, “I lay my hand on my mouth” – the third time he's used this expression. Well, it could refer to being dumbfounded, it could refer to being astonished, it could be an expression of silence . . ., it could be an expression of humility. But I'm going to go with silence over humility here because it does not appear that Job is completely broken at this point. But again, *God hears the deafening roar of our silence* – even what we don't say, God knows.

David Clines, in his deeply exegetical commentary, writes this:

. . . the wording of Job's brief reply does not suggest capitulation; if anything, it is a re-affirmation of his previous speeches. . . . Only in 42:4–6 will we hear his final decision; here he merely says that he will not further prosecute his case.

Get that? You get the legal language? You get the implication that Job is not going to say anymore; but it's kind of like, "My defense rests. I won't say any more." That's *Job's admission: short of repentance*.

Job's declaration: committed to silence

Our second point is, *Job's declaration: committed to silence*. In verse five he uses a common Hebrew figure of speech. Note it: "**Once I have spoken, and I will not answer; even twice, and I will add nothing more.**" Job is not saying that "I've only spoken two times." No. Again, this is a Hebrewism that means "again and again," or "over and over." *Yes, I've spoken over and over; I've spoken again and again, but I will add nothing more. I've stated my case and now my defense rests*. So again, I think Job is still – hesitantly at least – still holding to his earlier opinions.

Remember, again, chapter 31 versus 35 and 36 where Job said,

35 Oh that I had one to hear me! Behold, here is my signature; Let the Almighty answer me! And the indictment which my adversary has written, 36 Surely I would carry it on my shoulder, I would bind it to myself like a crown.

Job is very bold there. "Here's the indictment. Here is my signature; I'll paraded it around. Let the Almighty answer me." Well now Job has nothing more to say. Again, I think he is still holding on, maybe loosely, maybe his grip is slipping, but he's holding onto his earlier opinions; not so much that he is going to boldly talk to God, but the contentions he has made as to God's unfair treatment of him.

Now this is an interpretive judgment I'm making. I didn't come across that in my first reading or second reading or third reading. This [has] come through my study. So when Job replies as he does, in verses four and five, he's not at the place of full repentance. He's bending but is not broken.

I realize that this interpretation may chafe against the central point I made in the previous four messages that brought us from chapter 38, up until now. And that central point, that we've gone over again and again, is that *tough questions melt in the light of God's nature*. In other words, the difficult "why" questions, the accusations we have, the wonderings we have about how and why God runs the universe the way He does; when we're confronted with the reality of who God is, His nature, His character, those questions begin to melt away. We begin to fall silent. Yes, *tough questions melt in the light of God's nature*.

And no one will stand before God in the final day with any complaints. "Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." And some will make that confession with praise and joy for the salvation of Jesus Christ. But others, many, will make that confession in judgment. Yes, *tough questions melt in the light of God's nature*. And certainly Job has become mute. Job seemingly bites his tongue. However, many contend he's sobered, he may be humbled, but he is not broken. His questions may be melting, but they're not melted. He's not yet where God wants him.

The words Job uses are ambiguous

And there are five reasons why I interpret these three verses this way. Number one: *The words Job uses are ambiguous* – and we pointed that out. He admits he is insignificant. He says

he has no more to say. He covers his mouth. But all of that can be read in a neutral, or even negative sense. So there's ambiguity here.

Job doesn't say anything that clearly indicates he is repentant

Number two: *Job doesn't say anything that clearly indicates he is repentant.* And that point goes along with the first: he doesn't say anything. You don't see the word repentance.

God continues His correction

Number three: *God continues His correction.* From chapter 14 verse six to chapter 41 verse 34 you've got over 50 verses of God answering Job out of the storm. Again, why does God continue to admonish Job? Because Job didn't get quite get it!

Job's attitude is quite different in chapter 42

That's why, number four” *Job's attitude is quite different in chapter 42.* That is, after God's second speech. Now you see a difference. How does Job answer? Chapter 42, the first six verses:

1 Then [after God's second speech] Job answered the LORD and said, 2 “I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted. 3 ‘Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?’ “Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.” 4 ‘Hear, now, and I will speak; I will ask You, and You instruct me.’ 5 “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees You; 6 Therefore I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes.”³⁰⁹

Some weighty scholars agree

And then, lastly: *Some weighty scholars agree* with me. I say that tongue in cheek. I guess I should say, it would be more humble to say, “I agree with many weighty scholars.” But many of them take this position. Listen to one Old Testament scholars who've written on Job

³⁰⁹42:1–6, NAS95.

(Hartley): “Job continues to stand behind his avowal event of innocence.” Again, the before quoted David J.A. Clines: “He certainly does not indicate any regret for what he has said.”

Another, Francis Anderson, in the old Tyndale Old Testament Commentary Series, published in 1976. Francis Anderson says this:

Job admits that he cannot answer, but he still does not admit to any sin, so there is no ‘confession’. Nor does he retract any of his former statements, so there is no ‘submission’. On the contrary, he seems to be sticking to his guns. He has already spoken once, and need say no more. . . . This suggests that Job has nothing to say that he has not already said.”³¹⁰

Another writer use the analogy of Job’s silence being like “taking the fifth,” invoking the Fifth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution to avoid self-incrimination. He has no more to say. God has a lot more to say. And God finishes the task that He sets out to accomplish. And we will see that, Lord willing, in the ensuing weeks.

Concluding Thoughts

Where do we go from here? We’ve only covered, really, three verses. We did an extensive background. . . . Where do we go from here? Well, I have a few takeaways that we can think about.

God knows your heart

Number one: *God knows your heart*. God knows your heart. *God hears the deafening roar of your silence*. When I was struggling so deeply in the immediate aftermath of our loss of Giana, our daughter, a dear friend of mine encouraged me to be honest with God. And he said to me, “You know, God has big shoulders.” In other words, He knows. He knows what you think

³¹⁰Francis I. Andersen, *Job: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 14, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1976), 307–308.

and He knows what you're struggling with. Be honest with Him. *God hears the deafening roar of our silence.* Yes, indeed, He has big shoulders. Bring forth your questions. Bring forth your doubts. Bring forth your hurts. Tell Him how you feel, because He already knows. He even [sees] what we don't see in ourselves, what we don't know in ourselves. And by that I mean we have blind spots, right? And we're sinful. Sin marks our being, even as those who have been born again and are new creations in Christ. We still suffer the ravages of the old nature and depravity. And so we have blind spots. We have things we might say, things we might think, things we might do, that are not pleasing to Him, that we are sort of oblivious to.

David's prayer should be ours. Psalm 139: "Search me O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts, and see if there be any hurtful way in me. And lead me in the everlasting way." Yes, we should be readily praying that prayer: "Lord, where am I with You? What areas of my life need to be shored up? Where am I failing? . . . Where can I improve? Search me and know me, because You know me better than I know myself. Far better."

And sometimes there are things within my own life that I seemingly struggle to overcome and contain. And cry out to him when you feel that way. He's given you all of the means, everything that pertains to life and godliness (2 Peter chapter 1). That includes brothers and sisters in Christ, and elders within the church, who love you, care for you. So God knows your heart.

God is long-suffering with you

Number two: *God is long-suffering with you.* We see that with Job, don't we? Job persevered, but by means of God's preservation. And God was at work in his life. God knew

where He was going to take Job. It was on God's timetable, not Job's. And that's the same thing with us. If you know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, God will see you through all the muck and mire of this life. All the sin – all of your sin. All of the suffering, of the doubts; all of the questions. If you know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior God will see you through. That's the promise we have.

Many Scriptures we're familiar with. Philippians 1:6, Paul says, "I'm confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it [*epiteleō*] until the day of Christ Jesus. *Epiteleō*, translated "perfect" in the New American Standard, has the idea of "bringing to its ordained ends," a "finished product." God will do that for His elect, take it to the bank.

1 Corinthians chapter 1 verses seven and eight, where Paul says "that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will also confirm you [believer] . . . confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." I love 1 Thessalonians, the ending in chapter 5: "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," and then verse 24: "Faithful is He who calls you, and He also *will* bring it to pass." God is faithful to finish what He has started in you.

Great is thy Faithfulness, we sing, and it's true. Sing it to your own heart. *Great is God's faithfulness*. And as verse 24 ends, He also – not might, not if you keep up your end of the deal – no, He *will* bring it to pass. That is a promise for the elect church of Jesus Christ.

We are familiar with Romans chapter 8 verses 28 and 30, especially verse 28. We banter it about, but do we let it really sink into our hearts? "We know that God causes all things to

work together for good, to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” So it's a promise, again, for believers. It's a promise that God will work all things together for *your* good, believer, if you're born again. That's the context. Verse 29: “For those whom He foreknew” that's the idea of “foreordained,” “He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren. And those whom He predestined,” he is talking about believers, “those whom He predestined” (before all of creation) “these He called,” that's in time; that's when you responded to the gospel, “and those whom He called, He *justified*.” That's the hammer of God coming down (speaking of courtrooms) as courtroom language, the hammer of God coming down as Judge, saying, “You are not guilty! In fact, you know, it's not only ‘not guilty;’ you are counted righteous; not because of you, but because of Jesus Christ and your relationship with Him.” We're justified by faith. “And those whom He justified,” verse 30 ends, “these He also glorified.”

So I've not been glorified yet. Why does the writer put it in the past-tense: “He also glorified”? Because that's a way of using the past-tense to demonstrate, in the Greek language, that it's a done deal. It's done. Nobody gets lost. Nobody falls into the cracks in this *golden chain of redemption*, as it's often called in Romans chapter 8.

But this touches upon our suffering, doesn't it? The hard things we go through. Mine with the devastating crash and injuries and loss of our daughter. I knew Romans 8:28. I knew it here [in the head]. I had struggles with really knowing it within my heart. That's where the rubber hits the road.

John R. McDuff, a Scottish Presbyterian minister in the 19th century, wrote the following comment (commenting on verse 28):

The apostle here makes the glorious assertion that whatever befalls God's children—their joys, sorrows, comforts, crosses, losses—all are a part of a Divine plan and arrangement, whose issue and result is their good. There is nothing so incredible to unbelief as this. That bitter pang which tore up my hopes by the root! That unexpected poverty! That anguished sickbed! That crushing bereavement! How can I write "good" upon these? How can this broken heart ever endorse such a statement as that of the sacred writer?... Paul would have uttered what no ... Christian would have asserted, had he said "we see." But observe, his language is the utterance of believing trust.... He says, "we know."... Let us be assured of this: He has our best interests at heart. He has what is here called our GOOD in view. It may not be, it will not be, the world's definition of good—riches, honors, glory, worldly prosperity. But it will be better. It is our soul's good, ripening the immortal part of us for glory.

God's long suffering with us.

We ought to be long-suffering with each other

Third, it follows that *we ought to be long-suffering with each other*. The basis of this, how we ought to act in the church, how we ought to behave, how we ought to esteem one another, the basis of this is, again, in our election, Colossians chapter 3 verses 12 through 15.

That's where Paul grounds it. In verse 12, he says:

12 So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. 14 Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. 15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.³¹¹

We ought to be long suffering with one another.

Peter puts it this way, 1 Peter 1: "Since you have, in obedience to the truth, purified your souls for the sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable, but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring Word of God." If you've been born again, for this God brought you to new life, for

³¹¹Colossians 3:12–15, NAS95.

this: that you might demonstrate love and long-suffering and forgiveness to one another within the body of Christ.

There are two biblical words that sum up what I esteem in others within the church, as well as what I try to emulate in my own life. Two biblical words, one from the Old Testament, another from the New Testament. The Old Testament word we've come across in Job is *chesed*. It is used often used in the Old Testament, especially in the Psalms. It's used of God's covenant faithfulness, His lovingkindness, that's the way the New American Standard almost always translates this as a refers to God's *hesed* toward us, His “lovingkindness.” But again, it's covenant faithfulness. It could be translated “loyalty.” And we ought to be *faithfully loyal* to the church and each other. We ought to be, unless there is a really good reason why we oughtn't to. . . .

And then the Greek word *epieikēs*, which is used, for example, in Philippians 4:5. The word's translated by the New American Standard as “gentle spirit”: “Let your *gentle spirit* be known to all men.” It's one of those words that's hard to capture in English, *epieikēs*. Some translations have “reasonableness,” “moderation,” “gentleness.” But I like “reasonableness.” One writer suggested “sweet reasonableness.” We should be *sweetly reasonable* with one another. That encapsulates this idea of *epieikēs*.

Someone once wrote that “good people are reasonable people.” . . . That should be true of us. I have lots of experience with the opposite. I have lots of experience with *unreasonable* people. Leaders? Maybe. Church members? Definitely! I could tell you stories about the many who have gotten upset with me, or others, or [about] something that we do, that caused them to get their stinger out of joint and leave the church. And if you follow them, typically, they end up

going from church to church to church. So what they've done here, they just have done in other churches, and they continue to do so as they go on and bounce from church to church. [It's like] what people do with relationships. You know people like that. They've gone from marriage to marriage to marriage, or from shacking up with somebody to shacking up with somebody else to shacking up with somebody else. They go from one to one to one. And the bottom line is that they never address the issues that is their part in the equation.

And some of those people . . . it frustrates me because you just can't get through to them. You can pray for them. You can say, "God bless you; thankful for the time that we've had with you with us." (I don't say that every time, because I don't lie!) But yes, I've had lots of experience with the unreasonable people. But listen, good leaders are reasonable, good people are reasonable.

And I want to be a church characterized by this *chesed*, this loyalty, this covenant faithfulness. I want to be a leader, a member, a friend that is characterized by this covenant faithfulness and loyalty. I've tried to do that for 21+ years here. But also *epieikēs*, the New Testament Greek word: I want to be "sweetly reasonable."

And I think, by and large, that characterizes where we are. Not where we've always been, because we've had some issues. Those of you that have been here long enough know we've had some issues. We've had some unreasonable people that have been a bit of a wrecking ball in the church. But no, this is really, I think, from the time of the crash (maybe before that) onward we've been characterized by *chesed* and by *epieikēs*. Those two things have really characterized this church.

And I can't think of a greater demonstration than how you have treated my wife and I (and our new girls), but especially my wife and I in the aftermath of the devastating car crash. We're coming up on eight years. This Christmas Eve will be eight years since that crash that subsequently took her daughter's life and broke our hearts. And you have been patient with us, you been patient with me. Listen, I was in the hospital, what? two months. Then in rehab with my daughter for four months. And I was in no condition after that to function. Then my dad passed away unexpectedly eight months later, and we were in Arizona, and we we spent close to [a year] away from home and outside of this church. And you were faithful, you were loyal. I don't mean in a bad way. I mean in a good way, because it was driven out of love. You were concerned, not about the job I did – or wasn't doing. You were concerned about me, you were concerned about my wife. And those of you that remember her, you grieved along with us in the loss of Giana. I'm still not hundred percent, but I'm getting close; and I will always walk with a limp, as C.S. Lewis put it. I will always have a part of my heart that's missing until I see my daughter again. But praise the Lord, she was a baptized believer in Jesus Christ and she loved the Lord . . . and I will see her again. And our hope is that her sisters will someday see their big sister again.

God patiently disciplines those He loves

Number three: *God patiently disciplines those He loves*. God patiently disciplines those He loves. And we see that in Job. No, the result of Job's initial suffering where he lost his wealth, his health, his children, that wasn't due to sin as his friends kept trying to say. . . . Job was a man who feared God and turned away from evil, that's brought up again and again in the beginning of the book just so we get it. But Job did go sideways a bit in the aftermath of his

grief, in the midst of it, in the flood of his grief. And he began to accuse God and walk in a less than faithful way as far as his attitudes and his words were concerned. But God was patient with him.

And God is patient with us, and patiently disciplines, or corrects us. In fact, the writer to the Hebrews says that if you are without discipline, then you're an illegitimate child. As I was reading D.A. Carson, he actually used – I don't know how I feel about this – he actually used the “B” word; you know, “illegitimate son,” and used it in a sermon. Can I do that? Well, I'm not going to do it, but you probably know what I'm talking about. But that's the idea of illegitimacy. God disciplines every believer and sometimes that's painful, Hebrews chapter 12, yet it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. David, in Psalm 119, said “In faithfulness You have afflicted me.” Think about that. In faithfulness God afflicts you from time to time.

Repentance begins at the cross

And lastly: *Repentance begins at the cross*. Repentance begins at the cross. It not only begins at the cross, it ends at the cross. It's the all. Now you can say, from Job's perspective, repentance began with his faith in Yahweh and his belief in God's promises, in that embryonic form of which he had them, at that point, that patriarchal age. But the apogee of God's promise was fulfilled two millennia after Job when God the Son came to earth to live as the sinless Lamb of God, to die for the sin of Job and the rest of the Old Testament saints who were justified by faith. Yeah, there's still repentance to be had, and Job, who I firmly believe was justified by faith, nonetheless repents at the end of the book, what we need to be about: repenting in our lives. Not get saved all over again, but no, turning away from sin and turning to Christ. Holding fast to the cross. And that's where repentance begins. Even now, when we sin, when we feel

dirty. When we do, you make new resolutions, you can write down a promise. . . . No, I would say “flee to the cross.” That is where your hope is. You will break your resolutions. You're not going to keep every promise you make. But the cross will always be there. So flee to the cross.

Listen to this poem about Christ and how the words reflect what we've seen in Job as it relates to God's majesty in creation. And with this, we will conclude. Listen to this:

What grace is this that brought my Savior down?
That made him stoop to leave his throne and crown?
The One who made the stars, the sea,
The One who threw out every galaxy;
What condescension, oh, how can it be?
What pain he suffered and what agony,
When on the cross, he died
For sinners crucified.
What grace is this? What grace is this?

What grace is this? The grace that saved us, we who believe. It is the grace that is there for sinners who have not yet come to faith. It is the grace that we continue to embrace and that still there for us every moment of our day.

And so, Father, we thank You for that grace. What grace is this? What grace is this? It is matchless grace, as one song goes. It is amazing grace, as another song goes. And, Lord, I confess that sometimes I cease to be amazed. Sometimes my heart grows dull. And I pray for others like me that feel this way. And I pray that You would stir up those embers in our hearts. Stir them up that we may see the cross, repentance, grace, the way we saw it at the first. That we may yet be amazed, that we may yet cry out “matchless grace of Jesus that covers my sin.” This is “what grace is this?” And I pray, Lord, for any within the sound of my voice that is not born again. Maybe they yet walk in indifference. Maybe your Spirit, even now, is tugging at their hearts. And I pray, Lord, that if that's the case, that You would open their eyes to see their

destitute state. How they are not heirs of the kingdom of heaven, they are heirs of the torments of hell. But in seeing that, may they turn to the cross where repentance begins and ends, that they may be saved and understand the treasures, the matchless grace, of Jesus Christ.

As for the rest of us, Lord, we thank You. . . . We're mindful of the fact that You hear the deafening roar of our silence, and that You're not nonetheless patient with us. These things we pray in Christ's precious name. Amen.

God's Second Reply to Job: The Lord of the Great and Terrible

Job 40:6 - 41:34

January 28, 2024

Christ Church of Clarkson

0124Job40:6-41:34(41) | Audio Length: 53:21

We are looking this morning at God's Second Reply to Job. I had originally thought I would spend two weeks on these two chapters, but as I got studying it, I thought, "you know, I can squeeze it all into one message, and hopefully not too long." But I'm sure we will need all of the hour to cover what we have in these two chapters. This is the last hurdle. In fact, I'm kind of surprised; we're reaching shore more quickly than I anticipated. And when I looked ahead, I thought, "Man, there are probably only 2 or 3 messages left in the book." So that will be quite an accomplishment (we'll need to throw a mini party afterward on that Sunday). So anyways, God's Second Reply to Job: the Lord of the Great and Terrible. That's our title. God's Second Reply to Job: the Lord of the Great and Terrible. And so, if you're not already there, if you would open to Job chapter 40. And when you find your place, if you would stand. Job chapter 40. I'm just going to read the first couple of verses of the passage we'll be covering. So we will start reading in verse six. Follow along with me.

6 Then the LORD answered Job out of the storm and said, 7 "Now gird up your loins like a man; I will ask you, and you instruct Me. 8 "Will you really annul My judgment? Will you condemn Me that you may be justified? 9 "Or do you have an arm like God, And can you thunder with a voice like His? 10 "Adorn yourself with eminence and dignity, And clothe yourself with honor and majesty. 11 "Pour out the overflowings of your anger, And look on everyone who is proud, and make him low. 12 "Look on everyone who is proud, and humble him, And tread down the wicked where they stand. 13 "Hide them in the dust together; Bind them in the hidden place. 14 "Then I will also confess to you, That your own right hand can save you.³¹²

This is the voice of our God. Let's pray.

³¹²Scripture citations are taken from the NAS95 unless otherwise noted.

And so, Heavenly Father, we thank You for that voice that we have. That sure Word is, we're told by Peter, a sure Word that can fill us and guide us and direct us. It's a sure voice. We thank You for it and the time that we can spend, Lord, as we come upon this section in Job, covering two chapters. And I pray that You'll, just work through Your herald this morning, and I pray that You would give focus to those that hear, that they would retain those key concepts that we'll cover today. So we entrust this time to You, to Your glory, to the saint's edification, and in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

It's been several weeks. December 3rd was our last message in Job, where we looked at Job's first response to God's first reply to him. And now we come to God's second reply to Job. By this time, we're done with the three friends Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar. We're done with that fourth friend, Elihu. And while chapter 31 concluded with “the words of Job are ended,” we're not done with Job. At least God is not done yet with Job.

God's first reply to Job

And so back in chapters 38 and 39 we saw God's first response, his first response to Job, where He appeared to him out of a whirlwind (that was 38:1) and challenged him, verse two: “Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Now gird up your loins like a man, and I will ask you, and you instruct me!” *Gird up your loins, Job.* “Man up” as how we might put it in contemporary language. And what follows is a two chapter panorama – that first reply of God – and He goes through His greatness as Creator, demonstrating to Job that he has, Job has, indeed darkened counsel with ignorant words. And remember, God stands as both prosecuting attorney and judge. We have this courtroom setting that we've come across several times throughout the book, this legal language, and God serves in both of those capacities. Now,

in this final response, these final two responses to Job, He is the prosecuting attorney and He is the judge.

So we covered those two chapters 38 and 39: God's first reply. And in those chapters, God gave a survey of the creation, and that He not only created the galaxies, but He providentially holds them together. He providentially provides for the beasts of the field and the birds of the air. And we saw that panorama of all of these different creatures. God is providentially ruler and creator of all creation, whether it's inanimate matter, the sky, the stars, the planets, the earth itself; or whether it's animate nature, such as living beings, birds, fish, animals, even the crown of creation: man himself.

Job's Finiteness

We outlined those two chapters this way. . . *Jobs Finiteness: "Were you there?"* That was the question that God was asking. And really pointing out again Job's finiteness as man and the question, "Job were you there?" And God questions him about several different things in that section. There's questions about the earth, about creation (chapter 38, verses four through six). God asked, 4 "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding, 5 Who set its measurements? Since you know. Or who stretched the line on it? 6 On what were its bases sunk? Or who laid its cornerstone?" Questions about creation.

There were questions about the sea as well. The birth of the sea, which was likened to a woman giving birth, bursting forth from the womb wrapped in swaddling clothes. God went on to talk about the boundaries of the sea (chapter 38, verses 10-11). He set that boundary, the bolt, the doors. And He said, "Thus far the sea shall come no further. Here shall your proud waves

stop.” All of this paralleling the creation account of Genesis chapter one, where God, after creating, looks at all of His creation and said, “It's very good.”

Job's Experience

Then you have *Job's Experience*: “*Have you?*” (moving on from questions about *Job's finiteness: were you there?*) Well, now we have questions about light and darkness (chapter 38, verse 12), questions about unexplored places such as the grave and death (chapter 38, verse 17), questions about the seasons and the weather; everything from the expanse of the earth, light and darkness, snow and hail, lightning and the east, winds, rain, ice and frost.

Job's Ability

Then God moves on to *Job's Ability*: “*Can you?*” Questions about the stars and the clouds. Remember that? Chapter 38, verses 31 and following? Can Job, “bind the chains of the Pleiades, or loose the cords of Orion?” Can he, “Lead forth a constellation in its season, and guide the Bear with her satellites?” Can Job, “call rain upon the earth?”(again, looking at the atmosphere). Can he cause the lightning to strike?

And then, concluding with questions about the animal kingdom, lions and ravens, and how God provides for them. Mountain goats, deer. Questions about the wild donkey, wild oxen, the ostrich, the war horse, the hawk, the eagle. So if you remember back, if you were here during that time, that should sound familiar. That all kind of encompassed God's first address to Job.

Job bends but doesn't break

He concluded, God concluded, with a closing argument, chapter 40, verses one and two: “Then the LORD said to Job, ‘Will the faultfinder contend with the Almighty? Let him who reproves God answer it.’” And how did Job reply? He affirmed his insignificance, but he didn't

really admit his guilt. He affirmed his insignificance, but he doesn't repent. And that's the key. And that's why God moves on with his second reply to Job. So after God's first reply, Job is bending but not broken.

And that brings us to chapters 40 and 41. God ups the ante here with his second reply to Job. He isn't just the creator. He isn't just the providential ruler of what we might call “the normal.” But He goes on, I think, to demonstrate that He's also the creator, the providential ruler, the sovereign, over what we might consider *the paranormal*: angelic beings, demons, forces of evil. So the Almighty is Lord of the Great and Terrible. That's what we see here. *The Almighty (Shaddai) is Lord of the great and terrible.* And knowing this ought to move us to repentance and worship. Now, spoiler alert: it does move Job in that direction. In chapter 42, verse two, after God is done with His second reply, how does Job respond? “I know that You can do all things and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted.” So Job is now a repentant, broken worshiper of God.

That all brings us again to God's Second Reply to Job: The Lord of the Great and Terrible. There are three subpoints (and we'll be spending most of our time on that third point). 1) God's Charge Against Job; then, 2) God's Challenge to Job; and then thirdly, 3) God's Character as Lord of the Great and Terrible. And by that I mean, and we're going to have some fun time looking at this, that He is Lord over the Behemoth and He is Lord over the Leviathan. Well, what are those? I bet you can't wait. We will get to that.

I. God's Charge Against Job (40:6-8)

So first we begin with God's charge. This is God's Charge Against Job. Now, if you remember Job's words back in chapter 31, we cited these before, Job said:

35 “Oh that I had one to hear me! Behold, here is my signature; let the Almighty answer me! And the indictment which my adversary has written, 36 surely I would carry it on my shoulder, I would bind it to myself like a crown. 37 “I would declare to Him the number of my steps; like a prince I would approach Him.”³¹³

And again, that's more courtroom language. And Job is getting very bold at that point.

And he's saying, “Like a prince, I would put on my indictment and parade it in front of others. I have an indictment against God. I want him to hear me. I want him to answer me.” Well, Job is getting his wish. And it comes to its height in this second reply. And so we see God's charge, again in this courtroom setting. God is attorney and judge in His second indictment, as we might put it, against Job.

We begin, however, with a repeat of what we saw in chapter 38. So look at Job, chapter 40, verse six: **“Then the Lord answered Job out of the storm, and He said, 7 ‘Now gird up your loins like a man; I will ask you, and you instruct Me.’** Again, a repeat of chapter 38, verse three, in God's first speech. Then God questions Job's arrogance (Job's arrogance in questioning God). Look at verse eight: **“Will you really annul My judgment? Will you condemn Me that you may be justified?”** Well, that's similar to what God said to Job at the end of His first reply, chapter 40, verse two: “Will the faultfinder contend with the Almighty? Let him who reproaches God answer it!” But here the emphasis is on the second half of the verse, **“Will you condemn me in order that you may be justified?”** Elihu accused Job of the same thing (chapter 34, verse 17): “Shall one who hates justice rule? And will you condemn the Righteous, Mighty One? Here: 8 **“Will you condemn Me, that you may be justified?”** And Job was guilty of that on more than one occasion; justifying himself and thus bringing

³¹³31:35–37.

condemnation at the feet of God. And I think the most egregious occasion of that was back in chapter nine, verses 22 through 24, where Job said (think about this): 22 “. . . [God] destroys the guiltless and the wicked. 23 “If the scourge kills suddenly, He mocks the despair of the innocent. 24 The earth is given into the hand of the wicked; He covers the faces of its judges. If it is not He, then who is it?” He blinds judges from judging righteously is what what Job was saying. So again, **“Will you condemn me that you may be justified?”** That's what He says. And in verse eight, **“Will you really annul [or cancel] My judgment?”** The word “condemn here” (“Will you *condemn* Me that you may be justified?”) is the Hebrew verb *rasha*, “to act wickedly or to condemn as wicked.” And that's what Job was doing in that passage I just read above. He was accusing God and saying, “God destroys the guiltless (that is, “the righteous”) along with the wicked.” And even if there's some catastrophe that suddenly kills, “God mocks the despair of the innocent.” Well, that's where Job is going too far and accusing God of indiscretion. And so we saw that in more than one place, but really, I think at its height there in chapter nine, verses 22 through 24.

As God says in verse eight, **“Will you condemn me that you may be justified?”** We've seen that word “condemned” before. That verb, *rasha*, we saw it in chapter nine, verse 20, where Job said, “Though I am righteous, my mouth will (*rasha*) *condemn* me.” Also in chapter ten, verse two, Job said that he would tell God not to *rasha*, not to *condemn* him. Eliphaz told Job, that his own, that is Job's own mouth was *condemning* him (15:6).

But here's the twist here. God says that Job is *condemning* Him in order that he, that is Job, can be vindicated. This is blame shifting. And people do that all the time, don't they? We've done it at some point in our lives. We've certainly done it as children. “It's not my fault!” We

blame our parents, we blame our peers, we blame our brother or sister, and then we grow up often doing that exact same thing. It's always someone else's fault. That goes back to our first parents. Eve blamed the snake. Adam blamed God. "No, the serpent tricked me!" Adam, "It was the woman that You gave to me!" So you'll hear skeptics and Christ rejecters do this; at its height, such as, "I'll never believe in a brutal, vindictive God; this God of the Old Testament. I'll never believe in a God who allows so much evil and suffering in the world." And so they judge God. They stand in authority over Him when they have no base upon which to stand, no standard for right and wrong, good and evil. So blaming God is to do just that. It's to put oneself in authority over Him. It's to make yourself out to be God, and it's to reject, even at its lower instances, it's to reject personal responsibility, it's to doubt God's sovereign goodness, because that's that's where it all ends, doesn't it? I mean, you can't go any higher than to God. So something can go wrong (and certainly we blame others when they're involved), something happens, somebody does wrong to us and we blame them. Or sometimes we have a part in it and we don't take the blame, but we blame somebody else. But when it's something that we can't control, something that seemingly nobody else is involved in, well, then the tendency is – as Job did – the tendency is to blame God.

II. God's Challenge to Job (40:9-14)

If you remember, one of the things that we brought out when we were covering that first reply was this idea of "who do you think you are?" And it was kind of like, "Who do you think you are, Job? Do you think you're God?" And that thought continues here in chapter 40. If you look at God's power in verse nine, this is God's challenge to Job. Our second point: God's Challenge to Job. Look at verse nine: "**Or do you have an arm like God?**" [that represents

power] **“Can you thunder with a voice like His?”** Elihu said something similar in chapter 37. He said, “He [that is, God] thunders with His majestic voice.” So here is God's challenge to Job. *Try being God. Try that on for a while. Take my place. See how you do in running the universe.*

In verses ten through 13, we have ten imperatives, ten commands for Job to do what only God can. The first part of that challenge in verse ten is this *adorn yourself as God*. Can Job do that? Can he play the part by dressing the part? Verse ten, **“Adorn yourself with eminence and dignity, and clothe yourself with honor and majesty.”** These are robes of the King, of royalty, ultimately reflecting God who is King, who is the ultimate Sovereign One. And here's the suffering Job, sitting in a pile of ashes, who is in no position to adorn himself with much of anything, much less these symbols of power and authority. The United Bible Society's Handbook, which is a guide to translation, something I use in my study, said this about verse ten: “Majesty and dignity translate two words both beginning with the same letter in Hebrew and each suggesting high, elevated, superior status.” So again, that idea of adorning yourself as God. “You want to question Me? Try it out. Clothe yourself with majesty and dignity.” And after you've done that, then *act as God*. Verses 11 through 13: **“Pour out the overflowings of your anger and look on everyone who is proud and make him low.”** The NIV has, “Unleash the fury of your wrath and humble the proud.” That's the idea. Then, verse 12: **“Look on everyone who is proud and humble him, tread down the wicked where they stand. Hide them in the dust together; bind them in the hidden place.”** This is a poetic way of saying, “Job, see if you can kill and bury and consign to the grave.” Now the word “bind” means “imprison,” which is the grave for a wicked person. It's a prison. So this is God's ability as God.

In Isaiah 13:11, speaking of God's impending judgment against Babylon for its sin, we read these words (God speaking): “Thus I will punish the world for its evil and the wicked for their iniquity. And I will also put an end to the arrogance of the proud, and abase the haughtiness of the ruthless.” This is God's role to judge, to humble those who are proud. And what happened? Those words spoken of the nation of Babylon, what happened there will happen to the entire world system at the end of the age. Revelation chapter 18, verse two, an angel “cries out with a mighty voice saying, fallen, fallen is Babylon the great. She has become a dwelling place of demons.” Warren Wiersbe had this to say on this passage that we're looking at in Job:

Job had said that God was unjust in the way He treated him (6:29; 27:1–6) and in the way He failed to judge the wicked (21:29–31; 24:1–17). In 40:9–14, God asked, “Job, do you have the strength and holy wrath it takes to judge sinners? If so, then start judging them! Humble the proud sinners and crush the wicked! Bury them! You claim that you can do a better job than I can of bringing justice to the world, so I'll let you do it!”³¹⁴

God's challenge: try being God!

And then you've got a bit of an “if / then” sort of thing going on here. As we move on to verse 14, *if* Job can do that, all that God challenges him to do in verses nine through 13, *then* he can take over God's management of the universe. That's verse 14. God says, “**Then I will also confess to you that your own right hand can save you.**” “I will confess to you” that word *confess* translates a Hebrew word that means “praise” or “congratulate” or “commend.” “If you can do these things,” God challenges Job, “I will commend you, I will congratulate you.” Well, Job can't do what only God can do. What God does in the management of creation is His to do alone.

³¹⁴Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Patient*, 150.

Now, there is a parallel. While this isn't talking about eschatological salvation . . . one of the errors we make sometimes is we see that word “save” in the Old Testament especially, and we think, “Oh, it's talking about salvation, justification, going to heaven.” And most of the time, especially in the Old Testament, it's not. Here, it's talking about deliverance. *Can your right hand deliver you?* But there is a parallel to eschatological salvation here because so many do think that they can save their souls on their own (if they even believe in such a thing). But they feel they're good enough, or they can be religious enough. And, no that's the prerogative of God alone. Salvation is of the Lord on His terms and His terms alone.

III. God's Character as Lord of the Great and Terrible (40:15-41:34)

So we've looked at God's Charge; God's Challenge. Thirdly, our third point (and we'll spend most of our time here): God's Character as Lord of the Great and Terrible. That brings us to the most difficult part of these two chapters.

I want to give you a reminder: Job is poetry, okay? There are distinctions in poetry as compared to other types of writing, such as narrative, historical narrative, or prophecy (apocalyptic literature). This is poetry. So there is some poetic license here. But we are introduced to two creatures Behemoth and Leviathan. The rest of this second address by God revolves around those two, those two names. Both of these words are transliterations of Hebrew nouns. In other words, they're not interpreted. They're basically the phonetic equivalent, roughly, of what the Hebrew words are in “Behemoth” and “Leviathan.” The word Behemoth is used only here. However, a related word is used in the creation account in Genesis, translated “beast,” and also in Psalm 73, where it's translated the same way, as “beast.” But here it's in the plural even though it's talking about a singular creature. Singular pronouns, but the word Behemoth is

in the plural. And so what we think this means is this is talking about a “super beast.” Being in the plural, even though it's talking about a singular, intensifies the idea. So a “super beast.”

Now, as it relates to Leviathan, that word is used several times in the Old Testament. At least half the time it's used metaphorically to represent something else. But literally Leviathan refers to a sea monster or a dragon. But here, let me let me key you off, nobody knows with absolute certainty what Behemoth and Leviathan are when we talk about literally what sorts of creatures are these. There are many options. However, here's the key. If you get nothing else, catch this. *While we may not come to understand exactly what these two creatures are, I think we can know what they represent.* I think that's another question that helps answer the puzzling nature of these two chapters as it relates to these two creatures.

Behemoth

So I just want to read through the section here on Behemoth chapter 40, verses 15 through 24, the idea God is Lord of this beast. So just follow along beginning in verse 15:

15 “Behold now, Behemoth, which I made as well as you; he eats grass like an ox. 16 Behold now, his strength in his loins and his power in the muscles of his belly. 17 He bends his tail like a cedar; the sinews of his thighs are knit together. 18 His bones are tubes of bronze; his limbs are like bars of iron. 19 He is the first of the ways of God; let his Maker bring near His sword.”

Going on to verse 20:

20 “Surely the mountains bring him food, and all the beasts of the field play there. 21 Under the lotus plants he lies down, in the covert of the reeds and the marsh. 22 The lotus plants cover him with shade; the willows of the brook surround him. 23 If a river rages, he is not alarmed; he is confident, though the Jordan rushes to his mouth. 24 Can anyone capture him when he is on watch, with barbs can anyone pierce his nose?”

But what is that describing? We can look at some of the things on a surface level. This creature is created by God, dwells in and around water, is extremely powerful, bends his tail as a

cedar. He is the first of the ways of God. Only God can subdue him. He dwells with other animals, and he's fearless and confident. But what sort of creature are we talking about here? Well, throughout history there have been many speculations as to what the author has in mind. Let me just give you a few of them that have been proposed. 1) An unknown animal, perhaps now extinct, such as the brontosaurus; 2) the elephant (that was Thomas Aquinas, along with others of his time, Thomas Aquinas' view); 3) the water buffalo; 4) the rhinoceros; 5) a mythological creature. Or, here's the number one, number one opinion (this from the 17th century onward has been the dominant view): *The hippopotamus*. Okay, so the view is that this is describing a hippopotamus.

Well, let's consider the hippopotamus. A hippo was herbivorous. It feeds on grass like an ox (verse 15), therefore wild animals do not fear being attacked by it (verse 20). His massive strength is in his loins and stomach muscles, his thighs, metal-like bones and limbs (verses 16 through 18). His tail is likened to a cedar (the verb could mean "sways" or "stiffens;" only occurs here in the Old Testament). The hippopotamus was the largest of the animals known in the Ancient Near East, weighing up to 8,000 pounds. The hippo is difficult, if not impossible, to kill with a mere hand sword. And when he's submerged, only his eyes or nose show above the water (that seems to go along with verse 23).

When I was a kid, as kids today, we saw hippos as gentle giants. We had stuffed animals of hippos, cartoons of hippos. They were playthings. But the reality is that this a massive, dangerous creature with a bad disposition. The website Discovery Wildlife has this to say, "The hippopotamus is a very aggressive wild creature and is the deadliest large land mammal on the

planet. It is estimated that hippo attacks kill 500 people each year in Africa.”³¹⁵ Is Behemoth the hippopotamus? Possibly. But I think that just scratches the surface. I think there is more in view here, more below the tip of the iceberg.

Leviathan

But let's look at Leviathan. Again, “leviathan” (and this brings us to chapter 41) is a transliterated word. It's transliterated from the Hebrew noun; it's not interpreted. Three times as much space is devoted to this creature, the entirety of chapter 41. The section starts – and follow along with me as we read through this chapter – the section starts with a series of questions. There are 14 questions in the first seven verses, two questions per verse. So beginning in chapter 41, verse one. God is asking Job:

1 “Can you draw out Leviathan with a fishhook? Or press down his tongue with a cord? 2 Can you put a rope in his nose or pierce his jaw with a hook? 3 Will he make many supplications to you, or will he speak to you soft words? 4 Will he make a covenant with you? Will you take him for a servant forever? 5 Will you play with him as with a bird, or will you bind him for your maidens? [Idea, will you let your little girls play with him like a dog on a leash?] 6 Will the traders bargain over him? Will they divide him among the merchants? 7 Can you fill his skin with harpoons, or his head with fishing spears?”

All of these are rhetorical questions, and some of them kind of this humorous, ridiculous sort, but they all expect a “no” answer.

And now next comes a series of warnings in chapter 41, beginning in verse eight:

8 “Lay your hand on him; remember the battle; you will not do it again! 9 Behold, your expectation is false; will you be laid low even at the sight of him? 10a No one is so fierce that he dares to arouse him . . .”

³¹⁵www.discoverwildlife.com/animal-facts/mammals/facts-about-hippos (accessed 1/15/2024).

Then we have this parenthetical statement where God speaks of His own greatness that dwarfs that of Leviathan, beginning in the second half of verse ten: 10b . . . **“who then is he that can stand before Me? 11 Who has given to Me that I should repay him? Whatever is under the whole heaven is Mine.”**

And then we go on, verse 12 to the end of the chapter, descriptive statements of this beast’s power and might. Follow along with me in verse 12:

12 “I will not keep silence concerning his limbs, or his mighty strength, or his orderly frame. 13 Who can strip off his outer armor? Who can come within his double mail? 14 Who can open the doors of his face? Around his teeth there is terror. 15 His strong scales are his pride, shut up as with a tight seal. 16 One is so near to another that no air can come between them. 17 They are joined one to another; they clasp each other and cannot be separated. 18 His sneezes flash forth light, and his eyes are like the eyelids of the morning. 19 Out of his mouth go burning torches; sparks of fire leap forth. 20 Out of his nostrils smoke goes forth as from a boiling pot and burning rushes. 21 His breath kindles coals, and a flame goes forth from his mouth. 22 In his neck lodges strength, and dismay leaps before him. 23 The folds of his flesh are joined together, firm on him and immovable. 24 His heart is as hard as a stone, even as hard as a lower millstone. 25 When he raises himself up, the mighty fear; because of the crashing they are bewildered. 26 The sword that reaches him cannot avail, nor the spear, the dart or the javelin. 27 He regards iron as straw, bronze as rotten wood. 28 The arrow cannot make him flee; slingstones are turned into stubble for him. 29 Clubs are regarded as stubble; he laughs at the rattling of the javelin. 30 His underparts are like sharp potsherds; he spreads out like a threshing sledge on the mire. 31 He makes the depths boil like a pot; he makes the sea like a jar of ointment. 32 Behind him he makes a wake to shine; one would think the deep to be gray-haired.”

And what's the conclusion? 33 **“Nothing on earth is like him, one made without fear. 34 He looks on everything that is high; he is king over all the sons of pride.”**

This is a fearful, fearful creature. It cannot be subdued. It's adorned with armor. There's terror around his teeth. He breathes out fire and smoke. His neck is strong and his heart as a stone. He dwells in the waters and yet encroaches upon the land. Fearless, terrible, king of the proud.

Well, what is this thing? What is it? Well, like Behemoth, there have been many guesses throughout history. And I like this one: some have said this is the dolphin. Does that sound like a dolphin to you? Not to me! A whale (that's not a whole lot better); a marine dinosaur; a dragon-like creature (extinct, maybe undiscovered)? Maybe. A mythical creature; a seven-headed sea monster of antiquity; or a demonic entity. But the number one answer has been what? You probably have a note in your Bibles that tells you . . . *the crocodile!* This is describing the crocodile! Listen to David Clines in his commentary. He said:

The points of connection between the Leviathan pictured here and the crocodile are principally its terrifying jaws and teeth (v 14 [6]), its interlocking scales that cannot be penetrated (vv 13, 15–17, 23 [5, 7–9, 15]), the strength of its neck (v 22 [14]), the traces it leaves in the mud (v 30 [22]), and the fact that it is equally at home on land or sea (vv 30–33 [22–25]). On the other hand, the Leviathan of the poem appears to possess some of the characteristics of a fire-breathing dragon (vv 18–21 [10–13]); the LXX even calls it a “dragon” (drakōn).³¹⁶

Well, I'm less convinced that this is a crocodile than I am that Behemoth is a hippo.

By the way, you might wonder how interpreters deal with the fire and the smoke. Those who think this is a crocodile believe that this is mist that comes out of the crocodile's mouth when he sneezes or snorts, and then the sunlight going through the mist illuminating it. I think that's a bit of a stretch, even with poetic license!

³¹⁶David J. A. Clines, 1190–1191.

These may represent literal creatures. No one knows for sure what creature. But especially with Leviathan, there are many sea creatures we don't know about, many records of sailors spotting beasts, these records of these giant squid, giant sea creatures. Could it be one of those? I don't know. Were there any dinosaurs that breathed fire or caustic chemicals? None that I'm aware of. I don't know. I spent hours examining records of unknown sea creatures. I even bought a book, *The Field Guide to Lake Monsters, Sea serpents, and Other Mystery Denizens of the Deep*.

What they represent

But then it struck me as I spent all this time – I mean, I spent 30 some hours on this message and a lot of it on rabbit trails that I'm not even bringing out in the sermon – but it struck me again *that while we may not come to understand exactly what Behemoth and Leviathan are, we can understand what they represent*. I think there's a bigger picture here. One source had this to say: “Biblically, Leviathan would therefore most easily fit into the category of ‘supernatural’ creature (like cherubim) as opposed to natural or purely mythological.”³¹⁷

So let's take a closer look at culture, Ancient Near Eastern culture, and also take a look at the broader context of the book of Job. Remember, Job was part of that Ancient Near Eastern culture. And one thing I read is that the hippopotamus plays a role, or played a role, in ancient Egypt where it symbolized enemy powers against the throne. There was even an Egyptian festival where a hippopotamus was ritually slain, symbolic of Pharaoh's enemies. So the argument is that the hippopotamus represents an enemy, an enemy force, something like that. Well, I don't know if that practice was coterminous with the time that Job was written. May

³¹⁷*IVP Bible Background Commentary*, Job 41:1.

have been, may not, I don't know. And again, this assumes that this is a hippopotamus, and that's in doubt.

Beyond that, Behemoth may have been identified with death. That would fit the context. In the first speech, God talks about the gates of Hades and death: "Have they been revealed to you, Job?" In the second speech, right before God brings up Behemoth, one of His challenges includes whether Job can manage death and the grave. Behemoth did later become identified with the demon who oversees the feasts of Hell and serves Satan. He creates chaos and can only be controlled by God. Later Jewish tradition kind of adopted this and said that only God can kill Behemoth.

What about Leviathan? There is much more about this beast. We came across Leviathan back in chapter three, verse eight: "Let those curse it, who curse the day, who are prepared to rouse Leviathan." That's chapter three, verse eight. And back then I said that Leviathan may have been a metaphorical reference to an Ancient Near Eastern creature that stood for destruction. So "to rouse Leviathan" as chapter three, verse eight says, is to "bring forth ruin."

Leviathan is found a handful of times in the Old Testament, sometimes used symbolically. Isaiah 27:1, speaking of end times judgment, says this: "In that day the LORD will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, with His fierce and great and mighty sword, even Leviathan the twisted serpent; and He will kill the dragon who lives in the sea." Several times in the Book of Revelation, we see this dragon creature equated with Satan. Ancient Ugaritic literature spoke of a seven-headed dragon called Lotan that may form some of the backdrop to what this is talking about.

And we say, “What does all this mean?” I think it means that when we read of Behemoth and Leviathan, we're to look past the question of what they are to what they represent. What do they represent? Power, chaos, death, evil, the demonic – and that's especially true with Leviathan. And that would fit within the context of Job. Listen to a few quotes. D.A. Carson: “These two beasts may be the hippopotamus and the crocodile, respectively, but they probably also represent primordial cosmic powers that sometimes break out against God.”³¹⁸ The Bible Knowledge Commentary: “. . . though these are apparently actual animals, they may also represent proud, wicked elements in the world. In the ancient Near East these beasts, in their brute force (Job 40:16–18; 41:12, 22, 26–29) and agitation of the waters (41:31–32), symbolized the chaotic effect of evil.” Sam Storms says this: “Thus in describing how he rules over Behemoth and Leviathan God is not only telling Job of his creative power and majesty and sovereign authority over the natural world, but is also revealing his sovereign authority over the moral world, over the spiritual forces of both good and evil.”³¹⁹ One Old Testament scholar said this: “It is not that they are the hippopotamus and the crocodile, but that these beasts in their size, ferocity, and untameable nature are evidence of that dark power rooted in the universe itself which shadows all life.”³²⁰ And then Christopher Ash, lastly: “So we have clear scriptural evidence that Leviathan is a strange and terrifying sea monster, a many-headed, fire-breathing dragon who conveys to us the terror and evil of Satan himself.”³²¹

³¹⁸D.A. Carson, *How Long O Lord?*, 151.

³¹⁹Sam Storms, *Biblical Studies: Job* (Edmond, OK: Sam Storms, 2016), Job 40:15–41:34.

³²⁰Fyall, cited by Ash, 420.

³²¹Ash, 418-19.

Telescoping

I refer to this as *telescoping*. And that is where you see something at a surface level, but there's something that stands beyond it, a greater reality that stands beyond it. You see that same sort of thing in Ezekiel chapter 28. If you remember that passage, Ezekiel 28, God is talking about judgment that he's going to bring on the wicked king of Tyre. He's going to judge that wicked leader. So he's addressing the king and the nation of Tyre. But as Ezekiel chapter 28 progresses, it starts to get supernatural. It starts to change. We're reading about the King of Tyre, and then before long, a few verses later, we're reading this, verses 14 and 15 of Ezekiel 28:

14 “You were the anointed cherub who covers, and I placed you there. You were on the holy mountain of God; you walked in the midst of the stones of fire. 15 You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created until unrighteousness was found in you.”

Who's being addressed there at that point? Satan, right? But yet we're talking about the king of Tyre. Well, I would refer to this as telescoping, where we're looking beyond the surface into something that is bigger and greater in the distance. I see that same thing happening here in Job, and I'm not alone in that. But if we merely identify these creatures with something like a hippo and a crocodile, I think we missed the point. I don't see how Job's failure to repent, for example, after God's first reply to him somehow is broken and he repents when God then says, “Oh, by the way, I forgot two more creatures that I created, the hippo and the crocodile.” That seems a bit anticlimactic. However, if we see the darkness that Behemoth and Leviathan represent culturally and biblically, that makes a climactic point.

This ends the book as it began: addressing God's power over Satan, evil, and suffering. As I said, *the Almighty is Lord of the great and terrible*. And we also would see a natural progression from God's first speech, the first speech which progresses from the creation of the

earth to the sea to the morning light and darkness. Then we're talking about meteorological phenomenon. This is in chapter 38, the constellations, and then the animals of the land (also in chapter 38). We see this progression in creation. And yes, God is the sovereign creator who is Lord of these things. But then as it progresses, we see His, the sovereign creator, who is Lord over the forces of evil. So we're talking about the natural and then going beyond the natural, looking at the supernatural or the supranatural. This is God's character as Lord of the great and terrible. And that should bring us comfort. To quote again, Christopher Ash. He says:

The assurance that he can do all things and that no purpose of his can be thwarted is the comfort I need in suffering and the encouragement I crave when terrified by evil. He does not merely permit evil, but commands it, controls it, and uses it for his good purposes. The most evil deed in the history of the human race, the moment when the Leviathan and the Behemoth seemed ultimately victorious, is the moment that was brought about by "the definite plan and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23), and that was the moment of the Behemoth's and the Leviathan's definitive defeat.

Well, what's he talking about there? He's talking about the death of Jesus Christ; predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God. Ash goes on to say:

This God who knows how to use supernatural evil to serve his purposes of ultimate good can and will use the darkest invasions into my own life for his definite and invincible plans for my good in Christ. Hallelujah! What a Savior!"³²²

A Christophany?

And if you remember back when we looked at God's first reply to Job in chapter 38, we asked the question, "Could this appearance of God be a Christophany?" Do you remember that? And we talked about what's a Theophany and what's a Christophany? A Theophany is God, who is spirit, appearing in some tangible form, like a burning bush. And a Christophany is Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity, appearing before the incarnation in the Old Testament

³²²Ash, 424.

in some tangible form, such as the Angel of the Lord. Could this be God here; be Jesus Christ before the incarnation? Could this be the Second Person of the Trinity? And we teased that out and said, there's four reasons why this *may* be. (I don't think we can say definitely, but I lean toward thinking that this is actually a Christophany.) And we gave four reasons, briefly. That Yahweh speaks of His creation there in chapter 38, with the implication that the Creator is speaking. And while all three members of the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are involved in creation, we see that Jesus is the special agent of creation (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16). Another thing we talked about was that Job earlier spoke of wanting a mediator that would stand between him and God (9:32-33). And ultimately, who is that mediator? We're told the answer is Christ [who serves as] mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5). Number three, Jesus is the pinnacle of divine revelation. He's called "the Word" (John 1:1). He's the one through whom the prophets spoke (1 Peter 1:11). And then lastly, Isaiah's vision in Isaiah 6, where Isaiah saw the Lord holy and lifted up. That's an example of an Old Testament appearance of God that we're told in the New Testament was in fact an appearance of Jesus Christ (John 12:41).³²³

So with all of that, here are some quick closing thoughts. Number one, Jesus as God is Lord over evil. Jesus as God is Lord over evil. We see that in Job. We see that in full glory in the New Testament. Number two, Jesus as God is Lord over suffering. We see that in Job. We see that in the New Testament. He is the suffering servant who will wipe every tear from every eye of every believer. And thirdly, Jesus as God is Lord over everything. That's the central confession of the Christian faith: "Jesus is Lord." He's Lord over everything; things we see,

³²³Or a Christophany.

things we don't see, and that includes angels and demons. He's the Creator. Everything exists by Him and for Him (Colossians chapter one).

Now look again at Job, chapter 41, verses ten and 11. **“Who then is he that can stand before Me?”** Nobody can stand before Him in their naked humanness. **“Who has given to Me that I should repay him.”** No one. We're all debtors to God, not He to us. Then the second half of verse 11: **“whatever is under the whole heaven is mine.”** *The Almighty is Lord of the great and terrible*, and that includes the greatness of heaven and the terrors of hell. No one can stand before Him in naked sinfulness. I just said that.

One of my favorite passages is Romans chapter five, verses one and two: “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into the grace in which we stand, and we exult in the hope of the glory of God.” This is true of every believer. Justified. Saved by faith, therefore, having peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. And we're introduced by Him into this grace in which we stand. The idea is “fixed, immovable.” We stand in grace. We're grounded in grace. And we exult, we worship, we glory, we joy, in the hope of the glory of God. Yes. No one can stand before Him in their naked humanness. We can only stand before Him on that day, on that final day of judgment, if we stand clothed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. That comes by faith, by believing that you can't save yourself, your own hand can't save you. Believing that you are a sinner, condemned, under condemnation by a holy God. And that your only hope is the gospel, believing in Jesus Christ as Lord and as Savior; and in believing, repenting from your sin, serving Him. Then exult in the hope of the glory of God.

And so, Father, we thank You for this time. I pray, Lord, that You will use it. May it stick with us, and especially how You are the God of all things. You are Lord of the great and terrible, things that we see, things we don't see, even the forces of hell and evil, the forces of Satan himself. All of these things are in subjection to You and Your greatness as King. And so, Lord, we pray that You would encourage our hearts with these things. We thank You, Lord, for getting through this difficult section. We pray that we would glorify You as we move forward throughout this day and throughout this week. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

Job's Second Reply to God: When Suffering Means Surrender

Job 42:1-6

February 11, 2024

Christ Church of Clarkson

0124Job40:6-41:34(41) | Audio Length: 56:40

Job chapter 42, verses one through six (beginning in verse one): 1 **Then Job answered the LORD and said,** 2 **“I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted.** 3 **‘Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?’ “Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.”** 4 **‘Hear, now, and I will speak; I will ask You, and You instruct me.’** 5 **“I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees You;** 6 **Therefore I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes.”**³²⁴

This is the voice of our God.

And so, Lord, we're thankful for that voice, that voice that speaks to us and our reading. That voice that echoes in our hearts during times of need. As we reflect on the promises, as we reflect on the guidance, the light that your Word is to our path, would you illumine the path of Job chapter 42, verses one through six for us now? We ask this to the glory of our God and Savior. Amen.

Job's Second Reply to God: When Suffering Means Surrender

Well, if you've looked on the back of the Chronicle, if you've looked on the outline, you see the title. The title is “Job's Second Reply to God: When Suffering Means Surrender.” For the Christian, oftentimes suffering does mean surrender, and that's when we suffer that faith is tested. And the question is, “Will we really trust God when things go very, very wrong?” Will

³²⁴Scripture citations are taken from the NAS95 unless otherwise noted.

we submit to Him? You see what the Apostle Peter said is true: the sufferings of life serve to test the validity of our faith.

1 Peter 1:7-8

First Peter, chapter one, verses seven and following: Peter says, *You suffer* (note this) “so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” (v. 7) When you suffer, when you suffer trials, when you suffer calamities, your faith is being tested. And I find it noteworthy that within the context of First Peter chapter one, this includes the testing of our love for the Lord. Peter goes on in verse eight to say, “And though you have not seen Him, you love Him. And though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith, [and I would add, “even a suffering faith”] the salvation of your souls.”

It's when we suffer that we are called to surrender. When we suffer our faith is tested, our love for the Lord is tested. And certainly it doesn't mean that when we suffer, we fly through that suffering unscathed. We know that. But sometimes our faith wavers. Sometimes we're tempted to give up. Sometimes we're guilty of bad attitudes – or worse. But will we survive the fire? Back to First Peter: *You suffer* “so that the proof of your faith being more precious than gold, which is perishable, even though tested by fire . . .” Gold / faith. Get the analogy? “Tested by fire.” That includes the fire of suffering. But passing that test will result in “praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (when He returns, or when you stand before Him in glory). But you see again the surrender part. And when I say suffering means surrender, I mean, when we go through intense suffering, and we tend to often rebel against it (not always) but I

think it's common that when we go through intense trial, intense suffering, that we recoil against it, we rebel against it – and even maybe (dare I say it) against God. But do we finally come around and submit? Do we align our imperfect will with His will that is perfect? You know, my own suffering eventually did mean surrender in this sense. And the same thing is true of Job. Job lost just about everything near and dear to him. He lost his wealth, his possessions, his reputation, his friends – and worst of all, his ten kids. All of his children. All ten of them.

Satan's wager

But remember back to Satan's wager before the hammer fell on Job. Back when Job was happy and Job was prosperous during that time, before the hammer fell upon him. And Satan appeared to God in chapter one. Remember that? And it was God who pointed Job out as faithful. Satan's prowling about the earth and God – think about that – God drops your name! “Well, here's somebody worthy of being tested. Here's somebody worthy of going through the fire.” And Satan said in chapter one, verse nine through 11: 9 “. . . Does Job fear God for nothing? 10 “Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.”

You've blessed him. You've given him all this stuff. Well, no wonder he fears and serves You!

But here's the wager, verse 11: “But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face.” Satan's wager: would Job continue to love and serve his God?

And as we've seen, Job's faith wavered. He came perilously close, but never did as Satan predicted. He never did curse his God. He was guilty, however, of misrepresenting Him.

A hearing in God's courtroom

And so, giving Job his wish – what did he want? He talked about it in those middle chapters. He wanted a face to face hearing in God's courtroom. And God grants him his request. He appears to him out of a whirlwind in chapter 38, and He asks him, beginning of the chapter: “Now who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Now gird up your loins like a man. I will ask you [Job] and you instruct me.” And for two chapters God lectures Job on His, that is God's, greatness. His greatness as Creator. Will Job submit? Will suffering mean surrender?

And after God's first reply, Job responded by basically admitting his insignificance. “I'm insignificant; I will say no more.” He was bending but not broken, rattled but not repentant. And so God gives His second speech to Job in chapters 40 and 41. We looked at that last time. *The Almighty is Lord of the Great and Terrible*. By the “Great and Terrible,” we were focusing on two creatures of God's, two creations of His, the Behemoth and the Leviathan, both of which, as I took it, represented God's lordship over power, chaos, death, evil – even the demonic. He is Lord, He is sovereign over all of those things. And that sums up both of His replies to Job. He is the sovereign Lord. He is the sovereign Creator. He is the providential ruler over things we see, things we don't; over those things we characterize as natural, and those things we refer to as supernatural (like Behemoth and Leviathan). After all that Job has been through, will his suffering mean surrender?

God not only addressed him once, but he addressed him twice. After this second reply by God, *will Job tap out?* And will he not only give up, but will he give in? Will his heart be changed? Well, that's verses one through six of chapter 42.

Job's Realization: God Cannot Be Overcome (v. 2)

Again, this is Job's Second Reply to God: When Suffering Means Surrender. There are five points. And if you would follow along, the first one is in verses one and two – Job's Realization – our first point is Job's Realization: God Cannot Be Overcome. Job comes to understand that you can't overpower God. And so if you look at verse one and verse two, **“Then Job answered the LORD and said, . . .”** pretty much the same response, same words that preface this reply that also prefaced his first reply. But the words that follow are different, starting in verse two: **“I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted.”**

God is omnipotent

There are two things that Job realizes here. Two things. Job points out, number one (in verse two): *God is omnipotent*. He says, 2a **“I know you can do all things.”** Listen, God can do anything He pleases within the confines of His nature. I'm qualifying that. I'm *not* saying God can do anything, anything you can imagine God can do. Some people are shocked by that. “Oh no, God can do absolutely anything!” Now we're told in Hebrews chapter six, He can't swear by a name higher than His. We know that God can't lie. We know that God cannot do evil. There are lots of things God can't do. But God can do anything He desires *within the confines of His nature*. So supposed paradoxical silly questions such as God, “can He make a rock so heavy He can't move it” are absurdities. They are breaches of logic. God is the Lord of logic. It's part of His nature. And I focus on this a lot because I'm pretty big on logic, formal logic, and the importance of it. Truths like $5 + 5 = 10$ are eternal truths that derive their truth in God. They can't be anything other than what they are. So God can do anything He pleases within the

confines of His nature. God is omnipotent. Yahweh is bound by no law or principle outside of Himself. We say He is *ex lex*, He is above, outside of law, the law, other than those things that are consonant with His very nature. In the Old Testament book of Daniel, Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar; remember that he was humbled by God? And when he came to his senses, when he surrendered, he said this: “All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth; and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, ‘What have You done?’”³²⁵ No one! God is omnipotent. And Job says, “I know this.” Look at verse two: **“I know that You can do all things.”** That word “know” is the Hebrew word *yada*, which can carry the idea of “knowing by experience.” This is more than theoretical knowledge. This is like knowing, really knowing in your heart, or knowing through experience. Job now “knows” (*yada*). Job now knows this, and he saw how God demonstrated His omnipotence throughout chapters 38 through 41, how He's Lord of creation, including the great and terrible Behemoth and Leviathan. 2 **“I know You can do all things and no purpose of Yours can be thwarted.”** That's what Job says.

But note what Job doesn't say, either here or in the verses to follow. He doesn't say that now he understands suffering. “Now I understand why I suffered.” Or, “Now I understand why evil exists in Your creation, God.” “Now I understand why there seems to be injustice in this world.” Again, it's not the why. God doesn't answer the *why*, but He answers with the *Who*.

Capital W. And we ought to be content with that as well. D.A. Carson, quoting:

[Don't] assume that everything that takes place in God's universe ought to be explained to us. [Don't] assume that God owes us an explanation, that there cannot possibly be any good reason for God not to tell us everything we want to know immediately. [Don't]

³²⁵4:35.

assume that God Almighty should be more interested in giving us explanations than in being worshiped and trusted.³²⁶

God may not give you the answer to every question that you have. In fact, I think it's safe to say God *won't* give you the answer to every question you have. But God will always reply by not the “why,” but the “Who.” And God will always say, “Trust Me.” That's something you can take to the bank. Trust Him. *And sometimes suffering means surrender.* So we see God's omnipotence.

2 “I know that You can do all things . . .”

God is teleological

But we also see that not only is God omnipotent, *God is teleological.* Teleological? What does that mean? *God works providentially with a goal in mind.* God has a purpose. And that's what we see in the second half of that verse: 2b “**. . . no purpose of Yours can be thwarted.**” The United Bible Society Handbook says this: “Purpose translates a word meaning *plan* or *idea*. Anything that God plans to do will be done.” Anything God plans to do will be done. That's His purpose. He is the One, Isaiah 46:10, who declares, “. . . the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, ‘My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My [note this] good pleasure.’” Ephesians 1:11, “[He] works all things after the counsel of His will.” I couldn't help but think of Acts chapter four, verses 27 and 28. The first century disciples, reflecting on the crucifixion of Christ, said this: 27 “For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel . . .” *Yeah, there was a grand conspiracy. What do we do? Find a book on conspiracies? Look for the*

³²⁶D.A. Carson, *How Long O Lord*, 152-53.

first century Alex Jones? I mean, what do we do? There's a conspiracy going on here. What can we do? You know what happened: Verse 28 was whatever God's hand, God's purpose predestined. "Oh, I don't like that word 'predestined.' I don't believe in predestination." It's in the Bible! You're going to have to face it. Verse 28: "Whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur." God is teleological. He has a purpose. He has goals in mind that He will attain. He will, not might. He will. Yeah, we read the end of the book. We know who wins. You know that. That's been . . . that's a cliché that's been said many times. But it's true. God is teleological and God is omnipotent. This is Job's realization that God cannot be overcome.

Job's Recognition: Job Admits Ignorance (v. 3)

Number two, we have Job's Recognition: Job Admits Ignorance. And he begins by quoting what God said to him in chapter 38, verse two (and here I'm quoting God's words in chapter 38). God said to Job, "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?" *Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?* Now Job echoes that here in chapter 42, verse three. He says pretty much the same thing: 3 **"Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?"** (Question mark.) Implied idea, "Yeah, I can answer that question. That was me. I did it." Therefore, verse three: **"I have declared that which I did not understand, [that's Job's ignorance] things too wonderful for me, which I did not know."** One Old Testament scholar translates this this way: "To be sure, I made my *depositions* without understanding concerning things too wonderful for me, which I did not know." Depositions? What does that make you think of? That makes you think of legal stuff, right? A courtroom. Well, what have we said? If you haven't gotten this, you haven't been listening: legal language permeates the book of Job. And we see it here in chapter 42.

But again we have that word *yada*. And Job is saying here, “The words that came out of my mouth were ignorant. They were ignorant, and they were displayed by ignorance of the wonders that I did not know before.” *I did not understand things which I did not know*. Wonderful things! God's glory in being God! Wonderful things; God's power and God's wisdom. And so we hunger for that. To see God's glory, to see God's wisdom. But we will never grasp it all. Even when we're redeemed, we're not going to know everything because we're not God.³²⁷ Only Father, Son, and Holy Spirit know everything, okay? We will know all that we need to know. There will always be things we won't understand.

This past week I read Psalm 131, verses one and two, and I think it applies here. Here we have David: 1a “O LORD, my heart is not proud, nor my eyes haughty.” Okay, he starts with humility and he says, 1b “nor do I involve myself in great matters or in things too difficult for me. 2 Surely I have composed and quieted my soul like a weaned child rests against his mother. My soul is like a weaned child within me.” *I don't concern myself with matters too difficult*. And commentators debate, “What? What is he talking about here; things too difficult?” But some of them do see, as I see, an application to things so difficult, things so wonderful, that we can't totally grasp them. The mysteries of God and His ways, even in the midst of His glory. And so what does David do? He says, “like a weaned child rests against its mother, my soul is like a weaned child within me.” *I'm just going to rest in God*. He starts out with humility, he talks about difficult things that can't be understood. And then he goes back to humility and trust: *a weaned child resting against his mother*. God says, “Trust Me. Just trust Me. You don't

³²⁷Here I mean glorified.

understand, you don't know – there are some things, some things you do know – but you don't know the big picture. But one thing you can do is trust Me.”

Job's Reeducation: Job is Teachable (v. 4)

Thirdly, Job's Reeducation: Job is Teachable. Job's in the school of God and he wants to learn. And so verse four: **“Here now, and I will speak; I will ask You and You instruct me.”** Job's three friends tried to teach him, didn't they? Bildad, Eliphaz, Zophar, they tried to teach him. But they were teaching him the wrong things about God and creation. They believed that suffering was always a result of personal sin. Job had calamity come upon his life. Big calamity. He must have done some big sins to deserve that. Remember that was, that was the worldview out of which they were coming. And yet, Job (emphasized at the beginning of the book time and time again) was *a righteous man who feared God*. No, he didn't do anything to deserve the calamity that fell upon him. So the friends tried to teach him, but they were teaching him wrongly (and he was right to reject that teaching). And Elihu came along and focused not on what Job did *before* his calamity, but on the words he said *after*. That was the issue. Job questioned God after the calamity struck him. Job questioned God. Job blamed God. Job accused God of mismanaging the universe.

Two essential components of discipleship

But now here's Job's Reeducation. Job is teachable here now. 4 **“Hear, now, and I will speak; I will ask You, and You instruct me.”** There are two essential components of discipleship here in verse four. Number one, *you have to go to the right source*. You want to learn? Go to a source of truth, go to a source that's reliable. There are myriads of supposed authorities out there. Go to the internet, type in a controversial question, especially a theological

question, and see what myriads of answers that you get. And a lot of them wrong. Flat out wrong. Job went to the right source: God (or God went to him). And for us today, it's God's Word. We go to the right source. We go to God's Word. And if we have questions beyond God's Word? You go to somebody that knows more than you. Maybe you go to one of your pastors. Maybe you – if you don't know good resources – maybe one of your pastors can suggest some good resources for further study. Maybe you know good resources for further study. But be careful going to places like YouTube. “Christian living according to YouTube.” “The deity of Christ according to YouTube.” Unless you know the qualifications of the person that's teaching you, you could be in a whale of trouble. There is a lot of C-R-A-P on YouTube, a lot of it. And it always puzzles me how people, some people in my own church, can be going to places, grabbing books, getting stuff, and you find out, it's like, “Why are they, why are they into that? Why are they reading that? You know, why didn't they consult with one of the leaders of their own church?” That's kind of the first line of defense. You got a church you identify with, you got a question? Go to one of your leaders. Well, Job went to the right source.

And note, he says . . . just note the first six words: 4a **“Here now, and I will speak . . .”** What did Job say after God's first reply to him? What was Job's response? Remember? It was less than repentant. But what did he say? He basically said, “I'm shutting up. I'm not talking anymore. I lay my hand on my mouth. Once I've spoken, I will not answer even twice. I will add nothing more.” Well, Job does speak again. In fact, what we have here (in verse six) are his last recorded words in the book of Job. But not only do you go to the right source (remember two elements of discipleship? – *you have to go to the right source*), number two, *you have to have the right heart*. You want to learn? Sometimes that takes humility. Sometimes that takes, you

know, “I don't know, I don't know it all.” I remember one scholar who had a rather controversial view on divorce and remarriage. You know one of the things was that changed his mind? The fact that so many other scholars, even friends of his, rejected his view. That ought to give you pause when you hold up something that the vast majority of godly men and women and scholars in the church have rejected. Like I said before, I come up with some new spin on something significant like the Trinity, some new spin on the secret to Christian living that seems kind of weird, then you say, “Tony, it's time for you to hang it up, okay?” I think there's an authoritarian, an authoritarian aspect to the teaching of the church, the right teaching of the church throughout its history.³²⁸ I know, you know, you went through the dark ages and you had the Reformation and reasons for all of that. And that certainly has to be taken into consideration. Job says, “I will ask you, God, I'm going to the right source. You instruct me. I have the right heart. I have the right heart.”

These words Job utters here in verse four, **“I will ask You, and You instruct me”** do they sound familiar – do they sound familiar to you? These are the words that God said. God asked Job the same thing before each of his two speeches. . . . But God was being sarcastic. Okay, first speech. God prefaces it with this, chapter 38, verse three: “I will ask you, and you instruct Me.” Okay? God talking to me, saying that, I know He's being sarcastic and I'm probably in trouble. Before the second speech, same thing: “I will ask you and you instruct Me.” But here it flips. Here Job mirrors God's words, only Job isn't being sarcastic. He's ready to be educated. 4b **“I will ask You, and You instruct me.”** This is Job's Reeducation: Job is Teachable.

³²⁸Better, “authoritative.”

Fourthly, Jobs Revival: Job Now Sees (v. 5)

Fourthly, Jobs Revival: Job Now Sees. That brings us to verse five: **“I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You.”** This is such a powerful statement by Job: “I've heard, now I see.” And again, play with that idea that I brought up a couple times, that this could be a Christophany, this could be the Savior, Jesus Pre-incarnate appearing before Job. The mediator Job desired, the umpire who would lay his hands on them both.

He says, 5 **“I've heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You.”** Now, that doesn't always have to be literal sight. Like for us, sometimes we hear, but we don't see in the sense of understanding. And we'll often use that, won't we? Somebody will clarify something to us and you'll say, “Oh, now I see!” Well, you're talking about seeing with the mind, with the mind and heart. And Job is saying, “I've heard, but now I really know.” Kind of a parallel to the Hebrew noun *yada*, “Now I know, now I get it.” Of course, he did literally see. But to apply to us, it doesn't have to be a literal encounter. A.S. Peake, in his old commentary on the book, found this statement in verse five, *the supreme lesson of the book*. And he said,

Happy, even in his pain, that he has found himself and his God, he would rather suffer, if God willed it, than be in health and prosperity. He knows that all is well, he and his sufferings have their place in God's inscrutable design; why should he seek to understand it? In childlike reverence he acknowledges it to be far beyond him.”³²⁹

Another commentator, Rowley, said this: “Jobs intellectual problem is unsolved, for he has transcended it.” That's interesting. Jobs intellectual problem, “Why am I suffering? Why is there injustice in the universe?” – it's unsolved, but Job's transcended it. He's gone past the why? to

³²⁹Peake, A. S. *Job: Introduction, Revised Version with Notes and Index*. CB. Edinburgh: T. C. & E. C. Jack, 1905.

the Who. And I think those quotes are interesting. Some of it may be speculation, but I don't think they're far off the mark.

Times of revival

Job has undergone a personal revival of sorts. And it's important for us as believers to have those times of growth, maybe a time of sudden growth. And if you're like me, when you first came to Christ, you had this growth laced with a lot of stupid immaturity, but you kind of grew a lot. But you were like a puppy with big feet tripping all over yourself. And then things kind of slowed down. But hopefully you're understanding of the faith starts to grow and mature. And then it's sort of like you're really, really struggling to get more growth. You feel like you've achieved so much, but yet the more you grow, the more you realize how far short that you fall.

It's not the norm (to say lightly), to have some “subsequent to salvation experience” that automatically transcends our life with Jesus Christ to some higher plane, till we no longer struggle with apathy or sin. That is not the norm. But people seek it. The history of the church is replete with people seeking a higher life. Sometimes it's through a new understanding of sanctification. Sometimes it's through an experience (speaking in other languages, seeing miracles). Sometimes it's a new spin on sanctification. People are constantly – again, look at the history of the church – people have been finding (or trying to find) some higher plane that they can just “get there.” *And now, I'm there and it's done.*³³⁰ No, we struggle. But that doesn't mean we don't go through some times of personal revival.

³³⁰See the Apostle Paul in Philippians 3:12.

Spiritual depression and the promises of God

I went through a time of great spiritual depression a few years ago. And in 2022 I did two messages on this, *Spiritual Depression: Reasons and Remedies*. And if you find yourself spiritually depressed, I would encourage you to listen to those two messages.³³¹ Preparing them and delivering them did much for me, and I came out of that spiritual depression. And I remember telling somebody, “It's almost like I've been born again, again.” But unlike any genuine conversion – you're only born again once – unlike that, this didn't last like I wanted it to. I was on a spiritual high, but I came down off the mountain to taste again of the dark valleys. If you've walked with the Lord any number of years, I'm sure you understand what I'm talking about. And I can look back and say, well, one of the reasons is because I didn't maintain some of the hard disciplines that are required. Another is simply the fact that our sinful estate is quite unpredictable. We can be up one day, or one month, and then be down, struggling. Sometimes it's like being on a ship in turbulent waters. The waves are crashing against the ship, and it's going back and forth. And you feel sick. You're wondering, “Am I going to make it?” But then you see the land – you see the land in the distance. And you're being drawn, the ship is being drawn as if by a magnet to the land. And you look at that land and you say, “That's like the promises of God. I can look at my topsy turvy life, the up and down I'm going through, or I can look at that which doesn't move; I can look at the golden shore.” You know, those are the promises of God. The ship that goes back and forth and battered by waves? That's our lives sometimes. And if you're trying to find some magic bullet that will take you out of struggling in the Christian life, I think you're going to be frustrated. Focus on that which does not change.

³³¹www.GroundedInGrace.com.

Focus on the Word of God. Focus on the promises of God. And when you say, “Well, I just don't, I don't feel it.” Tell yourself *it doesn't matter how I feel*. God's promises are not contingent upon how you feel! Is that a surprise to any of you? I've never once had Him come to me and say, “Tony, how do you feel about this?”

Pray for revival

Pray for revival. Pray for revival. Someone told me months ago that I was one of only, I don't know, 1 or 2 preachers he knew that really talks a lot about revival. I don't know that I talk about it that much, but I think it's so important to pray for revival and to pray that it start with you. I talk about the different levels of revival. And normally when we think of revival, we think of people in a geographic area, a bunch of people coming to saving faith. Well, that usually starts with Christians getting serious about the Christian life. That's been the historical pattern. Christians praying for revival, and suddenly they have a revival in their hearts where now they are praying. You talk about prayer today in most churches? Uh, people get a little uncomfortable; start shifting their feet. “How much time do you spend in dedicated, devoted prayer every day?” Many Christians would say, “I really don't.” So pray for revival. Prayer is a mark of revival. When it starts in the family of God [we see] prayer, a hunger to evangelize, to tell others about Jesus, striving for and achieving more holiness in life. And those things seem to precede the revival that we think of when we talk about revival, and that is masses coming to faith in Christ. It seems to start in the church, then unbelievers get drawn in. “Lord, I don't know. I don't know if You're going to bring revival to this area, to this church. But Lord, please bring revival to this struggling, apathetic heart, to get a greater vision of Jesus.” . . . I'm not talking about a mystical experience, but to be able to read God's Word and to read about Christ,

and to have a greater appreciation and understanding and passion for Him. That's to *really* see God's glory. As one writer noted:

It's one thing to see God's glory in Creation; it's another to simply see God's glory. God means for us to be stunned and awed by His world of creation [and I would add, Job was]. But not for its own sake. . . . These are but the backside of his glory, as it were, darkly seen through a glass. What will it be to see the Creator himself! Not His works! A billion galaxies will not satisfy the human soul. God and God alone is the soul's end. Jonathan Edwards expressed it like this: "The enjoyment of God is the only happiness with which our souls can be satisfied. To go to heaven, fully to enjoy God, is infinitely better than the most pleasant accommodations here. . . . [These] are but shadows; but God is the substance. These are but scattered beams; but God is the sun. These are but streams; but God is the ocean."³³²

Help me to get a glimpse, a greater glimpse of what I will see in eternity. Help give me a greater glimpse *now* of that. John Newton:

Weak is the effort of my heart;
And cold my warmest thought;
But when I see Thee as Thou art;
I'll praise Thee as I ought.

All questions melt before Him

All questions flee before him. As we said when we were looking at God's first reply to Job, *tough questions melt in light of God's nature*. Well, God's nature is God's glory. God's answer isn't why, but Who? Christopher Morley said, "I had a million questions to ask God, but when I met Him, they all fled my mind and it didn't seem to matter." The Swiss psychologist, Dr. Paul Tournier, wrote in his book *Guilt and Grace*: "For God's answer is not an idea, a

³³²Cited in Talbert, 225.

proposition, like the conclusion of a theorem; it is Himself. He revealed Himself to Job; Job found personal contact with God.”³³³

Review

So this is God's Second Reply to Job: When Suffering Means Surrender. Number one, Job's Realization: God Cannot be Overcome, **“I know that You can do all things,”** verse two, **“and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted.”** Then there was Job's Recognition: Job Admits Ignorance. Verse three, **“Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge? Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand, things too wonderful me for me, which I did not know.”** Then there's Job's Reeducation: Job is Teachable, **“Hear now, and I will speak; I will ask You and You instruct me.”** Then fourth, Job's Revival: Job Now Sees. Verse five, **“I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You.”**

Job's Repentance: Job Drops His Legal Case (v. 6)

And lastly, we have Job's Repentance: Job Drops His Legal Case. Verse six (short verse): **“Therefore I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes.”** Depending on your translation, you may have something different for that first part of the verse, **“Therefore I retract . . .”** (for example, if you're using the ESV). Some translations have something like, “I retract my words,” but others have something like, “I despise myself.” . . . Well, translations are split on how they handle this. It's the Hebrew verb *ma'as*, most commonly meaning “to refuse” or “to reject.” The problem is here in verse six, it has no object. The words “myself” or “my words,” they're not in the Hebrew. It's simply “I reject, I revoke, I retract, I despise” (however you want to translate my

³³³*Guilt and Grace*, Harper & Row, 86. I don't use this quote to in any way minimize the essential nature of God's propositional revelation in the Bible.

ma'ss). There's no object, so that's supplied by the translator. So is it himself that Job rejects or retracts? Do we translate it, "I reject or loathe myself"? Or is it his words – "I reject"? – "I retract my words." Again, translations are split, but I think "words" is a better understood idea. I think Job is rejecting or despising ("reject" would be better) his words, what he has said up until this point. And why do I say that?

Addressing the translation issue

Well, let me give you two reasons why I prefer the New American Standard translation and others that follow it here. And these two reasons both start with the letter "C." Number one is *context*. It fits the context for Job to be retracting his words. That fits the context. Remember, both Elihu and God confronted Job as to his words and the attitudes that lie behind those words. Consider Elihu and his four speeches:

- 33:8, speaking to Job in the first speech: "Surely you have spoken in my hearing, and I have heard the sound of your *words*."
- Speaking to Job in his second speech, 33:13, Elihu said: "Why do you *complain* against Him? . . ." Well, complaining involves words.
- In his third speech, Elihu said this (34:5): "For Job has *said*, 'I am righteous, but God has taken away my right.'"
- And then in his fourth speech, Elihu simply says to Job: "For truly my *words*" [implied idea, "as opposed to yours and the three friends"] "my *words* are not false" (36:4).

The biggest problem has been what has come out of Job's mouth (and the attitudes that reflected that). All that happened subsequent to the calamity that struck his life. After his lamentation in chapter three, he starts to question God and God's management of the universe. So it's Job's words. Elihu points that out.

And God concurs. In chapter 38, He appears out of a whirlwind and prefaces His first reply to Job by saying, "Who is this that darkens counsel . . . by *words* without knowledge." So

understanding the Hebrew word *ma'as* as rejecting words rather than Job despising himself fits the context. That's the first "C."

The second "C" is *court*. It fits the courtroom setting. Again, God is appearing to Job in this metaphorical courtroom atmosphere where God is both the Judge and Prosecuting Attorney. For Job to say in verse six, "**Therefore I retract . . .**" is akin to Job saying that he drops his indictment against God. Layton Talbot brings both *context* (words) and "court" (courtroom) together in this quote:

But the immediate and larger context [emphasizing Job's uninformed and ill-advised words] suggests a meaning that brings closure to the legal battle that began with Job's challenge and culminated in God's answer. Job is "abhorring" his rash and inappropriate words. A better rendering would be simply "Therefore I retract [my words]" (NASB). *Job is recanting, withdrawing all charges, dropping his case.*³³⁴

And that fits, again, this the main subpoint, "Jobs Repentance," that we're looking at (number five, Job's Repentance: Job Drops His Legal Case).

Job's journey

Well, there are two halves in this verse. The first half, Job drops his case against God ("**Therefore I retract . . .**"). And the second half is that Job repents ("**. . . I repent in dust and ashes**").

Now think about Job's journey. Job began his sorrowful journey at the town dump, sitting in a pile of what? A pile of ashes; scraping his his oozing pus, infected sores with pot sherds, pieces of broken pottery, applying ash to them (2:8). And Job continued to live among the ashes of the town dump (chapter three on). Here he repents, the dust and ashes around him symbolic of his heart. What a picture! What a picture! Dust and ashes themselves symbolic of

³³⁴Talbert, 221. Emphasis mine.

grief (the three friends throwing dust in the air, chapter two, verse 12). But even in his grief, Job repents.

I don't believe – and I can say this from experience, as can millions of others – I don't believe that Job's grief ended here. I don't believe that Job's grief ends at the end of the book. You lose ten children, much less one, you don't get over it. Parents, you can only imagine – if you've gone through it, you know – but you can only imagine if you haven't. You don't get to the point where, “Well, it's been ten years now. I'm over it.” No, it doesn't work that way.

What is repentance?

What is repentance? I'll give you a definition: “Repentance is a change of mind and heart that results in a change of behavior.” *Repentance is a change of mind and heart that results in a change of behavior.* When Job says here in verse six, “**I repent in dust and ashes**”, you need to see that verses two through five are all inclusive of that. Okay? It isn't like, *Well, Job did this, Job did this, Job to this, Job did this.*

This really all encompasses repentance:

- First point, *Realization*. Knowing who God is, or knowing who Jesus Christ is, that's part of repentance.
- Number two, *Recognition*. Realizing and recognizing your ignorance, that you don't know it all; recognizing your sin.
- Number three, *Reeducation*. Learning the gospel. A change of mind that reflects a change of heart.
- And then number four, *Revival* (a new direction in life). And that's what we did when we believed.

I don't think this was a salvation moment for Job. I don't think we can look at it in that way. I think Job was already what we might call a believer back at the very beginning of the book. You don't call an unbeliever someone who's righteous and fears the Lord. That described

Job at the beginning of the book. This is just a revival in Job's life (and encompasses all of those things) and his repentance.

You know, as we say here, repentance isn't a one-and-done deal. Part of our church confession is that we believe that repentance is normal to the Christian life.³³⁵ That is, we continually repent. Not to get saved again. But no, as part of our ongoing sanctification.

We battle against sins. Have you ever had a particular sin that you battled against and it seemed like you couldn't get victory over it? But then, you know, you keep repenting and you keep repenting, and eventually you start to conquer that sin. Or maybe it was something that you were struggling with that you just outright said, "I'm repenting of this. I'm not doing this anymore." Yeah, sometimes we do that. [But we sometimes] fall again and we fall again. But we continually repent. We come back repenting again and again and again. The great London Baptist preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon said this: "The door of repentance opens into the hall of Joy." *The door of repentance opens into the hall of Joy.*

Of course, we ask the question, "of what does Job repent?" I'll let D.A. Carson have the last word on that: "He does not repent of sins that have allegedly brought on the suffering; he repents of his arrogance in impugning God's justice, he repents of the attitude whereby he simply demands an answer, as if such were owed him. He repents of not having known God better. . . ." ³³⁶

³³⁵The last paragraph includes the words, "We endeavor to live with Spirit-filled integrity, living holy lives in this present world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our conduct; to make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts, believing repentance as normal to the Christian life." [Paragraph Twelve: Personal Integrity, Christ Church of Clarkson Confession]

³³⁶D.A. Carson, *How Long O Lord*, 153.

Three Concluding Thoughts

Sometimes suffering means surrender

Let me just give you three quick concluding thoughts. Number one. *Sometimes suffering means surrender*. We've seen that with Job. Listen, I've lived it. Surrender yourself to God's omnipotence and His sovereign providence. What you're going through did not take God by surprise. There's a sense in which He designed it. And He is sovereign over it. And He wants to grow you through it. You may not see it now, but trust in the promise that "all things work together for good to those who love God, for those who are called according to His purpose."³³⁷ And that takes faith. That takes trust. That takes surrender to His designs. So *sometimes suffering means surrender*.

God never gives up on family

Number two (I'm so thankful for this): *God never gives up on family*. God never gives up on family. We've seen that with Job, and I've lived it. God will preserve and protect those who are truly His in Christ. He began the work; He will bring it to its final, teleological conclusion (or goal).

I've said it many times. I just said it to somebody the other day and it's no cliché for me. If it wasn't for God's mercy and patience, I would not be here. I would have made shipwreck of my faith. Every time I was tempted to give up or do something really foolish, God was there, providentially redirecting me, and often using others, some within this church, to do so. God never gives up on family. We see that with Job. I trust you see that in your own life.

³³⁷Romans 8:28.

Experiencing God means we truly know Him

Number three. *Experiencing God means we truly know Him*. We long for a greater experience with God, and I talked about that earlier. And if my hunch is correct, Job saw Jesus face to face out of that whirlwind. It's not likely . . . that we will see our Lord face to face, until that day when we stand before Him in glory. Ours, as Paul said, "We walk by faith, not by sight."³³⁸ And so if we truly know him, we have the Holy Spirit who resides within us, guiding us, testifying to us that we are His.

John 17:3, at the beginning of Jesus' high priestly prayer, He said this: "This is eternal life, that they may know You [talking to the Father], the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." We who know Christ have Him as our advocate in God's court. He stands with us as our Defense Attorney and our Judge who declares us "not guilty" in His sight because of His righteousness that has been imputed to us. Hallelujah! John Calvin said this: "For Christ's righteousness, which as it alone is perfect alone can bear the sight of God, must appear in court on our behalf, and stand surety in judgment."³³⁹ It's Christ's righteousness that appears in court on our behalf. In Christ, God's case against you, believer, has been adjudicated. Not guilty! Righteous in Christ! Clothed in the righteousness of Christ!

I will close with this quote by the old Anglican Henry Law:

"... [F]or what exact purpose did Jesus become the woman's Seed? . . . You know that the Word of God has spoken and cannot be called back: 'The soul that sins, it shall die.' You know, too, that to die under this sentence means to suffer forever the torments of the lost. Under this condemnation you and I are brought by sin. You and I, then, must remain there unless God be pleased to take the death of a sinless one in the place of our

³³⁸2 Corinthians 5:7.

³³⁹*Institutes*, 3.14.12.

death. Jesus is willing to bear all for us. How could He do so, without being man? He could not. Therefore, He is made man. So when God's truth and justice say, 'I must have that man's life,' Jesus is ready to reply, 'I am of his nature; here is My life for his.'"³⁴⁰

Lord, we thank You for the wonderful truth that Jesus gave His life for ours. That we can say, "I need an Advocate in the courtroom of God. And I have that Advocate with the Father: the righteous, the perfect, Son of God who gave His life for mine." And Lord, I pray that, like Job, when we suffer we will surrender. But I know, Lord, that often we are not willing to surrender so easily. And so we're thankful for that truth that You never give up on family. You continue to pursue those who are Your own, Your elect. And so, Lord, we are humbled by these truths; thankful, Lord, for this time that we can spend as we near the end of this, this wonderful book. May we take Lord these truths, not just those we've heard in this session, but those, Lord, that have come before it all, building upon another. May we take those, and may they serve to grow us in the grace and knowledge of the truth. To the glory of our God and King, we pray. Amen.

³⁴⁰Henry Law (1797-1884) commenting on Genesis 3:15.

Epilogue: Restoration!
Job 42:7-17
March 10, 2024
Christ Church of Clarkson
0324Job42:7-17(43) | Audio Length: 56:40

Job chapter 42, beginning in verse seven and reading to the end of the chapter:

7 It came about after the LORD had spoken these words to Job, that the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, “My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends, because you have not spoken of Me what is right as My servant Job has. 8 “Now therefore, take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, and go to My servant Job, and offer up a burnt offering for yourselves, and My servant Job will pray for you. For I will accept him so that I may not do with you according to your folly, because you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has.” 9 So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went and did as the LORD told them; and the LORD accepted Job. 10 The LORD restored the fortunes of Job when he prayed for his friends, and the LORD increased all that Job had twofold. 11 Then all his brothers and all his sisters and all who had known him before came to him, and they ate bread with him in his house; and they consoled him and comforted him for all the adversities that the LORD had brought on him. And each one gave him one piece of money, and each a ring of gold. 12 The LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; and he had 14,000 sheep and 6,000 camels and 1,000 yoke of oxen and 1,000 female donkeys. 13 He had seven sons and three daughters. 14 He named the first Jemimah, and the second Keziah, and the third Keren-happuch. 15 In all the land no women were found so fair as Job’s daughters; and their father gave them inheritance among their brothers. 16 After this, Job lived 140 years, and saw his sons and his grandsons, four generations. 17 And Job died, an old man and full of days.³⁴¹

This is the voice of our God. Let's pray.

Oh our dear Lord, our dear Savior, we pray for this time that we spend as we finish at least the text of this book. We thank you for it. We pray, Lord, that you would use your servant. Take all that I have studied over the past week plus, and may that come together in a way that's

³⁴¹Scripture citations are taken from the NAS95 unless otherwise noted.

understandable, in a way that's a challenge to the hearers, in a way that builds up our lives to better pursue Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Epilogue: Restoration!

If you haven't noticed it yet, the title (two words): Epilogue: Restoration! It originally was going to be “The Restoration of Job,” but then I got thinking, that would be understating the text. Much more is restored than just Job. We see that the three friends are restored. I think we see Job's wife is restored. Job's friendships and family, they're restored, and Elihu is vindicated. And Satan, in the end, loses his wager that Job would curse God.

Endure suffering, knowing that your reward is sure, even if the timing isn't

So we have as our title: Epilogue. Restoration! And the lesson that I hope that we can all glean from this passage is this: *Endure suffering, knowing that your reward is sure, even if the timing isn't.* And we'll be revisiting this thought time and time again.

But to elaborate on it a little bit right now, Job is indeed restored. I think you've probably peaked at the end of the book; you know what happens. He's blessed materially with double what he had before calamity arrived, and we see that in the end. But it would be a mistake to imply from what happens to Job, that we should expect when we encounter calamity in this life that God will reward our suffering well with some sort of earthly benefits. Listen, as a believer in Jesus Christ, you may suffer material loss. You may (as we have) lose a family member, a daughter or son, a wife, husband. You may not live to be elderly. But regardless, you will be rewarded. It just may not be in this earthly life. Okay, so I want to get that clear. God blesses Job. He blesses him out of grace, not out of obligation.

It was the words of Martin Luther that framed the song “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.” Those words, the one section, struck me with fresh impact after our calamity. Those words now adorn my left forearm (you haven't noticed because I wear long sleeves). But they struck me with such fresh impact: “Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also.” *Goods*, material things. *Kindred* our loved ones. Hold them with a loose hand. And *this mortal life*, because you never know when it will be taken from you. So *endure suffering, knowing that your reward is sure, even if the timing isn't*. But the sure reward for the believer is the gift of eternal life in Jesus Christ. And that is sure.

But we move in our passage for today from poetry back to prose. Prose that we saw in the beginning, historical narrative. But while prose set the stage for the book in chapters one and two, the great bulk of the book of Job is poetic. It's poetic literature (chapter three to the first part of chapter 42). But here in verse seven, as we end the book, we are back where we started in prose.

And if I can set the stage for you as we come to verse seven, the curtain rises on a different scene. Job is still suffering. He's sitting in the ash heap, still at the town dump. He's still a skeletal mess, covered with sores and scabs. He's still materially destitute, his reputation has been slandered, his friends have deserted him – and he yet grieves the loss of his children. He's suffering, but I don't think at this point in verse seven he still feels abandoned by God. God has confronted him (chapters 38 and 39). God gives two speeches to Job. And I think after verses one through six, Job's repentance . . . , he's humble now. He has repented. But perhaps the big question on his mind is, “Okay, what next?” *I feel like my relationship with my God is okay,*

but I'm still sick. I'm still suffering. So what next? Well, the “what next” is what follows, beginning in verse seven and ending in verse 17.

Three outline points . . . we're using the letter “R”:

1. God Reprimands Job's Three Friends (v. 7).
2. The Friends Are Reconciled to God (vv. 8-9).

And then the third point that takes us through the bulk of the passage:

3. God Restores Job (that's verses 10-17).

God Reprimands Job's Three Friends (v. 7)

So if you would look in your Bibles again at verse seven of Job, chapter 42: God Reprimands Job's Three Friends. Let's just read verse seven (follow along): 7 **“It came about after the LORD had spoken these words to Job, that the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, ‘My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends, because you have not spoken of me what is right as my servant Job has.’”**

I don't know if you noticed, but in your English Bibles, no doubt, the word “LORD” is in capitals. It's used twice that way, which indicates to us – the translators do that as an indication that the word, the Hebrew word, is “Yahweh.” And we've talked about this before. We see it at the beginning of the book, we see it at the end of the book, this word used for God, Yahweh, which is His personal covenant name. It's been anglicized through German influence into *Jehovah*, but more purely from the Hebrew it's *Yahweh*. And we see that word used twice. This is God's covenantal, personal name. That's significant. It's called the Tetragrammaton because it's YHWH, four consonants (Hebrew being a consonantal language, originally did not have vowels).

And so, the LORD, after he spoke these words to Job, He confronts Eliphaz. And again we see it's Eliphaz that goes first in each of the three cycles of speeches to Job, Eliphaz who we believe is the oldest. So he's addressed as the oldest on behalf of the entire group, those three friends. And God is angry, 7 **“My wrath is kindled . . .”** Think about that phrase, *wrath being kindled* – **“against you [Eliphaz] and against your two friends.”**

Very interesting that Job had predicted earlier in his reply to the three that things may not, in the end, turn out well for them. Going back to chapter 13, Job said this (he's addressing the three friends): 7 “Will you speak what is unjust for God, and speak what is deceitful for Him? 8 “Will you show partiality for Him? Will you contend for God?” And then note this, chapter 13, verse nine: “Will it be well when He examines you? Or will you deceive Him as one deceives a man?” In other words, “You've been examining me. You've been critiquing me. How is it going to go for you when you are being examined by Holy God?” And we see right now the friends are being examined by Yahweh.

And He's angry. And the reason for his anger is in verse seven, there toward the middle: **“because . . .** – You know, he's speaking to Eliphaz, but He's addressing the three; and the “you” in Hebrew is plural – **“because you have not spoken of me what is right as My servant Job has.”** He's not angry at the three because they misrepresented Job, they slandered Job (even though they did). Principally, God is angry with them because they misrepresented Him. They slandered Him with their misrepresentations of His character and His intents. So sin is principally, foremost against God. You may sin against someone else, but still it is principally and foremost a sin against God, who is The Standard for all things.

When Joseph was tempted to commit adultery with Potiphar's wife (Genesis chapter 39), Joseph, in the midst of his temptation, didn't say to this beautiful woman, "I can't sin against my master by fornicating with you." No, he said, "I can't sin against my God by doing this thing." Yes, you can sin against someone else and you will be accountable. But remember that you are principally sinning against God – and you will be accountable indeed for that, because God is the one who sets the standards of right and wrong.

Now note two things as you go back to verse seven. First, God calls Job "His servant" four times in this passage. God uses that phrase, words that haven't been uttered for 40 chapters, not since chapter one, verse eight and chapter two, verse three. And in that setting – God calls Job "His servant" – that's in the context of the heavenly council where Job didn't hear it. Now God uses that phrase in the hearing of *everyone* that's present, I presume Elihu is there. There may be others there. But principally, of course, you've got Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, and you've got Job as well who hears this. That's got to feel really good. After all he's been through, Job is called "My servant." So note that.

But secondly (and I don't know if anybody caught this), but the question has been asked, "How is it that God says that Job has spoken right about Him?" Look at verse seven: "**... you have not spoken of me what is right as *My servant Job has.***" That's repeated again in verse eight: "**... you have not spoken of me what is right as *My servant Job has.***" And so the question, and I think some of you are getting this, the question is, "How can God berate the three for their faulty words, and say that Job is spoken rightly of Him when God just spent two speeches berating Job for his words, for what he has said?"

And an example of that (among others), chapter 38, verse two where God said to Job, “Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?” In chapter 40, verse two, God calls Job “a faultfinder,” namely a faultfinder toward God. So Job clearly was guilty of similar sin as the three friends, and that is a sin of words, speaking things that aren't true about God. But yet it says, **“My servant Job has spoken of me what is right.”** Well, that's a discrepancy that has been debated for a long time. And there are several options that have been given, and I think the simplest (Occam's razor applies) is that God is referring to Job's repentance in chapter 42, verses one through six. Follow me. (By the way, Talbert calls this “the most naturally and grammatically consistent understanding” of what God means by applauding Job's words.³⁴²) And so the idea is, if we can do a little paraphrase, God is saying to the three, “. . . you have not spoken of Me what is right as My servant Job *just* has.” Well, when was the “just has”? It was in the first and second verses primarily [when] Job answered the LORD and said, “I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted.” That was the verbal aspect of Job's repentance before God. And so I think that is what is being talked about here. When God says to the three, 7 **“you have not spoken of Me what is right as My servant Job has”** He's looking at Job's confession that just happened. I think that's a good position to take.

But I also think that even if you don't take that position (it is, as I've searched it out, it's a minority position) – but I think yet there's a difference between Job's words and those of the three that's very important. Number one, even though they both said things that were wrong, Job was speaking his “windy words”³⁴³ out of a heart of deep, deep suffering; suffering tragedy,

³⁴²Layton Talbert, *Beyond Suffering: Discovering the Message of Job*.

³⁴³Job 6:26.

losing just about everything near and dear to him. The friends were speaking as those who seemingly knew nothing about suffering tragedy. They seemingly knew nothing about being broken by God. They were walking theological textbooks, devoid of feeling. And so Christopher Ash (who gives credence to the view that Job's good words were what he said in verses one through six) – looking beyond that, he says, Christopher Ash says this:

It seems to me that God's affirmation applies somehow not only to what Job has said, but to who Job is. . . . The friends have a theological scheme, a tidy system, well-swept, well-defined, and entirely satisfying to them. But they have no relationship with the God behind their formulas. There is no wonder, no awe, no longing, no yearning, and no prayer to meet and speak with and hear and see the God of their formulas. They are content with the rules of The System they have invented. . . . For them [God] is a dead doctrine and an abstract theory.³⁴⁴

There's a difference in the heart when the three speak and when Job speaks. God knows the heart. He knows the heart of Job. And He's compassionate, mindful of Job's suffering, of those “windy words.” So our first point: God Reprimands Job's Three Friends.

The Friends Are Reconciled to God (vv. 8-9)

Our second point, The Friends Are Reconciled to God (verses eight and nine). The first point the key word *reprimanded*. Here we have *reconciled*. So look at verse eight (we see a sacrifice) . . . : **“Now therefore take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up a burnt offering for yourselves.** Well, here God is commanding an offering, an animal sacrifice.

Now remember, what happens in Job happens *before* the Mosaic Law, when we have all of these sacrifices that are delineated for the people of Israel to follow during that time period. Nonetheless, there were still animal sacrifices – even before the giving of the Law. You can go

³⁴⁴C. Ash, *Job*, 428-28.

back to the animals that were slain for Adam and Eve after the Fall. They had to be slain to clothe Adam and Eve in their nakedness. You can talk about Noah, who had clean animals on the ark. And those were designed for sacrifice, principally at the end of the flood. So there were sacrifices, even though later the Law would outline several different reasons for burnt offerings.

So you wonder, *well, what is what is the reason here?* I take this to be a *sin offering*, a sin offering – that on behalf of Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar. Because God says, 8 **“take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams . . .”**

Now we assume, thinking about where they got the animals, we assume that Job had lost all of his, so it was up to the three to get the animals to sacrifice. They were the ones who had to provide them at their own expense. Seven bulls, seven rams. (Number seven is significant. It's a number of completion.)

But these 14 animals was a large sacrifice. One scholar calls the number “astonishingly high.” Later we see this number repeated. Seven bulls, seven rams would be offered for the whole people of Israel on each of the seven days of Passover (Ezekiel 45:23). We see the same thing in the narrative of Balaam and Balak (Numbers 23:1, 29). And we also see it at the installation of the Ark of the Covenant in David's time (1 Chronicles 15:26). And lastly at the cleansing of the Temple in Hezekiah's day (2 Chronicles 29:21).

[Verse 8] **“take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams”** (and then note Job's role): **“go to my servant Job . . .”** Go to Job. And then Job was to pray for them (verse eight): **“My servant Job will pray for you. . . .”** There's no indication that the three had ever prayed for Job. We don't know that (it's an argument from silence). But you would think that it would be in the

text if they had heart enough for suffering Job to pray for him. But here he is to pray for them. So there's a bit of an irony here, isn't there?

And God accepts the sacrifice and Job's prayer (in the future tense): **“For I will accept . . .”** – now, if you're using the New American Standard, it simply says, **“I will accept him.”** That is, “Job” – **“I will accept him.”** Most translations probably have, “I will accept his prayer.” The word “prayer” isn't in the text. That is put in because that's assumed what God is talking about here. But it's not in the text. It's literally in the Hebrew, “I will accept his face.” *I will accept Job's face*, something very personal in that Hebrew language and in the that ancient time for God to receive your face. That's literally what it's talking about here, that God accepts the sacrifice, He accepts the prayer.

And the purpose we see in verse eight: **“So that [or “in order that”] I may not do with you [three] according to your folly.”** Then, the phrase repeated from verse seven: **“because you have not spoken of Me what is right as My servant Job has.”** So God's anger is appeased. God's anger against their foolishness.

The word “folly” is related to the Hebrew word *nabal*, which means “fool.” In chapter two, verse ten, Job accused his wife of speaking (remember?) that “you speak like or as a foolish woman speaks.” He wasn't calling her a foolish woman, he was just simply saying, “you speak like one.” And there he uses that word in Hebrew, *nabal*. Here God uses a related word, *nebalim*, in stating that the three friends are themselves foolish for the false words they uttered from chapter four onward. Again, another little irony there. But the purpose was that God not do to them, not act in accordance with their stupidity. And so Job prays for them.

And in praying, Job fulfills the words of Jesus in Matthew chapter five verse 44, where Jesus said, “I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” And that's what Job is doing. He's praying for those that are seemingly – they become his enemies and they've been persecuting him.

We see Job also here acting as a priest. What did Job do before tragedy entered his world (chapter one, verse five)? Job sacrificed burnt offerings on behalf of his children. Here he offers up and witnesses sacrifices for those who wronged him, including the sacrifice of prayer.

But remember (this is so important), remember that Job is still – he's still at the ash heap. He's still suffering. He's still covered with sores. That hasn't changed. He's still, as I said earlier, a skeletal mess. As Clines says, David J.A. Clines:

. . . we must remember that Job has not yet been restored when the friends bring their request to him for his prayer. He is presumably still on the ash-heap. He has no inkling that Yahweh intends to reverse his fortunes. All he knows is that he is still suffering at Yahweh's hand, and, if it is difficult for the friends to acknowledge the divine judgment against them, it must be no less difficult for Job to accept this second-hand instruction to offer prayer for people he must be totally disenchanted with . . .³⁴⁵

Love your enemies, pray for those that persecute you, or afflict you, or criticize you, or slander you. So suffering Job serves as a priestly mediator for his friends, even though they didn't ask him for one.

And so they do as they're told, the three do as they're told. And God does as He said He would. Verse nine: “**Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar went and did as the LORD told them, and the LORD accepted Job.**” The same thing we saw in the previous verse: “The LORD accepted Job's face.” Job was accepted. He was satisfied with Job's prayer. And so there's a sense in

³⁴⁵David J.A. Clines. *Job*, in the Word Biblical Commentary series.

which Job is a mediator, and he delivers the three friends. God is using him as a mediating deliverer.

You go back to chapter 22, verse 30, Eliphaz as the spokesman of the three again gave a prediction. And he said of Job, listen to this, we'll repeat it. Listen to this: “[God] will deliver even one who is not innocent, ... through the cleanness of your hands.” Talking to Job, get that? “God will deliver even one who is not innocent . . .” Another way is saying that is that *God will deliver one who is guilty through the cleanness of your hands*. What is happening here? God is delivering the guilty (Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar) through the cleanness of Job's hands. How ironic. It ends up being prophetic! That's verses seven through nine.

God Restores Job (vv. 10-17)

Which brings us to the second main section, the bulk of the passage, which is verses ten through 17. Our third point and our last point (we have a lot under it): God Restores Job. *God Restores Job*. But note again that Job is restored *after* he prays. Note the timing.

Note also in verse ten, two more uses of the word Yahweh (capital LORD). Verse ten, follow along: “**The LORD restored the fortunes of Job when he prayed for his friends, and the LORD increased all that Job had twofold.**”

He's ultimately restored over a period of time. We assume at this time that he prayed, that Job either was completely healed of his physical maladies, or he began to be, he began to feel better. I'm sure he's still a skeletal mess (as I said before). That's going to change over time. And his restoration, this twofold restoration is going to take some time, but things change after he prays.

So he's healed spiritually with his repentance (42:1-6). He's then reconciled to the three. Here he's healed physically. But he's also going to be restored materially. And it says **twofold** (double). But that's again going to take time. And something we'll see a little later, beginning in verse 12.

But again, there's something essential you need to get. God's restoration of Job's health and wealth that we see here was an act of grace, not an act of obligation. You don't want to read the book of Job and say, here's a formula (my friend's suffering) – Well, here's a formula: “You suffer well. You lost your business. Your friends turned their backs on you. You suffer well and God will restore all of that, if you suffer well.” That's the wrong message to get from the book of Job. This is not some divine law from heaven. God does this as an act of grace, not an act of obligation. Very important that you get that.

And what I said earlier: *endure suffering knowing that your reward is sure, even if the timing isn't*. The timing may not be in this life for you, but if you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you're a follower of our Lord, you will see the reward of eternal life and you will hear, “Well done, My good and faithful servant.” Believer, listen, your best days are out of the time frame of this life regardless. I don't care how blessed you end up being, and I want you to be blessed. I don't want anybody to have to go through suffering, but we will. We know that that's part of our lot in life. But I want you to be blessed by God. But no matter how greatly you're blessed, no matter how great the rest of your lives are, that's nothing in comparison to what lies ahead. Your best days on this earth are yet future, okay? But you may die suffering. Remember as a believer in Jesus Christ, your reward in heaven is great and I've known people that have died (believe me, you have to) – people, believers, good Christians that have died suffering.

It made me think of Matthew chapter five, verses 11 and 12, where Jesus said in His Beatitudes, “Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward *on earth* is great. So is that what it says? Now what does it say: “Your reward *in heaven* is great.” The blessing is based on future heavenly reward.

That takes faith. Living the Christian life isn't about getting all we can get out of this life. (Well, you can. You can have a great family. You can have a great job. You can have this. You can have that.) Don't get me wrong. There's joy in serving Christ. But there's also suffering. And it's not about what we get out of this life. We have to have joy in the midst of those things because we're now walking by the Spirit, we now have the Holy Spirit dwelling within us, we've been born again, we're new creations in Christ. But it's not about what we can accrue in this life.

And yet you can build a great big church by preaching that message. You know, just have practical messages on how to live your life and never mention the gospel (we don't want to make Jesus the offense). And people can have a great life and go straight to hell because they've never reconciled with a holy God. Their sin is not been paid for by Jesus Christ.

D.A. Carson in his excellent book on suffering, *How Long, O Lord* is the title, says this:

The blessings that Job experiences at the end are not cast as rewards that he has earned by his faithfulness under suffering. The epilogue simply describes the blessings as the Lord's free gift. The Lord is not nasty or capricious. He may for various reasons withdraw his favor, but his love endures forever.³⁴⁶

So again, 10 **“The LORD restored the fortunes of Job when he prayed for his friends, and the LORD increased all that Job had twofold.”**

³⁴⁶D.A. Carson, *How Long O Lord*, 155.

Well, now it's time for some celebration. Still some comfort, but also some celebration. That's verse 11: **“Then all his brothers and all his sisters and all who had known him before came to him, and they ate bread with him in his house.”** Well, the first thing we note is that Job is no longer at the town dump. This is the first time since chapter two that Job is back home. All that time we spent going through those middle chapters, we believe Job is at the garbage dump. He's still scraping his sores with ashes, with pieces of broken pottery. But now he's back home and he's surrounded by his siblings (the first mention of them in the book), many other friends, and I presume the three were there along with the Elihu. His reputation restored.

And they **ate bread**. That isn't just that “Here's some bread and some butter. Let's go at it.” That's a way of saying they had a meal together. I think this was probably a bit of a banquet.

And they were still consoling him. They came to do what the three failed to do, verse 11, to **“console and comfort him for all the adversities [note this] that the LORD had brought on him.”** So again we see Job's suffering attributed to the sovereign hand of God. This bookends chapter two, verse ten, where Job said to his wife, “Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?” Here the same *adversities* are seen as coming from God. Remember chapter one, verse 21 where Job said, “It was the Lord who gave. It was the Lord who has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.” He stands in control of all things.

And you wonder why does Job still need comfort? They consoled him, we're told in verse 11. Why does he still need comfort? Because there's a sense in which suffering never ends, or the ramifications of going through severe suffering doesn't end completely. After all, Job was still bereft of his ten children. You don't get over that. He's still a suffered an ordeal that would forever impact his life.

But yet there's a sense in which this verse stands as a fulfillment of what we saw in chapter two, verse 11. Back there, Job's friends, they heard of the adversity that had come upon Job, they heard about his calamity, and they came: Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar. And we're told in chapter two, verse 11, "they made an appointment together to come and sympathize with him and comfort him." Their initial goal was great: *We're going to comfort you*. But we know, as we've gone through the book, that didn't last long, did it? It was short lived. It turned sour. This time, however, the comfort and the consolation in a celebration endures.

And they gave Job gifts. Each one gave him **one piece of money**, and each **a ring of gold**. That one piece of money would have been in the form of uncoined silver. The gold would have been a ring that was typically worn by the wealthy on the ear or in the nose. And perhaps these gifts help Job begin recover some of his lost wealth.

But then here's Yahweh's blessing, what we saw earlier. The Lord increased Job's fortunes **twofold**. Here we see that delineated. Yahweh's blessing beginning in verse 12 (and the key word is "double"). Look at verse 12: "**The Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning.**" The keyword is *double*.

Double the livestock

The first *double* is "double the livestock." He had 14,000 sheep, 6000 camels, 1000 yoke of oxen, and 1000 female donkeys. That is double the number that Job started with in chapter one. Perfectly doubled. And I assume that in that being doubled his reputation in as much as it was slandered, is restored, and he is once again known as "the greatest of all the men of the East" (1:3). So double the livestock.

Double the children

Then *double the children*. 13 “**He had seven sons and three daughters.**” Now someone says, “Wait a minute! He started with seven sons and three daughters, so they weren't doubled.” Yes they were. When animals die, they're no more. When people die, they live on. When people who are rightly related to God through Christ die, they live on with the Lord in heavenly bliss. He now has 20. He now has 14 sons and six daughters. This is very noteworthy because you would expect that if this were all just a made up story, someone would put, “He had 14 sons and six daughters.” No. This is again a subtle indication in the belief in everlasting life by those in antiquity. This is the man who said that he would one day see God after he died (19:26). Well, he also knew that he would see his departed children after he died.

I've been waiting a long time to get to this verse. My wife and I lost our daughter, 14 years old, in a crash involving a drunk driver. She passed away in 2016. We had one. Now we have three, so we've been triply blessed! God gave us two more.

I think Job's wife is mentioned again, by implication. To have kids, Job had more kids, presumes a wife (unless you adopt). But these would have been born naturally. No indication there is, as some think, that Job remarried. This is likely the same wife who went on to have ten more children.

And we're given their names and a description of their beauty. And it's noteworthy that Job is the one who names them. That's the only place we see this in the Old Testament. In Hebrew society in particular, it was always the mothers who are said to name children. Here Job names them. The first one was named **Jemima**. (I wonder if she became an aunt? If she did, she probably marketed in pancake syrup!) The first was named **Jemima**, which means turtledove.

The second was named **Keziah**. That's from the word *Kasia*, meaning cinnamon. The third was named (she got the hyphen) **Keren-happuch**. That was a horn, an object that was used to keep mascara. So we have *dove*, we have *cinnamon*, and we have *mascara*. And I don't know. I don't want to raise a daughter with the name of *makeup* and then have to listen to her when she's 8 or 10, "Well, why can't I wear makeup? My name's mascara!"

We're not giving the boys names. In my humble opinion, it's because daughters are superior to sons, right, gals? Anybody want to "amen" that among you women!?

In fact, I loved being the daddy of a girl, even though I kind of had my heart set on a boy (there was a reason that I thought we were going to have a boy). And as I would tell Giana many times, when we found out it was a girl (because we didn't find out until the moment of birth), when we found out it was a girl, I was disappointed for about a fraction of a second. Deep down, I've always wanted a daughter. I love being the daddy of girls. And when we, after our loss, set out to adopt because we thought we still had a lot of mommy and daddy in us, really centered on girls. And we were blessed with two girls, Giana's younger sisters, Lilly and Jazmynn. I am the last Bartolucci, however. Living in light of eternity, that's not a big deal. But this, this line of the Bartolucci family name ends with me not having any sons.

So Job is restored. To some degree his wish of chapter 29 was fulfilled. It was there in the midst of his losses, he said,

2 "Oh that I were as in months gone by, as in the days when God watched over me; 3 when His lamp shone over my head, and by His light I walked through darkness; 4 as I was in the prime of my days, when the friendship of God was over my tent; 5 when the Almighty was yet with me, and my children were around me.

To some degree, that desire of suffering Job back in chapter 29 is fulfilled here. But I say “to some degree,” because I can say, along with millions, from experience, new children are not replacements for those that have died. Getting more kids naturally or through adoption doesn't replace those you've lost. They're irreplaceable. And there's still grief. Animals and livestock can be replaced. Children cannot.

But the gals grew up to be beautiful women. Verse 15: **“In all the land no women were found so fair as Job's daughters.”** I say this tongue in cheek: Maybe Turtledove had beautiful skin, cinnamon, a beautiful aroma, and mascara, beautiful eyes.

But not only does multiple births suggest the passage of time (unless you have a bunch of multiple births³⁴⁷), there's probably at least ten years going by. But by the time the last one would become a woman, you're looking maybe at 25 years or so. So there's a passage of time. God doesn't restore Job all at once. It isn't like, boom! here are some kids. Boom! here are thousands of livestock. Boom! here, you're completely healed. This happened over time.

And these girls also had (very unusual) an inheritance among their brothers. In later years within Israel, a daughter received her father's inheritance only if she had no brothers (Numbers 27:8). But that's different here. Here they're heirs along with their brothers.

So this is Yahweh's blessing. Keyword “double”: double the livestock, double the children.

And then double the lifespan (verses 16 and 17): **“After this Job lived 140 years, and saw his sons and his grandsons, four generations.”** As it relates to the math, we have to speculate a little bit on how to calculate this. But if Job is around 70 in chapter one, then he may

³⁴⁷For example, twins or triplets.

have lived to be 210 years old, which was not uncommon at that early stage of human history. According to Jewish tradition, Job's latter years (that's the 140 that we see in verse 16) were exactly two times the number of his former ones (that is starting around 70). So if you double that and add in the rest, you've got 210.

But Job saw his descendants to the fourth generation. He lived to see his great great grandchildren. And then the last verse in the book, not the last message in our series (I want to do a sort of a recap), verse 17: **“Job died an old man and full of days.”** That closing formula “died an old man full of days” was used of Abraham in Genesis chapter 25, verse eight, of Isaac in Genesis, chapter 35, verse 29, and of David in 1 Chronicles 29:28. “Dying an old man full of days.”

Interesting side note, something I discovered that's just interesting. Remember the Septuagint? We talk about that sometimes. That's the Greek translation of the Old Testament that was around during the time of Christ and the apostles. That's what so many at that time, who knew Greek and had a limited knowledge of Hebrew, if at all, that's what they used as their Old Testament was this Greek translation. Well, the Septuagint – I don't know if it's through oral tradition – I don't know why (I didn't look at it further), but it adds to verse 17 these words, “And it is written [that he talking about Job] and it is written that he shall rise again with the ones whom the Lord shall raise up.” Interesting. It's not inspired text. We go off the Masoretic Text, not the Septuagint. But it's no doubt true. You see, Job faced death, he faced eternity because of the Mediator he so desired in life was there in death. And he takes his place among the patriarchs, the heroes of Israel's faith.

But I want to close the end of the book with James 5:11. We noted this some time ago in one of our earlier messages. This is the only mention of Job in the New Testament. James 5:11 reads, “We counted those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job, and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.” That's what we see here. This is the outcome of of the Lord's doings, that He's full of compassion and is merciful. And that would have been true whether Job was restored or not. And that's why we say *endure suffering, knowing that your reward is sure, even if the timing isn't.*

God is gracious in our failures

By way of application (we'll go through these quickly). Number one, *God is gracious in our failures.* God is gracious in our failures. When God says that Job has spoken rightly of Him, He at least implies that He was gracious in forgiving the many windy words that Job uttered in his suffering. God is gracious, especially when we're suffering, not to crush us for the poor attitudes and words and even actions that we exhibit in our grief. And as I thought about this, it encouraged my heart as I became guilty of the same sinful attitudes and words, not to mention acts that were so evident in me during those most painful years after we lost our daughter. *God is gracious in our failures.*

Something that struck me, and I've probably said this before because I tend to be pretty transparent with people, even when I'm teaching and preaching: But I struggle all the time with feelings of failure. I know others do because they've told me. But I know for me, I've been far from perfect as a husband, as a father, as a pastor, as a scholar, as a Christian. And I struggle with that. And sometimes I think, and maybe you think, “How can I stand before God on the day

of judgment?” How is He ever going to say, “Well done, good and faithful servant?” And then 1 John chapter four struck me (this just happened recently): *It's really God's love for his beloved.*

Listen to 1 John 4:17 and 18:

17 By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world. 18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.

Listen, the believer is not going to be punished. Jesus Christ took that punishment; a demonstration of God's love. Therefore, John could say that we can have confidence in the day of judgment. God can say of me, of you in that day with all the things that we feel like we really messed up and neglected, He yet can say, “Well done, good and faithful servant,” *because I love you, because I sent my son to die for you.* And all of your lack is fulfilled in what Jesus did.

Listen. Our love for God may be imperfect. His love for us is not. Even when we're at our worst, God is at his best.

We are do the right thing by faith, regardless of the consequences

Number two, *we are do the right thing by faith, regardless of the consequences.* I'll point out again that Job was still suffering in a pile of ashes when God told him to pray for his three friends. There were no promises at that time. Offer up a sacrifice, and the implication was that would restore the three. Pray for them that would restore the three and Job's relationship with the three. But Job is still suffering. There's no indication, God didn't say, “You do this and I'm going to bless your socks off with more kids, more wealth, livestock, all of that.” Job did the right thing, regardless of the consequences. Job simply believed and obeyed. And God in his mercy blessed – even though he didn't have to. Not at that time. Therefore, number three *endure suffering, knowing that your reward is sure, even if the timing isn't.* God would have been

merciful to Job even if he didn't receive earthly benefit because he had eternal reward, which is so much better. "Let goods and kindred go. This mortal life also. The body they may kill. God's truth abideth still. His kingdom is forever." Oswald Chambers wrote these powerful words:

To choose to suffer means that there is something wrong; to choose God's will even if it means suffering is a very different thing. No healthy saint ever chooses suffering; he chooses God's will, as Jesus did, whether it means suffering or not.

The battle scars of suffering remain

Number four, *The battle scars of suffering remain*. The battle scars of suffering remain. No doubt Job retained pock marks on his body, physical scars of his affliction. No doubt he had some emotional struggles. He grieved, continued to grieve the loss of his ten kids. D.A. Carson accurately observes:

No matter how happy the ending, nothing can remove the suffering itself. The losses Job faced would always be with him. A happy ending is better than a miserable one, but it does not transform the suffering he endured into something less than suffering. A survivor of the Holocaust has not suffered less because he ultimately settles into a comfortable life in Los Angeles.³⁴⁸

I have physical scars from burns, broken bones, skin grafts that I will carry around with me through the end of this life. And sometimes I wonder. I wonder if in the kingdom with my resurrection body, if I will retain some of these. And sometimes I hope that I do, just because they're a testimony of God's mercy and grace in suffering. So *the battle scars of suffering remain*.

Whether or not I have physical scars that continue, I'm confident that my emotional scars, the loss of Giana, will be gone when I see Christ for the first time face-to-face, I will see her once again, a joyous reunion with her and with all others that I love in Christ. And Job

³⁴⁸[D.A. Carson, *How Long O Lord*, 155

awaited, we await that day when God will wipe every tear from every eye. That day when sorrow will be eclipsed by the cross.

Job serves as a type of Christ

Well, we're out of time, but let me just give you the last two. *Job serves as a type of Christ* (that's number five). We've talked about that before in the book of Job (see message 19). Four times God calls suffering Job "My servant," In a far greater way, Jesus is the Suffering Servant who lived, suffered, and died to please the Father who calls him, in Matthew 12, "My Servant."

We're told twice that the Lord accepted Job on behalf of his three friends. God accepted Job on their behalf. God accepts us on behalf of the perfect Suffering Servant, Jesus Christ the righteous. Job is also a mediator between the friends. And God in a far greater way, Jesus Christ is our Mediator. And by faith we are reconciled and become His friends. And then Job was vindicated with a banquet (verse 11), and we will celebrate at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:9).

Job's blessing came not by suffering, but by believing

And then lastly, *Job's blessing came not by suffering, but by believing*. Again, it isn't a law of heaven whereby you endure suffering and you get some earthly reward. The thought should be, if God, through a broken heart, can bring His own purposes to pass in the world, then thank Him for a broken heart. Cling to his promises, especially in times of suffering. God rewards faithfulness. At the heart of faithfulness is the word "faith." God simply asks, "Will you trust Me?" That's the heart of salvation: "Will you trust Me for your eternal destiny?" And it becomes the heart of living the Christian life: *Will you trust Me?*

And so, Father, as those who do trust You, we thank You for this wonderful book of Job, and getting through at least the last message addressing any of the text. We're finished with chapter 42, we finished with the text of the book, and we thank You for that. And I pray that You'll use these truths, use them in our lives. We that have heard them, others that listen to them either on the radio or through the internet, that You'll use these truths. And, Lord, I pray for any that know not Christ. And I pray, Lord, that You would open their hearts and eyes, give them eyes to see, ears to hear that there is a Savior, and that the only way to have peace with God is through faith in Jesus Christ, a faith that evidences itself in repentance, turning from unbelief, turning from sin to embrace and love and live for Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. And in whose name we pray. Amen.

Afterward: Wrapping Up the Gift of Job
Job Selected Scriptures

March 24, 2024

Christ Church of Clarkson

0324JobAfterward(44) | Audio Length: 54:42

If you would stand. I want to read a couple of different passages from the Book of Job.

So just follow along with your ears:

1:1 There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job; and that man was blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil.

1:8–11 8 The LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil.” 9 Then Satan answered the LORD, “Does Job fear God for nothing? 10 “Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. 11 “But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face.”

1:20–22 20 Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped. 21 He said, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I shall return there. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD.” 22 Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God.

42:1–6 1 Then Job answered the LORD and said, 2 “I know that You can do all things, And that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted. 3 ‘Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?’ “Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.” 4 ‘Hear, now, and I will speak; I will ask You, and You instruct me.’ 5 “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; But now my eye sees You; 6 Therefore I retract, And I repent in dust and ashes.”³⁴⁹

This is the voice of the Lord. Let's pray.

Father, we commit our time to You. We're so grateful for sustaining us through this series in Job. And now, as we close the final chapter to this great book, we pray that as You have done before, You would continue to bless the meager effort of this humble preacher and

³⁴⁹Scripture citations are taken from the NAS95 unless otherwise noted.

*magnify Your Word, magnify Yourself in all Your glory. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray.
Amen.*

Afterward: Wrapping Up the Gift of Job

Well, my title for this morning is, *Afterward: Wrapping Up the Gift of Job*. I spent the past week reading and pondering the various themes of the book of Job, this great book, and I've come up with some central categories that we'll look at. Caveat: I could spend weeks on this, and no doubt there are some things that I may have overlooked in this last message, but consider that we have extensively looked at a lot of different things over the course of this series, which began in 2019.

I have transcribed every message to date, and in a single document so far, 967 pages and over 327,000 words. So we have covered indeed a lot of ground. Today I will look at four points. Number one, *What the Book of Job Teaches Us About God and good*. Number two, *What the Book of Job Teaches Us about Satan and Evil*. Number three, *What the Book of Job Teaches Us About Ourselves*. And then lastly, *What the Book of Job Teaches Us About Jesus Christ*. So again, *we'll be wrapping up the gift of Job*.

What the Book of Job Teaches Us About God and Good

The Book of Job is Principally About God

Looking at that first point, *What the Book of Job Teaches Us About God and Good*. Well, number one, the book of Job is about God. Typically when people are asked, Christians are asked, what the Book of Job is about, we reply with that one word: "suffering." Or sometimes we may say, "the Book of Job is about a man named job who encounters suffering." But both of those answers are a bit short sighted. God is the main character in this book. The

book is about God, and also about why does a true believer serve God? Why do we serve Him? For what reason? So again, looking at *What the Book of Job Teaches Us About God and Good. God is Breathtakingly Great*

We'll break that into two parts. About God, number one. Something that has struck me, particularly as we got later on into the book, God's Two Speeches to Job (chapters 38 through 42), I've been struck that how much God is magnified. I would put it this way: *God is breathtakingly great*. He is awesome! I felt like the apostle Paul in Romans 11 (when I got to those sections of those speeches) where Paul concludes that chapter with this

33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! 34 For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR? 35 Or WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN? 36 For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

God is breathtakingly great! And we see that so exemplified in this book, the Book of Job.

I was in Arizona, as many of you know (I was gone last Sunday), so I was in Arizona for a few days, and I was able to sit outside one night alone. And it was a clear sky, and I was just looking at the stars, looking at the constellations that are thousands of light years away, looking at the vastness of it and pondering the greatness of space. And I audibly said, "This is nothing, Lord, compared to You. You created this. And as majestic as this is, it's nothing." And that's only what we can see. What about those things we can't? What about the unseen realm? As we've seen in chapter 40, God is greater than the forces of evil, as exemplified by Behemoth and Leviathan.

Go back to Jesus Christ. In Colossians chapter one, verses 15 and 16. We've quoted this verse at least once before, maybe twice, maybe three times. I don't remember, but it's so

appropriate, especially as we look at God in His Majesty as Creator. But there we have Jesus Christ described as the Creator, saying that,

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities [Leviathan, Behemoth]—all things have been created through Him and for Him.

God is breathtakingly great!

And we see His transcendence. We talked about the transcendence of God. That's how big God is. And we can look at the open space, we can look through a telescope as far as even the great telescopes can see, God is so far beyond that. It is minuscule in comparison to the greatness of God. And yet, while God is transcendent, he's also immanent, that He's here, He's with you, He knows you more intimately than you know yourself. That's how great God is.

Breathtakingly great.

God is Supremely Sovereign

Something else we see is that *God is supremely sovereign*. Remember our definition of sovereignty. Sovereign means a king. And we talk about God, we're saying that God is the King, the King of kings, the Lord of lords. And as King, there are two words that begin with the letter "P" that fall under His Kingship, that relate to His sovereignty. One is *predestination*, those things that he has determined in eternity past to happen. And then *providence*, that's His outworking of His plan in time. So God had a plan. Sometimes in theology we call this His decree or His decrees, things He determined to do before He ever created. And then after He created, this world being central, His outworking of His decree in providence, in His provision and how things happen. This is all under the category of God's sovereignty. And we are really

big on sovereignty in this church. I think it's a big aspect of who we are and what we teach, because it's such a big part of what Scripture teaches.

I have a friend who pastors a church across town. And I got looking one day at the ratings on Google [for his church]. His rating on Google was like 3.7, something like that. It was under four. And I got reading where people had commented. And one gal, misguided as she is, said, “Well, they talk about sovereignty all the time. They're Calvinists and talk about sovereignty, and I can't even find that . . . word in a concordance.” And I felt like replying and saying, “You know what? You can't find the word ‘Trinity’ in a concordance, but deny the Trinity, you deny your soul.” I don't know how many times the word “sovereignty” appears in the King James. I know it does appear in some translations. But regardless of whether a word appears, the question is, “is the word biblical; is it taught?” And God's sovereignty is taught from Genesis to Revelation. It is who He is as God—and what we're not as His creation.

And this even relates to the foreordained tragedies that struck Job. He affirms God's supreme sovereignty. We read these passages earlier, chapter one, verses 20 through 22. After tragedy struck for the first time after Job lost his wealth, lost his ten children to despicable acts and those who committed those acts (I'm thinking particularly of the Sabeans and Chaldeans). Those who committed those [things] did wrong, they sinned. They will be held accountable (or were held accountable) for that. Yet Job could arise even after he lost his ten children in what we call a natural disaster. Stand up, tear his robe, shave his head, fall to the ground and it says “he worshiped.”³⁵⁰ Think about losing just about everything you hold near and dear to you, and believing so strongly in a sovereign God who loves you that you grieve, yes, but you fall down

³⁵⁰Job 1:20.

and you worship! And he says, “Naked I came from my mother's womb” (I didn't enter this world with anything), “naked I shall return there” (I'm not taking anything with me). “The Lord gave, the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD.”³⁵¹ And the book ended with his confession at the close of chapter 42, verses one and two, where “. . . Job answered the LORD and said, “I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted.” You can't thwart God's purposes. Satan, the demons of hell cannot thwart God's purposes. God is supremely sovereign.

And as it relates to our lives as believers, I like the words of Talbot. He said,

God is always the One in control of all your circumstances. He Himself claims this role and responsibility for Himself from the outset of the book (2:3). You may experience serious or extended illness, financial devastation, or the loss of loved ones. You may even have been victimized by the sins of others. Heap on top of all that the accusations of acquaintances, the misunderstanding of friends, the desertion of family, and, worst of all, the unresponsive silence of God. Job suffered all of these.

The message of Job is that you are never abandoned to the hand of man or the clutches of Satan. You are in the hand that holds the scepter of the world (Eph. 1:11). He alone grants permission for whatever He does not directly send. . . .

But then Talbot asked the question, a question that we ask sometimes,

But when God sends what even the Bible calls "evil" ("bad" things in a non-moral sense) or permits us to suffer as the victims of others' evil deeds, doesn't that raise questions about another attribute? Job understood and acknowledged God's sovereignty. But how do we know He is really good?³⁵²

Well, that's something that we come across, isn't it? That's a question we come across in our own lives. And yet we said *God is supremely sovereign* and *God is good*. God is good and He's the standard for goodness.

³⁵¹Job 1:21-22.

³⁵²Talbert, *Job*, 241-42.

God is Good

Listen, we talk sometimes about the fact that our axiom, our foundation, in philosophy our touchstone proposition, is that this is the Word of God and our foundational authority. And if that's true, and it is, then when this teaches that God is absolutely good, we don't doubt that. We may question it and we can go to God with our questions, but we don't doubt that God is good. He is the standard for what is good. All goodness is measured by Him. As John puts it in 1 John 1:5, "this is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness." That's another way of saying that God is righteous.

I mentioned this once before earlier in our series, the old childhood mealtime prayer: "God is great, God is good. Let us thank Him for our food." And we see those concepts of greatness and goodness brought together in Scripture. And I think of Moses song to Israel back in Deuteronomy chapters 31 and 32, just a part of that song. Moses spoke in the hearing of the assembly of Israel, the words of this song. . . . And just listen to these words, these four verses out of Deuteronomy chapter 32:

31:30 Then Moses spoke in the hearing of all the assembly of Israel the words of this song, until they were complete: 32:1 "Give ear, O heavens, and let me speak; and let the earth hear the words of my mouth. 2 "Let my teaching drop as the rain, my speech distill as the dew, as the droplets on the fresh grass and as the showers on the herb. 3 "For I proclaim the name of the LORD; ascribe greatness to our God! 4 "The Rock! His work is perfect, for all His ways are just; A God of faithfulness and without injustice, righteous and upright is He.³⁵³

God is good. And just as God's sovereignty is declared from Genesis to Revelation, God's goodness, His righteousness, His holiness is declared from Genesis to Revelation. But when life hurts, we may have doubts.

³⁵³Deuteronomy 31:30-32:4.

I read an account by the Old Testament scholar John Walton which reminded me of something from my own past when I was a small child. I have really vivid memories of my early childhood. I'm talking, you know, probably two, three, four years old. And I was probably somewhere in that range, probably 3 or 4. And I took my dad's hammer and I was sitting on the patio. It was in the summer and I was smashing ants: boom! boom! boom! boom! The more I smashed them, it seemed like the more came: boom! boom! boom! Well, they weren't doing anything wrong. They weren't threatening us in any way. They weren't invading the house. They weren't invading a garden. And so my dad rightly scolded me, *Don't do that*. My gleeful destruction of these creatures of God was indiscriminate and capricious. It wasn't right and my dad pointed that out to me.

But we can sometimes think of God in that way, can't we? He's got a divine hammer, and He swings it indiscriminately and capriciously at whoever He wills. Bang! You're gone. Bang! You've got cancer. Bang! You're in a car crash. Bang! You lost your daughter. That's not the portrayal we get of God in the book of Job, or in the Scriptures at large. It's not in keeping with the truth. God doesn't treat us like worthless ants that He can crush as He pleases. In light of the book of Job, we ought to think of God this way: Him saying, "I am your God who loves you deeply, and I want you to trust Me even when you don't understand My ways." You see, oftentimes we don't understand. But we can always trust. That takes the eyes of faith.

The author and churchman J.R.R. Tolkien had a concept called *eucatastrophe*. It's the word "catastrophe" with the Greek prefix "eu" put before it. The Greek prefix *eu* means *good*. Like you take "eulogy" as an example. Two Greek words *eu* (good) and *legō* (to speak or say). A eulogy is to say good about someone, usually after they're dead. The good thing is—a good

thing to remember—is say good things about people before they die. You know that's always a good idea. But anyways, he had this concept of *eucatastrophe*, literally *a good catastrophe*. And in that regard, listen to this sentence. (This is not his, this is mine or I stole it from somebody, I don't remember.) *Evil can be good to have existed and yet be evil*. Think about that: *evil can be good to have existed and yet be evil*. Well, what do you mean? Well, we see this in Scripture. God created everything. He pronounced it “very good” (Genesis 1:31). However, sin came into the world bringing death and destruction. But out of that broken, sinful, evil world came the promised One who would Himself be broken. Evil was done to Him. But in His sacrifice on the cross, in the life He lived, He delivered us from sin, destruction and evil. The death of Christ is that *eucatastrophe*.

The oft quoted account of Joseph in Genesis 50, where his brothers fear for their lives. Now Joseph is in this position of great leadership; they're cowering before him. And what does he say? “As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people [namely, the Jews] alive.” A *eucatastrophe*.

Well, what kind of *eucatastrophe* can be said of Job? Layton Talbert says it better than I can. Quoting:

In the language of Job's confession, God had purposed what He pleased, and performed what He purposed. Job was changed. What he valued more than wealth or health or life itself, his relationship to his God, was exponentially deepened; his understanding of the Lord soared and what he now knew about God was intensely personalized. His friends' abhorrent theology, still with us today, was debunked. Satan was not merely defeated but humiliated. Human faith was validated, human worship dignified. The angels were instructed and edified. God was magnified, made large in the eyes of all creation. And the story was preserved for the enlightenment and encouragement of countless generations of readers.³⁵⁴

³⁵⁴Layton Talbert, 238.

Including me.

One of the first things I turned to after the loss of our daughter was the book of Job. And I trust that what happened to us will have been proven itself to have been a eucatastrophe. In fact, I'm going to shy away from calling what happened to us a catastrophe. It would be catastrophic had she not been a believer in Jesus Christ. And that's not to say it wasn't a tragedy, that it wasn't a great tragedy. And maybe I'm mincing words, but I'm still comfortable calling it a calamity. But as far as catastrophic, no. Our daughter knew Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. She wanted to live for whatever God chose to do in her life that would bring Him glory. And we trust that He did that. And God has His reasons.

Who knows all the great things that will have come about through our tragedy, including sparing Giana from worldly temptation, sin, and sorrow. I don't know how many people have been touched. I know a lot have. I had a man I graduated high school with who several times came to me when I was at our "Buffalo" reunion (that's the mascot of the school). But Mark, who came up to me several times, says, "You don't know, you don't know how much your story has impacted me for good." And he told me that like four times, you know? And I said, "Mark, I'm so grateful for you to say that, you know, that just means so much to me. I won't forget it." God is good. God is sovereign.

I think the old hymn from the Trinity Hymnal, *Whate'er My God Ordains is Right*. Just listen to the last stanza.

4 Whate'er my God ordains is right:
here shall my stand be taken;
though sorrow, need, or death be mine,
yet am I not forsaken.

My Father's care is round me there;
he holds me that I shall not fall:
and so to him I leave it all.

Whate'er My God Ordains is Right

Theology professor Robert Lewis Dabney wrote a classic biography about Stonewall Jackson. It was under Jackson's Confederate command that Dabney, the Theologian, served for a time. Well, I don't know if you know this, but Stonewall Jackson was a committed Christian, a believer in the sovereign grace of God. And he lived the words of that hymn that I just cited. Well, in Dabney's book, *The Life and Campaigns of Lieutenant General Thomas J. Stonewall Jackson* (which I was so taken aback by this that I ordered that book this morning. I had to find a used copy, but I have my sources. So if you're interested I'll let you know what my sources are.) In *The Life and Campaigns of Lieutenant General Thomas J. Stonewall Jackson*, Dabney recounts a chaplain's visit after Jackson was severely wounded by friendly fire.

Think about you being severely wounded. Maybe it's in a car crash, as I was. Maybe it's in some other mishap. But listen to how Jackson handled this as he [the chaplain] entered and saw the stump. (Well, what had happened is that Jackson was severely wounded by friendly fire. So this is a chaplain's story visiting Jackson after he was severely wounded.)

As he entered and saw the stump where the left arm had lately been, he exclaimed in distress, "Oh, General! what a calamity!" Jackson first thanked him, with his usual courtesy for his sympathy, and then proceeded, with marked deliberation and emphasis, as though delivering his Christian testimony touching God's dealing with him . . . : "You see me severely wounded, but not depressed; not unhappy. I believe that it has been done according to God's holy will, and I acquiesce entirely in it. You may think it strange; but you never saw me more perfectly contented than I am today; for I am sure that my Heavenly Father designs this affliction for my good. I am perfectly satisfied that either in this life or in that which is to come, I shall discover that what is now regarded as a great calamity is a blessing. And if it appears a great calamity (as it surely will be a great inconvenience to be deprived of my arm), it will result in a great blessing. I can wait until God, in his own time, shall make known to me the object he has in thus afflicting

me. But why should I not rather rejoice in it as a blessing, and not look at it as a calamity at all? If it were in my power to replace my arm, I would not dare to do it unless I could know it was the will of my Heavenly Father.”

Coming under fire from a brief Northern offensive, the soldiers who first attempted to remove the wounded Jackson from the field dropped the [stretcher] carrying him. Jackson later recounted that he assumed at that at that moment he would die upon the field of battle:

“It has been a precious experience to me, that I was brought face to face with death, and found all was well. I then learned an important lesson, that one who has been the subject of converting grace and is the child of God can, in the midst of the severest sufferings, fix the thoughts upon God and heavenly things, and derive great comfort and peace; but that one who had never made his peace with God would be unable to control his mind, under such sufferings, so as to understand properly the way of salvation, and repent and believe on Christ. I felt that if I had neglected the salvation of my soul before, it would have been too late then.”

On Sunday morning, May 10, 1863, Mrs. Jackson woke her weakened husband. No kin to Job’s wife, Mrs. Jackson told him, "Do you know the Doctors say you must very soon be in heaven? Do you not feel willing to acquiesce in God's allotment, if he wills you to go today?"

Twice, with difficulty but distinctly, he replied, “I prefer it.”

“Well, before this day closes, you will be with the blessed Savior in his glory.”

“I will be an infinite gainer if translated.”

Not long after, Jackson “seemed attempting to speak; and at length said audibly: “Let us pass over the river, and rest under the shade of the trees.” These were the last words he uttered.³⁵⁵

That story encapsulates so much of what the Book of Job teaches us about God and good. That God is breathtakingly great, He is supremely sovereign, and that He is good and the standard for goodness.

³⁵⁵As cited in Talbert, 238-41.

What the Book of Job Teaches Us About Satan and Evil

About Satan

Well, what about Satan and evil? Well, about Satan, we learned from the book of Job that he is real, not a mythological character, not a metaphor for something else. He is a person. He's got personality: intellect, emotion, will. He appears at the outset of the book, chapter one, verse six. And while he isn't mentioned beyond chapter two, he's there nonetheless, no doubt cheering the three friends along and wishing that Job would finally curse his God. That was his wager. But he lost the wager.

Remember back in chapter one, “. . . Satan answered the LORD, ‘Does Job fear God for nothing? Have you not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased . . .’”³⁵⁶ In other words, “Sure he serves you because you have blessed him with a lot of things. He's had the easy life.” But here's the wager: “But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face.”³⁵⁷ Well, Job lost much in chapter one. He lost his wealth, he lost his kids.

And then Satan upped the ante in chapter two. And God again points Job out and says, “he still holds fast his integrity, although you incited . . .” [And note again God's sovereignty] “. . . you incited Me against him to ruin him without cause.” And Satan's reply: “Skin for skin . . . all that a man has he will give for his life. However, put forth Your hand now, touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse You to Your face. So the Lord said, “Behold, he is in your

³⁵⁶Job 1:9-10.

³⁵⁷Job 1:11.

power, only spare his life.” And Satan goes out and afflicts Job with this horrible, horrible skin condition that covered his entire body, described as boils.³⁵⁸ And he finds himself at the ash heap at the town dump, scraping his oozing, pus-infected sores and applying ashes to them. He's in misery. And that's throughout the bulk of the book. Satan lost that wager. Even though Job subsequently lost about everything except his faith, he never cursed God as Satan predicted, as his otherwise well-meaning wife had urged.

Job endured the test, and in chapter 42 gave his great confession of repentance:

“I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted. . . . I have declared that which I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. . . . I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees You; therefore I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes.”³⁵⁹

See, at that point, Job's trial was over. There was no need for the sufferings to continue; Satan had lost the wager. God restored Job by doubling his losses, making him once again “the greatest of the men of the East,” as we see him described in chapter one.

About Evil

So what is the book of Job teach us about Satan and evil? So much for Satan, what about evil? Well, in Job we saw evil at work not only in Satan, but in the also misguided words of the three friends. And while God meant ultimate good for Job, Satan meant ultimate evil for him. Satan is the father and author of sin, death, and destruction. And while there is evil that finds its genesis in the demons of hell, there's also evil that finds its origin in the depravity of the human heart. We see that throughout history. Tens of millions murdered under the godless dictator

³⁵⁸Job 2:5-7.

³⁵⁹Cf. Job 42:1-6.

Joseph Stalin. You see it in the headlines of newspapers around the world, headlines of our newspapers, from the evils of mass murder to reprobate acts of liars, thieves, adulterers and blasphemers. We see evil.

But I'll repeat it again: If there's no God, if there's no God of the Bible, there is no evil. He sets the standard for what is ontologically good. He also is the standard as to what evil is, being the absence of that ontological good. In other words, you have to have an absolute source to have absolute evil. In an atheistic world, there is no ultimate evil. We could say things are uncomfortable, things are unfortunate, whatever. But there's no absolute evil if there is no Triune God.

And you say, "Well, what about God and the absolute good *and* evil that still exists in His creation?" Well, we spent an entire message on that, on God's sovereignty and evil. And I don't have time to rehash that within the confines of this message. But if that's a question you have and you want to explore that in more depth in one message, look for the sermon entitled, "Interlude: God and the Existence of Evil" from August of 2019. It was the fifth message in this series. We devoted a whole a whole hour to what's theologically called *compatibilism*, that God is sovereign, man is responsible, and basically how those two things work in the book of Job and outside of it.

But back to that concept of *euclatrophe*: evil can be good to have existed and yet be evil. The greatest euclatrophe in that regard, Jesus Christ, who remain the innocent, spotless Lamb of God who faced calamity, out of which came the greatest good. Think about it. Good and evil came together at the cross, and good won, righteousness won. But it was the plan of God, the plan of the Triune God *which even encompassed the works of sinful men*, their deeds.

Acts 4:27 and 28, Peter and John appeared before the Jewish Council. Right afterward, the disciples gathered together and proclaimed, 27 “For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel.” That's acts 4:27. All of these wicked people came together in a grand conspiracy against Jesus Christ, ultimately nailing Him to a cross. But the next verse says, “they did whatever God's hand and His purpose predestined to occur.” That's compatibilism, by the way. Man's responsibility. God's sovereignty.

In Acts 2:23, Peter, on the day of Pentecost, declared that it was by the predetermined plan of God that the godless put Him to death, nailing Him to a cross. The predetermined plan of God. And in the next verse we read these great words, Acts 2:24, “But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.” Amen! It doesn't just end at the occupied cross, it ends at the empty cross, it ends at the tomb, the risen Christ. By the hands of wicked, sinful men. Jesus would die for the sin of the world and be raised for our justification (Romans 4:25). The crux of the gospel.

What the Book of Job Teaches Us About Ourselves

Satan is a Real Adversary

Thirdly, What the Book of Job Teaches Us About Ourselves. Number one as it relates to ourselves, even though we touched on this before: *Satan is real*. In that regard. He's a real adversary. He's a real foe. There's a battle for our souls. And even though the demons of hell cannot conquer a genuine believer (Romans eight, nothing can separate us from the love of God) they will literally go to hell trying. Job wasn't just *on* the battlefield. Job *was* the battlefield! And the same may be true of us.

I think of Jesus words to Peter in Luke 22, where He said to him (remember this?): “Satan has demanded permission to sift you as wheat.” We learn a few things there. Just as in Job, Satan needs permission from God to act.³⁶⁰ And what was true of Peter is true of us all. In fact, when Jesus says “Satan has demanded permission to sift *you* . . .” in the Greek, it's the second person plural. Not just you, Peter, but those around you, the other disciples (and by extension, believers everywhere throughout the ages). But then we read in the next verse that Jesus prays that our faith may not fail.

That doesn't lessen the fact that we are in a war every morning. We are to wake up to the reality that there is a battle, a vicious, dark, spiritual battle being waged over us. That's the unseen realm. And Satan is busy. And he has legions of demons who work at his bidding. . . . The enemy stands ready to go before God saying, “Look, there's a true believer. . . . I bet that one doesn't serve you for nothing. Let's test and see whether that one is truly, truly a genuine believer. And sometimes God gives that dreadful permission. So Satan is real.

Our Suffering is Real

Our suffering is real. Not only is it real, but as we pointed out in a past message, suffering is unavoidable and unpredictable. It's potentially always lurking around the corner. Your great trial may be the greatest trial of your life. That can happen on your Christmas Eve, when you think things are all well. You just never know.

The 19th century minister and author George MacDonald said this:

Sometimes a thunderbolt will shoot from a clear sky; and sometimes in the life of a peaceful family, without warning of gathered storm, something terrible will fall. And

³⁶⁰While the word “permission” isn't in the Greek, it is strongly implied by the context.

from that moment everything seems changed. That family is no more exactly what it was before. Better it ought to be, damaged it may be.

The result depends on the family itself and its response to the invading storm of trouble. Forever after, its spiritual weather is altered. But for the family who believes in God, such rending and frightful catastrophes never come but where they are turned around for good in that family's life and in other lives they touch.³⁶¹

That we take by faith. We know, I know when you're going through "the valley of the shadow of death," it is only by faith that you can say, "Thou art with me." Keep looking up. As Chuck Swindoll once quipped, *A vertical perspective will keep us from horizontal panic.*

Your Perseverance Will be Tested

And keep persevering; keep persevering. Number three, *your perseverance will be tested.* And I can vouch from experience that that is true. In chapter three, Job speaks of feeling hedged in; nowhere to go. "Between a rock and a hard place" is the way we put it sometimes. And I remember so often feeling that way. And at times just in blind panic, running out the front door with nowhere to go. Your perseverance will be tested.

I said this early on in our series, so I'm actually quoting myself here. I said this early on:

I see a glimpse of the reformed doctrine of the perseverance of the saints in the life of Job. After all . . . nothing proves the integrity of faith quite like suffering. Those who claim to serve God—and I've seen this happen, it's happened throughout history—those who claim to serve God who later renounce their faith often do so because of the allures of the world, love or lust for another man or woman (the lesson of Solomon), or the philosophical problem of evil (and the related issue of suffering). Nothing proves integrity, the reality of your faith, like going through trials and afflictions.³⁶²

And if you've ever gone through extensive suffering, you probably know what that feels like. *I don't know where else to go but to God.*

³⁶¹Cited by Swindoll, Job, 357.

³⁶²From the message on Job 2:1-10.

Learn the Lesson of Humility

And in that regard, number four: *learn the lesson of humility*. Something else we learned from the Book of Job: Our tidy theological systems are not always as airtight as we think, right? That was the mistake of the three. They had a fixed system of theology that was black and white, with no room for the nuances of gray. As I've said many times, you can't be a good theologian if you can't handle nuance, because there's lots of nuance in the Bible and in theology.

You see, we're arrogant when we think we have it all figured out, when we suppose that we have all the knowledge we need to propound our theories on secondary issues with some sort of divine authority. When we do that, we become no better than Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. We obscure God's counsel by words without knowledge. Old Testament scholar John Walton said this:

Our objective is faith and perseverance.... Our determination is to refrain from reducing God to a manageable size by confining him to a philosophical box of our own design. And our commitment is to respond with humility rather than to defame his character or dismiss him.³⁶³

This is where there's such great wisdom in that simple verse toward the end of Deuteronomy (chapter 29, verse 29): “The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.” You see, we think we can specialize in those “secret things” that are not ours to know. And we do well to humbly learn and cleave to that which has been revealed in the Word of God. Even a great mind like John Calvin warned about going into what he referred to as “labyrinths” from which there is no escape, by meddling in or trying to understand those secret things of God's counsel.

³⁶³John H. Walton, *Job in the NIV Application Commentary*, 443.

Two more quotes. One theologian has this to say, and again, we're talking about humility:

Our cornucopia of commentaries, translations, and theologies may lure us into believing that we can systematize God, explain all His past actions, pigeonhole His present doings, and predict His future plans in minute detail. To be sure, the Scriptures embody an essential core of unequivocal truth. Nevertheless, even when we speak truth that his corroborated by clear revelation, we must confess with Job (42:3) that we are speaking about things bigger than we understand, truths beyond our capacity to fully comprehend. We do not know as much as we may think we know, and only an infinitesimal fraction of what there is to know. We would be foolish to suppose that we have at our disposal all the facts about an infinite and eternal God.³⁶⁴

Charles Haddon Spurgeon weighs in:

Human knowledge has bounds beyond which it cannot pass. Universal knowledge is from God alone. If this be so in the things which are seen and temporal, I may rest assured that it is even more so in matters spiritual and eternal. Why then have I been torturing my brain with speculations as to destiny and will, fixed fate, and human responsibility. . . . Why am I so curious to know the reason of my Lord's providences, the motive of His actions, the design of his visitations? . . . Let me not strive to understand the infinite, but spend my strength in love. What I cannot gain by intellect I can possess by affection, and let that suffice me.³⁶⁵

I can say this: my own arrogance and pride have tripped me up many times. I have never gone wrong, I've never ended up in the wrong place by taking the route of humility. So learn the lesson of humility.

Your Worship Will Be Proven

Fifth, *your worship will be proven*. Again, that's the big lesson of the book: who or what do we worship, and why? Remember, Job never knew about Satan's wager. He never knew about the Celestial Council that was meeting. He didn't know why he was suffering affliction.

³⁶⁴Leyton Talbert, 257.

³⁶⁵As cited in Talbert, 260-61.

He attributed it to the hand of God, but he didn't know any of the reasons of what was going on.

Again, to quote Walton:

Do we serve God for nothing? If our righteous or kind behavior is motivated primarily by a desire to ingratiate ourselves with God and/or others, to win approval, or to conform to expectations, we are missing the mark. . . Righteousness and kindness certainly please God, and His pleasure is sound motivation. The key is to avoid expecting something in return; His approval should be enough.³⁶⁶

Bob Jones said this, “Do right, do right, do right till the stars fall, do right.” God's approval is enough, regardless of the consequences.

And then there's a reward, a reward of grace. And remember we said Job is rewarded by grace, not merit. We will be rewarded by grace, not merit. If there's merit involved, it's only the merits of Jesus Christ, what He has done for us. Especially when you are suffering, when you're struggling, think about what lies ahead. The wonderful promise of 1 Corinthians 2:9, where the Apostle Paul cites the Old Testament: “. . . THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND WHICH HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM.” The parallel to that is Romans 8:18, “I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.” These sufferings that we go through, these struggles, these battles, the persecutions, they're not worthy. Not worthy to be compared to what is to follow.

What the Book of Job Teaches Us About Jesus Christ

And that brings me to the last and most important point: What the Book of Job Teaches Us About Jesus Christ. Well, the first thing we could say is to learn about God, God the Father,

³⁶⁶John H. Walton, 439–440.

is to learn about Jesus Christ, God the Son. Those things that are true about God are true of Christ, who is God, the second person of the Trinity. John chapter 1:18, *He explains the Father*. He “exegetes” the Father (from the Greek word). We see Jesus in the suffering Job, Jesus who suffered unjustly, as did Job; Jesus who endured suffering, as did Job. But unlike Job, Jesus suffered righteously and as a propitiation, satisfying the wrath of God against us. Last quote (from Christopher Ash). Listen to this:

And therefore Job is passionately and profoundly about Jesus, whom Job foreshadows both in his blamelessness and in his perseverance through undeserved suffering. As the blameless believer par excellence, Jesus fulfills Job. As a priestly figure who offers sacrifices for his children at the start and his friends at the end, Job foreshadows Jesus the great High Priest. The monstrous ferocity of the beast Leviathan reaches its vicious depths in the life and death of Jesus, who in his passion endures deeper depths and a more solemn and awesome darkness even than Job. The drama, the pain and the perplexity of Job reach their climax at the cross of Jesus Christ. In the darkness and God-forsakenness of those terrible hours of lonely agony, the sufferings of Job are transcended and fulfilled. And as the blameless believer accused and despised by men, but finally vindicated by God in the resurrection, Jesus fulfills the drama and longings of Job for justification.³⁶⁷

So we as believers, we take up our cross and we walk in the footsteps of suffering Job, and the footsteps of brethren throughout history that have suffered before us, that have taken up the cross of Christ, knowing that Jesus Christ is there with us. He shares in those sufferings by His union with the believer, even as we fill them up. Know the sufferings of this present time are not worthy, they cannot be compared to future glory.

Also, Jesus is the mediator Job sought. Job's words in chapter nine, verse 33, so relevant, so gospel saturating, where Job says, “There is no umpire between us who may lay his hand upon us both.” So, “I'm at a loss for a mediator between me and God. Someone who can touch

³⁶⁷Ash, 436.

us both.” Well, Jesus Christ is that Mediator. The one Mediator between God and man, one Umpire between God and man. In the cross, ultimately, Job found hope and redemption. And what a blessing to live in the New Testament era, to have the reality of those things that were shadows and those things that were unknown.

So there we go. The gift of Job; wrapping up. We have wrapped it up. A momentous occasion. As I said earlier, I began this series in 2019. Kind of been in it part time. I had actually, before I went into Job, I did a series on suffering that I began a few months after the Lord called Giana home. And I have literally suffered through this book. I never thought at some point that we would ever get to the end. I about gave up when I was about two thirds of the way through. I'm like, “I just can't do this.” I agonized, I cried out to God. It's the most difficult thing I have ever taught or preached through.

Though my my suffering wasn't as great as Job's, I can sense the restoration he received at the end of the book as my own. And like Job, I will continue to grieve my loss, the loss of our daughter, as Job did, until we are together again. So, *Afterward: Wrapping Up the Gift of Job*.

There's another gift waiting to be unwrapped by those who don't know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. And that's the gift of eternal life. We read in Romans chapter three, verse 23, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Every one of us is born in a sinful condition. Every one of us sins. Even as Christians, we sin. But as Christians, we have that Mediator, we have that Umpire, we have that Advocate in Jesus Christ. And we read about that in Romans 6:23 where it says, “The wages of sin is death.” That is, the right deserts of sin is death. It's physical death, and then it's eternal death. “But the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” It's a free gift. It's granted by God in response to faith, to belief. Simply

believing that Jesus Christ died for you, was resurrected for you, died in your place. And in believing, turning from your sin to serve a risen Savior. That is being a new creation in Jesus Christ. That is our hope for everyone that we meet that knows Him not. Amen?

And so, Father, we thank you for this time and we thank you for, Lord, for this wrap-up, in some ways itself, difficult. But, Lord, I trust that we put a final touch to this book with this 44th message. Lord, use these truths and press them upon our hearts. To the glory of our Savior Jesus Christ. In his name we pray. Amen.