

The background of the entire cover is a dramatic landscape. In the center, a single, lush green tree stands on a sandy dune. The sky is dark and filled with heavy, brownish-grey clouds. A bright, jagged lightning bolt strikes down from the top left corner of the frame, passing behind the title. The overall mood is one of intense, divine power and suffering.

# **JOB**

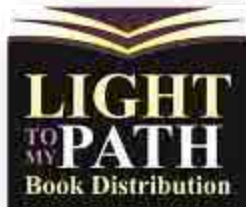
**The Sovereignty of God in the  
Suffering of Job**

**F. WAYNE MAC LEOD**

# Job

*God's Sovereignty in the Suffering of Job*

F. Wayne MacLeod



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## PREFACE

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The book of Job is the story of a blameless man of God who fell on hard times. More than that, however, it is the story of a man of God who was tested beyond his limits and remained faithful. The story of Job is a story of a man's feeble attempts to understand the purpose and plan of a sovereign God. In this story we meet Satan in the presence of God. We see the righteous suffer while the evil prosper. We watch a blameless man curse the day he was born and wish to die. We watch God remain silent to the cries of His righteous servant. More than anything else, however, we meet a God who can use the efforts of Satan and accomplish great good in the life of a persevering saint.

The book of Job is a message from a sovereign and loving God about suffering and pain in this world. It is a book we can all identify with because we live in a world of pain and suffering. Take your time reading this commentary. Please do not read this commentary on its own. Read the Bible passage quoted at the beginning of each chapter. Ask the Lord to open your eyes and ears to what He wants you to learn from each passage. Take the time to read and consider the questions at the end of each chapter. Pray over what you have learned.

My desire is that this commentary will be an aid to help you understand this complex book of the Bible. I pray that this section of Scripture will be as much encouragement to you as it has been to me. May God bless you richly as you take the time to read and study the book of Job.

F. Wayne MacLeod

# INTRODUCTION TO JOB

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## *Author:*

There is no indication anywhere in the Bible as to the author of the book of Job or the time the book was written, although various opinions have emerged. It is quite obvious that Job was a real person. Evidence for this is found in Ezekiel 14:14 where he is listed with other Old Testament characters:

Even if these three men—Noah, Daniel and Job—were in it, they could save only themselves by their righteousness, declares the Sovereign LORD.

There is also evidence that the author of the book was quoted in the New Testament. A comparison between Hebrews 12:5 and Job 5:17 as well as 1 Corinthians 3:19 and Job 5:13 show that the book was well respected by the writers of the New Testament.

The material found in the book indicates that the author was close to Job and was able to obtain detailed accounts of the conversations of Job with his friends, his thoughts and the words of God to him.



*Background:*

Job lived in the land of Uz which seems to be located somewhere around the region of Edom as evidenced in Lamentations 4:21:

Rejoice and be glad, O Daughter of Edom, you who live in the land of Uz.

Job is described as a blameless and upright man who feared God (Job 1:1). Not only did he fear the Lord and walk in His ways but Job was also a very well respected and wealthy man in the region where he lived. Through a series of events, Job lost his family, his wealth and physical health. He was left to question God and His purposes. The book is an account of Job's pilgrimage through the trials he faced.

*Importance of the Books for Today:*

The book of Job is probably one of the most important books in the Bible dealing with suffering and trials and is entirely devoted to this subject. It is written in a manner that reflects Job's personal experiences but designed to teach its readers about suffering and God's sovereignty over it.

Job's friends present their opinions about his suffering and trials but in the end they have to admit that they do not have an answer. God's purposes were too great for them to understand. This shows us that God's ways are much higher than our ways and there are times when we simply will not understand what He is doing.

Job never fully understood what God was doing in his life but he did persevere in his confidence in Him. The book teaches us the importance of faith and confidence in God even when we don't have the answers we would like to have.

Job's struggle was intense. He was brought to the limits of his strength. He cursed the day he was born and wished he could die. He was broken and crushed. His friends accused him. Fellow citizens, who had once respected him, mocked him and refuse to be seen in his presence. His wife told him to curse God and die. Job was left without strength, confused and depressed but God carried him through to victory. What an encouragement this is for us. This book reminds us that the battle is not in our strength but in the strength the Lord provides.

Satan unleashed all he could on Job in an attempt to cause him to renounce God. God allowed Satan certain privileges but protected Job and kept him in His hands. The God of Job will care for us in the same way. We belong to Him and Satan cannot have us. God will keep us, protect us and strengthen even though Satan does his utmost to destroy us and our faith. Job's example is proof of this.

While sometimes difficult to understand, the book of Job brings great comfort and strength to those of us who have had to face struggles in life. It shows suffering at its worst but points us to a sovereign and loving God who keeps those who belong to Him.



# 1

## THE TRIALS OF A BLAMELESS MAN

---

Read Job 1

One of the greatest challenges of the book of Job is to understand the work of God. In a sense, the book is about a God whose ways are higher than our ways. Throughout the generations human beings have attempted to understand the mind of God. We have formed a theological system and dissected the various attributes of God, but have we really come to understand who He is and how He works? In this commentary we will see the futile attempts of Job and his friends to define God. Ultimately, we will be confronted with God Himself who is beyond description.

As we begin the book of Job, we meet Job himself. He lived in the land of Uz in the region of Edom (see Lamentations 4:21). While it is uncertain when Job lived, it is generally agreed that he lived around the time of Abraham (approximately 2100 BC). We learn several things about Job in this opening section of chapter 1.

First, Job was blameless (verse 1). The Hebrew word used for blameless (perfect, KJV) has the idea of being morally complete. That is to say, Job was honest and mature in his dealings with God and people. He lived a morally pure life. This does not mean that Job never sinned. The Lord Jesus alone was without sin. Job was honest, pure, and sincere and lived an exemplary life; but he was still a sinner in need of God's grace. Verse 1 tells us what being blameless means when it tells us that Job "feared God and shunned evil." He loved God and lived for Him.

Second, notice that God gave Job seven sons. Sons, in the Old Testament context, were a true blessing from the Lord. Job also had three daughters. Besides his many children, Job was rich in livestock. Verse 3 tells us that he owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred donkeys, and had a large number of servants. He was considered to be the richest and most influential man in the East.

Third, notice that Job had a deep concern for the spiritual welfare of his children. We are told that his sons took turns holding feasts in their homes. Job would sacrifice burnt offerings for them in the event that during their time of feasting and drinking, they may have sinned or cursed God in their hearts. It is of particular interest that Job spoke here of the hearts of his children. He was not just interested in their outward actions; his deep concern was for inward, spiritual well-being. He wanted them to be cleansed from every wrong action, thought, or attitude. This indicates that Job's faith was more than a superficial, outward faith. Job's faith came from his heart, and he expected the same from his children.

Following this introduction the scene is moved to heaven (verse 6). The angels were coming to present themselves

to God apparently to account for their activities. Satan also came with these angels, and God asked him where he had come from. Satan told the Lord that he had been roaming through the earth. God asked Satan if he had noticed Job (verse 8). This leads us to understand that the reason Satan was roaming was to find individuals to tempt and turn from God. The apostle Peter warned believers about Satan and the way he roams through the earth seeking someone to devour:

“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

What may seem strange here is that God does not try to hide Job from Satan. The Lord openly asked Satan if he had ever considered tempting Job. God did not fear what Satan could do. Satan's efforts in the life of Job would not affect God's ultimate purposes for Job.

Satan jumped at this opportunity. He wanted an opportunity to tempt Job. The problem, however, was that God had been protecting Job by putting a protective hedge around him and his family, sparing them from harm. According to Satan, Job had no reason to turn away from God. God had made Job's life so comfortable and blessed that Job was more than happy to be faithful to Him. Satan suggested that Job was committed to God simply to get God's blessing.

It is important that we consider the reason for our commitment to God. Do we serve Him for what we can get from Him? Do we love Him because He has made our lives easy? What would happen if God took away His blessings? Satan told God that if Job was stripped of these things, he would curse God to His face. In response to this,

God placed everything Job had in Satan's hands. God told Satan, however, that He could not touch Job's person.

Notice that Satan had no ability to take anything away from Job that God did not give him permission to take. Though Satan lashes out in great fury, he is not in control. The Lord God still rules in heaven. Satan is limited in power.

Satan left the presence of God that day and wasted no time doing his evil work. On one of those occasions when Job's sons and daughters were feasting together, Satan attacked.

The first Job heard about this was when a messenger arrived to tell him that the Sabeans had attacked and carried off the oxen and donkeys that were grazing in the fields. The raiders had also killed the servants who were looking after the animals. Only one servant had escaped to give Job the news.

While the first messenger was speaking, a second arrived. He told how the fire of God had fallen from the sky and burned the sheep and more servants. Yet a third messenger arrived telling Job that the Chaldeans formed three raiding parties and carried off his camels, putting yet more servants to death.

The fourth messenger came with even more tragic news. He told how Job's sons and daughters were feasting and drinking together when suddenly a great wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house so that it collapsed on them, killing them all.

Job lost his oxen, donkeys, sheep, camels, servants, and all his children. We can only imagine the pain Job

experienced. In response, He rose up, tore his robe, and shaved his head, as a sign of deep mourning. He fell to the ground in worship of God and said in verse 21:

“Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised.”

We do not always understand why God allows what He does, but we must never lose sight of the fact that He is able to use the worst things Satan does to us to accomplish His glory and draw us closer to Himself. Although Job grieved, he still worshipped the Lord. He acknowledged the Lord’s sovereign control over all the events of his life.

This passage ought to challenge us to examine our love for God. What is the basis for your love for God? Do you love Him because He has given you lots of good friends and a wonderful church? Do you love Him because He has blessed your ministry and given you a wonderful spouse? Do you love Him because He has given you all you need for each day? What would happen if all of these things were taken from you? Would you still love Him? Job loved God for who He is. Even if God stripped Him of everything He had, Job would still love and obey Him.



### For Consideration:

- What do we learn here about Job? What kind of person was he?
- Do the righteous suffer? What evidence is there of this in your church and community?
- Where is God when trials and suffering come our way? Do we have to understand what God is doing to trust Him?
- Why do you love God? How much of your love for God is based on what He has given you in this life?
- In this passage we see that sometimes God puts a protective wall around His people and sometimes He removes that wall. What do we learn from Job about how to deal with the times when God removes the wall?

### For Prayer:

- Thank the Lord that He is in control of everything in this life.
- Take a moment to praise the Lord for the things He has given you.
- Can you, like Job, still worship God when blessings are removed from your life? If so take a moment to do so right now.
- Ask God to help you to understand the motivation for your love for Him. Ask him to give you a love that is sincere.

## 2

### MORE TROUBLES

---

Read Job 2

In the last meditation, we saw how Satan stripped Job of all he had in an attempt to make him turn from God. Job lost his livestock, his servants, and all his children but refused to turn his back on the God he loved.

On another occasion the angels came to present themselves to God, and again Satan came with them. Notice the boldness of Satan. He appears before God with the angels of heaven. We need to understand that Satan will stop at nothing to destroy the work of God. If he was willing to appear in the presence of the angels of heaven before God, we should not be surprised if he shows up in our churches or Bible studies. His boldness is second only to his hatred of the things of God.

When the Lord saw Satan, again He asked him where he had come from. Obviously, the Lord already knew where Satan had been. The question was asked not so that God could gain information but rather to ask Satan what he wanted. Satan told God that he had been roaming the

earth. Satan roamed looking for people to tempt. He roamed seeking any opportunity to hinder the work of the Lord. He does not hide this from God. He is very open about his purposes.

Again, the Lord asked Satan if he had considered Job and reminded Satan that Job was blameless. Job had not sinned even though Satan had tempted him. Notice in verse 3 that God accused Satan of causing Job's suffering for no reason. This should not go unnoticed. God did not allow Satan to attack Job's possessions because Job deserved punishment. Job was more blameless and upright than anyone else on the earth. He lived for God and loved God with all his heart. Though God allowed Job to pass through this trial, we can be sure of one thing: God was in control and would use this trial to accomplish good in the life of Job.

Satan contended that the reason Job did not curse God in his suffering was because God was protecting his physical health. Satan was confident that if God would let him strike Job's body with disease, then Job would turn from God and curse Him. God again gave Satan permission to distress Job. God hindered Satan only from taking Job's life.

Satan left the presence of God that day to assault Job. Verse 7 tells us that Satan afflicted Job with painful sores from the sole of his feet to the top of his head. So great was this disease that Job used a piece of broken pottery to scrape and scratch himself. He sat among the ashes. He could no longer live in his home because he was unclean, filled with running sores. He sat in what would appear to be some sort of garbage dump amid the ashes in absolute agony and pain.

In verse 9 Job's wife came to see him. As he sat there in the ash heap, she said to him: "Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!" We can only imagine the impact of this statement on Job. Even his wife asked him to curse God and die. She could not bear to see him in such pain. Her commitment to God was not equal to Job's. She preferred to see him dead than to see him in such a condition. Job had lost the support of his wife. He was alone in this trial.

Job listened to his wife but challenged her attitude. In verse 10 he told her: "You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?" Job's words are powerful. He reminded his wife that they must be ready to receive whatever God chose to give.

We are more than willing to accept the things we like from God, but we do not want to receive difficulty. Sometimes God will ask us to carry a burden. Some people go through life with a physical affliction. They must carry that affliction with them to the grave. We may not understand the reason for this, but we can be sure that God has a purpose in it for good. Sometimes the world needs to see how God can give believers the victory of faith and joy in affliction.

In verse 11 we meet three friends of Job. When Bildad, Zophar, and Eliphaz heard about Job's suffering, they came to visit him. They hoped to comfort him in his pain. When they saw Job at a distance, they did not recognise him. When they finally realised that this suffering man was Job, they were stricken with grief. Verse 12 tells us that they wept aloud, tore their robes, and cast dust on their heads. They did this to indicate their intense grief at seeing their friend in such a condition.

Verse 13 tells us that they sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights without saying a word. We can only imagine the intensity of pain that Job experienced that day. All his friends could do was to watch him as he groaned in agony.

God never promised that things would be easy for us. Here we have a picture of a man of God sitting on an ash pile in intense suffering, not because of anything he had done but because Satan was afflicting him. God watched what was happening but did not interfere with Satan. Job was stretched beyond his human ability to endure. What we need to understand, however, is that without the stretching there can be no strengthening. God was not blind to what Job was facing. Though Satan was vicious in his attacks, God would use what Job went through to strengthen and purify his servant. Would you be ready to face what Job faced if by doing so you would be drawn closer to the Lord God?

#### For Consideration:

- What do we learn here about the boldness of Satan? What does this teach us about our need for caution and discernment?
- How is the power of Satan limited?
- Does God allow or even send trouble to His servants? Why?
- What is the connection between being stretched and being strengthened?

For Prayer:

- Ask the Lord to give you greater discernment in your ministry and walk with God to recognise the attack of the enemy.
- Thank the Lord that He is greater than Satan and that Satan can do nothing to us that God does not first allow.
- Ask the Lord to forgive you for the times you refused to accept His means of strengthening you.
- Thank the Lord that no matter what the enemy may do to us, He is in control.



# 3

## JOB CURSES

### THE DAY OF HIS BIRTH

---

Read Job 3

Job and his friends had been sitting in silence. The time finally came when Job broke the silence and expressed his grief in words to his friends. Here in chapter 3 Job cursed the day of his birth. The pain he was experiencing was so great that Job began to wish he had never been born. Notice that he does not curse God, though admittedly he does begin to question why God had let him be born at all.

From verses 3-7 we see that Job wished that he could erase the day of his birth from the calendar. He wished that the night had never come when his parents were told: "A boy is born!" Job wished that the day he was born had been nothing but darkness and that God had cared nothing about it. That is to say, he wished that God's blessings had never fallen on that day so that he would never have been brought into the world. He expressed his wish that the night he was born would have been a barren night. "May no shout of joy be heard in it," he says in verse 7. In



particular he was thinking of the shout of joy that was heard when the news of his birth was announced.

In verse 8 Job called on those who cursed days. Possibly, he was referring here to magicians or sorcerers of some kind to whom people would go for the purpose of cursing someone or something that had offended them. Job called on these individuals to curse the day of his birth.

Notice also in verse 8 that Job called on those who were ready to rouse Leviathan. Leviathan was a fierce sea creature mentioned in the Bible. In the book of Isaiah, Leviathan is described as a gliding and coiling serpent:

“In that day, the LORD will punish with his sword, his fierce, great and powerful sword, Leviathan the gliding serpent, Leviathan the coiling serpent; he will slay the monster of the sea” (Isaiah 27:1).

Psalm 104:26 states:

There the ships go to and fro, and the leviathan, which you formed to frolic there.”

Leviathan was a sea monster of some kind. The reference to those who would rouse Leviathan is a reference to those who sought to bring tremendous curses and terror to others; these are likely pagan sorcerers. We need to understand that Job was not actually calling on sorcerers and magicians. He was simply recognising a practice of his day and using it in a poetic form to express his deep pain.

Job's desire was that the morning stars had become dark and the dawn had never come on the day he was born (verse 9). He wondered why he had not perished at birth.

Why had God allowed his mother's knees to receive him and her breasts to nurse him? Had he died at birth, he would never have had to face the pain he felt at that time. In death, he would be at rest.

Job reminds his friends that if he had died at birth, he would be lying in the ground with kings and the wise counsellors of the earth (verses 14-15). There in the grave he would be with rich rulers who had filled their houses with silver. At present, he was sitting on an ash heap in both physical and emotional agony. For Job the grave would have been a welcome sight. In the grave even the wicked ceased causing turmoil. Those who were weary and overworked were finally able to rest in peace. The captive slaves were released from the terrible burden of life and no longer had to listen to the cry of their slave drivers (verse 18).

How easy it is in our suffering to forget the good we have experienced. During our suffering all the past blessings of God seem to be forgotten. All Job could see was his present pain. Job failed to understand the purpose of God in his suffering. In verses 20-22 he asked:

“Why is light given to those in misery, and life to the bitter of soul, to those who long for death that does not come, who search for it more than for hidden treasure, who are filled with gladness and rejoice when they reach the grave?”

Life on earth is indeed filled with pain and agony. Sin has had a terrible effect on nature and on human relationships. Sometimes the weight of sin and its effects is too much for some to bear in their own strength. Even those who know the Lord have been known to cry out for death because of the weight of evil and oppression on them.

In 1 Kings 19:4 we see that the prophet Elijah, under the pressure and stress of the day, cried out to God to take his life. In Jeremiah 20:14 the prophet Jeremiah cursed that day of his birth. The reality of the matter is that even believers can feel the terrible weight of pain and suffering to the point where death seems preferable to continuing in this world.

The question Job asked was why would God allow humans to go through this type of pain? Why did He not protect them from the overwhelming effects of sin, evil, and pain? Job's experience was causing him to ask some hard questions. He had no peace or quietness in his soul. For Job his worst fears had come true.

There will be times in life when we may be brought to the same point as Job. As someone who has suffered from clinical depression, I can at times identify with what Job was saying. I still remember the time when, walking home from church one Sunday evening, I cried out: "Lord, if you have finished with me, then take me home. I don't want to continue like this anymore." Obviously, God was not finished with me. He would later open up a greater door of opportunity for these commentaries. The reality of the matter, however, is that as long as we live in this body and on this earth, we will have to deal with sin and its effects. As long as God has not finished with us, we will always be stretched and strengthened through what we suffer. We may, like Job, not have the answers to our questions, but be assured that God has not finished with us. He will teach and purify us in these times like gold refined in the fire.

## For Consideration:

- Does God always give us reasons for the things we have to face in life? What do we see in the life of Job?
- Have you ever found yourself wondering what God was doing in your life? Explain.
- Do we need to have answers to our questions before we can trust God?
- What does God accomplish in us through suffering and trials?

## For Prayer:

- If you are facing a deep trial right now, commit yourself afresh to trust and seek the purpose of God alone.
- Do you know of a fellow believer who is facing a deep trial? Take a moment to pray for this person and to ask the Lord to show you if there is anything in particular you can do to help.
- Thank the Lord that He is trustworthy even when things seem to overwhelm us.



## 4

# ELIPHAZ: MAKE PIETY YOUR CONFIDENCE

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Read Job 4-5

After a long period of silence, Job finally spoke. In the last meditation, we saw how Job cursed the day of his birth. He wished he had never been born. The pain and suffering he felt at that time seemed beyond his ability to endure.

It was Eliphaz who spoke first in an attempt to explain the reason for Job's suffering. It seems that as human beings we need to understand everything God does even though His ways are often beyond us. His first argument to Job is found in chapters 4 and 5. To get the general sense of his argument, we will look at both chapters in this meditation.

Eliphaz had listened to Job curse the day of his birth. As he listened, his heart stirred within him. He felt the need to speak and share what was burning in his heart. In verse 2 he approached Job somewhat cautiously. Eliphaz asked Job to be patient with him as he ventured to speak. Eliphaz was hesitant to speak, possibly because of Job's profound

suffering, but the words seem to burn in his heart and needed to be released. For the sake of clarity, we will break down his argument into its various sections.

### *Easier to Instruct Than Live (4:1-5)*

The first part of Eliphaz's argument in chapter 4 is really an accusation. He began by reminding Job how he had instructed and strengthened many people in his lifetime. With his great wisdom, he had supported those who had stumbled and strengthened those whose knees were weak with difficulties. Although Job had encouraged others in their troubles, he was discouraged and overwhelmed when trouble came to him. Eliphaz was frustrated with Job because he did not practice what he preached.

Here in his opening statement, Eliphaz shows us that he believed Job to be inconsistent. He encouraged others but did not listen to his own advice.

### *Make Piety Your Confidence (4:6-11)*

The second part of Eliphaz's argument is in verses 6-11. He told Job to make piety his confidence and blamelessness his hope. In other words, Job was to live such a life that there would be no reason for God to teach him lessons he had not yet learned. Eliphaz was saying that living a good life was Job's hope. The fact that Job was experiencing problems was an indication that he was not living a pious and blameless life before God.

Eliphaz supported this view by telling Job that the innocent never perished. Those who lived an upright life would never be destroyed. Those who ploughed evil would reap

trouble (verse 8). Evil people, according to Eliphaz, would be destroyed by the breath of God and the blast of His anger. Like lions, evil people roared and growled in their pursuit of prey. They destroyed innocent men and women, but God would break their teeth so that they could no longer torment their victims.

Eliphaz accused Job of serious crimes here. He compared Job to a lion devouring the innocent. He told Job that the innocent never suffer. Job somehow deserved what he had received from God. Eliphaz, however, had no proof of his statements. God had called Job “blameless” in chapter 1; Eliphaz accused him of sin.

*Can a Man Be More Righteous Than His Maker? (4:12-21)*

In verses 12 to 17, Eliphaz told Job about a vision he had. While he was asleep one night, fear and trembling overtook him. He felt a spirit slip by him and his hair stood up on end in fear. He saw the indistinct form of a spirit. As he trembled in fear, he heard the spirit speak: “Can a mortal be more righteous than God? Can a man be more pure than his Maker?” (verse 17).

Eliphaz felt that this vision was very appropriate in Job’s situation. He believed that Job was claiming to be more righteous than God. He saw Job accusing God of punishing him without cause. Eliphaz felt that Job was accusing God of wrong. The voice in Eliphaz’s vision reminded him that humans could not be more righteous than God. If there was someone to blame, it certainly could not be God. That could only mean that Job was to blame for his suffering.

Eliphaz reminded Job that not even the angels were perfect. They were capable of making mistakes and errors



(verse 18). If God could not completely trust His angels, how could He trust mere humans who live in bodies made from the dust of the earth?

Eliphaz reminded Job that humans are as fragile as moths (verse 19). Humans are broken to pieces between dawn and dusk and perish, never to be remembered again. That is to say, the time between the dawn of birth and the dusk of death is short. In that period our bodies will become more fragile with age. Our vision will disappear; our strength will wane; and eventually we will fade away like flowers. In an instant the cords of our tents can be pulled up—life can be suddenly taken from us. How could the words and judgments of such weak and helpless beings be trusted? Mere human could never accuse God of wrong. Eliphaz believed that Job was setting Himself up as God's judge. This was very foolish indeed.

### *Hardship Does Not Spring from the Soil (5:1-7)*

The next element of Eliphaz's argument can be found in verses 1-7 of chapter 5. In verse 1 Eliphaz asked Job who in heaven he could turn to for support of his arguments. Eliphaz made it clear to Job that no one in heaven would support him. Eliphaz believed that he, however, had heaven's support in what he spoke.

For Eliphaz things were very simple. "Resentment kills a fool, and envy slays the simple," he told Job (verse 2). The sinful acts of the sinner destroy him. Eliphaz reminded Job that he had known evil people who seemed to prosper for a moment, but they were ultimately cut down. Their children were not safe. They suffered the consequences of their father's sin. The hungry consumed the harvest of the wicked. Evil people would get what they deserved.

Hardship, according to Eliphaz, was not natural to the earth (verse 6). Trouble did not sprout from the ground naturally. Hardship and trouble was not the portion of the righteous. They were the punishment of God for evil. In verse 7 Eliphaz reminded Job that people were born to trouble as surely as sparks fly upward. Eliphaz was telling Job that since trouble and evil did not grow naturally in the soil, they occur some other way—that way was from people. Humans reap what they sow. Job had sowed evil and was now harvesting the consequences of his actions.

### *Appeal to God (5:8-12)*

Eliphaz pleaded with Job to appeal to God (verse 8). He told Job to lay his cause before God and listen to what He would tell him. Eliphaz reminded Job that God performed wonders and miracles. He was a God of mercy and compassion who gave rain to the earth. He set the humble in high places and lifted up those who were mourning to safety. Those who were crafty and wise in their own eyes, however, were under the curse of God and would never prosper or have success.

### *God Will Catch the Wise (5:13-16)*

Eliphaz continued by saying that God is not fooled by the words of the wise. He is not taken in by their evil schemes. Though they devised ingenious plans, God would see through all the plans of the wicked. Ultimately, darkness would fall on those who were wise in their own eyes. It would fall on them in the daylight when they least expected it. They would fall before their time. Their evil plans would fail. God would rescue the needy from the sword of the wicked. The poor of the land could have hope because God was against these evil people and their schemes. No

more would these so-called wise people keep the poor from justice.

Eliphaz saw Job as being wise in his own eyes. Maybe he believed that somehow Job had cleverly deceived those around him and had hidden his sin. He reminded Job that God would reveal his sin and punish him.

*Do Not Despise Discipline (5:17-18)*

It was quite clear in the mind of Eliphaz that Job was being punished for some hidden sin. He challenged Job not to despise God's discipline. For Eliphaz, Job's complaints proved that he had rejected what God was doing. He reminded Job that while God wounded, He would also bind up those wounds; and although He injured, he would heal. God would punish and discipline, but when His child learned the lesson, He would quickly restore him. Eliphaz challenged Job to accept God's discipline, repent of his sin, and be restored.

*No Harm Will Befall You (5:19-26)*

Eliphaz concluded his arguments by telling Job that if he listened to God and accepted His discipline, then only good would happen to Him. God would rescue Job from famine, battle, and sword. Job would be protected from the lashing of the tongue and from destruction. He would be able to laugh at destruction and would not need to fear the wild beast.

Eliphaz told Job that those who were right with God were protected so that harm could not befall them. They had a covenant with the stones of the field, and the animals of the wild would be at peace with them. The tent of the

righteous would be secure and nothing would happen to their livestock. The ones who served God would know the blessing of God and have many children. Their descendants would be as numerous as the grass of the earth. These people would die in full health, having lived a fruitful and blessed life.

Eliphaz ended his speech by telling Job that these things had been examined and found to be true. He encouraged Job to listen to what he was saying and apply it to his life. In brief, Eliphaz believed that if people lived good lives, they would prosper. The blessing of God would rest on those who did His will. God would protect them and nothing evil could happen to Him. According to Eliphaz, Job must have done something wrong to deserve such a drastic judgment from God.

#### For Consideration:

- How important is it that we are able to live by the wisdom that we teach others?
- Does the argument of Eliphaz make sense? Do you agree with what he had to say to Job? Why or why not?
- Is the argument of Eliphaz the complete answer to why Job was suffering? Why or why not?
- Does God correct His people? Have you ever experienced the correction of the Lord?
- What encouragement do you receive here from Eliphaz regarding the way God can rescue us from our trials and difficulties?

For Prayer:

- Thank the Lord that He does correct those He loves.
- Thank the Lord that He is a holy God who does no evil.
- Ask God to keep you from being quick to judge others.
- Ask God to give you patience under His discipline and training.

## 5

# **JOB'S RESPONSE: THE DEVOTION OF FRIENDSHIP**

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Read Job 6

In chapters 6 and 7, Job responded to the remarks of Eliphaz. In chapter 6 he addressed his friends, and in chapter seven Job cried out to God. In this meditation, we will look at the response of Job to his friends. This chapter can be divided into two parts. In verses 2-13 Job spoke about the agony he was facing. In verses 14-30, he spoke directly to his friends regarding their efforts to minister to him in his hour of need.

Job began by telling his friends how he wished his anguish could be weighed and placed on a scale. What did Job mean by this? Perhaps Job was not convinced that his friends understood the weight he was bearing. The comments of Eliphaz seemed to say that Job deserved what he got. This would likely have hurt Job who felt that he did not deserve such a heavy measure of pain. Perhaps, and much more likely, is the fact that Job was seeking justice. At this point in his life, he did not think he deserved what

he received from God. If only he could take his grief and pain, put it on a scale, and compare it to his sin, he would at least have a way of testing to see if his punishment met his crime.

In verse 3 Job seems to respond to Eliphaz's accusation that he was being impatient (see Job 4:1). Job told his friends that the reason he spoke with such impetuosity was the weight of his pain and agony. He told them that if he were able to weigh the agony he felt at that point, it would outweigh the sands of the sea.

Job felt justified in what he was saying. God's arrows of judgment had struck him. Even as he spoke, Job was drinking the poison of those arrows. He was terrified as God set Himself against him. Job saw the arrows of God's judgment as a poison that was slowly killing him. He did not know how much more he could handle.

In verse 5 Job asked his friends a question: "Does a wild donkey bray when it has grass or an ox bellow when it has fodder?" What was Job saying here? When a donkey or ox is well fed, it has no reason to bray or bellow. But it cries out, however, when it is hungry. In a similar way, Job's complaint had reason. He spoke from the pain and agony of his soul.

In verses 6 and 7 Job asked his friends if there was any taste in the white of an egg or if tasteless food was eaten without salt. There are certain foods that are unpleasant to eat. In order to make those foods more agreeable, salt or some other type of seasoning must be added. Job's life was at present very disagreeable. All that made life agreeable to Job had been taken from him. Like tasteless food, Job's life was detestable to him.

Job cried out in his despair, and he believed he was justified in doing so. His complaints were not without reason. His life was stripped of any blessing that would ease his suffering and make life more bearable. He wished that God would crush him and end his suffering (verse 8). Life had no more meaning and joy, and he wanted to die. At least if he died, he could do so with the knowledge that he had not denied the words of God (verse 10). Job believed in his innocence.

God had set Himself against Job (at least this is how Job saw it). There was nothing Job could do before a holy and sovereign God. Job saw himself as being without hope. He did not see any benefit to being patient (verse 11). He could only handle so much. His body was being broken down. His spirit was being crushed. The day of his death was approaching. He did not have flesh of bronze that he could resist indefinitely the attack of the Lord. If God was against him, what hope did he have?

Before a holy and awesome God, Job had no power to defend himself (verse 13). His only hope was in the Lord God and His favour. If there was one thing this trial was teaching him, it was that a person apart from God could do nothing. Everything we have we owe to the favour of God. Take away that favour and we perish. Job could only wish that God would speed up the process of crushing him so that his suffering would come to a speedy end.

From these remarks, Job turned his attention to his friends. In verses 14-30 he told them what he felt about them and their futile attempts to help. Job reminded his friends that a despairing man should have the devotion of his friends even if he forsook the fear of the Lord (verse 14). How many believers have turned their backs on those who have even once fallen in their walk with the Lord? What Job is



telling us is that we ought not to abandon our friends in their need. True friends stick with each other through the good times and the bad times. To stand with a friend in a time of rebellion does not mean that we support his or her rebellion. It simply means that we care for them and are concerned for their well-being.

This, however, was not the type of friends Job had. He compared them to undependable streams. These streams overflowed in the winter, but when the dry season came, they were nowhere to be seen. They had been great friends in Job's prosperity; but now that everything had been stripped from him, they turned away.

In verses 18-20 Job compared his friends to the caravans that travelled through the desert. These travelling merchants moved with confidence because they knew where the streams were located. They arrived at the location of the stream but were distressed to find out that it had dried up, leaving them thirsty and perishing.

This is what Job's friends were like. They had proved to be of no help to him at all in his hour of need. They sat before him in accusation. In his pain they blamed him for abandoning the Lord God. Accusations flowed freely, but love and devotion was nowhere to be seen.

Job was confused as to why he was being punished. He asked his friends if he had ever taken advantage of them or taken anything from them for profit. To the best of his knowledge, Job had never taken advantage of his friends.

In verse 24 Job challenged his friends to show him where he had gone wrong. To this point, they had only spoken in vague generalities. Job wanted them to search their memories to find evidence that he deserved to be punished. He

admitted in verse 25 that honest words were very painful at times, but he did not run from them. He wanted to know what God found against him. The problem was that neither his friends nor God Himself had ever shown Job what his fault was.

Job's friends found Job in despair and assumed that he had nothing to say. They saw his pain and assumed that God was punishing him. Because they saw him as a sinner, they put no trust in anything he said. They treated his words like wind that blew past but had no wisdom to impart.

Job accused his friends of being the type of people who would do anything to benefit themselves (verse 27). They were the type of people who would cast lots for the fatherless in order to use them as their slaves.

Job saw his integrity at stake. He was being accused of evil. Even his friends questioned Job's integrity. He pleaded with them to consider that he might have a just case before God. He pleaded with them to be true friends in this season of grief.

#### For Consideration:

- Why did Job want his sins to be weighed? Have you ever felt that your punishment was unjust?
- What do we learn about the favour of God? Where would we be if it were not for the favour of God?
- What does Job teach us about our devotion to a friend who has fallen?

- Job accused his friends of being there for him when he had lots of money but putting no confidence in Him when he was stripped of everything. How easy is it for us to respect the rich and look down on the poor?
- What kind of friend are you? What does Job teach us about friendship?

#### For Prayer:

- Take a moment to thank the Lord for the wonderful favour He has given you.
- Do you have a friend who is in need of encouragement? Ask the Lord to help you to be loving toward this friend.
- Ask the Lord to remove any prejudice you may have in regard to certain people in your society. Ask the Lord to help you to respect people He sends to you regardless of their social standing.

## 6

# **JOB'S CRY TO GOD: LEAVE ME ALONE**

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Read Job 7

In chapter 6 we saw how Job responded to his friends. He told them that they were of no help to him. Instead of sharing his sorrow and pain, they attacked him and accused him of evil. Here in this next chapter, Job spoke to God. His cry to God was very honest. He did not hold back his feelings or questions.

Job began by speaking of the hardships of life. "Does not man have hard service on the earth?" he asked in verse 1. He compared his life to that of a hired servant or slave. The servant worked hard all day in the hot sun. Fatigue overwhelmed him so that he began to long for the end of the day when he would be paid and return home to rest.

Job felt like that servant. He longed for the end of his life when he could rest in peace from his pain and agony. He could not understand what was happening to him. These last few months were months of futility for him. What had

been accomplished through his pain and affliction? Even his nights were nights of misery.

He would lie down at night thinking that he would rest from his pain but this would not happen. Instead, he would toss and turn all night in his longing for the morning. There was no rest at night and only futility all day long. Job reminds God that his body was clothed with worms and scabs (verse 5). His skin was broken and festering. All day long he had to suffer the pain of his festering wounds. He saw no purpose in this.

As Job looked at his life, he felt that it was short and futile. He compared it to the weaver's shuttle. This was an instrument used to make cloth. It moved from one side of the cloth to another so that the strands of thread could be woven together. Job was saying that he saw his life like this. Maybe this is a reference to how quickly the shuttle moved from one side of the cloth to the other. His life went by as quickly as the weaver's shuttle moved from one side of the cloth to the other.

In verse 7 Job stated that life was but a breath and then was no more. He would perish and never see happiness again. He would disappear in death, never to be seen again. Like a cloud, he would vanish and never return to the land of the living (verse 10).

We need to understand that Job spoke out of pain and anguish and not from a deep theological understanding of God and His plan. Job may have lacked some basic theological understanding of the resurrection and the hope we can have through the Lord Jesus. Job spoke from a partial understanding of God and out of deep pain and suffering.

Job refused to be silent in this time of his life (verse 11). He chose to speak out about the anguish he felt in his spirit. He felt justified in complaining bitterly. He did not feel that he deserved what he was receiving from the hand of God. "Am I the sea, or the monster of the deep that you put me under guard?" he asked God (verse 12). Job has enough understanding to know that man was the crown of God's creation. Man was to be treated with dignity and respect. He felt that he was being treated like a monster that needed to be crushed or like an object that needed to be controlled lest it unleash its deadly power and destroy the earth.

Job believed he was being attacked by God and expressed this to Him openly (verses 13-15). Here he told God that even when he laid down to rest from the weariness of the day, God pursued him with frightful dreams and terrifying visions. These dreams and visions at night were so horrible that Job felt as though he preferred strangling and death rather than living in the body God had given him. Death seemed to be the only way of escape for Job.

Job made it quite clear in verse 16 that he hated his life as it was. He pleaded with God to leave him alone. He found no more reason to live. His life seemed to be a waste of time and an unnecessary anguish. He just wanted to die.

In verse 17 Job asked God why He made so much of man. Why would God give Job so much attention? It seemed that God looked down on Job every morning and tested him every moment of the day. God would not leave him alone. Job pleaded with God to show him what he had done to deserve such wrath (verse 20).

In verse 21 Job asked God why He did not pardon his offences. Why would God set His heart to punish and

torment? He reminded God that his life would soon be over. Soon he would die and no longer be a burden to Him.

Chapter 7 reveals the true pain of Job. He was not only tormented on the outside with open wounds but also on the inside with deep unanswered questions. Job's greatest pain was the silence of God and the uncertainty of what He had done wrong. Job's spirit was crushed. Depression had set in and Job could no longer see any reason to live. Life was futile and meaningless. Death seemed like the only escape.

It is important that we see that God never left Job. Admittedly, Job saw the presence of God as a negative thing. He could not get away from God. In reality, however, it was that presence of God that kept him safe from even more evil and oppression at the hand of Satan. Job was able to overcome only because God never left him and would not let him go. The pain was very real. The depression and anguish of spirit were overwhelming, but God was still there by Job's side.

For Consideration:

- Have you ever experienced times when you wondered if you could ever get through the trials you felt? Have you ever felt overwhelmed by suffering and anguish? How did God take you through those times?
- What comfort do you find in the fact that God never left Job in this time of trouble?
- Have you ever felt the silence of God? Why is it so difficult for the believer to handle the silence of God?

For Prayer:

- Ask God to show you His purpose for you in the struggle you are facing right now. Commit yourself to the Lord and to faithfulness in this time.
- Thank the Lord for the times He has carried you through great struggle and pain.
- Take a moment to thank the Lord that His ways are always perfect. Ask Him to increase your faith when you cannot understand His ways.





## 7

### **BILDAD:**

### **PLEAD WITH THE ALMIGHTY**

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Read Job 8

In chapter 8 Bildad the Shuhite spoke to Job. He began by telling Job that his words were like blustering wind. They were offensive and cruel. To Bildad, Job was accusing God of injustice. Bildad reminded Job that the Lord God could never be accused of perverting justice. Everything He did was righteous, just, and holy.

According to Bildad, Job's children had sinned and were justly punished for their sin. He did not base this on what he knew about the events of that day but rather on the idea that God would only punish Job's children if they had not done something terrible.

Bildad felt the need to defend God's honour. He believed he spoke on God's behalf. He said that Job's children deserved their punishment (verse 4). He told Job, in effect, that he too deserved what was happening to him. He

spoke these things because he believed God's honour was at stake.

Bildad shows no sympathy for the pain Job faced here. There is a time for theology and a time for sympathy and compassion. At this point in the life of Job, he needed fewer theological answers and more comfort and concern from his friends.

Bildad challenged Job in verse 5 to look to and plead with the Lord God. He went as far as to tell Job in verse 6 that if he were pure and upright, then God would restore him to his original place of honour. He believed that if Job repented, then the result would be that God would make him so prosperous that the wealth he previously had would seem like nothing (verse 7).

In verse 8 Bildad challenged Job to ask the former generations about these matters. He was convinced that if Job were to listen to the instructions of the former generations, they would clearly tell him that God's blessing falls on those who are obedient. What we see here in the book of Job, however, is that God considered Job to be the most blameless person on the earth:

“Then the LORD said to Satan, ‘Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil’” (1:8).

If God was punishing Job because he had sinned, why were his three friends not being punished, since they were less blameless than Job? If God considered Job to be the most righteous person on the earth, why was he the target and not his friends?

With a hint of pride, Bildad called on Job to plead with God for forgiveness. Bildad believed that if Job would do this, then all his prosperity would be restored. The matter was not as simple as that.

In verse 11 Bildad went on to illustrate his point through nature. He reminded Job of the papyrus that grew tall in the marsh. He reminded Job, however, that these reeds could not thrive without water; they would wither away even more quickly than grass. Bildad told Job that this was the same for anyone who forgot God. Their belief, trust, and obedience were the sustenance that allowed them to prosper in this life. Without this they would perish as quickly as a reed without water. If Job's trust was not in God, then what he trusted in was as fragile as a spider's web (verse 14). It would give way in an instant. God alone is our only true security.

Bildad used another illustration in verse 16. He spoke about a well-watered plant in the sunshine. That plant spread its shoots over the garden and prospered. When this plant was pulled up by its roots, however, it quickly perished. This is what Job's life was like according to Bildad. He had been anchored in the blessings of God through obedience and faithfulness. As long as he was faithful to God, he prospered. Now that he had turned from God, he was like a plant with its roots pulled up. He would perish. If Job returned to God he could again experience blessing.

Bildad told Job clearly that God would never reject a blameless man nor would He strengthen the hands of an evil man (verse 20). For Bildad the answer was very simple. Trust God and be blessed; curse God and perish. This is why he pleaded with Job to repent and return to God.

God is not easily put in a box. His purposes sometimes defy our understanding of theology. He is bigger than our ability to understand Him. None of us can truly claim to fully understand His ways and purposes. Bildad believed he was defending God when, in reality, he was misrepresenting him. Bildad's limited understanding of God, led him to wrong conclusions.

Job had not abandoned God. He had not turned his back on his Maker. The blessings of the Lord had not been removed from Job because of some deep sin in his life. God was testing Job and strengthening him. That testing was extremely painful, but God had not abandoned Job.

What is most challenging about this is that God is testing and strengthening the man He considered to be blameless. This blameless man was being drawn closer to God and His purposes. God was refining him and changing him. No matter how close we feel we are to the Lord there is always more room for change and refinement. This is what God is doing to Job.

For Consideration:

- Can we truly defend God? Does He need us to defend Him?
- How can limited understanding lead to false conclusions? How much of a problem is this in your church and society today?
- Bildad spoke elements of truth but did not show any compassion for the pain of Job. When is it important to speak theologically to those in pain, and when is it more important simply to show compassion?

- Does God allow good people to suffer? Explain.
- Is it possible for us to be deceived by carefully reasoned and illustrated theological arguments? Why do we feel it important to understand God and His purposes? Can we really ever understand everything about Him and His ways?
- What is the role of faith and trust in the times when we simply do not understand God and His ways?

For Prayer:

- Thank the Lord that He is bigger than our ability to understand Him.
- Ask the Lord to give you the humility to admit that you do not always understand His ways and purposes.
- Thank the Lord that He is a God who forgives and restores.
- Ask God for discernment to recognize false but carefully reasoned theology.
- Ask God to give you a greater confidence and trust in Him when you do not understand what He is doing.



## 8

# JOB'S RESPONSE: CAN A MORTAL BE RIGHTEOUS?

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Read Job 9

In Bildad's reply to Job in chapter 8, he told Job: "God does not reject a blameless man." He challenged Job to plead with God for forgiveness and get his life back on track so that the blessing of God would no longer be hindered in his life. Although Job listened to what Bildad had to say, he had certain problems with the reasoning. Job agreed with Bildad that God blesses those who honour Him and live a righteous life. Job's problem, however, is stated in chapter 9: "But how can a mortal be righteous before God?"

In other words, how can a sinful man ever meet the standard God has set out for him? Job felt the futility of even trying to reach the standard of perfection that God required. The apostle Paul recognized this problem in the book of Romans when he wrote:

"As it is written: 'There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one



who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one” (Romans 3:10-12).

This same problem exists in our day. None of us can ever meet the standard that God has set out for us in His Word. We have all fallen short. Not one of us can claim to be perfect or sinless. As such, we are separated from God. It was for this reason that the Lord Jesus came to the earth. Job was aware of this universal problem of humanity. We are sinners and God is righteous. We are separated from God with no ability to attain the standard He has set out for us. Not one of us lives up to the perfect standard God has set for us.

In verse 3 Job reminded Bildad that even if he wished to dispute or argue his case with God, there was nothing in him that would give God cause to consider his request. Why would a holy God listen to proud and rebellious humanity?

There is no reason logical reason why God should be interested in us as human beings. We have all too often turned our hearts in rebellion against Him. We have dishonoured His name. We are sinners and He is holy. We are fragile and finite creatures, and He is an almighty and everlasting God. We differ from Him more than day differs from night.

The wisdom of God, according to verse 4, is profound. His power is vast. How could any human stand against Him and prevail? This awesome God moves mountains and overturns them in His anger without humanity knowing it. He does not need permission to move the mountains. He shakes the earth and makes it tremble (verse 6). He

speaks to the sun and causes it to cease shining. He can block the light of the stars. We cannot imagine this power.

This wonderful God stretched out the heavens by Himself. Even the waves of the sea are under His feet. He controls when they rise and fall and how far they travel. He created the constellations of the sky. Job noted several constellations (verse 9). He spoke of the Bear, Orion, and the Pleiades. Job had an understanding of the stars in the heavens. He realized that the stars were not in their places by chance. Each star owed not only its existence to God but also its placement in the sky.

The God that Job knew was a God who performed wonders that could not possibly be understood. He defied scientific knowledge. He did as He pleased. He multiplied His miraculous works on the earth so that they could not be counted. This is the same God we know today. Every day evidences of God's miracles can be seen. Each breath and beat of our hearts are miracles that science has never been able to reproduce. His miraculous works cannot be counted. He does as He pleases and moves where He wants. We cannot see Him nor do we always recognize His work. No one can stop Him from doing as He pleases.

If God decided to snatch something away from one of His created beings, no one could stop Him from doing so (verse 12). No one can question what He is doing. He owns everything and has absolute right to everything on the earth. If He took the life of one of His creation, He could never be accused of wrong because every life belongs to Him.

Job's God was also a God of righteous anger. He would not hesitate to move in wrath and judge the earth. He was a God to be feared. Job tells us in verse 13 that even the

cohorts of Rahab cowered at His feet. Rahab is seen by many commentators and historians to refer to a mythological sea monster. The idea here in this verse is that as powerful as this great sea monster was, it was no match for God. Rahab and all its followers would tremble at the feet of this great God of Israel.

It is important to note here that while the New International Version speaks of Rahab and her helpers other versions of the Bible translate this verse slightly differently. The King James Version translates this phrase by “the proud helpers,” while the New King James Version uses the phrase “allies of the proud.” The reason for this is found in the Hebrew word for “proud” (rahab). What Job is telling us here is that even the greatest and most proud on the earth must bow down before God. Even those who lift themselves up boastfully above God will one day be humbled and brought down.

Bildad had told Job that he should plead with God (8:5). Job reminded Bildad, however, that in light of who God is, how could anyone approach Him with their argument? Even if Job were completely innocent, what could he say to such a God? He could plead for God’s undeserved favour, but how could he argue his case before the God whose wisdom had put this world into existence? Job could not imagine God giving him a hearing. He felt so unworthy of God and His attention.

For Job all he deserved from God was to be crushed and wounded. In verse 18 Job told his friends that if he ever drew God’s attention to himself, God would inflict him with even more misery. Though he believed he was being wrongly punished, he did not feel that he could summon God. He felt that if he stood before God to defend his name, he would say something that would condemn

himself. Job was aware of the infinite distance between God and man.

At this point in Job's experience, he had lost all taste for life. His pain had been so great that it no longer mattered that he was innocent. He just wanted to die and escape the agony he suffered each day. There was very little fight left in Job. He saw no reason to live any longer.

Job struggled to understand God and His ways. He reminded his friends that when a disaster of some kind came on the land, it took away both the righteous and the wicked. Job went as far as to say that God mocked the despair of the innocent (verse 23). The righteous died just like the wicked. Sometimes their deaths were just as cruel.

In verse 24 Job asked where God was when the land fell into the hands of wicked people whose judges were corrupt. He told his friends that God blindfolded these corrupt judges. It is hard to imagine Job accusing God of blindfolding judges so that they acted corruptly. From Job's perspective, however, he knew that an almighty and all-powerful God could destroy evil in an instant. God could wipe out every evil judge or ruler if He so desired. Why did He not do this so that justice could prevail in the land? Why did He allow evil people to live?

Job's life seemed to be passing him by like a runner moving toward the finish line (verse 25). He said his days passed quickly like the papyrus boats that sped through the waters of Egypt or like an eagle descending for its prey. There is an element of despair in the words of Job in verses 27-32. Here Job reminded his friends that it made no sense to bring his complaint to God, because God had already judged him guilty. Even if Job washed himself with soap and washing soda, he felt that God would plunge him

into slime. In other words, no matter what Job did to make things right, God would always have reason to punish him. God was not like a man that Job could stand before and challenge His ways.

In verse 33 Job cried out in a sense of hopelessness:

“If only there were someone to arbitrate between us, to lay his hand upon us both, someone to remove God’s rod from me, so that his terror would frighten me no more. Then I would speak up without fear of him, but as it now stands with me, I cannot.”

Job longed for someone to stand between him and this holy God. He cried out for someone who could speak to God on his behalf and have the judgment of God removed from him. Job did not live to see the answer to that prayer. In time, however, God would send His Son Jesus to be that mediator. Jesus would stand between God and people to be the bridge of peace. Jesus would take the punishment of God on Himself so that people could be set free from the curse of sin and separation from God.

Because of Jesus, we can now stand boldly before God and address Him as our Father. Job began this chapter with a question: “Can a mortal be righteous before God?” He wrestled with this throughout this chapter and concluded that the separation between God and humans was so big that unless someone came to be a mediator between the two, there was no hope for sinners. That is why Jesus came. He alone can reconcile God and sinners. He was fully God and fully man and, as such, was the only one who could speak to both parties and bring reconciliation. Jesus alone is our mediator. If you want to be right

with God, you must do so through Him. This is something the Job longed to see.

For Consideration:

- Can a mortal be righteous before God in his or her own strength?
- What is the difference between God and people?
- What makes God listen to our cries for help?
- Is there anything that we can do on our own to make ourselves right with God? Explain.
- What is a mediator? Why do we need a mediator? Who is the mediator between God and sinners?

For Prayer:

- Thank the Lord that He is able to be a mediator between God and sinners. Thank Him that He opened the door for you to be completely restored to a right relationship with God.
- Thank the Lord that though we are not worthy of His attention, He still reaches out to us in our need.
- Take a moment to thank the Lord that He is holy and completely separated from sin.
- Ask the Lord to keep you faithful to Him even when you do not understand His ways.



## 9

# TELL ME THE CHARGES YOU HAVE AGAINST ME

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Read Job 10

In chapter 9 Job responded to Bildad and his argument. He reminded Bildad that no matter what he did, he could not possibly be righteous before a perfect and holy God. As a sinner, he needed someone to plead his case. In chapter 10 Job continued to speak and voice his complaint to God.

Job began by reminding his friends that it was because he loathed his life that he would give free rein to his complaint. The life that Job was experiencing was a life of misery and suffering. It was because of this misery that Job felt compelled to speak out. He had nothing to fear. He felt that God's hand was against him. If God struck him dead because of his complaining, he felt that his life would be better than it was at present. If, on the other hand, God heard his request, maybe He would relieve his pain and forgive him.



It was out of the bitterness of his soul that Job cried to God. His soul was in pain. God was not speaking to him. He felt that he was without hope in this life. Many people in this world find themselves in the situation of Job. Their hearts are breaking within them. They feel that death would be preferable to life. Where can we turn in our pain if not to God? Job had nowhere else to turn. He voiced his complaint to the only one who could do anything about it. If you find yourself in Job's situation, maybe you need to follow his example, come to God and express the pain of your heart.

Notice in verse 2 what Job asked of God. He asked God not to condemn him but to tell him what charges He had against him. In the last chapter, Job told his friends that there was no reason why a holy God would ever listen to him as a sinner. Here he cried out to God anyway. He recognized that although God was indeed holy and pure, He was also a God of mercy and compassion; and so he pleaded with God to forgive him.

What seemed to disturb Job more than anything else was the fact that he did not know what he had done to deserve the judgment of God. His plea to God was that God would reveal the charges against him. Why had God stripped him of everything? If he knew what he had done wrong, then he could seek forgiveness and make things right. The agony of God's silence seemed to be worse than the pain of his physical affliction.

Job hid nothing from God in his prayer: "Does it please you to oppress me, to spurn the work of your hands, while you smile on the schemes of the wicked?" (verse 3). Job was confused in the overwhelming silence of God. It caused Job to question God's purposes and character. How much easier it would have been for Job if God had spoken to him

in those days. A reassuring word from the Lord or a sign of His presence would have gone a long way to ease his spiritual and emotional suffering. This silence, however, was agonizing.

Job began to wonder if God actually took delight in afflicting him. He looked around and saw how wicked men prospered and lived their lives in full health. Though he had served the Lord God with all his heart, Job suffered. This made no sense to him.

In verse 4 he bluntly asked God if He had eyes of flesh. The eye of flesh does not see everything. The eye of flesh is limited. God, on the other hand, sees everything and knows everything. Job was questioning God's power and love. In his suffering and confusion, Job could not understand why a God, who can see all things, would not notice the suffering of those who loved Him. Job questioned God in verse 5: "Are your days like those of a mortal or your years like those of a man that you must search out my faults and probe after my sin?"

What was Job asking God here? It seems that Job was confused about why God would spend so much effort searching him out. Was God limited like a mortal? Did He only have a few years of life to accomplish His purpose? Did Job warrant such severe punishment because he was such a severe hindrance to the purpose of God? Job knew that God was an almighty and eternal God. Why did He even concern himself with Job? Could one man change the plans of an eternal and sovereign God?

In verse 8 Job pleaded with God to remember how He had shaped him. Job was the work of God's hands. After creating me "will you now turn and destroy me," he asked. Job knew that God had made him from the clay of the earth

(verse 9), clothed him with skin, and knit him together with bones and sinews (verse 11). God's work was wonderful. The body that Job had received from God was a masterpiece of creation. God had put the effort into shaping and knitting him together. Why would He now crush what He had put together so wonderfully? Why would God pour Job out as discarded milk or curdle him like cheese?

Job was aware that God had given him life and showed him tremendous kindness in the past. God had watched over Job. For a moment in time, Job reflected on the past and the blessings of God. He recognized the many good things he had seen and experienced from God's hand (verse 12).

In verse 13 Job confessed that all this affliction and agony was also part of the purpose and plan of God for his life. The God who created and knit him together also had a purpose in his suffering. God was not taken by surprise by Job's present afflictions. Job had to believe somehow that God knew about them and would somehow use them.

It is easy to accept the good things God gives us but not so easy to accept difficulty. When Job's wife told him to curse God and die, Job had responded: "You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?" (2:10). Job realized deep down in his heart that even trials and agony are in the hands of a sovereign God who is working out all things for His glory and the good of the person afflicted.

Job expressed more of his confusion in verse 14-15. Here he told his listeners that if he had sinned, God would see and not let his offenses go unpunished. Even if he were innocent, however, Job could not lift up his head for he was full of shame, and his affliction had drowned him. In other

words, even if Job were blameless, he still could not lift up his head in pride. Similarly, Jesus told his disciples in Luke 17:10:

“So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.’”

The holiness of the Lord God is such that even if we could live perfectly before God, we would still stand before him ashamed, because we understand that even our best is less than what He deserves. He is worthy of far more than we could ever give Him. Who could ever lift up their head to this awesome God without feeling shame at their own condition? Job sensed something of this in his spirit. In verse 16 he told God that if he lifted his head up high, God would still have reason to stalk him like a lion and display His awesome power against him. Again, this comes back to what Job told his friends in chapter 9—a mortal man, no matter how good he lived, could never truly be righteous before such a holy and perfect God. Not one of us could ever reach the standard of God’s perfection. Every one of us will one day stand before the Lord. We will understand our human and fleshly weaknesses. At the same time, however, we will be amazed and overwhelmed by His grace, mercy, and forgiveness.

Job’s suffering was such that he cried out to God in agony. He felt that God was been bringing his forces like waves against him (verse 17). It seemed that he had no relief from his pain. In verse 18 he asked God why He had allowed him to be born. Had he died in his mother’s womb, he would never have had to face such depth of pain and suffering.

Job pleaded with God to turn away from him so that he could get some rest from his pain before he had to go the land of no return (a reference to the grave). Job described death as a land of disorder and shadow, of deepest night where there is no light (verse 22).

At this time in Job's life, he was confused. God was not speaking. He could not understand from a human point of view the purpose of such suffering and pain. He spoke from the confusion of his heart. He felt despair as he thought about the holiness of God and the impossibility of mere mortals pleasing a holy and eternal God. There were no answers for him at that time. The silence of God was devastating.

For Consideration:

- What do we learn here about how dependant we are on the compassion and forgiveness of God?
- Have you ever felt the agony of God's silence? Why is this silence so difficult for us as believers?
- Why does God take the time to examine our sins? What is His purpose in revealing and purging us of those sins?
- Can we ever stand before a holy and perfect God without feeling shame? Explain.
- What comfort does the reality of heaven give to you in your time of trouble?

For Prayer:

- Thank the Lord that He is a God of wonderful compassion and forgiveness.
- Ask the Lord to give you grace and patience to wait on Him when He chooses to be silent.
- Thank the Lord that despite our many imperfections and weaknesses, He still is willing to take the time to perfect us and shape us into His image.
- Thank the Lord for the wonderful hope and promise He has given to us of an eternal home in His presence. Thank Him for how this hope gives us courage to face our struggles here below.



## 10

# ZOPHAR: GOD'S WISDOM AND HUMAN WISDOM

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Read Job 11

Job has many unanswered questions. These questions came from a mind confused with pain and emotional anguish. Job also experienced the painful silence of God. He could not understand why God had allowed such suffering to fall on him. He did not know what he had done to deserve such judgment. Nothing made sense to him. As he searched his heart, he could not find any sin that would deserve this severe judgment of God. Job cried out in anguish, searching for answers but finding none.

As Zophar listened to Job, he felt compelled to speak. In verse 2 he said: "Are all these words to go unanswered? Is this talker to be vindicated?" Zophar felt that someone needed to say something to Job. We should see two things in this verse. First, Zophar felt that there was an answer to Job's questions, and he felt quite convinced that he knew the answer. He believed Job needed to know why he was going through this pain and suffering.



Second, Zophar felt that Job needed to be corrected. "Is this talker to be vindicated?" he asked. In other words, will Job get away with all these things he is saying? Should he not be corrected and reprimanded for the things he is saying about God and about his innocence? Notice also that Zophar did not call Job by name. He referred to Job as a "talker." This may be an indication of his frustration with Job and his many words.

In verse 3 Zophar voiced some of his frustration with what Job had been saying. "Will your idle talk reduce men to silence? Will no one rebuke you when you mock?" Job's talk was "idle talk," according to Zophar. In other words, his words were of no value. They were not based on an understanding of true theology; Job was looking at things from a human perspective and not from a divine perspective.

Human wisdom, as wonderful as it is, cannot be compared to the wisdom of God. His purposes far surpass human wisdom and make it look foolish. Job had examined himself with human wisdom and believed that he was justified in complaining to God. He believed that he had done nothing wrong and did not deserve the pain he was experiencing. What Zophar was telling Job was that his wisdom was not divine. Human wisdom told Job that he was correct in complaining because he was sinless. God, in His greater wisdom, saw what Job could not see.

Zophar told Job that God, in His compassion and mercy, had even forgotten some of Job's sin (verse 6). Zophar went on to explain what he meant. "Can you fathom the mysteries of God? Can you probe the limits of the Almighty?" he asked in verse 7. Did Job think that he could understand the purposes of God in his human wisdom? The ways of God are higher than the heavens and deeper

than the deepest grave (verse 8). God's wisdom is longer than the earth and wider than the sea. How can a mere human claim to understand God? Who would dare to challenge divine ways? For Zophar, it was the height of arrogance and pride for Job to assume that he could challenge God in regard to what He was doing in his life. If God chose to punish Job, who could oppose Him or question His purpose (verse 10)? The wisdom of God is so vast that no one can argue against Him and His purposes.

"Surely He recognizes deceitful men; and when He sees evil, does He not take note?" said Zophar in verse 11. Did Job think that a God of infinite wisdom wouldn't recognize deceit and evil when He saw it? Did Job think that such a God would ever be mistaken or need to be corrected by a mere mortal?

In verse 12 Zophar reminded Job that a witless man could no more become wise than a donkey could give birth to a man (verse 12). There is an infinite distance between the wisdom of mortals and the wisdom of God. This distance is so great that humans cannot possibly understand the ways and purposes of God in this universe.

Some time ago, I met a man at a print shop. Our conversation turned to the doctrine of the Trinity. He told me that he could not possibly believe this doctrine because it did not make any sense. "How can one person be three," he asked. He was making the mistake of trying to fit an infinite and eternal God into his finite and mortal mind. Of course, there are things we do not understand about God. The fact that our human wisdom cannot fathom the depths of God and His purposes is encouraging to me. It means that He is a big God. He is bigger than my ability to understand Him. I can trust Him because He is greater than me and my mind.

The ways of God are beyond our ways. Just because we cannot understand what He is doing does not mean that He is wrong. Only when we understand that God's wisdom is greater than ours can we step out in faith and confidence. We may never understand His purposes, but we can trust His wisdom.

Zophar felt that Job did not understand this principle. He felt that Job was trying to reason things through by human wisdom instead of trusting the purpose and plan of God, whose wisdom was far greater than his. Zophar believed Job was mocking God and acting in pride. He felt that Job needed to repent and make things right with God in this matter.

In verse 13 Zophar reminded Job that if he devoted his heart to God and stretched out his hands in surrender and repentance to him, God would still forgive him. Zophar told Job that he needed to put away his sin and evil. If he did this, he could again lift up his head without shame and stand without fear of his enemies or God's judgment. Only when Job repented could he be set free from his trouble.

Zophar believed that through repentance and confession of sin, Job would experience life that was brighter than the noonday (verse 17). All suffering and pain would flee from him as the darkness flees before the rising sun of the morning. Zophar promised Job that he would be secure because he would have hope in the Lord his God. Their relationship would be mended and restored through repentance. Job would be able to lie down in safety with no fear of enemies. If he repented of his sin, not only would he be restored, but also many would seek his favour. God would restore his reputation, and again he would have the respect of the people in the land.

Zophar concluded with a warning to Job. In verse 20 he told Job that the eyes of the wicked would fail. That is to say, their eyes would close in death. They would not be able to escape the judgment of God. All hope would be lost. They would perish at the hand of God.

Zophar's argument was simple. He believed that Job was trying to accuse God of evil. He believed that Job needed to understand that God was wiser than he was. Job needed to accept the fact that there were simply things that he did not understand about God and His ways. Zophar, like his friends, felt quite sure that Job was in the wrong. He challenged him to repent of the sin of accusing God of evil. Zophar promised Job that the moment he repented, he would experience the wonderful blessing of the Lord and be restored.

#### For Consideration:

- Have you ever tried to figure out the ways and purposes of God? What does Zophar tell us here about the foolishness of trying to do this?
- Are there things about God and the Scriptures that you do not understand? Why should you be encouraged by this?
- Are you facing a difficulty right now in your life that you cannot understand? Is it necessary that you understand what God is doing? What role does faith play in getting through this struggle?

## For Prayer:

- Are you facing a trial in your life? Take a moment to thank the Lord that He knows what He is doing. Surrender to Him in this trial, and let Him accomplish His wonderful purpose in you.
- Thank the Lord that He is bigger than your ability to understand Him. Thank Him for the hope and confidence it gives you to know that He is so much wiser than you are.

# 11

## **JOB'S RESPONSE:**

## **CAN WE UNDERSTAND GOD?**

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Read Job 12:1-13:19

This is the second response of Job to his friends. There is a sense of frustration in the words of Job here. His friends had been trying to solve the problem of why Job was suffering. They had been offering him their suggestions. None of these suggestions seemed to strike Job as the answer to his suffering. Here in this section, Job speaks some harsh words to his friends.

Job began with a mocking statement to those who had been offering him their advice. He said: "Doubtless you are the people, and wisdom will die with you!" (12:2). Job's friends thought they knew what God was doing in Job's life. For them, God was very predictable. They felt they were offering great wisdom to Job in his time of need. Job felt that they were acting in pride. Did they think that they were the only wise people on the earth? Would there be no more wisdom when they died?

Job reminded his friends that he too was able to think and reason (12:3). Despite his problems, Job did not see himself as being inferior to his friends. From this statement we might be able to assume that his friends had been looking down on him because of his suffering. They felt that they were better than he was because God had not afflicted them in the same way.

Job felt that he had become a laughingstock to his friends. Even though he suffered tremendously, Job still held on to his innocence. He made it clear to his friends that he was blameless (12:4). He could not find any sin in his heart.

Job told his friends that those who lived at ease did not respect those who suffered (12:5). For Job, those who never experienced a problem were too quick to look down on those who suffered under the hand of the Lord's discipline and training.

Often we are simply not able to identify with people in their struggles until we ourselves have to face trials. The book of Hebrews speaks of this when about it states concerning Jesus:

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin” (Hebrews 4:15).

The Lord Jesus is fully able to identify with us because He himself was tempted as we are. If we have never walked where our friends have walked, it is very difficult for us to understand them and what they are going through. It was quite easy for Job's friends to sit with him and condemn him as a sinner. They had never been in his situation. Job painfully searched his heart to find any area of sin and

darkness. He pleaded with God for revelation of sin, but there was no such revelation. Yet beside him were his friends accusing him of sin but unable to tell him the nature of that sin.

I remember in my own personal life wrestling often with God because I was not able to feel joy and peace in my life. I would look at myself in the mirror and was not pleased with what I saw. I saw someone who looked stressed and burned out. I could not see the radiance of the joy of the Lord shining through me as I felt I needed to. Not long after this, I was diagnosed with clinical depression. I began to realize that this depression was keeping me from experiencing what I needed to feel in my walk with God. Now I should say here that even though I was depressed, my walk with God had been stronger than it had ever been. I found myself often crying out to God for help and guidance. I would go to meetings to preach, crying out to God in emotional emptiness before I went. As soon as I would open my mouth, the Lord would fill me and speak through me. A friend of mine was in one of those meetings. He told me that when he saw me arrive at such a meeting, I looked worn out and empty. Then he said, "As soon as you started to speak, I saw a tremendous difference in you. It was as if you were being filled with the Lord." Some of the most powerful times I had in my walk with God were in times of emptiness and depression.

I remember wrestling with this depression. I would ask the Lord to show me any hidden sin, but he did not reveal any sin to me. I have now come to realize that sometimes God will put us through tests like Job, not to punish us but to teach us to depend solely on Him. I have learned much in this struggle with depression. God has opened my heart to the reality of His presence, even when I do not feel it. I am learning to move forward in ministry when I do not feel



worthy. I am learning to minister even when I feel like I have nothing to give. I am seeing the power of God at work. I also have a deeper compassion and understanding for those who are going through a similar struggle. It would have been easy for those around me to accuse me of not trusting the Lord or not being filled with the Spirit. In fact, I was being trained and equipped in a deeper way for a greater ministry.

Job's frustration here was with those who looked down on him because God was training him for a greater work. Some people think that God would never stretch them or allow them to pass through the fire. They believe that God's ways will always be easy and comfortable. This is simply not true.

Job reminded his friends that marauders and those who provoked God still lived in security (12:6). Here, on the other hand, was Job, a child of God who lived to the best of his knowledge in the path of righteousness. Yet Job struggled while sinners around him lived at ease. If only Job's friends would open their eyes, they would see that things were not as simple as they believed they were.

"Ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds of the air, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish of the sea inform you," said Job to his friends (12:7-8). Life in nature gives witness that the violent prosper and that God sends calamities to the innocent. The life of every creature is in the hand of the Lord. The Lord does what He pleases with all of His creation. Sometimes the Lord gives breath and sometimes the Lord takes breath away. Life is not always predictable.

God also controls wisdom and gives it to some and not others. Wisdom and power belong to God alone. God

gives wisdom but can take that wisdom away in an instant. We have seen great men and women of wisdom lose their reason with age or illness.

Job reminded his friends that when God tears something down, it cannot be rebuilt. God does not just build things, He also tears them down. When God imprisons a person, that person cannot be released by anyone else. God sets people free, but He also imprisons. Everything is in the hand of the Lord. When He holds back the waters of heaven, the earth dries up; but if He lets them loose, the resulting floods can destroy the earth (12:15).

Strength and victory all belong to the Lord (12:16). No one can ever claim to be strong in themselves. God gives strength, and He takes strength away. God gives victory, and He takes victory away. Job would go on to say that both the person being deceived and the deceiver belong to God. He strips counsellors and elects fools as judges. This may be hard for us to understand, but it is important that we realize that nothing can happen unless God permits it to happen. Paul tells us in Romans 13:1-2:

“Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.”

Not all authorities are good. Some seem to be very evil. Paul is telling us, however, that God allows these leaders to take their places to accomplish His purposes in the earth.

God takes of the shackles that are put on by kings (12:18). That is to say, he reverses the decisions of kings. He can also take those kings and put loin clothes around their waists, reducing them to slaves. God leads priest away stripped of all their authority and brings down men and women of authority who have long been established in their positions. God raises up leaders, and He takes them down as well.

God silences the lips of advisors and strips the elders of the society of their discernment (12:20). God pours contempt on nobles and disarms the mighty. They have no power but what He gives. All their power can be taken from them in an instant. Ultimately, divine power is in control of earthly power.

Job reminded his friends that God exposes those things that have been hidden by darkness (12:22). He also hides what is in the light in deep shadows so that they can never be seen again. God knows all things, and He can hide from the wise what He chooses not to reveal to them.

God makes nations great, but He also destroys them and brings them down. He stretches their boundaries or sends them into exile as He pleases (12:23). He strips leaders of wisdom and sends them groping in the darkness, staggering like drunkards.

Job seems to be telling his friends that God is not as predictable as they believed. God does what He wants to do. His ways are far beyond earthly ways. How can anyone possibly understand the purposes of God? Job's friends felt they could speak for God and explain His ways. However, Job's God was far beyond explanation. He could not be explained. Job was not fooled by the so called wisdom of his friends. He understood that as mere humans, they

were unable to understand the purpose of God and so had no wisdom for Job.

Job told his friends that he wanted to speak with God about these matters (13:3). What his friends told him really meant little to him, as they were certainly no experts in the matter of the mind of God. God alone could answer the questions on Job's heart.

All Job's friends were doing was smearing him with lies. They were telling Job that he was suffering justly for his sin. They were speaking as if they knew God's heart and His purposes for Job. In reality, they were like worthless physicians who had no idea of the reality of the situation or the conversation between God and Satan described in chapters 1 and 2. They did not know how to heal Job's hurt. He pleaded with them to stop talking to him. He had no confidence in their words and arguments because he knew they were wrong about him and wrong about God. In fact, Job accused his friends of speaking wickedly on God's behalf (13:7). In saying this, Job was accepting what God was doing in his life. He did not enjoy the pain, but he recognized it as being from God; he would not fight against it.

Then Job turned the tables on his friends (13:9). He asked them to consider how they would do if the Lord were to examine them. He reassured them that God would surely rebuke them as well (13:10). If God were to reveal His splendour to them, they would be terrified. They spoke with such boldness of God, His person, and His plans; but if God were ever to show up, they would be condemned and terrified in His presence. All their sayings and pat answers were like proverbs of ashes. They would amount to nothing in the end.

Job asked his friends to be silent and let him speak out in his pain and agony. Job knew that he was taking his life in his own hands as he spoke out and sought God (13:13-14). Job waited on God in this time, knowing that he could die at any moment under His heavy hand. Job held on to his innocence. He would not seek a way out. Instead, he would keep looking to God and putting his hope in Him. He told his friends that he would defend his ways to God's face (13:15). There is boldness here. He believed that God was a God of justice. Even if God destroyed him, he would still trust in Him and bring his cause to Him.

Job was ready to take his case to God. He sincerely believed that he would be vindicated in the end. At the same time, however, it is important that we note that he was more than willing to hear any accusation that might be brought before him to consider (13:19). Job sought the truth. If he had sinned, he was willing to face that sin and deal with its consequences. If, on the other hand, he had not sinned, he demanded justice.

Job persevered in this matter because he believed that God was a just God. No one had yet shown him his sin. He believed himself to be innocent and demanded that a holy and just God be true to His character and expose the truth. Satan longed for Job to give up. He wanted to separate Job from his God. Satan wanted Job to curse God and walk away from Him. Job refused to do this. The more pain Job experienced, the more he came to God and desired to speak with Him. In all this, Satan's efforts were being frustrated.

For Consideration:

- Have you ever looked down on a brother or sister who suffered, feeling that somehow you were better because you did not have to go through such suffering?
- How easy is it for us to give simplistic answers to people going through pain and agony? What are some of those answers we give to people who are suffering today?
- How do personal problems help us to identify better with others? What have you learned through pain and suffering in your life?
- Is it possible for us to completely understand God and His ways?
- What does this passage teach us about the danger of trying to speak for God?

For Prayer:

- Ask God to help you to respect the feelings of those around you who are suffering.
- Ask God to forgive you for giving simplistic answers to individuals in their time of need.
- Thank God that He and His ways are beyond our ability to understand. Ask Him to forgive you for believing that we can understand His ways and purposes.
- Take a moment to surrender yourself to God in your present struggle. Submit to Him and His training. Thank Him that He is in control, even though we cannot understand His ways.



## 12

### **JOB'S CRY TO GOD: IS THERE ANY HOPE?**

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Read Job 13:20-14:22

In the last meditation, Job responded to his friends, challenging them in their belief that they could somehow understand the ways of God. He told them that they were of no comfort to him in his suffering and that their understanding was very limited. Only God could give him the answers he needed.

Job's attention shifted to God. As he began to pray, he asked God for two things (13:20). He told God that if He granted him these two requests he would not hide from Him. There is some question about what Job meant. Job saw God as the source of his pain and suffering. At the very least, God had allowed Satan to buffet and oppress him. While it is not possible to hide from God, it is possible to withdraw from the intimacy of relationship with Him. Could it be that Job was wondering how he could continue in a personal relationship with God when God was not speaking to him and afflicting him all day long?



Job's first request of God is found in verse 21. He pleaded with God to withdraw His hand from him and stop frightening him with His terrors. This is an understandable request in light of the pain and agony he was facing every day. The second request was that God would stop being silent. Job begged God to speak to Him and answer his requests. We have already spoken about the silence of God. For Job, the silence of God was as terrible as the physical pain he faced each day.

There have been times in my life when God was silent. I did not hear from Him in terms of the direction He wanted me to take. The Word of God seemed to be lifeless and my walk unfruitful. When we hear from God, the pain we endure is more bearable. To hear from God and know His presence in our trials gives us strength and courage to carry on. In the silence, all hope seems to vanish.

Having brought his two requests to God, Job focused on the second request. He had two questions to ask God regarding His silence. Job asked God how many wrongs he had committed and begged Him to show him his offenses (13:23). This seemed to trouble Job greatly at this time. He was quite willing to admit that he could have done wrong, but he just could not honestly see what he had done to deserve this wrath of God. He pleaded with God to search him and reveal those sins. He wanted to know why God was punishing him.

The second question Job had for God was: "Why do you hide your face and consider me your enemy?" (13:24). This grieved Job who had always sought to honour God and live in communion with Him. The God who had always been his friend seemed to have become his enemy, and Job did not know why.

As his "enemy," God seemed to torment him. Job compared himself to a windblown leaf (13:25). His life was almost gone, and he was being tossed helplessly about at the mercy of a God who seemed to torment him. "Will you chase after dry chaff?" he asked God. Job could not understand why a holy and almighty God would ever take the time to chase after a withering leaf like him.

Job went back in time and wondered if maybe God was punishing him for the sins of his youth (13:26). Job seems quite desperate to find some reason to understand what he had done that deserved the wrath of God. Job felt helpless. He felt as if God had fastened his feet with shackles to keep him from running away. He felt like a prisoner who could not escape his punishment. God was constantly watching him like a guard watching over a prisoner. Job went as far as to accuse God of putting marks on the soles of his feet (13:27). This may have been for clearly identifying his tracks in the event that he should attempt an escape.

Job compared his life to the life of something rotten that was wasting away. Job was rotting away in his pain and agony (13:28). His life was worth nothing to him. He was sinking in deep despair

As Job reflected on life in general, he found that the life of a human being is only a few years (14:1). The few years that we have in this life are filled with trouble. We have our moment of glory, but that moment is taken from us by age and death. Job compared life to a fading flower and a fleeting shadow that grows up in an instant and then disappears very quickly, never to be seen again.

What Job found so hard to understand was why God would fix His eyes on something so fragile (14:3). God is so much

greater than humans. What did God find in them that would attract His attention? Why would God waste His time to be concerned with Job? Why did it even concern Him how Job lived his life?

Some time ago I was doing some work on my house. As I was working, I noticed a small bug. Thinking nothing of it, I simply squished it and went on with my work. Not until I was writing this did I even give the fate of that bug a second thought. This seems to be, in essence, what Job was arguing before God. Job saw his life like that ugly bug. Job wondered why God didn't simply squash him and move on? Why did God even care about Job?

This question is very important. The fact of the matter is that the Lord God does care. He cares enough to discipline and train us. He cares enough to deal with anything that will keep us from Himself. He is jealous for our attention. Though we are filled with sin, He reaches out to us in love and devotion. He cares deeply enough to do something. We will never fully understand why He cares, but we must be forever thankful that He does.

Then Job asked the question: "Who can bring what is pure from the impure?" (14:4). Job recognized his condition before God. He also recognized that he could not attain God's standard of perfection. He was sinful and nothing could change his nature. The prophet Jeremiah spoke of this in Jeremiah 13:23:

Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil.

The Lord Jesus came to offer a solution to this problem. He came to bring forgiveness and cleansing. He came to

bring new life. Through His death on the cross, we can be renewed and changed from the inside. Job struggled with the problem of sin. Christ came to bring the solution.

Job knew how limited he was. God had determined the length of his days (14:5). There was nothing he could do to change the number of days he would live on this earth. The day of his death would come as it was determined. For this reason Job asked God to turn His attention from him so that he could live out his years of service in peace. Job spoke here from his experience of pain and agony. While he knew that he needed God to give him life and breath, he was afraid of God continuing to focus attention on him.

Many people are afraid of an intimate relationship with God. They are afraid of what God might ask them to do or what he might take them through. God's ways may at times be difficult. Sometimes the Lord must do something radical to separate us from our fleshly nature. We have the benefit here of seeing what Job did not see. We have the benefit of seeing what God would accomplish through the pain and suffering that Job experienced that day. While the ways of God may be difficult, they are perfect. No one who perseveres to the end and allows God to accomplish His purposes will regret God's discipline.

Job sought to understand if there was any hope for him (14:7-12). He used the illustration of a tree that is cut down. There are times when a tree is cut down that a shoot will grow from the stump, and another tree will grow in its place. Humans, on the other hand, are not like this, according to Job. When they die they never return to the earth. Job compared human life to a sea or a river that ran dry. When that water is gone, it cannot be recovered.

Those who died would not be roused from their sleep until the heavens were no more.

Job wished that the Lord would somehow hide him in the grave until His anger was past, and then remember him (14:13). Job wondered, however, if a man could ever live again. Job did not have a true understanding of the resurrection here. Would it be possible for God to hide a person in the grave for a time and, when his anger subsided, raise them to life again? "If a man dies would he live again?" Job asked (14:14). While this was possible for the tree, Job was uncertain that God would do the same for humanity.

What hope we have in the New Testament? We have the benefit of understanding the reality of the resurrection and life with Christ. This gives us courage as we face the struggles of this life. We know that no matter what happens to us here below, we have a hope of eternity with God.

While there are many questions in the mind of Job, he told the Lord that he would wait for His renewal to come. He believed still that the day would come when he would call on God, and God would answer. He knew that God would eventually long for His creature again (14:15).

Job believed that the day was coming when the Lord would watch over him, count his steps, but would no longer keep track of his sin (14:16). Those sins would be forgiven and sealed up in a bag. Job's confidence was in the justice and forgiveness of God. Though he did not know how or when, he continued to believe in the forgiveness of sin and the justice of God.

Then Job spoke of his dwindling hope (14:18-20). He compared his hope to mountains that eroded over time. He also compared it to soil and rock that was washed away.

Job trusted the Lord, but he was feeling hope dwindle in him. This was the effect of his pain and the silence of God.

Job felt like the Lord was overpowering him. What hope was there if the Lord God stood against him? In an instant life could be taken away and all hope of victory with it. In death, the individual was unaware of what happened. A man who died may have sons that were honoured, but he would not know it. These sons might be brought down, but again he would not be aware of it in his grave. Thoughts of death and separation from earthly life brought Job more pain and mourning (14:22).

When hope is gone, nothing seems to matter. Those without hope are enclosed in prisons of self-pity and dark thoughts. All they can see is their own pain and helplessness. There is no vision, no encouragement, and no prospect of the future. Job understood what happens when hope is eroded.

We see here the nature of Job's pain. He asked God to remove His hand from him. He also asked the Lord to speak to him and let him hear His voice. Job wanted to know what he had done wrong. He failed to grasp why God would put so much effort into disciplining him when squashing him would be so much easier. Despite his lack of understanding, he still trusted in God. He believed that that day would come when God would restore him. Even in his hope, however, Job saw his own weakness. He wondered how long he could continue to trust in God. The agony of each day seemed to erode his trust and hope. Job was stretched to the limit of his resources. God took him further than he had ever gone in his faith and trust before.

## For Consideration:

- Have you ever feared to let God have His way with your life? What caused you to fear?
- What is Job's reaction to the silence of God? Have you ever gone through a time when God was silent?
- What is it in men and women that God should take note of them?
- What do we learn here about the fragile nature of humanity?
- Have you ever felt your faith being eroded by what you are going through? How can you protect our faith from being eroded?

## For Prayer:

- Thank the Lord that He takes note of us and disciplines us to bring us closer.
- Ask God to protect you and your faith from being eroded.
- Surrender yourself to the Lord Jesus today. Ask Him to give you courage to face the fear of what He may do in and through you.

## 13

# ELIPHAZ: THE GODLESS WILL BE BARREN

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Read Job 15

Chapters 15-21 contain a second cycle of speeches from Job and his three friends. Job's friends were convinced that God, in His perfection and justice, caused only evil people to suffer. Job maintained that he had committed no sin that justified his severe suffering, and he wanted to meet God to argue his case. Chapter 15 opens with Eliphaz speaking first. Listening to Job had been frustrating for him. He heard what Job said but wrestled with the conclusions he drew.

Eliphaz began by charging Job with speaking nonsense. Job claimed to be a wise man, but, according to Eliphaz, he spoke empty notions and ideas. What Job said had no value. Eliphaz compared Job's words to the hot east wind. This wind was a very stormy wind. The fact that it was hot made it also very uncomfortable. In other words, Eliphaz told Job that his words brought trouble. In verse 3 Eliphaz



told Job that he was speaking useless words and speeches that were of no value.

In verse 4 Eliphaz went as far as to say that Job undermined piety and hindered devotion to God. Job's friends had been speaking to him about the reason for his pain and suffering. They told him that the reason the Lord had been punishing him was because he had harboured sin in his heart. Job, on the other hand, told his friends that he had done nothing wrong, but God had still struck him. The idea that God would cause an innocent person to suffer was beyond what Job's friends were willing to accept. If God struck the righteous person, what purpose would there be in living a godly life? What benefit was there to godliness if it did not bring prosperity and blessing? For Job's friends, Job's doctrine undermined piety. Why would anyone serve God if in so doing it brought pain and suffering? Why would people devote themselves to a God who allowed them to suffer?

We see evidence of this thinking in our day. We want to know the benefits we will receive from a product before we purchase it. This has spilled over into our faith. There are those who still want to know what they are going to get if they accept the Lord and walk with Him. They feel somehow that God owes them something for their commitment. What was the motivation for Job's friends in serving the Lord? Were they motivated by blessing and prosperity? Did they serve the Lord for what they could get from Him? Throughout the ministry of the Lord Jesus on this earth, countless people followed Him for healing and blessing. These same individuals turned their back on Him when things became difficult. Godliness will bring blessing but it should never be our motivation. True godliness is seen when we are willing to seek God whether there is blessing or not.

Eliphaz claimed that Job's words were birthed out of sin and evil (verse 5). According to Eliphaz, Job's words were motivated by sin and would ultimately condemn him. He would have to answer to God for his evil words. He was discouraging people from serving the Lord.

In verse 7 Eliphaz reminded Job that he was not the first man ever born. He was not there when God formed the hills. He did not sit with God and listen to His great wisdom. Job was not the source of all wisdom. Eliphaz believed that Job was being very proud and arrogant in his words.

Eliphaz did not hesitate to tell Job that they knew everything Job knew (verse 9). Job had no insights that Eliphaz and his friends did not have. Job had no right to set himself over them. Instead, he should listen to them. Eliphaz told Job that the wise men were on their side (verse 10). The ancestors would disagree with Job and his ideas. Eliphaz believed that he and his friends were supported by the wisdom of the ages.

In verse 11 Eliphaz told Job that he should be content with the consolations of God. According to Eliphaz, God was speaking these words of consolation gently to Job. It is true that God often speaks gently to us in our time of need and trouble. The problem however, is that we do not always hear those gentle consolations. The pain and agony of hurt scream so loudly that the gentle consoling words of God are not often heard. Eliphaz said that this is how it was for Job—he was simply not able to hear anything from God.

Eliphaz told Job plainly in verse 12 that he was being carried away by his evil heart. Job's eyes were flashing with anger and rage toward God. Eliphaz said that Job had no right to speak to God in anger. To him, Job was dishonouring God.

“What is man, that he could be pure, or one born of woman, that he could be righteous?” Eliphaz asked Job (verse 14). Eliphaz believed that Job was trying to communicate that he had done no wrong and was blameless. Eliphaz could not accept this. He reminded Job that God did not even trust His holy ones and that even the heavens were not pure in His eyes (verse 15). By “holy ones” it is possible that Eliphaz was speaking of holy men and women who lived on this earth and who were called of God to minister in various aspects of the kingdom of God. He may also be referring to His angels in heaven. While God does call us and send us out into the ministry of the kingdom, the fact of the matter is that even the holiest person on this earth is less than perfect and subject to failure. The same could be said of the angels. We know that some of the angels of heaven fell into sin and were cast out of heaven. In 2 Peter 2:4 the apostle tells us:

God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment.

Eliphaz reminded Job that God alone was perfect. God could not place His confidence in human beings or even the angels of heaven. Eliphaz reminded Job also that even the heavens were not pure in the eyes of God. In speaking of the heavens, Eliphaz was speaking of the sky. This sky is above the earth and has no physical contact with the earth, but, compared to the perfection of God, falls short. The term “heavens” here does not necessarily refer to the dwelling place of God, where no evil or imperfection is permitted.

From what Eliphaz understood (and according to him this was backed up by the wisdom of the ages), wicked people spent their days in suffering and turmoil. They lived a life

of despair destined for the sword (verse 22). These individuals would wander from one place to another and ultimately end up being food for vultures. The evil person would always live with the understanding that the day of dark judgment was coming.

Distress and anguish would fill those who were evil, overwhelming and attacking them. They were always living one step from the wrath and judgment of God. That judgment would come because they shook their fists at God and lifted themselves above Him to fight His purposes.

Eliphaz admitted that there were some evil people whose faces were covered with fat and their waists were bulged with flesh (verse 27). This was a sign of temporary prosperity. The day was coming, however, when these individuals would live in ruined towns and houses that were crumbling and falling down (verse 28). The prosperity of the evil would not last. Their wealth would not endure. It would one day be stripped from them and be given to others.

Evil people would not escape darkness. The flame of God's fury would burn them and cause them to wither like a plant (verse 30). At the breath of God's mouth, these evil people would wither and perish. Just one word from God and all they had would be gone.

Evil people were allowing themselves to be deceived into believing in the security of their riches, but those riches would not save them in the end. According to Eliphaz, all evil people would be paid back in full for their evil before they died. They would be stripped like a vine or an olive tree of his or her wealth. Those who lived in sin would be barren, and God would consume them and their wealth.

Their destiny was to conceive trouble and give birth to evil (verse 35).

Eliphaz's argument to Job here states that God blesses those who follow Him and curses those who do not. Eliphaz was repulsed at Job's insinuation that God would allow anyone who followed Him to suffer. He believed that this undermined the benefits of piety and would discourage people from seeking God.

#### For Consideration:

- Eliphaz accused Job of hindering devotion to God. What was the basis of his argument?
- What was the connection, in the mind of Eliphaz, between blessing and prosperity?
- Would you serve the Lord if in so doing you knew that you would lose your possessions and suffer greatly?
- Does God allow godly people to suffer in this life? Have you had to suffer yourself? What did God accomplish through that suffering?
- What is your motivation for serving the Lord?

#### For Prayer:

- Take a moment to thank the Lord for the many blessings He has given you.
- Thank the Lord for the blessings He has given you through trials and suffering in life.
- Ask the Lord to give you the right motivation for serving Him.

# 14

## **JOB'S RESPONSE: MY INTERCESSOR IS MY FRIEND**

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Read Job 16

Eliphaz had made it clear that he believed that the godless would be barren. They could not prosper. He believed that Job's idea—that he suffered even though he was blameless—hindered devotion to God. If a blameless man could suffer like Job, then there would be no reason for anyone to seek after God. In chapters 16 and 17, Job responded to Eliphaz and his friends and pleaded with God to enable them to understand the real issues.

Job began his response by telling his friends that they were miserable comforters. They sat with him debating theology, because they were determined to find an answer to the problem of suffering. Job had already heard their arguments. They were not telling him anything new. The one thing Job needed he was not getting from his friends. Job needed comfort, and his friends offered only theology.

Job was getting tired of his friend's speeches. It would have been hard enough to listen to these long speeches if Job had been in full health, but he was in severe pain. His friends were very insensitive to his agony. They were more interested in proving Job's theology faulty than they were in being compassionate. It came to a point where Job began to wonder who was more ill, he or his friends. "What ails you that you keep on arguing?" he asked them in verse 3. They had to be sick to keep talking as they were.

In verse 4 Job told his friends that if he were in their place, he could also have offered the same speeches. He knew the theology and could recite it just like them. Job told his friends, however, that if he were in their place, he would choose to encourage them instead of giving these long-winded speeches. With his lips he would offer them relief instead of pat answers. There is an important lesson we need to see here in the words of Job.

There is a time to offer answers, but there is also a time for us simply to offer comfort and encouragement. We are too quick to offer theology to the afflicted. Sometimes we simply have to realize that we do not have an answer.

At this point, Job's friends did not offer encouragement and comfort. Instead, they spent their time boring him with long speeches about how he was a sinner and deserved this wrath of God. They felt so compelled to defend God that they had no time to comfort His servant.

Job could not find any relief from his suffering. There was no relief in speaking about his suffering and no relief in silence (verse 6). He felt that God was wearing him out. His household had been devastated. His family was dead. All of his possessions had been taken from him. This was a heavy burden to bear.

According to Job in verse 8, God had bound him up like a prisoner in his pain. His own body had become a witness against him. Everyone who looked at him and saw his condition believed he had done something wrong (verse 8). How often we judge people based on their outward appearance. God, on the other hand, looks at the heart. In 1 Samuel 16:7 we read these words of the Lord to Samuel:

“Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

At this time in Job's life, God seemed to be attacking him and tearing him apart in anger. He seemed to gnash His teeth at Job and set His piercing eyes on him (verse 9). While God was attacking him in this way, men and women around Job jeered at him. They united against Job, and he felt as though he had been turned over to evil men and thrown into the clutches of the wicked. He was unable to find any comfort in God, his neighbours, or his friends. He felt very much alone. Once again, we see that his heart longed for someone to show compassion. How much it would have meant for him at that time to have just one person minister to him and encourage him, but there was no one. Even God seemed to be against him.

In verse 12 Job told his friends that God had shattered him. He had seized him by the neck and crushed him. More than this, God had made Job his target. God's archers surrounded Job and pierced his kidneys and spilled his gall on the ground. Repeatedly, God rushed at him like a warrior intent on killing (verse 14). This wore Job out. He dressed in sackcloth as a sign of mourning. His eyes were red with tears shed in grief and agony.



What disturbed Job was that he could not understand why this was happening. He had not done violence to his neighbour. He had the assurance that he had treated everyone with proper respect and dignity. He also reminded his friends that his prayer was pure (verse 17). In other words, Job was able to approach God in an attitude of sincerity. Nothing stood in the way of his prayers to God. His conscience was clean and right before God.

There is something wonderful about this assurance. Through all this time of painful suffering, Job was assured that he was right before God. He knew that he had walked with a pure heart and conscience before God all his days. He had no regrets in life. As we look over our lives, could we say the same?

In light of these facts, Job asked the earth not to cover his blood. He wanted his blood to be seen by all. He wanted everyone to know that he suffered as an innocent man. He also asked the earth to refuse to let his cry be laid to rest. He wanted his cry of agony to echo forever or at least until justice had been done.

Job had not given up. He continued to hold on to his integrity. In verse 19 he painted a picture of a court scene. Job had a witness who could attest to his innocence. He had a lawyer who could plead on his behalf. He felt sure that he would win this battle and be proven innocent in the end. There was one who interceded for him in the heavens. The heavenly intercessor was his friend. This friend believed in the innocence of Job. This friend felt Job's tears. He understood the pain and suffering he was going through as he poured out his heart to God. This lawyer pleaded with God on Job's behalf would plead for his friend.

Today we know that the Lord Jesus is that friend and lawyer. He understands our pain and pleads to His Father for us. What a comfort this is for us today. The Lord is aware of our pain. He sees every trial we face. He comes to minister to us in our need.

Job's friends were of no comfort and encouragement to him. Job was aware, however, that God had not abandoned him in his hour of need. Deep down inside he knew that there was a Comforter and Defender who would come to his aid, though he did not know when.

#### For Consideration:

- Have you ever found yourself trying to prove a point rather than listen with compassion? What was the result?
- Job spoke here about individuals who judged him based on his outward appearance. Why is this wrong? How does God judge?
- Job lived through his trials with a deep assurance of righteousness. Do you have a clean conscience before God today? If not, what do you need to do to make things right?
- Job told us here of his heavenly advocate, intercessor, and friend. What comfort do you receive from the fact that your friend, the Lord Jesus, is your advocate, and intercessor before the Father?

#### For Prayer:

- Ask the Lord to give you more compassion for those who suffer.

- Ask God to keep you from judging based on the outward appearance.
- Thank the Lord that He is your advocate, intercessor, and friend.
- Ask the Lord to help you to live each day with the assurance of a clear conscience before God.

# 15

## **JOB'S CRY TO GOD: THE RIGHTEOUS WILL HOLD ON**

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Read Job 17

In the last chapter, Job responded to the comments of Eliphaz. He told his friends that they had not been helpful to him. They sat with him and accused him of sin but did not encourage him in his suffering. Here in this chapter, Job turned his attention to God. While he was not hearing God at this time, he continued to pour out his heart to Him.

In verse 1 Job began by telling God that his spirit had been broken. The weight of suffering had been too much for him to bear. He was broken emotionally and physically. He believed that the day of his death was rapidly approaching. Part of the emotional suffering he experienced had to do with the responses of those around him. Job told God that mockers surrounded him.

There is something about suffering and brokenness that brings out mockers. These individuals have no compassion. They look down on those who have been broken.

There were mockers at the foot of the cross where Jesus was crucified (Luke 23:35). The Psalmist also knew what it was like to suffer the mocking insults of those who cried out: "Where is your God?" (Psalm 42:10). Jesus reminded us in Matthew 5:11 that people will insult us and say all kinds of evil things against us. Job experienced the reality of these insults. All Job could do was to watch these individuals unleash their hostility at him.

In verse 3 Job asked God to give him a pledge because no one else could do this for him. Job looked for an assurance from the Lord that he would be fairly tried in a heavenly court. He asked for a pledge from God that justice would be done. Without this pledge and assurance from God, Job would have no hope. Scripture speaks often of pledges or guarantees. We read in Hebrews 7:22 that the Lord Jesus Himself was a pledge or guarantee of a better covenant to come.

Job needed some assurance from God in his time of need. He had nowhere else to turn. His friends could not understand his situation. They had abandoned him in his hour of need, and they would suffer the consequences of their actions. While his body and emotions were broken, he still hung on to God. His enemies would not triumph. He believed that God would give him victory in the end.

Those who surrounded Job were not really his friends. They loved him when he was rich and healthy; but now that he had lost everything, they denounced him. Job stated that the children of those who denounce a friend for reward would have eyes that failed. Job was saying that the curse of God would fall on the families of those who did such evil. When parents court evil, their children will be blinded to the truth. Whole generations can be lost to the reality of sin. How can children distinguish between good

and evil when parents themselves do not demonstrate this to them at home? Children learn from parents. Parents can blind the eyes of their children to sin by making sin so common in the home that the children consider it normal.

Job realized that what he suffered was ultimately from God: "God has made me a byword to everyone, a man in whose face people spit," (verse 6). It is true that Satan had unleashed this flood of suffering and pain on Job. However, Satan needed to get permission from God to do so. God could have kept Satan from testing Job, but He did not. God allowed Job to be tested and tried because he had a purpose in all this. Job accepted these trials as being ultimately from God.

Because of the suffering, he was going through, Job's eyes were growing dim with grief (verse 7). His whole body was like a shadow, empty of substance. The light of life seemed to be going out for Job.

Those who saw Job in his suffering were appalled. The upright were appalled because they had respected Job as a righteous man. If such a thing could happen to Job, it could happen to them as well. This caused a certain fear for the upright. The innocent were given cause to be aroused against the ungodly. They saw the ungodly prospering and felt frustrated. These ungodly profited off the backs of the innocent. They took advantage of them and grew rich for it. Job wrestled with why this was allowed to happen.

Though he did not have an answer for this question, Job chose to hold onto his ways. He would persevere in doing what God required. He believed somehow that those who kept their hands free from sin and evil would ultimately grow stronger and stronger (verse 9).

Repeatedly, in this book we see hints of Job's faith. He complained to God and could not understand what He was doing, but still he believed that justice and righteousness would prevail in the end. He refused to give up on God, but his confidence in humanity and its pat answers was shattered. In this time of suffering, Job found no one who was wise. There was no one who could come alongside of him and explain the purpose of God. God's ways were mysterious and hidden. They could not be understood by human minds.

In his suffering Job had experienced a shattering of his life plans and a death of all the desires of his heart (verse 11). His friends offered very little counsel and encouragement to him at this time. In verse 12 Job stated that these individuals turned night into day, and, in the face of darkness, they said that light was near. They tried to bring comfort, but they were not realistic. They spoke nice words, but those words were of no help. They had pat answers, but those answers were of no comfort. While they spoke those words, things just kept getting worse for Job. He did not see the day. The night just seemed to be getting darker. Nice words did not bring comfort for the agony he felt.

Verse 13 might lead us to believe that Job's friends were telling him that soon he would go to the grave and all his suffering would end. While it is true that death ends earthly suffering, Job reminded his friends that if the only hope he had was to one day die and be released from his suffering, then he really had no hope. Death itself did not offer the victory Job wanted.

Job believed that there was something more for him. He believed that God would give him true victory. His suffering was not without reason. He would hold on despite the suffering because he believed there was something more

than the grave in store for him. God had seen his suffering and his righteous life. Justice would prevail. The righteous would be honoured by God in the end. There was purpose in this suffering and pain.

For Consideration:

- Have you ever been mocked or ridiculed for your faith? What gave you courage to keep going?
- In this chapter we see how Job came to the end of his confidence and trust in human beings. This forced him to turn to God alone. Have you come to this place in your own relationship with God?
- What do we learn here about how parents influence their children?
- Job tells us that the righteous will persevere even when things get difficult. Is this your desire in the struggles you face today?

For Prayer:

- Ask the Lord to help you keep your focus on Him.
- If you are a parent, take a moment to thank the Lord for the children He has given you. Ask God to help you to be a good example for them in their walk with God.
- Ask God to give you the grace to persevere when things get difficult in your spiritual journey.



- Job experienced a shattering of his life plans and goals. Commit your life plans and goals into the Lord's hand. Surrender them all to Him.

## 16

### **BILDAD: THE WICKED ARE SNUFFED OUT**

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Read Job 18

This is the second recorded speech of Bildad in this book. He heard how Job held on to his integrity and his claim to be blameless. Bildad also felt the insult of Job's comments to him and his friends. Job told them that they were useless counsellors and false friends. Bildad was offended by these comments and did not hesitate to share this freely with Job.

In verse 2 Bildad asked Job when he was going to stop all his speeches. He accused Job of not being sensible. He felt that what Job was saying was complete nonsense. He seemed to have a sense that Job's mind was closed to anything they had to say. He clearly told Job that unless he stopped speaking nonsense, there was no way they could help him.

According to Bildad, Job saw them being as senseless as animals, and, therefore, Job was unwilling to listen to what

they had to say. Bildad had the distinct impression that Job would just as soon listen to the cows in the field as he would listen to his own friends.

Bildad felt that God was not tearing Job apart (as Job claimed) but that Job was tearing himself to pieces in his anger. In other words, Job's anger was having a negative impact on his life. Anger and bitterness have a tendency to destroy those they possess. Maybe you have met individuals who have held on to anger and bitterness for years. These individuals hurt themselves. They destroy all chances of happiness and contentment in life. They are often unpleasant people to be around. Bildad challenged Job in regard to his anger. He pointed out to Job the effect that anger was having on him. Job was being ripped apart because he could not let it go.

According to Bildad, Job was angry because things were not going his way. "Is the earth to be abandoned for your sake," he asked (verse 4). "Must the rocks be moved from their place?" When Bildad looked at Job, he saw a man who was angry with God because God had not given him what he wanted in life.

Bildad reassured Job that the lamp of the wicked would be snuffed out (verse 5). There was no hope for proud men like Job. God would snuff out his life as quickly and as effortlessly as a person blowing out a candle. Job's steps would become increasingly weaker. His own evil schemes would be his downfall (verse 7).

Bildad believed that the path Job was taking was leading him straight into a trap. A trap would seize him by the heel and a snare would hold him fast (verse 9). A noose was hidden on the ground, and Job was going to step in it.

If Job continued on this path, terrors would await him on every side and dog his every step. Calamity would seek him out like a hungry enemy. Disaster was just waiting for him to fall (verse 12). Like a vulture, it would swoop down on him and eat away his skin. Death's firstborn would then devour his limbs (verse 13). It is uncertain what Bildad meant here by "death's firstborn." Death gives birth to corruption, rottenness, and decay. It may be that this is what Bildad was referring to here. He was telling Job that disaster, rottenness and corruption would devour his limbs.

A wicked man, according to Bildad would be torn from his tent and handed over to the king of terrors. Bildad was speaking poetically here. Terror awaited those who lived wicked lives. The tent of the wicked would be filled with fire and burning sulphur. That fire and sulphur would destroy all the wicked possessed.

Like a plant whose roots have dried up below the surface, wicked people would wither and perish. All memory of them would be removed from the land and no one would remember their accomplishments or presence on this earth. They would be driven from light into complete darkness. The wicked would be banished forever from this world.

According to Bildad in verse 19, God would not leave the wicked any offspring to carry on their name. People from the west and the east would see their fate and be horrified at the intensity of God's wrath against them. This, Bildad told Job, was the fate of everyone who did not know God. These words were quite harsh to a man who had just lost all his children.

Bildad's words were strong and to the point. He was offended by Job's comments and clearly communicated this

to Job. He saw Job as being a proud man who complained when things did not go his way. He made it quite clear that Job was walking down a path that would lead to his ultimate destruction.

#### For Consideration:

- What do we learn here about the effect of anger and bitterness in our lives?
- Have you ever been angry because things did not go your way? What should your response have been?
- What does this chapter have to tell us about the destiny of the wicked?
- Bildad seems to infer here that Job was guilty of great wickedness. Have you ever falsely judged a brother or sister?

#### For Prayer:

- Ask the Lord to open your eyes to any anger or bitterness in your life. Confess this to Him and ask Him to cleanse you.
- Thank the Lord that He has given you the assurance of victory through the Lord Jesus over your sin.
- Ask the Lord to keep you from falsely judging a brother or sister in Christ.
- Ask God to help you surrender your goals and ambitions in life to Him. Ask Him to give you grace to accept His plan is for your life.

## 17

### **JOB'S RESPONSE: HE HAS STRIPPED ME**

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Read Job 19

Bildad had finished speaking for the second time. He had made it clear that he believed Job was being punished for sins he had committed. It was to this statement Job responded in chapter 19.

Job began by expressing his disappointment with his friends and their attitude toward him in his trial. In verse 2 he told them that they had been tormenting him and crushing him with their words. His friends had not been a comfort to Job. Instead of coming to his side, they had accused him of sin and rebellion against God. Their words cut Job. It was as if they were stoning him with each word they spoke, adding to the terrible pain he already suffered.

"Ten times now you have reproached me," Job told his friends. Most commentators agree that we should not attempt to find ten times where Job's friends had spoken evil of him. Job was not counting the insults of his friends. The

use of the expression “ten times” is simply to indicate that his friends had many times insulted him. They had attacked him without shame. They had attacked him with no consideration of the years they had known him as a man of absolute integrity and honesty who walked in righteousness before God. Now that he was suffering, they kicked him, crushed him, and accused him of sin.

It is often in times of trial that we discover who our true friends are. The true friend will stick with us even when things are difficult. Job was discovering who his true friends were.

In verse 4 Job told his friends that if he had unconsciously gone astray, then he alone would bear the consequences. This is not to say that we are not to warn people when they are going down the wrong path. While we must indeed warn people of their sins, we cannot confess these sins for them, nor can we make things right for them. If Job had sinned, then he alone would suffer the consequences. He alone could make things right with God and others. There comes a point when after warning our brother or sister, we simply have to leave things in their hands to work through, or not.

We get the impression that Job felt that his friends were taking advantage of his humiliation to accuse him (verse 5). Job wanted them to know that he believed God had wronged him (verse 6). Though he cried out to God, God would not answer Job or give him justice (verse 7). God had blocked Job's way so he could not pass and covered him in darkness so he could not see his way.

In verse 9 Job told his friends that it was God who had stripped him of his honour and removed the crown from his head. God had given, and now God had taken away from

him (1:21). From the beginning, Job accepted this trial as coming from the hand of a sovereign God. This did not make the trial any easier for him, but it did offer him some hope in the midst of darkness. He knew that God could also take his suffering away.

Job did not hide how he felt toward God, who had torn him down on every side. The Lord had uprooted him like a tree that was pulled up by its roots and left to die. God's anger burned against him. God was treating Job like an enemy. He sent His troops to advance in force against Job (verse 12). In obedience God's troops built a siege ramp against Job. They camped around him, blocking off all blessing. This resulted in Job being alienated from his brothers and acquaintances. Job's relatives abandoned him. Those he thought were his friends forgot about him. Those who had been his guests and benefited from his kind hospitality now treated him like a stranger.

Job's servants no longer respected him and refused to obey his commands, even though he begged and pleaded with them (verse 16). Job's brothers treated him as someone who was nauseating and offensive (possibly due to the open sores that riddled his body). Job's wife found his breath offensive, and she too kept her distance. The little boys playing around him mocked and ridiculed him. His closest friends detested him, and those he loved had turned against him. Job was abandoned in his time of need. He was filled with grief and pain, and there was no one to comfort him or listen to him. He was all alone in the world.

Physically, Job was nothing but skin and bones (verse 20). His skin was as fragile and thin as the skin on his teeth. "Have pity on me, my friends, have pity, for the hand of God has struck me," Job cried to his friends (verse 21). He



longed for someone to understand what he is going through. He could not understand why his acquaintances added to the torment that God had already laid on him (verse 22).

Job's cries can also be heard today from the lips of men and women around us. Some have been locked up in prisons. Some have locked themselves up in prisons of drugs, sex, or alcohol. There are others in mansions, living in the lap of luxury, but deep inside they cry out for someone to stand with them and ease their suffering. Ultimately, the Lord Jesus is the only one who can truly answer the questions they have, but God is calling you and me to be His representatives to these tormented people around us.

In verse 23 Job told his friends that he wished that his complaint could be recorded in a scroll or inscribed with an iron tool on lead. He wished that it could be engraved on rock so that it would be remembered forever. Job had a sense that what God was doing in him would be of benefit for others. He wanted justice to prevail. He wanted future generations to know his suffering and how the Lord vindicated him in the end. There was truth that God wanted to communicate to the world through Job. Job did not want that truth to be lost for all eternity. He did not want his suffering to be in vain. He did not understand that God would do just that and preserve his complaint for us to study today.

Deep down inside, even below all his great despair, Job was confident that God had not completely abandoned him. He believed that his Redeemer lived and would stand on the earth. A redeemer is one who buys something back. Job had been sold to evil. He was confident, however, that his God would not leave him in his pain and suffering. God would come to his aid and release him from the hand of evil and oppression. Job knew that when his skin and

bones were destroyed and God had accomplished everything he wanted, then he would see God (verse 26).

Job longed for that moment when he would see God with his own eyes (verse 27). Then he would receive justice. No one, who is not right with God, can long to see God as Job did. Job remained confident in his relationship with the Almighty.

Job turned the arguments of his friends against them. They had been hounding him and accusing him of sin. Job told them that they needed to fear the sword of God's judgment because of all the evil they had spoken against him. God would deal with them because of their arrogant attitudes, words, and actions.

God allowed Job to go through this time of severe suffering, and Job's experiences were recorded for our benefit. The truths of this book should be mastered by every pastor and Christian counsellor. How easy it is for us to offer our cheap answers to the deep questions of suffering and pain. God's purposes and plans are beyond us. Job knew God had stripped him of everything, but he was confident that God would one day set him free.

For Consideration:

- Have you ever found yourself trying to give easy answers to those who were suffering?
- Job felt abandoned in his suffering and pain. Are there people in your community who are feeling abandoned? What would God have you to do?

- Why was it important for Job that his suffering be recorded for future generations? What lessons do we learn from this book?
- What lessons has God taught you through suffering? How has this helped you to more effectively minister to others?

For Prayer:

- Ask the Lord to help you to be slow to offer easy answers to those who are suffering.
- Ask the Lord to open your eyes to those who are feeling abandoned around you today. Ask Him to show you what you should do for them.
- Thank the Lord that our trials are not in vain. Thank Him that He teaches us life's most valuable lessons through these trials.
- Thank the Lord that we can have every confidence that when we have been tested, we too will see God.

## 18

### **ZOPHAR: THE JOY OF THE WICKED IS BRIEF**

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Read Job 20

Job had not been very complementary to his friends. In his last response to his friends, he told them that they had been tormenting and crushing him with their words. He accused them of abandoning him in his moment of grief and pain. Zophar was quite troubled by what he heard Job saying.

Disturbed in his thoughts, Zophar felt compelled to speak out. In verse 3 he stated that what Job had said dishonoured him as a person, a friend, and man of wisdom. Zophar began by calling Job to consider the lessons of history from the time that people began to walk on the earth. According to Zophar, the lesson history taught was that the joy of the wicked was only brief (verse 5). Zophar's words were aimed at Job.

According to Zophar, a wicked person's pride could reach to the heavens. These proud people walked around with

their heads in the clouds. They accumulated wealth and power, but none of this would last. Though these individuals lifted themselves up, they would fall to the ground like worthless dung and perish forever (verse 7). Their influence and possessions would perish with them (verses 8-9). They would no longer be remembered on the earth. Their lives would be like a dream that quickly flew away or like a vision in the night that was soon forgotten. They would be seen no more and be forgotten even by the land in which he lived. For Zophar, the destiny of the wicked person was very clear.

In their pride the wicked lifted themselves above the poor. They abused their position and took from them. Their children would have to pay back what they took from the poor. Their ill-gotten wealth would last only for a brief time before it was taken from them and restored to its rightful owners. If this did not take place in their lifetime, then their children would be forced to pay back what their parents had accumulated by deceit and evil. God would not overlook the plight of the poor forever.

The youthful vigour that filled the bones of the proud would lie with them in the grave (verse 11). Their vigour would not last. This too would be stripped from them.

Zophar compared the proud person to a man who took evil into his mouth. That evil was sweet to his taste, and so he kept it under his tongue, savouring it like a tasty candy. Unwilling to let it go, it quickly became sour in his stomach and poisoned his system like the venomous poison of a snake (verse 14). In the end, he would be sickened by the riches he had unjustly accumulated. He would vomit them out, losing everything he had lusted after in his life.

For Zophar, the proud, who accumulated evil riches, were like people sucking the poison of a serpent. The fangs of an adder would kill them. The poison of materialism would destroy them (verse 16).

In the end, evil people would not enjoy the streams and rivers flowing with honey and cream (verse 17). All blessings would be removed from them. What they toiled so hard to obtain would be return uneaten. They would not be permitted to enjoy the profits of their dishonest business.

Because the proud had oppressed the poor, seizing their homes and leaving them destitute, they would have no relief from their own cravings (verse 20). They would be unable to save themselves in the time of judgment. Their prosperity would not last. In the end, there would be nothing left for them to enjoy (verse 21). Distress would overtake them in the midst of plenty (verse 22). When they were in full force, misery would suddenly come. While the belly of an evil man was full, God would fall on him in burning anger (verse 23). Zophar was implying that this is what had happened to Job.

An evil man would not be able to escape the justice of God. If he fled the iron weapon, a bronze tipped arrow would pierce him. As he pulled that arrow out of his back and liver, other terrors would overwhelm him (verse 25).

According to Zophar, total darkness awaited the wicked. Their treasures would perish and be of no more benefit to them (verse 26). God would expose the guilt of the proud and arrogant. The earth itself would fight against them (verse 27). Their houses would be carried off by a flood in the day of God's anger and wrath (verse 28). God would punish the wicked. At best, all they had was temporary.

They would perish, and all they had accumulated would perish with them.

Zophar reminded Job of the temporary nature of wealth and prosperity. In the end, all we have accumulated in this life will perish. Jesus taught his disciples about the temporary nature of wealth when He said in Matthew 16:26:

What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?

Many people live for this world with no concern for spiritual matters. These individuals need to hear what Zophar was saying here. All people will one day stand before a holy God to give an account of their lives. Riches and possessions can have a powerful attraction and have led many to turn from God and His purposes.

God will judge sin in the lives of the wicked, but this judgment does not always take place in their lives on earth. Zophar assumed that God had severely judged Job because of his wickedness. God had not stripped Job of his possessions because he had accumulated them by unjust means. He had not stripped them from him because Job had made them his god. In the opening chapters of this book, Job graciously accepted the removal of his possessions and worshipped God saying:

“Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised” (Job 1:21-22).

While Zophar's words are true enough in certain contexts, they wrongly applied to Job. Not only do we need to know the truth, we also need the wisdom and discernment of God to know when and where to apply that truth.

#### For Consideration:

- Can the wicked prosper on this earth? What is the danger of wealth and possessions?
- Zophar compared those who accumulated riches to someone sucking the poison of an adder. What did he mean by this? How can riches and possessions be a curse to us?
- Are all riches a curse? What is the difference between the person that Zophar spoke of here and Job?
- What can we learn about the importance of correctly applying the truth of Scripture to each situation in life? What is the difference between knowing truth and correctly applying that truth?
- Could you, like Job, allow God to strip you of everything and still praise Him?

#### For Prayer:

- Ask the Lord to keep you from the love of money and possessions.
- If you know someone who is trapped in the love of money and possessions, take a moment to pray for them, asking God to show them their need of Him.
- Ask God to help you not only to know the truth of the Word but also to correctly apply that truth to each situation He brings your way.





## 19

### **JOB'S RESPONSE: WHY DO THE WICKED LIVE ON?**

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Read Job 21

In chapter 20 Zophar told Job that the joy of the wicked was brief. While there was certainly an element of truth in what he was saying, the reality of the matter was that this did not always work itself out in everyday life. It is very easy to make general statements and believe that they will apply to every situation in life. This is simply not the case. It is impossible to put God in a box and discern what He will do in any given situation. His ways and purposes are beyond us.

Here in chapter 21, Job challenged Zophar in regard to his comments. Job began in verse 2 by asking Zophar to listen carefully to what he was going to tell him. It would provide Job some comfort if his friends would just listen to him. Zophar could mock Job all he wanted, but for the moment Job wanted his undivided attention (verse 3).

"Is my complaint directed to man?" Job asked in verse 4. The idea here seems to be that if Job were directing his complaint to a human, his complaint would be in vain. No man or woman could relieve him of the pain he was suffering. Only God could remove the load he bore. If God could relieve the pain, then why should he not cry out to God for relief? The apostle James told us that we do not have things because we do not ask God for them (James 4:2). This seems to be the general idea of Job here. He believed that he could approach God for mercy, and so he did.

"Look at me and be astonished; clap your hand over your mouth," Job said in verse 5. Look at what I am going through. Let the full reality of what you see fill you with astonishment so that you have to cover your mouth to silence your cry of terror. Cover your mouth to keep it from giving quick and easy answers.

When Job thought about what he was going through and the intensity of his suffering, he was terrified and shook all over (verse 6). What made matters worse, however, was the fact that when he looked at the wicked who lived around him, they did not seem to suffer the same trials. This idea is the focus of chapter 21.

Zophar had told Job that the joy of the wicked is always short-lived. This was not what Job saw in his experience. Theologically, Zophar sounded good, but his mind was blinded by a desire to make life simple and predictable. His eyes were not open to the reality of the things that were happening around him.

As Job looked around, he saw how the wicked lived to old age and increased in power (verse 7). They had children who grew up and settle nearby. The wicked lived to enjoy their offspring and the blessing of God in their families.

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The wicked lived in nice homes and were free from fear (verse 9). God did not seem to set His face against them or even punish them. Their cattle prospered. Their bulls did not fail to breed, and their cows never seemed to miscarry. Their flocks were numerous and content. Their children were well cared for and danced in a carefree manner in the fields (verse 11). The homes of the wicked seemed to be joyous homes filled with music and merriment (verse 12).

Job rightly observed that many wicked people lived in prosperity and died in peace (verse 13). These thoughts seemed to terrify Job. He saw the agony of his own life and the prosperity of the wicked around him. He felt confused.

Though the wicked prospered and lived in peace, they told God to leave them alone. They had no desire to know the ways of God or to walk in His path (verse 14). They arrogantly said: "Who is the Almighty that we should serve him? What would we gain by praying to him?" (verse 15). Their only concern was how to prosper and gain more for themselves. If God was not going to serve their greed, they wanted nothing to do with Him. They despised God but still prospered.

As Job considered the prosperity of the wicked and his own suffering, he came to an important conclusion. In verse 16 he realized that the prosperity of the wicked was not ultimately from their own hands, but from the generosity of God. They would, however, one day answer to God for their actions. By turning from the God who had so richly blessed them, their judgment would be very great. Job chose to suffer under the hand of God and live in faithfulness to Him rather than live a life of peace and prosperity in unfaithfulness. For Job, it was much better to worship God and get nothing in this world than to live in rebellion.

For this reason, Job refused the way and counsel of the wicked.

“How often is the light of the wicked snuffed out,” Job asked in verse 17. “How often does calamity come upon them?” As we look around us even in our day, do we not see wicked men and women prospering? Do they not live in rich mansions with servants and more than they can enjoy in a lifetime? Their light does not seem to be snuffed out. They live and die in prosperity.

Job went on in verse 18 to ask Zophar to consider the reality of what he saw around him. “How often are they like straw before the wind, like chaff swept away by a gale?” he asked. Have we not all met unbelievers who are well established and prosperous? Not all unbelievers are homeless drifters. Many have their roots firmly established. Zophar’s comments about the prosperity of the wicked being short-lived did not seem to bear itself out in real life where the wicked seemed to prosper all their lives.

Job moved on in verse 19 to address a common notion in his day that though the wicked may not be punished, their descendants would have to pay the price of their parents’ sins. Job reacted against this idea. He told Zophar and his friends that it would be much better to punish the wicked themselves. The wicked, according to Job, should see the judgment of God. They should be forced to drink the cup of God’s wrath themselves. Why should a wicked man care what happened to his family when he was gone? What lesson could he learn in the grave (verse 21)?

Zophar’s theology sounded pious and wonderful, but it did not work itself out in everyday life. God’s ways are higher than our ways. Who can ever teach God (verse 22)? One person dies in full strength, having lived a life of complete

ease and security. This person was well fed and in full health. Another person dies with a grieving soul. His or her life was joyless, never having enjoyed the good things of life. In the end, both these individuals are laid side by side in the dust of the grave. Worms cover them both (verse 26). How can we explain this mystery? Why are all people not treated the same? Why does one live in luxury and another in poverty? Why does one person experience the fullness of life and all its pleasures, while another experiences only misery and failure? How can we understand the purposes and plans of God in these matters?

Job knew the way his friends were thinking. They too had their illustrations of how the wicked lived and were judged. Job admitted that there were examples of evil men and women who were judged in this life for sin and evil. He told his friends to question those who had travelled in larger circles than they did. These individuals would tell them that they had seen evil men spared from the day of calamity (verse 30). The King James Version translates verse 30 slightly differently. "The wicked is reserved to the day of destruction? They shall be brought forth to the day of wrath" (Job 21:30, KJV) John Gill commenting on this verse says this:

That the wicked is reserved to the day of destruction? That is, that they are spared, withheld, restrained, as the word signifies, or kept and preserved from many calamities and distresses, which others are exposed unto; and so are reserved, either unto a time of greater destruction in this life or rather to eternal destruction in the world to come. (*Gill, John "Exposition of the Entire Bible" Public Domain, Extracted from freegrace.net. Formatted for Bible + version 3.1.11*)

The idea here is that same as the New International Version. Job is trying to communicate to his friends that there are times when the punishment of wicked individuals may be withheld for a time. They may live in this life without ever seeing the wrath of God for their sin.

No one dared approach these individuals to denounce their evil conduct to their faces (verse 31). These people, though they never cared for God, died and were richly buried, having servants to watch over their tombs (verse 32).

These wicked men lived in fertile valleys. They gained the support and approval of many people in their communities. They had many followers and servants. The reality of the matter was that while there were some examples of the wicked being punished in this life for sins, there were also examples of many wicked who prospered. Job concluded by telling Zophar that his argument made no sense. His theology had no basis in reality.

#### For Consideration:

- What evidence did Job give that showed Zophar's theology that the prosperity of the evil was only short-lived on this earth was not based in the reality of daily life?
- Do the wicked prosper in this life? Is there an easy answer as to why this is the case?
- Job concluded that it was better to die in faithful obedience than to live in rebellion. Is this truth reflected in your own life?

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For Prayer:

- Ask the Lord to show you the truth and to give you grace to admit that sometimes your idea of God is based more on your desire to predict or understand God than in the reality of who He really is.
- Thank the Lord that while we do not understand His ways and purposes, He always does what is right.
- Ask the Lord to give you the grace to live in obedience to Him even when He calls you to go through suffering and trial.





## 20

# ELIPHAZ: SUBMIT TO GOD AND BE AT PEACE

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Read Job 22

Chapter 22 contains the beginning of the third cycle of speeches given by Job and his friends. This was the third time that Eliphaz spoke to Job. His idea of why Job was suffering was firmly entrenched in his mind. Eliphaz believed Job was wicked and his guilt was the cause of his calamities. Eliphaz believed that God was too lofty to be very concerned with the lives of individual people, unless they needed to be punished for wickedness.

When Eliphaz told Job that human beings could not be of any benefit to God, he was not saying that God could not use them (verse 2). God had often used men and women to advance His kingdom. Eliphaz seems to refer to the fact that humans owe everything they have to God. Without God, people can do nothing. There is nothing humans can offer God that does not first come from Him. Eliphaz went on in verse 2 to remind Job that even a wise person could not benefit God. In other words, a person could not tell God

anything He did not already know. All wisdom comes first from Him.

In verse 3 Eliphaz asked Job what pleasure he felt God would get if he was righteous. Again, we should not see him saying here that God is not pleased when we honour Him and live in obedience to His commands. While a servant who does his master's will does receive the approval of the master, the fact is that the servant is only doing what is expected of him.

Eliphaz seems to be saying that if as servants of God we are living righteous lives, we are merely doing what God expects. We are not giving Him any more than we are obligated to give Him as servants. The Lord Jesus communicated the same thought in Luke 17:10:

So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'

Eliphaz continued his thought in the second half of verse 3. "What would He gain if your ways were blameless?" he asked Job. Would God become a better person because Job lived a perfect life? Would the Lord be hindered because Job did not live according to His purpose? God chooses to use humans but is not hindered by their limitations.

Having challenged Job with this thought, Eliphaz moved on to accuse Job of serious offenses before God. He spoke very strongly to Job. Perhaps the reason for the strength of his language had to do with the fact that Job had told his friends that he was blameless. His friends were frustrated with Job's insistence that he was

blameless because they believed that Job's sufferings proved his guilt.

Eliphaz asked Job if it was for his goodness that God rebuked him (verse 4). Eliphaz did not believe God ever allowed good people to suffer. This led Eliphaz to the conclusion that Job was a wicked person (verse 5). His sins had no end. Eliphaz proceeded to give a list of those sins he supposed Job had committed.

He accused Job of demanding security from his brothers for no reason (verse 6). In other words, he did not trust his brothers and demanded a guarantee for even the smallest loan. Eliphaz believed that Job was so concerned about getting his money back that he refused loans to those in need who could not guarantee repayment of the loan.

Eliphaz also accused Job of stripping men of their clothing and leaving them naked (verse 6). It may possibly be that Eliphaz was referring to a defaulted loan. When the loan was not paid, Job supposedly took the clothes off the backs of the poor, leaving them cold and naked rather than suffer loss himself. In verse 7 Eliphaz accused Job of not giving water to the weary and withholding food from the hungry. He told Job that though he had been a rich and powerful man, owning land and possessions, he still turned widows and orphans away empty-handed (verse 9). Job had the power and ability to help, but he refused. According to Eliphaz, this was why God was punishing Job (verse 10).

From the perspective of Eliphaz, Job was blind to spiritual matters. It was as if he was covered in darkness or by floodwaters so that any spark of intelligence or wisdom had been snuffed out (verse 11).

Next Eliphaz condemned Job for evil motives. Eliphaz assumed Job believed that God was so high in the heavens that he could not see Job's wickedness, and so Job had sinned greatly, thinking he would not get caught (verses 12-14). Eliphaz warned that this false belief about God was an old path walked by many evil people whom God had seen and punished (verses 15-16).

These wicked people had told God to leave them alone (verse 17). They wanted nothing to do with God and His ways. Yet God had filled their houses with good things, even though they did not recognize it. Eliphaz was implying that Job was one of these evil people who had prospered for a brief season. Eliphaz stated that he wanted nothing to do with this sort of wicked thinking.

In the end, the righteous person would see the fall and ruin of the wicked and rejoice. The innocent victims of the wicked would mock them in their time of trouble. God would destroy the wicked and the fire of His judgment would devour their wealth (verse 20). According to Eliphaz, this was what had happened to Job because he had practiced much evil.

Eliphaz does not seem to have any proof for these statements about Job. It may be that Eliphaz accused Job of these things not because he had seen Job do any of them but because he believed he had to be guilty of such crimes because of the punishment he was receiving from God.

Believing that Job had sinned, Eliphaz pleaded with him to submit to God and make peace with Him (verse 21). Eliphaz promised that if Job would do this, he would become prosperous again. Eliphaz believed that obedience to God equalled wealth and prosperity. If Job would repent and

return to the Lord, he would be restored to his former position of wealth and comfort (verses 22-23).

Eliphaz told Job that if he was willing to assign his nuggets to the dust and his gold to the rock in the ravine, then the Lord would be his gold and silver (verses 24- 25). In saying this, he accused Job of greed and materialism. He told Job that he needed to put aside his wealth if he was going to have a relationship with God. Only then would he find delight in the Lord God and be able to lift up his head without shame (verse 26). Only then would the Lord God hear his prayers and honour him (verse 27). Only then would God give him success in everything he decided to do. Job would become a light to many on his path and God would lift up the downcast and guilty for whom Job prayed (verses 28-30).

Eliphaz had some strong accusations against Job. To him, Job was caught up in the love of money and would do anything to have more. God was punishing him because of his great evil. Only by repenting of his lust for riches and by using those riches instead for the good of others could Job experience success and blessing in his own life. But Eliphaz was wrong about Job and about God. We will see Job's response to these beliefs in the next chapter.

For Consideration:

- Does God really need us? Is there anything that we can give Him that does not first come from Him?
- Have you ever found yourself boasting because you did your duty? What can we learn here about there being no room for pride in this matter?

- Eliphaz seemed to jump to conclusions about Job and what he had done. Have you ever found yourself doing this?
- What does this passage teach us about the danger of materialism?

For Prayer:

- Thank the Lord that while He is fully capable of expanding His kingdom by Himself, He chooses to use us.
- Ask the Lord to help you to be faithful to Him even when you are falsely accused.
- Ask God to set you free from the love of money and possessions.

## 21

### **JOB'S RESPONSE:**

### **I WISH I COULD FIND GOD**

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Read Job 23-24

In frustration Eliphaz had accused Job of serious sins. He told Job that he deserved the trials he had received from the hand of God. He challenged Job to turn from his sin and seek the Lord God so he could be at peace. The accusations of Eliphaz, however, were not based in fact. He accused Job of sins he could never prove. In the next two chapters, Job offered his response to Eliphaz.

Job began by reminding his friends that his complaint was bitter because the hand of God was heavy on him despite his groaning (23:2). It was as if the Lord did not care about the pain He was inflicting on Job at that time.

Eliphaz had told Job to repent and seek God so that he could live. These words were easily spoken but not so easily practiced. Job told Eliphaz that if he knew where God was, he would go to Him immediately and state his case before Him. The fact of the matter was that Job could not



find God at this point in his life. God had hidden His face from him. Although Job searched, God was nowhere to be found. Job cried out constantly to the Lord, but the Lord was not answering him.

There are times when the Lord seems to withdraw His presence for a time to test us (see 2 Chronicles 32:31). In those moments, it seems that God is very distant and nothing we can do can bring Him any closer. This was the case with Job. God was simply not revealing Himself to Job at this time. There was nothing Job could do but wait on the Lord and be faithful to Him. Most of us have experience times like these.

Job wanted, more than anything, to hear from God. He was not afraid to hear what God would say (23:5). He was not running from God but seeking Him with all his heart. Job had nothing to fear from God. He believed that he was innocent and would not be accused by God. Job knew that Eliphaz had falsely accused him. He knew that God would give him a fair hearing.

Job considered himself to be an upright man (23:6-7). He did not fear approaching God because he knew where he stood with Him. If only he could find God, he knew that he would be set free from any condemnation. Job had full assurance of his position before God.

Job's greatest complaint was that he could not find God (23:8-9). However, Job reminded his friends that when God had finished testing him, he would be refined like gold (23:10). Job understood that even when he could not see God in his trials and pain, God could see him and had not abandoned him. Job believed that God was doing a powerful work in his life that would draw him even closer. This was evidence of Job's tremendous faith. Earlier Job had

wanted God to leave him alone (7:17-19), but Job was coming to trust God's ways, even if he could not understand them.

Job was confident that he had followed in God's steps (23:11-12). He knew that he had been faithful to God and had not turned aside. Job walked in the commands of the Lord. He told his friends that those commands had been more important to him than his daily food.

Eliphaz could not understand how Job could suffer so much and still be innocent. For him, there had to be a connection between Job's suffering and some hidden sin in his life. Job's concept of God was much larger than this. He did not see God as being so easy to understand. God's purposes were beyond human ability to comprehend. God stood alone in His plans and purposes (23:13). No one could tell God what to do or predict what He would do.

God was carrying out His strange purpose for Job. Job understood this and it terrified him. He knew God was holy and did as He pleased. God could not be reduced to a simple set of rules, as Job's friends had tried to do. Job knew God's ways to be beyond the understanding of mere humans.

Though Job had been plunged into darkness, he would not be silenced (23:17). He was terrified and God had overcome him, but Job would still approach Him with his complaint because he believed that God was full of justice and mercy.

The thing that Job failed to understand in this trial was why God did not set a time for judgment (24:1). Job's trial had lingered. It did not seem to have an end. God seemed no closer now than He was in the beginning of Job's trial. The

question on the mind of Job was how long this trial was going to last.

Another concern of Job was why the wicked seemed to get away with terrible evil while he suffered so much even though he lived a life of obedience and faithfulness (24:2-12). He reminded his friends how wicked people moved boundary stones and pastured their sheep in stolen pastures. They drove away the orphan's donkey and took a widow's ox in pledge, even though these animals were all these victims had to earn a living. They pushed the poor and needy aside when they found them on the road. They forced the poor into hiding because of their evil dealings with them. The poor were left foraging for food like wild donkeys in the desert. The evil had no concern for the poor. They took their land and left them to fend for themselves with no means of support.

This forced the poor to gather from fields that were not their own (24:6). They lacked clothes and spent nights naked in the cold night air. They would be drenched by the mountain rains and had to hide among the rocks for shelter. They had no homes.

Fatherless children were snatched from their mother's breasts and the infant was seized to pay off a debt owed to the wicked (24:9). There was no concern for the pain this would cause. These poor lacked clothes and went about naked. They carried the food of the rich but still went hungry. The sheaves they gathered in the fields were not their own. They were gathered for their masters. The poor were forced to crush olives and tread winepresses but still suffered thirst because they were not permitted to enjoy the fruit of their labours. Throughout the city the groans of the dying could be heard. Wounded souls were crying out for help as they were oppressed by the wicked (24:12).

Despite this, God did not seem to charge the wicked with wrongdoing. He remained quiet while the wicked abused the land and devoured the innocent. What was Job to understand from these things? How could he explain why God allowed the wicked to flourish on their evil path while doing nothing to stop the suffering of the righteous man?

There were many who rebelled against the light of truth (24:13-17). They had no desire to walk in the way of the Lord. They murdered, killed the poor and needy, and stole like thieves. The adulterer lived as if no one could see what he was doing. Men broke into houses at night and hid away in the daylight. These individuals lived for the darkness. They slept in the day and rose at night to engage in their night terrors.

While the wicked did not see the wrath of God in this world, they would be like the foam on the surface of the water (24:18). They would fade away, and everything they had would be cursed. Just as the heat of the day melts the snow, so these evil beings would be consumed by death and the grave. There in the grave, they would be forgotten and the worms would feast on their bodies.

Though the wicked preyed on needy widows, the day would come when God would drag them away by His power (24:22). As strong as they were, they would be no match for God who would bring them to justice in the end. For a time these individuals might rest in a feeling of false security, but God was not blind to their ways. Wicked people might live exalted lives here below for a time, but the day was coming when they would be brought low. They would be like grain that prospered for a time but would eventually be cut down.

As Job concluded his argument, he defied his friends to contradict what he told them. If Job's friends would simply open their eyes, they would see that God was not so easily defined and predicted. God would determine in His wisdom when wrongs would be made right. This, however, would not always be in our time.

#### For Consideration:

- Have you ever experienced a time when the Lord seemed distant? Did this mean that you had done something wrong?
- Why does God sometimes distance Himself from us? According to Job, what is the result of being tested by God in this way?
- Can we be faithful when we do not understand the ways of God?
- Can the wicked prosper? What will happen to them in the end?
- What does Job teach us here about trying to predict the ways and purposes of God?

#### For Prayer:

- Ask God to help you to trust Him fully even when you cannot understand His ways.
- Ask God to keep you from judging others by outward circumstances.
- Thank the Lord that He is able to keep you through any trial and make you into the person He wants you to be.
- Thank God that He is bigger than our ability to understand Him.

## THE OUTER FRINGE OF GOD'S WORD

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Read Job 25-26

In chapter 25 Bildad spoke for the third time. He spoke briefly but clearly expressed his opinion that God is majestic and humans are sinful, especially Job. In the last meditation, we saw how Job told his friends that he had been seeking God but could not find Him. He told them clearly that if he could find God, God would not condemn Him (23:6). Job's friends had been condemning him, but Job sincerely believed that God would press no charges and find him innocent.

Job's words troubled Bildad, and he responded. Bildad began by reminding Job that dominion and awe belong to the Lord God. That is to say, God is Lord over all the earth and rules in glory and majesty. God established the heavens and set them in order. That order can be seen, according to Bildad, in how God rules the forces of heaven (25:2). This may refer to the innumerable host of angels in heaven who are under God's command and live to obey His every

word. It may also refer to the way in which the stars, moon, and sun are set in place and rise day by day in obedience to the Lord's holy command. Anyone looking at the stars, planets, and the sun has to be amazed at the power and order of this awesome God. The heavens testify to how big and awesome God really is. Who could ever piece together such a world? For centuries these lights have burned in the sky, giving light to the earth below.

"How then can a man be righteous before God? How can one born of woman be pure?" Bildad asked (25:4). How could anyone born on this earth ever consider themselves pure enough to stand before such an awesome God? Compared to God, even the moon is not bright, and the light of the stars is not pure. Everything in the heavens is so inferior to God that in His eyes the heavenly bodies are like darkness. Men and women on this earth are so much smaller than these powerful lights of the sky. Bildad reminded Job that compared to God, human beings are like maggots (25:6).

While there is an element of truth in what Bildad said here, I often meet people who emphasize this thinking. They live in a sense of total unworthiness. They speak of themselves as "worms." While it is true that we are in ourselves unworthy, the Lord Jesus came to forgive us. He has placed his Holy Spirit in us and made us His children. Those who have accepted the forgiveness of the Lord Jesus are now precious in His sight.

Even in the Old Testament before the coming of the Lord Jesus, God considered His people very precious in his sight. A favourite verse of mine is Zephaniah 3:17:

The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet

you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing.

In the prophecy of Zechariah, God called His people the apple of his eye. "For this is what the Lord Almighty says:

Whoever touches you touches the apple of his eye" (Zechariah 2:8).

Far from being worms, we are the "apple of his eye." He rejoices over us with singing. Yes, we are certainly unworthy of this attention and love, but in mercy God delights in us and has made us to be kings and priests. The apostle Peter put it this way:

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light (1 Peter 2:9).

Bildad believed that Job was deceiving himself into believing that he could be holy and righteous before God. How terrible it would be to live our lives with this theology. The fact of the matter is that God loves us. He accepts us, and we can have the assurance of His delight in us. We can live under the umbrella of His mercy, compassion, and acceptance. Far from being worms, we can become children in whom God takes great delight. This is not because we deserve this status but because in His mercy God has accepted us and changed us into His image through the work of His Son.

Job responded to Bildad in chapters 26-31. In chapter 26 Job began in a sarcastic or mocking tone. "How you have helped the powerless! How you have saved the arm that



is feeble!" he told Bildad (26:2). Job expressed his humour in this statement. What does one say to a man or woman suffering the pain of separation from God? Bildad told Job that he was a maggot! What advice you have given me, said Job mockingly. You have displayed tremendous insight in dealing with those who are feeling the reality of their feebleness and powerlessness. You call them "maggots." Bildad obviously was not in tune with the pain and agony of Job. To tell a suffering servant of God that he or she is a maggot would not refresh and encourage that individual. Instead, it would only add to their already unbearable misery.

Job asked Bildad who it was that helped him to speak these words (26:4). Job wanted to know where those words came from. Clearly, they did not come from a spirit of compassion and mercy. Very likely, these words did not even come from the Spirit of God. They were spoken out of anger and frustration. When we remember that Satan was behind this suffering of Job, we can assume that these words were being used by Satan to add to the suffering of Job.

Satan has often delighted in keeping Christians under a sense of absolute unworthiness. He loves to make them think that they are so sinful and unworthy that God could never accept them or use them. Satan is an accuser (Revelation 12:10). He loves to find fault and point out our weakness and failures; whereas, God reveals sin so that we can be drawn to the Lord Jesus to be forgiven. Satan emphasizes sin so that we will be discouraged and frustrated in our attempt to walk with God. Bildad's words were discouraging and suggested that God was so far removed that Job could never approach Him.

In verse 5 Job told his friends that the dead and those who lived beneath the waters were in deep anguish (26:5). What was Job trying to say here? It may be that he spoke of the souls of those who waited for judgment. They were in agony and trembling. Death is not an escape from judgment. The day would come when the Lord would bring everyone to judgment. All people will have to give an account of their lives. He pictures the dead trembling as they await their final judgment.

Job continued to describe the awesome God he trusted, who alone controlled the universe (26:7-11). This God spreads out the sky and suspended the earth over nothing. He wrapped water in clouds, and yet the clouds do not burst under the weight. He hid the light of the moon with clouds. He marked out the boundary between light and dark. The earth quaked when He was angry. His power churned up the sea.

Job told his friends that God cut Rahab to pieces (26:12). The King James Version translates this verse: "He smiteth through the proud." "Rahab" has different meanings in the Hebrew language. It can mean "proud," or it can also refer to the name of a mythical sea monster that caused great chaos in the sea. It is hard to say which translation is the best. God does smite the proud, and He conquers all opposing forces.

Verse 13 is best understood in the context of verse 12, in which Job stated that God churned up the sea and cut Rahab to pieces. In verse 13 the breath of the Lord stopped the churning of the seas by a single word from His mouth. That word destroyed the sea monster and restored order in the sea. This awesome Lord God controls all forces of nature.

All these things are just “the outer fringe of his works” (26:14). These powerful deeds are just a small portion of what the Lord God can do. We can only hear a whisper of God’s power and ability. If we fail to understand the whisper, how could we ever understand the thunder? If the outer fringe of His power is beyond our ability to understand, how could we ever understand the greater things of God and His ways?

What was Job telling Bildad here? Bildad and his friends have been explaining to Job how they believed God related to humans. Somehow, they felt that they knew the ways of God and could speak on His behalf. Job reminded them that God is so great and awesome that they could not understand His ways. God cannot be placed under a microscope and examined. He cannot be examined through a telescope and understood. His ways are so much greater than our ways. This being the case, how could Bildad speak on God’s behalf? How could he understand what God was doing? Bildad spoke of an awesome God who was so much higher than he was but then proceeded to speak on His behalf, as if he knew exactly how God worked.

Because God is a big God, we have to settle in our minds that we will not always understand His ways. God will work in ways that do not make sense to us. We will not understand, but we can trust Him to do what is right.

## For Consideration:

- Bildad spoke of people being “maggots” and “worms” before God. How does God see us? How should we see ourselves?
- What does Job teach us about dealing with those who are suffering? How did Bildad fail as a counsellor?
- Why does Satan emphasize our sin? Why does God emphasize our sin? What is the difference? How can we distinguish one from the other?
- Can we ever understand the ways of God? What is the role of faith in times when we simply do not understand what God is doing?
- Bildad spoke of a big God but seemed to limit Him practically by His theology. In what ways do we limit God?

## For Prayer:

- Take a moment to praise the Lord for the fact that He delights in you as His child. Thank Him that He is a God of tremendous mercy and compassion.
- Praise the Lord that He is a big God whose ways are beyond our ability to understand.
- Ask God for faith to keep you in those times when you do not understand what He is doing.
- Thank God that because He loves you, you can have full confidence in Him and what He is doing in you and your society.



## 23

# I WILL MAINTAIN MY RIGHTEOUSNESS

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Read Job 27

Bildad had challenged Job concerning his statements about being right before God. He felt that Job was speaking in pride when he said that he had done nothing wrong. In chapter 25 Bildad reminded Job that before such a holy and awesome God, human beings could be, at best, mere maggots. Job had begun his response to Bildad in chapter 26, and chapter 27 is a continuation of that response.

Job spoke honestly from his heart. He believed that God had denied him justice (verse 2). He felt he was suffering unjustly. God had made him taste bitterness. Job was confused in his trial. He could not understand the ways of God or the divine plan for his life. His human understanding was insufficient to grasp the purposes of the Almighty God.

Though Job could not understand what the Lord was doing in his life, he told his friends that as long as God gave him life and breath, he would never speak evil or wickedness

(verse 4). Nor would he ever admit that his friends were right. He would never deny his integrity (verse 5).

Job had a clear conscience before God (verse 6). We need to understand that there is a difference between being blind to our sin and being confident in our walk with God. Many people believe that they are right with God. Even when confronted by clear sin, they will not accept it. Job was not blind to sin. He searched his heart and sought God about any hidden sin in his life (7:20; 10:14; 13:23). His friends accused him of many different sins, but Job knew in his heart that none of these accusations were based in truth.

Job's friends were under the assumption that because he was suffering terribly, he had done something seriously wrong. This was not the case. Even good people suffer. The Lord Jesus is a clear example of this. He was persecuted and felt all the temptations and trials that we face, even though He was without sin (Hebrews 2:18; 4:15). Job honestly wanted to know if there was any sin in his life that caused the Lord to discipline him with such force.

Job wanted to find any hidden sin. He wanted, more than anything, to be in fellowship with God. He was willing to deal with any sin that God revealed to him. His attitude was right. There was trouble in his life, and God was distant. Job was not hearing from God nor was he seeing His blessings. He was not experiencing joy, nor was there any song in his heart. One thing he did know, however, was that he still sought after and loved God. In verse 6 Job told his friends that he would maintain his righteousness and never let go of it. He had a clear conscience before God.

Job understood that there was no hope for the ungodly. For him to turn his back on God at this time would be very

foolish indeed. His only hope was in God. For this reason, Job was going to cling to God and His ways until he died. Job's friends were doing everything in their power to convince him that he had abandoned the Lord God. They were, in reality, instruments of Satan to shake his faith in God.

Satan was doing all he could to turn Job away from the Lord. He was trying to cause Job to doubt his faith and believe that God had abandoned him. Job refused to fall into this trap. He knew where he stood before God, and neither Satan nor man could take that assurance from him.

Job spoke in verse 9 of the fate of those who turned from God. He asked the question: "Does God listen to his cry when distress comes upon him?" Job meant that God is under no obligation to answer the cry of the wicked. In saying this, Job would no doubt have thought of his own situation. He had not heard from God concerning his trouble. Job had every reason to believe, however, that though God delayed in answering his prayer, He had not forsaken him. Job had every reason to believe that God would answer in his time. This was not the case for the wicked.

The wicked, according to Job, found no joy or delight in calling out to the Lord (verse 10). Day after day Job cried out to the Lord. Day after day he sought God's face. He longed to see God and hear from Him. Even though God did not respond, Job continued to seek Him.

Job had a few things to teach his own friends regarding the ways of the Almighty (verse 11). Especially in regards to their false idea that all suffering is the result of personal sin and all blessing is the result of personal righteousness (verse 12).



In verses 13-23 Job told his friends that he too believed that in general the wicked suffer in this life. The heritage of the ruthless person is the sword (verse 14). Though the wicked person may have many children and seem to prosper on this earth, the day would come when God would judge. In the end, the wicked and their offspring would perish, and no one would mourn their passing (verse 15). Job was confident in the justice of God, even if it was not immediate.

The wicked person may heap up silver like the dust of the ground and clothes like piles of clay (verse 16). That is to say, the wicked may prosper and be wealthy in this life, but in the end, the righteous will inherit these riches. In time, all that the wicked have worked so hard to obtain would be stripped from them. The wicked are fighting a battle they cannot win. Yes, they may prosper in this life. They may have great wealth and live at ease, but the Day of Judgment is coming. On that day, terrors will overtake them like a great flood (verse 20). Their possessions will be snatched away in the night.

The wind of God's fury will sweep down on the wicked (verse 21). That wind will hurl itself on them without mercy, sending them fleeing from its power (verse 22). That wind of God's judgment would mock them and "hiss" them out of their place.

Job seems to have been telling his friends that to renounce his righteousness would be to seal his fate. There was no hope for the unrighteous. The only hope there is could be found in God alone. Job clung to the Lord God. He would not turn from His ways. Though nothing seemed to make sense, he placed his full confidence in the Lord God. He would not abandon hope. He would not turn from righteousness. When nothing makes sense to you in this life

and everything seems to be falling apart, trust the Lord and walk in His ways.

For Consideration:

- Can we have assurance of a right relationship with God? How does Job demonstrate this assurance in this chapter?
- Have you ever had a time when God seemed far away? Is it possible for a righteous person to feel that God is far away?
- Why does Job choose to maintain his walk with God? Where else could he have turned?
- Can the wicked prosper in this life? Can they prosper in the life to come?

For Prayer:

- Thank the Lord that He has given you the assurance of your salvation.
- Thank God that even though He may appear distant at times, we can still place our confidence in Him.
- Thank the Lord that there is more to life than what we see around us in this world. Thank Him for the promise of eternal life through the Lord Jesus.
- Ask the Lord to give you the assurance that you are walking in his truth.
- Thank the Lord that Satan could not shake the faith of Job. Ask God to give you a faith that Satan cannot shake.



## 24

### IN SEARCH OF WISDOM

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Read Job 28

Job continued to speak to the comments of his friends. In the last chapter, he agreed that the wicked suffer. But this did not explain his suffering because he was righteous. He would not turn from the Lord. He knew that outside of the Lord God there was no hope of justice. In chapter 28 Job spoke of wisdom and how difficult it is to find.

The reality of the matter was that Job's friends had not spoken wisely. They had tried to explain the purposes of God for Job but fell short. Job was seeking to understand the plan of God for his life. Job cried out for wisdom. He wished he could have some sense of what God was doing.

Job began by speaking of mining for earthly treasures. He told his friends that silver, gold, iron, and copper were taken from the earth (verses 1-2). In order to find these precious metals, people dug deep into the earth. They would cut a deep shaft into the ground, letting the light into a place where light had never shone before (verse 4). They would search unexplored recesses of the earth for these

metals. The miners would dangle from ropes in absolute darkness, swaying dangerously back and forth to obtain what they longed to find.

As the miners' torches lit these deep recesses, gems would reflect the light, revealing their presence and transforming the darkness into a glittering fire-like light (verse 5). There below the surface of the earth, sapphires and gold were discovered (verse 6). By digging into the depth of the earth, humanity was discovering what no animal or bird of prey had ever seen. People were seeking treasure where no other creature had ever gone (verses 7-8).

Miners assaulted the flint rocks and exposed the roots of the mountains (verse 9). Tunnelling through the rock, they saw the vast treasures below the surface of the earth (verse 10). There under the earth, miners traced the sources of the rivers and brought to light what had been hidden from the human eye (verse 11).

Job marvelled at the ability of these miners to expose what was hidden. As difficult as these precious metals and gems were to obtain, there was something that was even more difficult to find. Wisdom, according to Job, is an even greater treasure, more difficult to find than the most precious of gems (verse 12).

Humanity has not understood the worth of true wisdom, and it cannot be found on the earth (verse 13). The depth of the earth says: "It is not in me," and the sea says the same thing (verse 14). True wisdom cannot be mined from the earth or harvested from the depth of the sea.

The wisdom that Job spoke of here cannot be purchased with gold, silver, or precious gems (verse 15). It is not something that riches can obtain. Its value is far superior

to that of precious metals and gems. The wealth of the entire earth cannot be compared to the value of wisdom (verses 16-19).

In verse 20 Job asked: "Where then does wisdom come from? Where does understanding dwell?" This wisdom is hidden from the eyes of the living. The birds of the air have never seen it as they fly above the earth (verse 21). Death and Destruction have only heard a rumour of such wisdom (verse 22). That is to say, neither the living nor the dead are the source of wisdom. God alone understands the way to wisdom and knows where it is (verse 23). The wisdom Job sought concerning his suffering could not be found on earth. It is a heavenly wisdom, and God alone could reveal it. In fact, God is the creator and source of this wisdom.

The wisdom of God is demonstrated clearly in how He established the force of the wind and measured out the waters on the earth (verse 25). It was by this wisdom that God established an agreement with the rain and set out a path by which the thunder was to travel (verse 26). All of creation was established by this wisdom.

It is a wisdom that the greatest scientists of our day have never been able to understand. Human minds have long sought to understand the wisdom of God. Scientists and medical experts have never been able to see the extent of this wisdom. Our telescopes have probed the depths of space but have never seen where it ends. We have marvelled at the complexity and harmony of the human body. What parent has not stood in awe at the miracle of birth? These are just a few small examples of the infinite wisdom of God.

Job concluded his reflection on this wisdom by telling his friends what true wisdom really is. He told them that true

wisdom is to fear the Lord and to shun evil. True wisdom sees who God is and what He has done. God is the creator of the universe. It is He who holds it together. He gives life and takes it away. This wisdom can be found in no one else. He knows all about us and what is best for us. He is an awesome and majestic God whose purposes and plans are perfect. He is a powerful God who, by His word alone, shaped the earth. In the hands of this God is the power of life and death.

How foolish it would be for us to turn our backs on this wise God. How foolish it would be for us to think that we know more than He. The wise person will understand, see this wisdom in God, and surrender to His purposes and plans. True wisdom is to turn from anything that is contrary to God and His nature and surrender completely and reverently to Him.

Job did not understand what God was doing in his suffering. Job did not need to understand all the mysteries of God. He knew that God's ways are perfect. Job simply needed to trust God's revealed wisdom. "The fear of the Lord—that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding" (verse 28). The wisest thing Job could do was to surrender to God whose ways were higher than His and trust what He was doing for He was an infinitely wise and perfect God. To fear God and reverently walk in obedience to Him was true wisdom. Everything else was pure folly.

For Consideration:

- What does this chapter teach us about the value of wisdom? Have we appreciated the value of godly wisdom in our day?

- Where does true wisdom come from?
- What evidence do you see of the wisdom of God?
- What did Job mean when he said that true wisdom is to fear God and to shun evil? How easy is this to do when we are facing trials we cannot explain?
- Can we ever truly understand the ways of God? Can you trust the Lord when you do not understand His purpose?

For Prayer:

- Take a moment to praise the Lord for His wisdom. Praise Him for particular demonstrations of that wisdom in your life.
- Thank the Lord that He has clearly demonstrated that He is worthy of our confidence as a wise God.
- Ask the Lord to help you to trust Him and His wisdom in those times when you do not understand what He is doing.





## 25

### SHATTERED DREAMS

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Read Job 29-30

Following the brief discussion about wisdom, Job moved on to speak quite personally about his disappointments in life. The trials of the last while had certainly taken their toll on him. While he trusted the Lord and His divine purposes, Job still wrestled with what had happened to him. In chapter 29 he looked back over time to the days when things were very different for him.

Job longed for the days when the Lord watched over him, and divine light shined on his head (29:2-3). He remembered the days when, even in his darkest times, he still knew the reality of the light of God and His blessing.

This is not to say that the Lord no longer watched over Job, but Job's experience of God's presence had radically changed. No longer did he experience the fullness of God's blessing. God seemed to be very distant. At one time God had protected him, but now trials were very real. God seemed to let them fall freely on him now.

No longer did Job experience the “intimate friendship” of God. This grieved him greatly (29:4). At one time he could hear the voice of God and knew His fellowship. Now all this seemed to be in the distant past. God seemed very far away. It is interesting to note that Job’s experience of God had been that of an intimate friend. He knew that God was his awesome Creator, yet his experience of Him was that of a close friend. God was someone with whom Job could share his heart, and God would share His heart with Job. What a wonderful description of communion with the Lord. How incredible it is to think that we can actually have this sort of relationship with God.

In John 15:15 Jesus told his disciples:

“I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.”

It is the desire of the Lord God that we experience this intimate friendship with Him. He is our Lord and God, but He also wants to be our friend. Job had experienced this close relationship with God. Now however, he grieved over the distance between them.

In former days when Job had known the presence of God and His blessings, his children were gathered around him (29:5). The path Job had walked was drenched with cream and the rocks poured out streams of olive oil for him. In other words, God’s luxurious blessing surrounded him. Everywhere he went there was evidence of the wonderful abundance of God.

Job remembered being a respected man in the community. When he went to the gate of the city and took his seat in the public square, the young men stepped aside and the old men rose to their feet to honour him (29:7-10). The leaders and important men in the city did not dare speak when Job entered their presence. They stood silent out of respect and honour. Everyone spoke well of Job.

There were many reasons why people spoke well of Job. He was a man of incredible compassion and mercy. He rescued the poor and helpless (29:12-13). He came to the aid of the fatherless who had no one else to help them in their need. Job helped the man who was dying and provided for the widow in her time of need.

Job was a righteous and just man. He wore righteousness and justice as he would wear his clothing and a turban (29:14). This was demonstrated in very practical ways. He was eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, and a father to the needy. Though he was rich and blessed of the Lord, he willingly and freely gave that wealth to all who had need. He even took up the case of strangers and loved them as his own (29:16). When the wicked snatched victims in their teeth and attempted to carry them off, Job broke their fangs and rescued the helpless (29:17).

Job felt that everything would go well for him in life. He truly believed that he would die in his own house as an old man full of blessing (29:18-20). He believed that he would be like a deeply rooted tree planted near water. In other words, he felt that his riches and blessings were assured him for life. He believed that he would always live with the glory of the Lord fresh on him every day. He told his friends that his bow was ever new in his hands. The sense of this phrase seems to be that Job's power, influence, and physical strength seemed to be always increasing. All these

things Job had taken for granted. He would never have been able to imagine himself in his current situation.

Everywhere Job went men listened to him and waited silently for his advice (29:21-23). When he spoke, no one debated or questioned what he said. They trusted him and clung to his wisdom. People longed to see and hear from Job. They waited for him like the dry earth waited for the showers of heaven and drank his words like the thirsty ground.

Job was held in such high regard that when he smiled at people, they could hardly believe it. Just to know that such an important man had noticed them was an incredible delight to their hearts. Job was a chief among his people. He lived like a king but still had time to comfort those who mourned (29:25).

Job remembered these former days with great fondness. He had no regrets as he looked back on his life. It was for this reason that his present situation seemed to be very confusing. Things had radically changed for Job. In chapter 30 Job reflected on just how much his life had changed and lamented.

All respect that people once had for him was gone. Job reflected on how people mocked him in his present condition, even the younger men. Job remembered that the fathers of these young men were unworthy people, not even as useful as Job's sheep dogs (30:1). Because of their bad character, they had been banished from society. They were treated like thieves and wandered through the land, gathering herbs and eating roots (30:3-5). These men lived in dry steams among the rock and in holes in the ground. They were nameless and wild men. Now the children of these despised vagabonds lifted themselves up above Job

and mocked him in his need (30:6-10). The sons of these banished fathers now would not even come near Job. They did not hesitate to spit in his face as he passed him by.

Now that Job's bow was unstrung, these sons showed no restraint in his presence (30:11-14). The unstringing of Job's bow implied that God had stripped Job of his strength and authority. These men attacked him from the right. They laid snares at his feet. They built siege ramps against him. They advanced against him like an army entering a breach in the wall.

Terrors overwhelmed Job. His dignity was driven away and his sense of security vanished like a cloud in the sky (30:15). His life passed away from him. Suffering now gripped his whole body. Gnawing pain never left him.

While it was others who were doing these things to Job, he knew that God was involved in this process. He spoke of God blinding him, throwing him in the mud, and reducing him to dust and ashes (30:18-19).

Job realized that his friendship with God was not what it had been in the past. He cried out to God, but God would not answer him. Job accused God of merely looking at him but doing nothing to help him in his time of need (30:20). This silence of God caused Job his deepest suffering.

Instead of filling him with blessings, Job felt that God had turned on him (30:21-23). He attacked Job ruthlessly, snatching him up in the wind of His wrath and tossing him about as in a storm. Job felt that God sought to destroy him. Job expected, at any time, to pass from the land of the living.

All these things perplexed Job: "Surely no one lays a hand on a broken man when he cries for help in his distress," (30:24). Job could not understand why God would not open His heart to him as he cried out for help. As a mere human, he had wept for those who were in trouble. His heart had grieved for the poor. Now, however, when he hoped for good, he only found evil. When he wanted to see the light, all he saw was darkness (30:25-26).

Inside, Job churned with the pain of his trials (30:27-28). Those trials never seemed to stop. He seemed doomed to bear this horrible pain and suffering all his life. Job told his friends that he went about blackened but not by the sun. It is hard to say what Job meant. It might be that Job was dressed in black as a sign of mourning. It may also be that Job was symbolically comparing the heat of the sun to the heat of God's wrath. Job's skin was being darkened by the wrath of God. It was shrivelling up because God had set Himself against Job.

Though Job cried for help in the assembly of God's people, there was no help for him. He was like the lonely wild jackals and the owls with no friends to help him. His skin grew dark and peeled off his body. His body burned with fever (30:28-30).

In verse 31 Job told his friends that his harp had tuned to mourning and his flute to the sound of wailing. This was his present reality. He felt alone and abandoned by people and God. His dreams of living in prosperity and in fellowship with God were shattered. The dream of dying as an old man in the lap of luxury was now forgotten. In an instant, everything had changed. Job came to realize that he dare not take his blessings and fellowship with God for granted.

For Consideration:

- Have you ever had your personal dreams shattered? What were those dreams?
- Did Job's prosperity guarantee him a trouble free life?
- Do we have a guarantee of health, prosperity, and blessings in this life?
- What do we learn here about Job's experience with God as an intimate friend? Have you experienced this type of relationship with God?
- What does this passage teach us about Job's compassion for those who were suffering around him? Do you have this same heart?

For Prayer:

- Ask God to draw you closer to Him. Ask Him to teach you what it means to be His intimate friend.
- Thank the Lord for the reality of your present blessings. Surrender all you have to Him. Ask Him to give you grace not to take those blessings for granted.
- Thank God that all you have is a result of His grace in your life.
- Take a moment to pray for someone in your community who is suffering or who is finding that God is distant in these days.
- Surrender your dreams to God. Let Him do as He pleases in your life.





## 26

### IF...

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Read Job 31

Although Job's friends had accused him of much evil, he did not believe that he had done wrong in the sight of God. The fact that God was distant from him at this time in his life was very confusing for Job. Job wanted to find out if he had done anything. Here in chapter 31, he spoke to both God and his friends about this issue.

Job reminded both his friends and the Lord in verse 1 of a covenant he had made with his eyes not to look lustfully at a girl (verse 1). This verse shows us something of the integrity of Job. In chapter 1 he had prayed for his children lest they commit sin in their heart against God. Job's faith was far deeper than the externals. He sought to genuinely live in harmony with God and His purposes from the heart. While many might make a covenant not to act on their lust, Job's covenant was not even to look on a woman with lust. Job's desire was to please God not only in his actions but also in his thoughts. He committed his thought life to the Lord God and sought to honour Him in this.

Notice in verses 2 and 3 the reason why Job refused to look on a woman with lust. The punishment for the impure person was ruin and disaster. Job knew that this sort of thought pattern would ultimately lead to separation from God and His blessings.

Notice also in verse 4 that Job refused to look on a woman with lust because God saw his ways and counted every step he took. Job knew that one day he would have to give an account of his actions and thoughts before God. Nothing was hidden from Him. Job wanted to do everything in his power to please God.

In this chapter Job searched his heart and recognized before God that if he was guilty, he deserved to be punished for his sin. He did not seek to justify his actions. He did not seek to hide them:

If I have walked in falsehood or my foot has hurried after deceit—let God weigh me in honest scales and He will know that I am blameless” (verses 5-6).

Job was quite confident that, in this matter of falsehood and deceit, he was innocent.

If Job had allowed his steps to turn from the path of God or if he had allowed his heart to be led by his eyes, then God could take all his crops and give them to others to eat (verses 7-8). If his hands were defiled by turning from the purpose of God, then Job would not feel worthy of the blessings God had given him and he would willingly give up all he had sinfully attained.

If Job's heart had been attracted to his neighbour's wife so that he lurked at her door, looking for an opportunity to entice her, then he deserved that someone else take his wife and sleep with her (verses 9-10). He recognized that this would be a shameful sin that needed to be judged seriously.

Job would not run from punishment if he had been found guilty of such an evil. The sin of adultery would become a fire in his life that burned to destruction. God would remove His blessing from an adulterous man so that his harvest would be uprooted (verses 11-12).

If Job had denied justice to his servants when they had something against him, what would he be able to say when God confronted him on this issue (verse 13)? He knew that it was his obligation to treat his servants with honour and respect. To refuse to do this would be to make himself guilty before God. He would be without excuse before God if he mistreated His servants. Job recognized that his Creator also created his servants. Job did not see himself as more important than them. He understood that he needed to respect them and honour them. To dishonour his servant was to dishonour the Lord who created them.

If Job had denied the need of the poor or let the widow grow weary without offering her bread, he deserved to be punished by God (verses 16-17). Job's conscience was pure in this area however. From his youth Job had been compassionate toward the widow. His wealth was given freely to those in need (verse 18).

If he had seen anyone perishing because they lacked clothing and not warmed that person with the fleece of his sheep, he would willingly allow his arm to fall from his shoulder (verses 19-22). If he had raised his hand against

the fatherless and used his influence in court to get his own way at their expense, then he would willingly accept punishment.

Job's fear of God and His majesty was such that he could not allow himself to do anything of this nature (verse 23). Job respected those in need because he respected their Creator. He knew that he had the means to make their lives more comfortable, and so he felt obliged to do so.

If Job had put his trust in gold or found security in his money and possessions, then he would be guilty before God (verses 24-25). If he had engaged in the practice of sun or moon worship, this would have made him guilty of unfaithfulness before God (verses 26-28). He would have deserved punishment.

If he rejoiced at the misfortune of his enemies, Job knew that he would have to answer to God for this (verse 29). He would be guilty before God if he had allowed himself to curse his enemy (verse 30).

Job recognized that he would be guilty before God if the servants of his household were not well provided for (verse 31). No stranger had to spend the night on the street because Job's home was always open to them (verse 32).

If ever Job had concealed his sin by hiding it in his heart because he feared what the crowd would say or do, he pleaded with the Lord Almighty to put this in writing and present it to him so that he could answer for his deeds (verses 33-37). Job knew he had nothing to be ashamed of before God. He told his friends that he would give God an account of his every step. He would approach God like a prince, with dignity and honour.

Job concluded in verses 38-40 by telling his friends that if ever his land cried out against him so that the furrows of his land were wet with the tears of those he had oppressed or cheated of wages, then he deserved to have God allow briars to come up from the ground instead of wheat, and weeds instead of barley.

What is clear from this is that Job was declaring his personal purity. He searched his life and heart in vain to discover any sin that would cause the Lord to inflict him with the punishment as he was experiencing. Not all trials are the result of sin in our life. Sometimes God allows difficult things to happen to His chosen servants so that they will be drawn closer to him. Job lived his life with a clean conscience. Not only were his actions pure before God but so were his thoughts and attitudes.

#### For Consideration:

- Are you willing to submit yourself to the Lord God for Him to search your heart and life for anything that might be displeasing to Him?
- Can you say, like Job, that you are living with a clean conscience before God? Take a moment to consider the following areas of your life:
  1. Your relationships with others
  2. Your honesty and integrity
  3. The use of your possessions and finances
  4. Your compassion for others
  5. Your attitude toward your enemies

- What evidence do we see in this chapter that Job was not only concerned with his outer actions but also with the inner thoughts and attitudes of his heart?

For Prayer:

- Ask the Lord to search your heart to reveal any hidden sin that keeps you from drawing closer to Him.
- Ask the Lord to open your eyes to how you can use what He has given you to minister to others in need.
- Ask God to give you thoughts and attitudes that are glorifying to His name.

## ELIHU: INTRODUCTION

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Read Job 32-33

Job's three friends, seeing that they could not convince Job his suffering was just, ceased to speak to him. They believed that Job was self-righteous in denying his sin. They felt he was being punished for some particular evil in his life. To his friends, Job was simply unwilling to listen to reason. He was proud and would not admit his guilt (32:1).

With Job's friends was a young man by the name of Elihu. He was the son of Barakel the Buzite of the family of Ram. Genesis 22:20-21 gives us a better understanding of this family.

“Some time later Abraham was told, ‘Milcah is also a mother; she has borne sons to your brother Nahor: Uz the firstborn, Buz his brother, Kemuel (the father of Aram).’”

The Buzites were the descendants of Buz, the nephew of Abraham born to Abraham's brother Nahor. Buz would become the father of Aram who would, in turn, be the father



of the Arameans. This was the genealogy of Elihu who sat with Job and his three friends that day.

Elihu was very angry with Job, just like Job's friends. He was angry because Job had found himself just and God unjust. Two things set Elihu apart from the other three men who had been speaking to Job. First, Elihu was not only angry with Job but also with his three friends because they condemned Job without proving his sin (32:3). The second thing we need to notice about Elihu is that he was younger than the others. He had waited for Job's friends to speak out of respect for their age and supposed wisdom. But when they were unable to convince Job of his error, Elihu felt he needed to step in and do the convincing himself (32:4-7). He was filled with youthful enthusiasm but did not have the experience that the other three friends had.

When Elihu saw that the three older men were unsuccessful in discovering Job's sin, he found his own spirit jumping inside him, clamouring to speak and share his own mind. While he struggled with being younger and inexperienced, he realized that age and experience are not the only sources of knowledge and wisdom. The breath of God gives wisdom and understanding. Even a younger person, if guided by the Spirit of God, could be wise (32:8-9). It was on this basis that Elihu dared to approach Job and his three friends, asking them to listen to him and what had been revealed to him by the Spirit of God.

There is certain arrogance in the statements of Elihu. He claimed that while he did not have the wisdom of age, he did have the voice of God. In verse 14 he made it clear that he would not answer Job with the same poor arguments of his friends, which failed to have any persuasive power.

Elihu seems to mock Job's friends in verses 15 and 16. He reminded them that they had failed in their attempts. "Must I wait, now that they are silent, now that they stand there with no reply?" he asked. He almost seemed to say that because they had failed, he would have to show them how it was done. This would have been insulting to these older men.

We need to remember that, while Elihu was arguing with Job's friends, Job continued to suffer. Elihu showed the same lack of compassion toward Job as his three friends did. Elihu was using the suffering of Job to promote himself and his ideas. He was more interested in showing his persuasive abilities than he was in showing compassion and mercy to Job.

Elihu told the friends that he was full of words and that the spirit within him was moving him to speak. He compared himself to bottled-up wine ready to burst. He felt compelled to speak (32:19-20). He told them that he would speak honestly and show partiality to no one. He would not flatter but speak freely what his Maker had put on his heart (32:21-22).

In chapter 33 Elihu turned his attention to Job. He told him to listen to what he had to say. He told him that he was about to speak, and so he had better listen carefully to what he had to say.

Elihu reminded his listeners that he spoke from an upright heart and sincere lips (33:3). It is somewhat ironic that he had been frustrated by Job maintaining his righteousness yet Elihu made the same claim. He wanted his listeners to know that he was right before God and that nothing stood between him and his Maker.

Elihu continued to set himself up before he spoke. He reminded those present that the Spirit of God had made him and the breath of God had given him life. He was in tune with the Almighty and challenged his friends to refute his wisdom if they could (33:4-5).

On the one hand, Elihu waited for the wisdom of age to speak but did not put too much confidence in that wisdom. There is arrogance in Elihu's words: "Answer me if you can." In other words, he doubted whether the older men could answer him. He challenged his listeners to confront him. Before God he was just like them. "No fear of me should alarm you, nor should my hand be heavy upon you," he told them (33:6-7). In other words, Elihu would go easy on them. The respect he claimed he had for the more aged friends of Job had disappeared.

Speaking more particularly to Job, Elihu reminded him that he claimed to be pure and without sin, yet God still found fault with him and considered him His enemy (33:8-10). He reminded Job how he had claimed that though he was innocent, God had fastened his feet with shackles and kept watch over his paths so that he could not escape.

Elihu did not hold anything back here. He told Job that he was wrong (33:12). He challenged Job's statement that God was not answering his cries. Elihu again told Job he was wrong in this. God did speak in various ways but humans simply did not always recognize His voice. Elihu was telling Job that he was not hearing God because he just didn't recognize God's voice.

Elihu presumed to teach Job a lesson on how God spoke to humans. He reminded him that He spoke sometimes in a dream or in a vision (33:15). At other times he spoke directly to an individual as a warning to turn from sin and

harm. Still at other times, God disciplined a person by pain and suffering.

That discipline was sometimes very harsh (33:19-22). Elihu reminded Job that there were times when God would discipline people so severely that their flesh would waste away to nothing and their bones would stick out from their sides. At other times God would allow a person to draw near to death. God used various methods to speak to His servants.

Elihu told Job that even in times when the discipline of the Lord was very heavy, a single angel acting as a mediator, could keep him from perishing in the pit and renew his flesh like a child's (33:23-25). In an instant the person whom God disciplined could pray, find favour with God, and be restored to his righteous state (33:26). After repenting, that individual would come to realize that the punishment of the Lord on his life was not in proportion to what he deserved. In other words, while God punishes, He does not always use the full force of His discipline. Even in discipline He shows mercy. In the end, those who have been disciplined would realize that God had restored their life from the pit. Despite the agony of the discipline, the end result would be for the good of the person being disciplined. Elihu told Job that God was working in him to turn him back from the path he had chosen (33:30).

Elihu challenged Job to listen carefully to what he was going to tell him. He was going to teach Job what he needed to learn. He would teach Job wisdom (33:31-33).

Elihu believed that he had an answer when no one else did. He was frustrated by the failure of Job's friends. He came with high hopes that he could convince Job where age and experience failed. He believed that God had given

him all the wisdom he needed. The excitement of youth was evident but tainted with pride. He assumed he could succeed where other godly men had failed. We must realize that what he believed to be confidence in God was in reality confidence in himself and his own ability. Elihu would fall into the same error as Job's friends and come short of his expectations to find the reason for Job's severe suffering.

#### For Consideration:

- Have you ever met individuals who believed that they had the answer and could do what no one else could do? What happened to these individuals?
- What is the difference between being led of the Spirit and being confident in our own abilities? Was Elihu relying on himself or on the Spirit of God? Explain.
- How easy is it to confuse what we feel God is saying with what we are thinking in our own minds?
- What does Elihu teach us here about how God speaks to us?

#### For Prayer:

- Ask the Lord to help you to discern His voice from your own voice.
- Ask the Lord to show you the difference between confidence in God and pride.
- Ask God to open your ears and eyes to understand how He speaks today.

- Ask God to help you to put your full confidence in Him and His ability. Ask Him to enable you to serve with humility and not with self-confidence.



## 28

# ELIHU: JOB RECEIVES WHAT HE DESERVES

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Read Job 34

In chapters 32 and 33, Elihu prepared Job and his friends for what he was to say. He had listened to their words but was frustrated and angry because they did not convince Job of his sin. He claimed to speak not so much from the experience of life but from the wisdom he had received from God. In this chapter Elihu attempted to refute Job's charge that God seemed unjust.

In verses 2-4, Elihu challenged Job and his friends to listen to his words and judge them. He was confident in what he was about to say. He did not hesitate to submit it to them for their consideration. He challenged them to test his words to see if they could find any fault with them. From what we have seen of Elihu, he is not so much submitting himself to the wisdom of Job and his friends as defying them to prove him wrong.



Elihu reminded them first that Job had claimed to be innocent and that God had been denying him justice (verse 5). Elihu claimed that Job said that even though he was right, God saw him as a liar. Job, according to Elihu, claimed that even though he was guiltless God continued to inflict him with His arrows (verse 6). From Elihu's perspective, Job was setting himself up against God, by saying he knew better than God. To Elihu, Job was accusing God of being unjust and incapable of distinguishing truth from error.

Was this really what Job had been saying to his friends? An examination of the life of Job shows us that he was blameless in the eyes of God. By God's own confession, Job was blameless (1:8). This is not to say that Job was sinless but rather that he was living in harmony with God. Obviously, he was not being punished for rebellious sins against his God. Job was legitimately confused about what was happening to him. He could not find any deep-rooted sins in his life because there were none. Job was not so much accusing God of injustice but legitimately trying to understand His ways.

Elihu, like Job's three friends, wrongly accused Job of evil (verses 7-9). He accused Job of drinking scorn like water. In other words, he was showing open discontent and distaste for the ways of God. He accused Job of keeping company with evildoers. This was the same accusation the Pharisees had against Jesus in Luke 7:34:

The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and "sinners."'"

Job associated with the common people or sinners of his day for the purpose of ministering to them. We know that

Job reached out to help the poor and the afflicted in his community. Job spoke of this in chapter 31.

Elihu further accused Job of saying that it was of no profit to a person to try to please God. Elihu may have come to this conclusion because Job claimed to be righteous and yet still suffered. For Elihu, God blessed those who loved Him. God would never, according to Elihu, make a godly person suffer as Job did. Elihu and the three friends of Job believed that God's honour needed to be defended against the claim that He allowed the righteous to suffer. Why would people be attracted to God if by coming to Him they would only increase their suffering and pain in this world? Elihu felt that this charge against God needed to be addressed. He believed Job was accusing God of doing wrong. This was totally unacceptable to Elihu (verse 10). His theology did not permit God to work in this way.

For Elihu, God repaid men and women for what they had done (verse 11). He gave them what they deserved. It was unthinkable to Elihu that God would do what was wrong or pervert justice (verse 12). While we all would agree with Elihu in this statement, his interpretation of justice and wrong is the problem. Elihu spoke from his limited human understanding.

Is it wrong for a surgeon to inflict pain in order to bring healing? Is it wrong for a teacher to stretch students intellectually in order to teach them the lessons they need in life? Is it wrong for an athletic coach to push his players to limits they never thought they could reach in order to give them that edge they need to win? Is it wrong for a parent to set standards for their children in order to keep them from falling into situations they cannot handle? The reality of the matter is that pain and struggle are normal parts of growth. Struggle is never easy. Discipline seems to always

hurt. Without them, however, we will not become what we need to become.

The story is told of a young boy who watched a butterfly trying to get out of its cocoon. As the young boy watched the butterfly struggle with the cocoon, he felt pity in his heart. Feeling like he was helping the butterfly, the young boy opened up the cocoon with his own hands to allow the butterfly to escape. The butterfly eventually died, unable to fly. What the little boy did not realize was that the butterfly's long struggle to get out of its cocoon was part of the process required to strengthen its wings enough to fly.

Many people believe struggle and trial to be evil in nature. The reality of the matter is that they are necessary for growth and maturity. Elihu saw what Job was going through as being evil. He could not see it as part of the divine process necessary for Job to be taken to the next level in his walk with God.

Elihu continued his argument to remind Job and his friends that no one appointed God to be over the earth or to take charge of the world (verse 13). God did not need anyone to put Him in that position. No one can take that position from Him. No one is worthy or capable of taking on such a task.

God is the source of all life. If ever He withdrew His spirit from the earth, humanity would perish (verses 14-15). We are absolutely dependent on God for everything. According to Elihu, no one who hated justice could govern. A ruler needed to be just (verse 17). Again, it was unthinkable that Job should accuse the Lord God, Creator and Sustainer of the universe, of being unjust. To say this was to say that God was unworthy of ruling the universe.

The God of Israel spoke to the rulers of the earth and called them worthless and wicked. God is the standard by which all rulers of the earth are to base their own leadership (verse 18).

God does not show any favouritism in His judgment. He treats the prince and the rich just as He treats the poor (verse 19). He does not judge people according to their position. He does not look at how much money people have. Everyone is judged equally in the eyes of God. He created them all equally and would judge them fairly.

God could take away life in an instant (verse 20). In the middle of the night, the Lord could remove His hand from us and we would perish. Humanity is absolutely dependent on God for life and breath. How terrible it is to sin against and offend the person who gives life.

As a sovereign ruler, the Lord is an all-seeing God. He knows every step His people take (verse 21). Nothing is hidden from God. There is no dark hiding place or shadow where His creation can flee from His all-seeing eye (verse 22). Unlike human judges, God does not need to question those He judges (verses 23, 24). Human judges need to gather information from witnesses in order to make a proper decision. This is not the case with God. He knows the hearts, attitudes, and actions of all of His creatures. No one can teach Him anything new. Nothing is hidden from Him.

God's sentence is always just. His punishment is always based on truth. Nothing could ever be hidden from Him. No one could deceive Him. No one would get away with a crime they committed. God exposes sin and evil that is hidden from human eyes.

Job had been accusing God of being silent and not answering his prayers. Elihu reminded Job that even if God remained silent and chose not to speak, who could condemn Him or accuse Him of evil (verse 29). God revealed Himself when He wanted or hid His face when He wanted but, in doing so, could never be accused of wrong.

According to Elihu, God ruled over people and nations alike. God kept the godless from ruling and setting snares for His people (verse 30). It was the nature of God to protect and keep His people. He was a just God who overthrew those who were unjust. Again, it would be impossible for a man to accuse God of injustice as Elihu felt Job was doing.

In verses 31-33 Elihu reminded Job that God did not resort to judging by human terms. He gave an example of a repentant man in verses 31-32:

“Suppose a man says to God, ‘I am guilty but will offend no more. Teach me what I cannot see; if I have done wrong, I will not do so again.’”

Elihu reasoned that a sinner should not be spared from punishment simply because he or she promised not to sin again? Imagine a man who steals from his neighbour trying to make this agreement with God. He tells God that though he is guilty he would not steal from his neighbour again. Should this man be free to go and not be punished for his crime just because he made this promise never to do it again? Can we bargain with God? Does God reward or punish us on our terms or His (verse 33)? A promise never to sin again does not remove the guilt of past sin.

Elihu felt that Job was trying to bargain with God. He felt compelled to remind Job that God was the judge and that

Job had to meet God on God's terms. Job was saying that he was innocent, but Job did not set the standards. God set the standards and also the punishment for breaking those standards. He alone was able to judge what was sinful and worthy of punishment.

Elihu believed that Job was speaking without wisdom, knowledge, and insight (verse 35). He felt that Job needed to be tested and punished even more than he had been because he was speaking like a wicked man (verse 36). According to Elihu, Job was rebelling against God and speaking evil words about Him (verse 37).

Elihu accused Job of setting himself up against God. He believed that Job suffered because he was receiving what he deserved from God. He believed that Job was trying to bargain with God by setting up his own terms. Elihu had a high regard for God but still felt he could explain God's ways. Elihu had very little compassion for Job in his time of suffering. He spent his time accusing Job rather than trying to minister to him. He wanted to prove his position and show his wisdom. Job was simply a means to that end.

For Consideration:

- There are a number of right words and thoughts in the argument of Elihu. Is it possible to use the right words and thoughts and still come to a wrong conclusion? How did this happen in the case of Elihu?
- What is the place of suffering and trials in the life of the believer? What did Elihu believe about suffering and trials?

- Does God show favouritism when judging? Is it possible for us to show favouritism in the church today?
- Can we hide anything from God? Have you ever found yourself trying to hide things from God?
- What does Elihu teach us here about meeting God on His terms? Can we set our own terms with God?
- Is all suffering the result of sin? Does God allow suffering for other reasons than to judge us for sin? Explain.

For Prayer:

- Thank the Lord that He is in absolute control of the universe.
- Thank the Lord that He judges with absolute justice and truth.
- Thank the Lord that He cares enough for us to train us and discipline us. Thank Him that He desires our maturity.
- Ask the Lord to help you to meet Him on His terms. Ask Him to help you to accept His standard and surrender to it willingly.
- Ask God to give you more compassion for those who struggle around you.

## **29**

**ELIHU:**

### **JUDGING ACCORDING TO CIRCUMSTANCES**

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Read Job 35-36

In chapters 35 and 36, Elihu continued his response to Job. He believed that Job was in error, and he did not hesitate to tell him what he thought. He held nothing back.

Elihu challenged Job, claiming that he had said he would be cleared of all wrongdoing by God. He made this challenge in light of the fact that Job supposedly questioned what profit there was to living a righteous life (35:3). Job certainly had questioned why the wicked prospered while the righteous suffered. For Elihu, the fact that Job would even question the profitability of righteousness was an indication that he was not living in tune with the Lord.

Elihu felt that he needed to speak to Job and his friends about this matter. Job's friends had not answered this question to his satisfaction. Elihu told them to look to the



heavens and to gaze at the clouds so high above them (35:5). He wanted to show them how vast the universe really was. Behind this vast universe is an even greater Creator. Compared to the vastness of the universe, humanity and all their efforts are very small. Elihu asked Job and his friends to consider what effect their sins really had on God (35:6).

God is so much bigger than human beings that what individuals do on earth really does not have any impact on the overall purposes and plans of God in heaven. Job's sin would not hinder God from accomplishing His purposes in the world. This is not to say that we can do what we want in this life. God is grieved by our sin and rebellion against Him and this affects the quality of our life here on this earth. Sin has caused tremendous damage in this world. We dare not underestimate its power to destroy our society. At the same time, however, God's ultimate purposes for this world will not be defeated by sin. He is greater than sin. His purposes will be accomplished despite the sin that ravages our earth. My sin will have a tremendous impact on my life and the lives of those around me but it will not defeat God.

Elihu went on to tell Job and his friends that even if they were righteous, what would they be giving to God that he did not already have? (35:7). What Elihu seemed to be telling Job and his friends is that God is not dependent on people. God chooses to use us to accomplish great things for His kingdom but all the tools and strength we have for that task already belong to Him. He is fully able to advance the cause of His kingdom without us.

Elihu continued by saying that there were many men and women who cried out under a load of oppression, seeking relief (35:9). It is only natural for people to seek relief from

their pain and suffering. These same individuals, however, were more concerned about being set free from their pain than they were about being seeking God in their pain. They did not cry out to the God who can give them songs in the night (35:10). They did not seek the One who gives wisdom. Though they cried out to God for deliverance, they did not receive that deliverance because they were arrogant and wicked (35:12). They only wanted relief from their problems; they did not want God. God would not listen to those who were too proud to seek Him. Elihu was inferring that Job did not get his prayers answered because he was proud and more concerned about relief from pain than a relationship with God.

Another reason God had not answered Job, according to Elihu, was that Job lacked patient trust (35:14). Job had been saying that God did not see him or hear his case. For Elihu, this was a wicked thing to say. God created the world and all there is in it. He is an all-knowing and all-seeing God. Nothing escaped His eyes and ears. To Elihu, Job accused God of being blind and deaf to the cries for help of His people.

Elihu accused Job further of saying that God never punished people for their evil and that He did not even notice wickedness in the land (35:15). Job did not actually say these things. It is true that Job questioned what God was doing in his life. It is true that Job wondered why wicked people around him were not suffering as he was. Elihu claimed that by questioning these things, Job was actually saying that God was unjust. He felt that Job was multiplying words but was not speaking with any wisdom.

In chapter 36 Elihu begins his concluding statements. He felt that he needed to continue to speak on God's behalf. Somehow he felt that God needed to be defended. He

claimed that what he spoke was not his own wisdom but was the wisdom of God. He claimed that what he had to say was absolutely true and trustworthy because it came from God who is perfect in knowledge (36:4). Elihu claimed that God was the source of what he had to say.

Elihu reminded Job and his friends that God is a mighty God (36:5). Although He is mighty, He does not despise those He created. He is, however, a God who is firm in purpose. He judges the wicked and gives the afflicted their rights (verse 6).

According to Elihu, God always watches over the righteous (verse 7). He takes care of them and blesses them in their ways so that they live like kings and queens. For Elihu, obedience and prosperity walked hand in hand. He believed that if people were obedient to God, they would prosper and God would keep them from all harm. This was not the experience of Job. He suffered tremendously though he knew of no particular sin for which he deserved to be punished.

Elihu went on to say that if people were being disciplined or punished, then God would tell them what they had done wrong (36:8-10). He would show them their pride and how they had offended Him. God would make these individuals listen to His correction. He would discipline them and command them to repent of their sins.

Elihu's theology was simple. He believed that if God disciplined people, He would tell them what He was disciplining them for. If these individuals then obeyed the voice of the Lord, they would live the rest of their lives in prosperity and contentment (36:11). Otherwise, they would perish and die without ever learning what God intended for them to learn

(36:12). For Elihu, God's purposes and plans were incredibly simple: obey and prosper, or disobey and die.

Those who were ungodly would not cry out to God (36:13). They would not turn to God in their time of discipline. Instead, they would die in their youth like male prostitutes in their shrines, despised and rejected. This again did not answer Job's question about those who lived rebellious lives in the land but still died full of blessings after a long and fruitful life.

Elihu reminded Job and his friends that God is also a God of compassion and forgiveness (36:15). He is willing to deliver those who suffer. He would speak to them in their affliction and pain. His whole purpose in disciplining is to woo people from the jaws of distress into tremendous blessing. Again we see the emphasis on prosperity in Elihu's theology. Elihu judged Job according to his circumstances. He saw how much Job was suffering and determined that the only reason for this was that he had so greatly grieved God with his sins that God had removed His blessing from Him.

It may be that Elihu believed that Job had allowed his former prosperity to draw him away from the Lord. He challenged Job to be careful not to allow riches to entice him or to let bribes turn him away from the Lord (36:18). When the judgment of God had come, Job's wealth had not protected him. Wealth keeps no one from the day of God's judgment.

Elihu exhorted Job not to long for the night when he could drag people away from their homes (36:20). The idea here is that Job was to be careful not to abuse people in order to profit from their affliction. The reference to dragging people away from their homes seems to speak of wealthy land owners forcibly removing tenants from their land because

they were not able to pay their rent. Their concern was not for the people but for the money they could get out of them. Elihu stops short of accusing Job of this terrible evil but assumes that he would be tempted to do such a thing. Elihu does not have a very high regard for Job.

Elihu warned Job about turning to evil rather than bearing patiently the affliction of God (36:21). He made it quite clear that he believed Job preferred to practice evil rather than learn from the discipline of the Lord. The accusation is quite serious. It shows that Elihu did not understand what Job was facing or the thoughts of his heart.

Elihu reminded Job that God is exalted in power (36:22). There is no greater teacher than the Lord God Himself. He is beyond instruction. No one can teach God. He knows everything. He is perfect in all his ways. Elihu exhorted Job and his friends to remember the wonderful work of God and to praise Him for His deeds (36:24).

The works of God are awesome and majestic. Elihu reminded Job of how God draws up water from the earth and returns it to the earth in the form of rain (36:27). The clouds collect the moisture and when they break open, they pour their showers on the earth (36:28). No one can understand how God spreads out the clouds or how He forms the thunder (36:29). God scatters lightning around Him. These are small tokens of His power and wisdom.

This same God governs the nations. He provides all the nations need. He gives food in abundance (36:31). Lightning strikes at the command of God. Thunder is like a trumpet announcing a storm. Even the animals know of the approaching storm when the thunder announces its presence (36:32-33).

Elihu believed Job to be living in sin. He judged Job on the basis of outward circumstances. He saw Job suffering and wrongly assumed that the reason for this was that he was living in sin. Elihu also assumed that God was not answering Job because of his sin and rebellion. He believed that to live a righteous life is to prosper—God would always bless the righteous. To Elihu, that blessing was a physical blessing. He did not seem to see how trials and suffering could actually be God's means of bringing greater spiritual blessing.

Elihu spoke of a holy, sovereign, and just God. He believed Job was guilty of accusing God of sin and evil. Elihu, however, did not understand the purpose of God for Job. Despite his wisdom, he fell short of understanding God and His plan for Job.

#### For Consideration:

- Elihu accused Job of believing that there was no profit in righteousness. Does living a righteous life always mean that we will prosper in material things?
- Elihu reminds us of how big God is compared to humanity. What would make such a great God place His attention on us and choose to love us?
- We are reminded here that God sees and knows all things. How should this affect how we live? What things has He seen in your life?
- Why is it dangerous to judge according to outward circumstances? Do sincere believers go through trials in life?

## For Prayer:

- Thank the Lord that though He knows everything about us, He still loves us.
- Thank the Lord that while we do not always prosper materially in this life, we have a wonderful hope in the Lord Jesus.
- Are you facing a time in your life when God is silent? Ask the Lord to enable you to continue to trust in Him and His purposes until He reveals Himself again to you.
- Ask the Lord to forgive you for any time you have judged someone based on their outward circumstances.

## 30

# ELIHU: CONSIDER THE WONDERS OF GOD

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Read Job 37

Like Job's three friends, Elihu also accused him of many sins. In the last meditation, we saw how he had reminded his listeners of the vastness of God. As he reflected on how big God really is, Elihu felt overwhelmed. His heart began to pound in his chest as he thought about God (verse 1). We need to understand also here that God was going to break the silence and speak to Job personally. Maybe there was an air of anticipation and expectancy at this time. Perhaps the storm out of which God was ready to speak was already gathering, and its thunder could be heard.

In verse 2 Elihu called his friends to listen to the roar of the voice of God and the rumble that came from His mouth. He spoke here of the thunder. He compared the thunder to the voice of God. Have you ever listened to the thunder as it roared across the sky? It is an indication of the power and majesty of the awesome God we serve. God not only



speaks in the thunder but also unleashes lightening, sending it to the ends of the earth (verse 3). The forces of nature are in His control. They obey His voice and respond. Elihu reminded his friends that the Lord God of heaven is a great God whose works are beyond their ability to understand.

This same God speaks to the snow and commands it to fall on the earth. He also speaks to the rain and commands it to fall as a mighty downpour (verse 6). The fury of the cold and bitter snowstorm and the downpour of rain help us to see the power and might of the Lord God who created them.

When we lived on the island of Reunion in the Indian Ocean, we sometimes saw the fury of the downpour of rain as it came with cyclonic power over the island. Those downpours can dig trenches in the side of the mountains and flood everything below. In Canada where we now live, a big snowstorm can literally close down an entire city, leaving people stranded and helpless.

Elihu reminded Job that God did these things so that people would know His work (verse 7). What is humanity compared to such an awesome God? If even the rain and the snow can shut down an entire city, we can only imagine the force of the God behind that rain and snow.

Even the animals of the land take cover when the Lord God showers the rain on the earth (verse 8). They stop their search for food and wait for the fury of the storm to pass.

Along with the rain and the snow, the Lord also unleashes the fury of the wind (verse 9). While visiting the island of Mauritius on one occasion, after the passing of a cyclone, I witnessed the devastation of the wind. Concrete

telephone poles were snapped in two. Steel cranes used in the construction of high-rise buildings were literally twisted and beyond repair. Roofs were ripped off their buildings. Trees were uprooted. All this came from the hand of the Lord, who had unleashed the wind as He saw fit.

The breath of God produces ice so that the waters of the lakes and pond are frozen (verse 10). No boat can move through them. In Canada where I live presently, we have seen the weight of the ice accumulate on trees and snap branches and telephone lines, cutting off communication. A news report I heard recently spoke of an “ice highway” across a lake. When the water on this lake froze in the winter, cars and big transport trucks would simply drive across the lake instead of taking the long way around it. Elihu reminded his friends here that ice comes from the breath of God’s mouth.

God loads the clouds with moisture and lightning (verse 11). They follow His direction and move across the face of the earth, doing whatever He commands (verse 12). God can use those clouds either to punish people for their evil or to bless them and show them His love. They can unleash a deadly flood or a gentle and refreshing shower on the earth (verse 13).

Elihu paused in verse 14 for a moment to challenge Job to consider the wonders of the Lord God. “Do you know how God controls the clouds and makes His lightning flash?” he asked (verse 15).

Elihu was saying that the wonders of God are beyond our ability to understand. Elihu asked his listeners if they knew how God hung the clouds in place (verse 16). Who could help God to spread out the sky (verse 17)? What could

anyone tell God that He does not already know? What could anyone add to His understanding? Who could ever enter into the presence of such an awesome God? Who would dare to question His purposes and plans (verses 19-20)? Human beings cannot even look at the sun because of its brightness. How much less could people look at the face of God if He stood before them in majesty (verses 21-22)?

According to Elihu, God is beyond our reach. He is exalted in power and justice. What is most wonderful about God, however, is that He is a God of great righteousness and does not oppress (verse 23). He is a God we can trust. He will do what is right.

God is to be revered and respected because His wisdom and majesty are beyond ours. He cannot be questioned nor can His ways be doubted.

As we reflect on the words of Elihu, we are struck with the reality of the power of God. What a terrible thing it would be to fall into the hands of such a God (see Hebrews 10:31). How dreadful it would be for us to anger Him. On the other hand, however, all that power and wisdom is on the side of those who love Him. Elihu reminds Job that God's ways are beyond his understanding. God always did what was right and for the good of His creation.

## For Consideration:

- What evidence is there of the power of God in nature?
- What encouragement do you find in the fact that God has tremendous power? What warning do you take from the fact that God has such power?
- What would make such an awesome God of power reach out to us in compassion and love?

## For Prayer:

- Take a moment to look around you. What evidences of God's power do you see? Thank the Lord specifically for these evidences.
- Thank the Lord that even though He is so great, He still loves us.
- Thank the Lord that He has placed His strength and wisdom at our disposal.
- Ask the Lord to help you to live boldly with great confidence in His strength.



# 31

## HAVE YOU?

## CAN YOU? DO YOU?

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Read Job 38

We are not told how long Job had to suffer without hearing from God. As we examine the book of Job, we see that the greatest cry of his heart was to hear from God. This long silence had been a tremendous struggle for Job. Finally, the day came when God spoke.

Notice in verse 1 how the Lord answered. He answered out of the storm. It is quite interesting that in chapter 37 Elihu reminded Job how God revealed Himself in the thunder, lightning, and strong wind. Elihu's words had a prophetic nature and seemed to pave the way for God to speak.

There are a number of ways the Lord can speak to His people. In 1 Kings 19:1-13 God spoke to the prophet Elijah through a "gentle whisper." To Job, however, God chose to reveal His presence in the power of a storm.

God began by asking Job a powerful question: “Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge?” (verse 2). God was saying that Job was speaking about things he did not understand. To darken counsel is to communicate untruth or to speak inaccurately about a subject. Job and his friends had been speaking about God and His purpose, but they were not experts in this field. There was much they could not understand.

Job did not profess to understand God and His plan, and throughout this book he had asked many questions. Now, however, it was God’s turn to ask some questions. This chapter is filled with questions from God to Job. In verse 3 God challenged Job to brace himself for these questions that would not be easy to answer. The Lord would cause Job to reflect deeply on the nature of God and on his own ignorance.

In the first set of questions, God asked Job, “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation?” (verse 4). God asked him if he knew who had marked off the boundaries of the earth (verse 5). That is to say, who determined how big the earth would be. God continued by asking Job if he knew where the footings of the earth’s foundations were and who had laid the cornerstone in place (verse 6). God used the illustration of a building to speak of the creation of the earth. Had Job heard the stars singing together and the angels shouting for joy at that time (verse 7)? The reference to the singing stars may simply mean that the stars shone down on the work of the Lord and shed light on it, bringing praise to His name.

In verse 8 God asked Job if he knew who set the limits for the sea. Who decided how much of the earth the seas would cover and where their boundaries would be? Where was Job when all these things had taken place? The

answer to this question is quite obvious. Job had not yet been born. God was bringing Job to an even greater point of humility. Job did not understand how God made the world or sustained His creation. God was asking Job to consider this ancient wisdom that was beyond any knowledge Job had ever heard or could comprehend. Job had presumptuously demanded that God explain His actions regarding Job's suffering (13:22; 31:35) but how could he understand the ways of God when he could not even understand the basics about how God created this earth?

In verse 12 God began a series of questions beginning with the phrase "have you ever?" He began by asking Job if he had ever given orders to the morning or shown the dawn its place. The dawn is the first light of the morning. God spoke of the dawn in verse 13 as taking hold of the earth by its edges and shaking the wicked out of it. The idea here seems to be that at night, under the cover of darkness, much evil takes place. Most wicked people wait for the darkness to cover them before doing their evil deeds. When the dawn sheds its first light, it sends the evil doers running into hiding. When the dawn rises, it also reveals the beautiful features of the earth (verse 14). The dawn denies the wicked the "light" they want and thwarts their evil power (verse 15). The light of the wicked is really darkness. It is in the light of darkness that the wicked do their evil deeds. In the world of evil and sin, everything seems to be reversed. God asked Job here if he ever commanded the dawn to break forth and send the wicked scattering for cover. Only God could do this.

In verse 16 God asked another humbling question. "Have you journeyed to the springs of the sea or walked in the recesses of the deep?" In other words, have you ever explored the depth of the ocean? While in our day we have



gone deep into the sea, the fact of the matter is that even with all our underwater equipment, there is still much to explore. After thousands of years, we have still not come to understand the complexity of the oceans surrounding us. We have never discovered the source of all the water in the ocean.

“Have the gates of death been shown to you?” God asked in verse 17. Do you know where death takes its prey? Do you know where death is or what it is? Do you understand why it claims its prey? Can you determine when death is coming and how it will occur? Do you have any control at all over death?

In verse 18 God asked: “Have you comprehended the vast expanses of the earth?” God was asking Job if he had ever been able to wrap his mind around the vastness of this world. Had he ever seen the limits of the earth? This question led to further questions in which God asked Job if he understood the marvels of the heavens (verses 19-38): “What is the way to the abode of light? And where does darkness reside?” That is, where do light and darkness live? Have you ever seen where they live? Do you know the way to their homes? If Job were wise enough to question God’s ways, then he would surely know these simple things (verse 21). The reality of the matter was that Job was ignorant of God’s ways.

“Have you entered the storehouses of the snow or seen the storehouses of the hail, which I reserve for times of trouble, for days of war and battle” asked God in verses 22-23. Here God asked Job if he had first-hand knowledge of the treasures of snow and hail. Notice that God reserves the snow and the hail for days of war and battle. These natural elements are compared to God’s arsenal. In other words, the snow, hail, lightning, and wind are stored

and used by God in times of judgment against his enemies. We should not see from this that every time the hail and wind is unleashed on the earth that God is judging us. God simply painted a picture Job could understand. Military leaders of his day would store their arms in preparation for battle. God compared the wind, snow, hail, and lightning to the stores of arms. God does use these natural elements to bring His judgment, or He can use them as a blessing to the earth.

Job stood silent before God who asked him about the storehouses of the wind, snow, hail, and lightning. He had never entered these far-off places in the sky. Job had no knowledge of these marvels, and he had no answer when God asked him who determined where it rains (verse 25). Does the rain have a father (verse 28)? Where does the rain come from? How is it formed? Where is ice formed (verse 29)? Why does water become frozen (verse 30)?

In verse 31 God asked yet another series of questions to Job. "Can you bind the beautiful Pleiades? Can you loose the cords of Orion?" Pleiades and Orion are prominent constellations in the sky. God asked Job if he could control Pleiades or Orion. Did he have the power to bring them out in the evening and take them home in the morning? Could he lead out the Bear constellation in the right season (verse 32)? The sky with all its stars is very complex. Each constellation has its place in the sky controlled by God. How foolish it would be for Job to assume that he could manage the stars.

In verse 33 God asked Job if he knew the laws of the heavens or if he could set up God's rule over the earth? Could he speak to the clouds so that they obeyed (verse 34)? Did the lightning report to him and listen to his command (verse 35)? Did he have the wisdom necessary to

administer the heavenly bodies? Where did wisdom come from? Was there anyone who had enough wisdom to count the clouds (verse 37)? Was there anyone on the earth who could tip the clouds over to shower their rain on the earth when the ground was dry and hard (verse 38)?

In verses 39-40 God asked Job if he satisfied the hunger of the lion. Could he provide the food necessary for the raven when its young cry out in hunger (verse 41)? Could Job give these animals the instincts necessary to find food for their young?

Any one of these efforts is absolutely amazing. What kind of power does it take to turn a lake into ice? What kind of wisdom does it take to administer the movement of the stars in the sky? Our God does all of these things. He is the creator and sustainer of all. As we listen to these words of God, we begin to feel how small we really are. Like Job, we listen in silence. We have nothing to say.

For Consideration:

- How great is God? What does this chapter teach us about His wonderful works?
- Who are we compared to God? Why should such a big God be concerned for you and me?
- Take a moment to consider the vastness and complexity of the universe God has created. What is your response to this power and awesome wisdom?

## For Prayer:

- Thank the Lord for how marvellous He is.
- Ask the Lord to forgive you for the times when you questioned His wisdom?
- Ask the Lord to forgive you for the times you felt you needed to help Him accomplish His purpose.
- Surrender afresh to the Lord right now. Tell Him that you will submit to His wisdom and direction for your life.
- Ask God to give you grace to live in confident obedience to His leading, knowing that His wisdom is perfect.



## 32

# GOD'S RESPONSE: WILD ANIMALS AND BIRDS

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Read Job 39

This is the second part of God's response to Job. In the last chapter, God began asking Job a series of questions to humble him. Here in this chapter, God spoke to Job about animals and birds. The purpose of God was to continue to show Job the complexity of His creation and the unfathomable wisdom of His ways.

### *Mountain Goats*

God asked Job if he knew when the mountain goats give birth (verse 1). The question is not so much about knowing the particular season for birthing but rather whether he knew about particular mountain goats giving birth. God's care for the smallest details of His creatures is such that he knows when each mountain goat gives birth. Nothing escapes the Lord's attention.

*Doe*

Again in verse 1, God asked Job if he watched when the doe bore her fawn. While Job may have seen a doe giving birth, he did not watch over each doe that gave birth. This again is the sense of the question here. We see the wonderful care of the Lord God over all His creatures. He takes care of each mother deer as she gives birth to her young.

God asked Job in verse 2 if he ever counted the months with anticipation until the deer or the mountain goat gave birth to its young. God understands all about even the smallest of all His creatures. He sees the young deer grow up in the wilds where no one else sees them. He watches them leave their families and move out on their own. He counts the months until they crouch down and give birth (verse 3).

*Wild Donkey*

In verse 5 God spoke of the wild donkey. He asked Job if he knew who gave this donkey its freedom, unhindered by cords. He asked Job who gave the wild donkey its home in the wasteland (verse 6). That donkey had its own mind and was not disturbed by the commotion in the towns. It did not obey human voices but roamed freely in the hills, searching for its own food (verses 7-8). God questioned Job about the nature of the wild donkey. Who gave it a nature? Anyone who has had time to watch the animals God has created cannot help but be amazed at the unique nature that each animal has been given. All of this points to a Creator who made each one different.

*Wild Ox*

In verse 9 God turned His attention to the wild ox. He asked Job if the wild ox would ever consent to serve him. There is a difference between the wild ox and the domesticated ox used for thousands of years on farms to cultivate the land. The wild ox spoken of here is quite different. This ox will not listen to people or be content to be locked up in a barn with a manger for food. It is the nature of the wild ox to wander. It will not submit to a harness nor will it plough the land for the farmer (verses 10-11). The wild ox cannot be used on a farm. It will not bring in grain for the farmer (verse 12).

*Ostrich*

The ostrich is quite an awesome creature. God spoke of it joyfully flapping its wings. These ostrich wings are marvelous, but they cannot be compared with the wings of the stork (verse 13). The ostrich lays her eggs on the ground in the warm sand. She is not concerned about anyone stepping on those eggs (verses 14-15). She seems to be harsh with her young, treating them at times as if they were not hers at all (verse 16). God did not give the ostrich the wisdom of a mother or teach her to care for her young (verse 17). Yet that same bird can spread out its feathers and run like no other bird. It can run as fast as the horse (verse 18). Its personality and strengths are unique.

*Horse*

The horse is a very strong animal. God asked Job where that strength came from (verse 19). Who gave the horse its flowing mane? Who gave it the strength to leap like a locust (verse 20)? A war horse can paw the ground fiercely and charge into the midst of danger with no fear of what is



happening around it (verses 21-22). In the midst of the battle, the horse is a very dependable animal. Though swords swing all around it and spears flash in the sun, the horse remains faithful to its rider. When the battle trumpet sounds, the war horse is eager for battle and eats up the ground as it runs (verses 24-25). This again is the work of a great Creator who formed the horse's unique personality.

### *Hawk and Eagle*

Where did the hawk get the wisdom to take flight (verse 26)? It was the hand of God that gave the hawk this knowledge. The same is true for the eagle. Job could not command the eagle to fly. Could Job tell the eagle where to build a nest? The eagle chose to live on a rocky cliff. From the heights of that cliff it would search out prey (verses 28-29). Its eyes are so good that it can detect prey at a great distance. Where did this eyesight come from?

What was God communicating to Job in this chapter? He was pointing out to Job the various personalities and differences among the animals on the earth. These animals were the creation of a great God who gave to each a unique set of abilities and personalities. Even among those of the same species, we can find great diversity in personality. This is also true of humans who experience life differently according to God's wise plan. Job and his friends had wrongly assumed that they could understand God's marvellous ways.

As we take a moment to look around us at the animal kingdom, we cannot help but see the hand of an amazing God. He is a God of tremendous artistry, power, and wisdom. This was the God who spoke to Job that day. God's creative wisdom was diverse and wonderful and beyond

anything Job had ever imagined. Again, Job stood silent before this wisdom.

For Consideration:

- Take a moment to look around you today. Open your eyes to the animals and birds you see. What unique personalities do they have? What does this tell you about God?
- Consider for a moment the wisdom it took to form this world with all its diversity and vastness. Who is the Creator behind this? What ought to be our response to this wonderful God?

For Prayer:

- Take a moment to thank the Lord for the wonderful diversity you see all around you in creation.
- Thank the Lord that He is such a wonderful artist. Thank Him for the beauty you see in His creation.
- Ask the Lord to forgive you for the times you have questioned His ability to sustain what He has created. Ask Him to forgive you for the times you have not trusted Him as you should.



## BEHEMOTH

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Read Job 40

God has been speaking to Job using illustrations from everyday life. He challenged Job to see His greatness and wisdom as revealed in natural forces and the animal kingdom. God was humbling Job because Job had been boldly questioning the wisdom of the Almighty in allowing him to suffer unjustly (13:22; 31:37). Job questioned the purposes of God and the divine plan for his life. But when God finally spoke to Job, he did not explain why Job was suffering. Instead God challenged Job to answer His questions. Job did not have answers for even one of God's questions.

Speaking to God that day, Job admitted that he was unworthy and insignificant before Him (verses 2-4). Even the most basic questions of the last few chapters were beyond the greatest wisdom of humanity to answer. Job told God that he would put his hand over his mouth and not speak. He no longer wanted to argue with God in a divine courtroom (see 13:3).

Having heard the response of Job, God continued His speech out of the storm (verse 6). We are not told how that actually took place.

God challenged Job to prepare to answer the Almighty (verse 7). The questions that followed were difficult ones. God asked Job, "Would you discredit my justice? Would you condemn me to justify yourself?" (verse 9).

This question seemed to strike home with Job. He had questioned what God was doing and longed to have the opportunity to defend his cause. Now that he stood before God and considered His wisdom and power, Job recognized that God's ways were beyond his ability to understand or question. God accused Job of discrediting His justice and lifting up his own human thinking above that of God.

God told Job that if he had enough understanding to question divine wisdom, then he should adorn himself with all his glory, splendour, honour, and majesty (verse 10). God challenged Job to unleash the power of his fury so that proud humanity would be brought down (verse 11). He challenged him to crush every wicked person (verse 12). He was then to bury these individuals in the dust (verse 13). When he had accomplished this, then God would admit that Job was powerful enough to deliver himself from his own misery (verse 14). Until that time, Job would need God and have to trust in His ways.

We need to understand the reality of what God was asking Job to do here. God was asking him to conquer all wickedness and pride that would raise itself up above God. In other words, Job was asked to deal with the problem of sin in the world and to make the world a perfect place in which to life. Only then would God admit that Job was right to

question Him and what He was doing. Unless Job could accomplish this, he was a mere man who needed to submit to the greater wisdom of the great, all-knowing God.

God then turned Job's attention to a creature called behemoth in verse 15. The term behemoth is generally understood to refer to a large animal, either the elephant or the hippopotamus. This is not without its difficulty as some of the detailed descriptions of the animal does not clearly fit either of these two animals. We are not quite sure as to the exact identity of behemoth.

God reminded Job that he made behemoth and had it feed on the grass like an ox (verse 15). The strength and power of its muscles were very evident in this massive creature. Its tail was like a cedar tree and the sinews of its thighs were closely knit (verse 17). While some of these details could describe either an elephant or a hippopotamus the tail on these animals is not easily compared to a large swaying cedar tree. Some other animal may be intended.

God continued in verse 18 to describe the power of behemoth. Its bones were like tubes of bronze, and its limbs were like rods of irons. It ranked first among the works of God (verse 19). That is not to say that it was the greatest of all of God's creation, nor the most important. It was first in power and strength. It struck fear into the hearts of men and women. Behemoth was, however, no match for God. In an instant God could bring it down (verse 20).

Behemoth fed on the hills of the land (verse 20). Wild animals played nearby as it lay under the lotus plant and among the reeds in the marsh land (verse 21). There it would remain hidden from the hot sun's rays (verse 22).

The river was no threat to behemoth. Even when the river flooded its banks, behemoth was not afraid but remained secure (verse 23). Behemoth was a creature that could not be easily captured. It would not submit to humans (verse 24).

What was God telling Job in this passage? In the first part of the chapter, God showed Job how powerless he was as a mere man to take care of sin in the world. Behemoth, whose power and strength caused fear among humans, also proved to Job how powerless he was compared to God who could subdue this creature with a simple word.

The more Job was reminded of the complex wisdom and sovereign power of God, the more silent he became. Job had wanted to speak with God and defend himself, but the more he listened to God, the more he enclosed himself in silence. God alone is able to create and govern the world. How could Job respond to this kind of wisdom and power?

God really does know what He is doing. There are times when we are tempted to complain and grumble, but God is absolutely trustworthy. Job was beginning to see this in a new way. The God who created and controlled behemoth is a God who cares for us.

## For Consideration:

- Have you ever found yourself questioning the purpose and plan of God? What do we learn here about the futility of this exercise?
- What is the role of faith in times of confusion?
- Who alone can deal with the problem of sin in our society?
- Is God big enough to handle the problems of this world? Can you relax and trust Him to care for you?

## For Prayer:

- Thank the Lord that He is an all-powerful God.
- Thank the Lord that He is able to deal with every problem you will ever face in life.
- Ask the Lord to forgive you for the times you have doubted His ability and questioned His methods.





## 34

### LEVIATHAN

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Read Job 41

In the last chapter, the Lord God spoke to Job about behemoth, the large and wild creature of the land. Here in chapter 41 God pointed Job to another powerful and feared creature of his day so that he could catch a glimpse of the power of the Creator. If the creature is so powerful, what must the Creator be like? If we dare not approach the creature, how dare we approach and question the Creator as Job wanted to do?

God began in verse 1 by asking Job if he could pull in leviathan from the river with a fishhook or tie down its tongue with a rope. Leviathan is generally considered to be a crocodile. We cannot catch a crocodile like a fish. The crocodile will resist our effort to put a cord around its nose or a hook in its jaw. It is not likely that you will see a crocodile begging for mercy or pleading for its life (verse 3). It will not submit to becoming a domesticated animal to serve human beings (verse 4).

Leviathan was not an animal to be taken lightly. People did not keep it as a pet or let their young daughters walk it on a leash down the street (verse 5). It was wild by nature and had to be respected for its deadly power.

Traders in the market do not barter for leviathan. It was not cut and sold in the market for meat. Leviathan was difficult to catch, and its hide was so thick that harpoons or fishing spears did not easily penetrate (verse 7). God told Job that if ever he sought to overcome leviathan by the strength of his own hands, it would not be an experience he would forget (verse 8). Very likely he would never want to tackle it again. The mere sight of leviathan was enough to send many running in the opposite direction (verse 9).

In verse 10 God made His point clear. If no one is strong enough to rouse the great leviathan, who could ever hope to stand against its creator? Who could stand before God and demand anything—even an explanation as Job had wanted (verse 11)? Everything under the sun and in heaven belongs to God. If we treat the crocodile with respect, how much more does the Lord deserve that respect and more?

In verses 12-24 God spoke of the animal's anatomy. In its arms and legs there was powerful strength. In verse 13 God asked Job if he could strip off the monster's outer coat or approach it with a harnessing bridle. The ox has been tamed and its strength put to the use of humanity, but leviathan could not be so trained. It would remain a wild animal.

Leviathan's mouth was a fearful thing to behold. Its teeth struck terror (verse 14). Its back was covered with rows of tightly sealed, protective "shields" (verses 15-17).

God described leviathan in a very poetic way in verses 18-21. It is presented as a fire-breathing dragon. It snorted and threw out flashes of light. Its eyes shone like the sun's rays at dawn. Fire shot from its mouth and smoke from its nostrils like a boiling pot sitting on a fire. Its breath set coals on fire.

It is best to see these verses as poetry. Animals we know today do not breathe fire. Fire, however, is a picture of destruction and devastation. Leviathan left destruction and damage in its wake. There was deadly power in its mouth to consume like a fire.

Leviathan's strength was in its neck (verse 22). With the muscles in its neck, shoulders, and mouth, leviathan could completely destroy all enemies. The creature's chest was as hard as rock (verse 24).

In verses 25-34 God emphasized the terror leviathan caused. When this creature stood up, even the mightiest person took notice and was afraid. People turned and retreated from its thrashing (verse 25). Though people tried to kill it with the sword and the spear, the monster seemed only to laugh at these feeble attempts. Leviathan could not be subdued with weapons of iron and bronze (verse 27). Neither arrows nor slingshots would make the creature flee, and using a club was a waste of time.

Leviathan's stomach was jagged like broken pottery (verse 30). It dragged its tail on land and made the deep sea churn like a boiling caldron, leaving a wake of "white hair" as it swam (verse 32). The white hair is a reference to the white water that is left behind a fast-moving boat on the water. This monster's white waving wake looked like waving hair in the water.

Leviathan was an animal to be feared. It had no equal on earth (verse 33). This creature looked down on others, like a proud and powerful king (verse 34). It did as it pleased.

Again, the idea in this chapter is not for us to focus on leviathan and admire its form or strength, but to focus on God its creator. All its power came from God. If we stand amazed at the power and strength of a mere creature of God, what kind of God do we serve? Is He not greater than His creatures? Every creature that has ever lived on the earth has drawn its strength from the Lord God its creator. His power is beyond all we could ever imagine.

As a powerful God, how careful we need to be not to speak evil of Him. How dangerous it is to question God's purpose and His power to deal with the issues we face on a daily basis. When we understand His great power and might, we can only stand in awe of Him and His purposes. This was the experience of Job that day.

#### For Consideration:

- What is leviathan? How is it described in this chapter?
- Who gave leviathan power? What does this tell us about the Creator?
- What does the creation have to teach us about the Creator? What specific things do you see in creation today that tells you something about God?
- Why is it a serious matter to grumble and complain about the purpose of God? Does God know what He is doing? When we grumble, complain, or act in unbelief, what does this tell us about how we feel toward God?

## For Prayer:

- Thank the Lord that He is a powerful God for whom nothing is impossible.
- Take a moment to look at the universe around you. What does this tell you about your Creator? Take a moment to praise Him.
- Bring a specific situation you struggle with today to the Lord. Commit this matter to the Lord and confess Him as the all-powerful God.
- Ask God to forgive you for the times you have doubted Him or complained to Him about His purposes and plans.



## 35

# REPENTANCE AND RESTORATION

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Read Job 42

Job had longed for time to speak to God. He was convinced of his innocence and wanted to defend his cause before Him (13:3, 15). Then his moment came, and he stood before God. God displayed some of his majesty in creation before Job and then waited for Job to respond. God listened to what Job had to say. We have the record of the words of Job in verses 1-6.

Job began by telling God that he knew Him to be a God who could do all things and that nothing could hinder His purpose and plan (verse 2). While Job knew this from the beginning, the words the Lord had spoken to him in the last few chapters had driven this point home in a powerful way. There was no one like God. He alone could govern the universe. His wisdom and power was beyond imagination.



God had asked Job who it was that had obscured His cause without knowledge (38:2). In other words, Job had been casting doubt on God's purposes in his suffering. He had questioned what God was doing. Job didn't see the whole picture. He was only seeing his own situation and the pain he was feeling. God, on the other hand, understood what Job could never understand. God knew exactly what He was doing. In verse 2 Job confessed to God that he had spoken of things he did not understand. Job understood what God had been telling him in his rebuke in chapters 38-41 (verse 3). Job recognized that he was out of line in questioning God's wisdom and justice in his own suffering. He had failed to recognize God's goodness and sovereignty in his trial. Now, however, he confessed that God's ways are too deep and wonderful to understand.

Many times in my own personal experience I have failed to see the goodness and sovereignty of God. Human reason would not permit me to see the goodness of God in my trial. There are times when the wisdom of God defies human logic and reason. We simply cannot understand His ways. In these times all we can do is trust what we know about God and rest in His purpose. God will never fail. His purposes are always good. Human reason will seek to convince us otherwise, but faith will keep us strong and confident in His purpose.

When it was Job's turn to speak, all his objections to God's ways faded. "My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you," said Job to God in verse 5. God had revealed Himself to Job. That day God made His presence very real. The presence of God was the answer to all Job's questions. Job had heard of God and had learned about Him in the past, but right then and there he was seeing a powerful manifestation of God. The presence of God

changed everything. It removed every doubt Job had experienced over the past period of trial and suffering.

The presence of God that day was so wonderful that, instead of presenting his case before God and demanding an explanation, Job fell before Him in repentance and trust. He now understood what no words could ever describe—how wonderful and awesome God is. Job's questions were no longer important; he had the answer in the presence of God.

It is important to note that at this point Job was still suffering in agony from disease and the loss of his children, possessions, and community. In the presence of God, however, all objections faded. In the presence of God, all questions were unimportant. His presence is so wonderful and comforting that all doubt and fear are gone. We are left with a sense that nothing else matters but the presence of God. God's presence completely satisfied Job. Countless men and women in history have joyfully faced death and the loss of everything they had because the presence of God was so wonderful to them that nothing else seemed to matter.

That day as Job stood in the presence of God, he repented of the pride and doubt his suffering had revealed. God wanted to bring him to a new level in his relationship with Him. God had stripped Job of everything he had and his attraction to the things of this world in order to introduce him to a deeper and more intimate communion with Him. Job understood more profoundly than ever the genius, majesty, and independence of the Creator. Job had a fresh and more realistic vision of God that would transform his faith. Job did not know why he suffered or why the wicked prosper, but upon hearing from God he entered a deeper

level of confidence in Him. In that intimacy Job was content.

Having accepted the confession of Job, God turned his attention to Eliphaz. It is unclear why God spoke directly to Eliphaz, perhaps because he was the leader of the three friends and had spoken first. What God said to Eliphaz, however, was not for him alone. Bildad and Zophar had committed the same sin as Eliphaz in limiting God's sovereignty in His dealings with mankind. God spoke to Eliphaz, but his two companions were also in view.

God told Eliphaz that He was angry with him and his two friends (Bildad and Zophar). He told him that he had not spoken truthfully about Him and His purposes as Job had done. It is important to note here in verse 7 that God recognized that Job had spoken truthfully about Him. It is true that Job had questioned God in what He was doing, but His words reflected more truth about God than that of his friends.

In verse 8 God commanded Eliphaz and his friends to take seven bulls and seven rams, bring them to Job and offer a burnt sacrifice for their sin. Job would pray for them and God would accept his prayer and forgive them for their sin. The three friends did this, and the Lord accepted the prayer of Job on their behalf.

There are two things we should mention in this context. Notice that God told Eliphaz that he was to go to Job with this sacrifice. We are not told how much time elapsed. Could it be that this command to go to see Job indicated that he was no longer with Job? At any rate, Eliphaz needed to face his sin. He needed to repent before God and before Job. It is clear from this that Eliphaz could only be forgiven by going to Job and asking him to forgive him

and pray to God on his behalf. This would have been a humbling thing for Eliphaz to do, but his forgiveness from God depended on his being made right with Job.

This is still true for us today. There are times when we need to confess our sin one to another if we want to be forgiven by God (see Matthew 6:14-15). Sometimes we need to go to our brother or sister and make things right with him or her before we can expect to be forgiven by God.

There is a second point we need to see here. The fact that Job prayed for his friends is an indication that Job was considered by God to be a priest. As Job likely lived prior to the days of the Levitical priesthood, he functioned as a priest before God. In chapter 1 we see him offering sacrifices to the Lord for his children. Here in this passage, he was asked to make a sacrifice for Eliphaz and his friends and to pray to God on their behalf.

Notice that while there is a record of sacrifice required for Eliphaz and his friends, no such sacrifice is mentioned for Job. This may also be an indication of Job's innocence. Job had not been punished for evil in his life. He had been used by God as an example to Satan of faithfulness during suffering. Satan had been defeated in his attempt to destroy Job's faith. Job was being stretched by God so that he could be drawn closer to the Almighty. Job admitted that in that time of stretching he had failed to trust God as he should have. While Job stumbled under the discipline of the Lord, Eliphaz and his friends misrepresented God and spoke evil of God's servant.

Verse 10 tells us that after Job prayed for his friends, God made him prosper. We have seen that the forgiveness of Eliphaz and his friends depended on their willingness to be

reconciled with Job. Here the prosperity of Job and the restoring of his blessing depended on his willingness to forgive and pray for his friends who had let him down. Our relationship with God cannot be separated from our relationship with our brothers and sisters. Eliphaz's confession before Job restored him to a right relationship with God. Job's forgiveness of Eliphaz and his friends released the blessing of God to Job's life.

Notice that when God blessed Job in the end, he became twice as prosperous as he had been in the beginning. His brothers and sisters and those who had known him prior to this accepted him again (verse 11). They ministered to him and consoled him in the tremendous loss he had suffered. They each gave him a piece of silver and a gold ring. This was, in part, God's way of restoring Job's fortune. It may also have been God's way of making his friends pay back something of what that they had done to Job. They had mocked him and in his time of trial. Now they realized that they too were wrong and brought their tokens of friendship to him again.

The last part of Job's life was more blessed than the first part of his life. His trials were not without reason. He was a blessed man in the beginning of this book, but God brought him to a new level. God gave Job a new family (verses 13-15). He had seven sons and three daughters. His daughters were the most beautiful women in the land, and they shared the inheritance with their brothers, which was unusual in the East. Job lived 140 years after his trial, and he saw his children's children to the fourth generation (verse 16).

As I reflect on this final passage of Job, I cannot help but wonder how much more God has for us in this life. Job could have died content with what he had before all his

trials and suffering. What he experience after, however, was so much richer. He knew God in a much deeper way. His new experience of God was transforming. The evidence of God's blessing was so much greater.

Could it be that the Lord God wants to move you closer to Him today? Could it be that what you have experienced to this point is nothing compared to what the Lord has in store for you? The path to that deeper blessing and closer fellowship with God was a difficult one for Job. He had to lay everything down. He had to be purged of his limited thoughts and attitudes, but the end result was more than he could ever have imagined. He moved from hearing about God to a personal and intimate knowledge of God. It was worth it all—just to know and experience God and His presence in this deeper way.

#### For Consideration:

- What do we learn here about the purposes and plans of God? Do we always understand those purposes and plans?
- In what way can it be said that the presence of God was the answer to all of Job's questions?
- What is the connection between confession and reconciliation with others and the forgiveness of God?
- How did forgiveness release the blessing of God in Job's life? Can forgiveness release God's blessing for us as well?
- What challenge does this chapter bring us in regard to seeking God for a deeper and more intimate walk?

## For Prayer:

- Thank the Lord that you can trust Him and His purposes even though you do not always understand them.
- Ask the Lord to show you anyone you need to forgive. Ask Him to give you grace to forgive that person.
- Ask the Lord to reveal Himself to you in a much deeper way, as He did for Job. Commit yourself to letting God teach you what you need to learn from Him.

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