

Job 15-31 - Job and His Friends Talk (Part 2)

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Job chapter 15. This is our third installment of our study through the Book of Job. For those of you that might be joining us mid study here.

The Bible tells us that Job was a great man. He was also credibly wealthy; wealthier than anyone else in the east at that time. But more than all of that, the Bible tells us that he was blameless and he was upright. And it says he was one who feared God and turned away from evil. And that is the most important element of Job's character that we need to remember as we go through this, because it plays into the entire book.

You'll remember in chapter 1, we're told Satan challenged Job's attitude to God, saying basically that the only reason he loved God was just because he'd been blessed so greatly. And if all the blessings, earthly blessings that Job had been given in his life were to disappear, Satan said that Job would curse God to His face.

And so God allowed Satan control over all that Job possessed. And, I hope I said that right, God-gave-Satan-control, I got all those names right, in the right order, okay? Over all that Job had, and in one day, all of his wealth was wiped out, but even more than that, all 10 of his children died a tragic death and it was a terrible situation.

But Job did not curse the Lord and when he did not curse the Lord, Satan appeared another time before God assuring the Lord that if the man himself were afflicted somehow physically.

It's like you can take everything away from a man and he's willing to part with it. But the moment you touch him at the level of his own flesh, oh, that's when he'll turn on you in a second. And so once again, God allowed Satan to afflict Job, this time touching him physically so that Job's entire body was covered with painful boils.

And Job's suffering was so great, so terrible, that when his 3 friends arrived on the scene to console him, we're told that they saw that his suffering was so

intense that they couldn't even speak a word for a full 7 days. They just sat there, just sat with him. And that was the smartest thing they could have done. In fact, we found out as we continued our study that where they made their critical error was when they started talking.

But after 7 days, actually, Job was the first one who began to speak. And he never did curse God for all of the trouble that he had endured. However, after that 7 days of sitting with his friends, Job did finally curse the day of his birth. And that began a conversation between Job and 3 three men that has lasted up until the chapters that we're dealing with, we've seen, and we're dealing with tonight.

And what we saw in the first installment of the conversation between Job and his 3 friends is that they assumed that Job was being punished for some evil behavior that he had committed before God, and he was guilty. And it's crazy to think that they would say such a thing to a man who had endured such loss and now was dealing with such intense and painful suffering. And yet that's what they did.

They kept coming back and saying to Job over and over and over, Job, you're getting what you deserve. And it's so important that we keep referring back to the first couple of chapters of the book because we're told there in no uncertain terms that Job was blameless. In fact, God said that Job was blameless. And now that doesn't mean perfect, it just means without blame. And so we know that the assumption of Job's friends was wrong.

That's what makes, though, the Book of Job so difficult to read and understand. And we talked about this last week. Many of the things that Job's friends say are, in fact, true. They're simply a misdiagnosis of Job's issues and Job's personal situation.

It's easy to read through the Book of Job and wonder whose side you should be on. Because Job says something that sounds completely plausible, and then one of his friends speaks up seemingly to debate or contradict what Job has just said, and you read it and you go, well, he's got a point.

And in many cases, these men do speak truths that would stand in most circumstances, but in Job's particular situation, they didn't apply because these men made an assumption. Job, you're guilty, you're a guilty man, you're guilty of sin. And this is what happens to people when they're guilty of sin, they suffer. And so Job begins to argue with these men about, number one, his own innocence related to these events. He never claims he's sinless, but he does

believe he's innocent of deserving the circumstances that he's in, and he's right, by the way.

He also argues with them about their conclusions. Their conclusions are, the wicked always suffer in this life and Job is like, what planet do you guys live on? Because on the planet that I'm on, I often see the wicked prospering, I often see them doing well, actually. And anyway, there it goes back and forth this conversation.

We also noted something else that's important for us to just revisit momentarily before we get into the chapters we're going to be dealing with tonight, and that is that Job was, in the chapters we dealt with, speaking largely and will continue to speak from his pain. And we talked about how when someone gives voice to their pain, many times they will say things that they probably wouldn't say otherwise.

Sometimes it can bring out the truth, which might have been hidden, but just never expressed. Sometimes it can bring out things that just are outrageously false. But whatever comes out of someone's mouth who is going through intense suffering, it is really folly on the part of his friends to answer whatever, frankly, Job is saying.

Because when somebody is dealing with suffering, they're going to say things that are just off the top of their head, or should I say off the top of their pain? And as I said, sometimes they'll be true, sometimes they won't, but to correct someone in the midst of their pain for saying something that isn't just theologically down the line. There's a time for correction, don't get me wrong.

I mean, I'm a teacher and I have to be careful myself when somebody says something that is theologically incorrect because by nature, teachers are sharp. There's a sharpness which we have to be very careful about because we can leave a trail of blood if we're not careful going around correcting people. And, like Paul says if things aren't done in love, right, we're just making noise. Got to be careful.

Well, these men aren't careful at all. I mean, they are just slicing and dicing Job throughout the course of this entire conversational process, and assuming to correct him with their false assumptions, and it's just a train wreck.

We're going to actually see tonight that as cruel as they were in the first several chapters that we dealt with, they will actually increase in that cruelty tonight. And Job for the most part, although he will answer them. Job began in our last

study and will continue in this study to talk to God. He will speak many times to God here, and yet these men will presume to answer for God. Another fundamental error when you are answering out of assumptions.

Alright, as we start chapter 15 here, "*Eliphaz the Temanite*" is going to speak once again, and I want to remind you again as we go through this, that we're not going to be reading every single verse in each chapter, but I'm going to trust that we'll cover enough that you'll get a sense of what they're saying here.

Job chapter 15. Eliphaz speaks. He says, verse 2, "*Should a wise man answer with windy knowledge, and fill his belly with the east wind?*" (ESV) Essentially Eliphaz is accusing Job of being a windbag, hot air, you might say today.

Verse 3, he says, "*Should he argue in unprofitable talk, or in words with which he can do no good?*"

Skip down to verse 17. Now, here's again, where we learn about Eliphaz and his sense of authority. Notice what he says here in this verse. He says, "*I will show you; hear me, and what I have seen I will declare*"

You'll remember when we looked at these men last time, we talked about how they spoke to Job and on what they based their authority. And you remember that this man is an experiential truth person, for lack of a better term. In other words he gains truth from experience.

Now, experience can be a great teacher, don't get me wrong. But when it comes to theological truth, or truth about God, we have to be very careful because experience can actually deceive. And if I assume that because I've experienced something that it is in fact true, right? I am stepping onto very thin ice as it relates to asserting an understanding of what is true or what is false. Because our experience is often skewed. Our understanding of even what we are experiencing is often skewed.

Don't ever forget the fact that God is very, very gracious. Sometimes, even when we are stepping out in wrong areas, God's grace is such that He may choose to bless you in the midst of some really creepy decisions in your life. Can you relate?

I have to admit to you here tonight when I have made some of the most serious errors in my life I have found some of the most incredible blessings from God. Now, if I were to be an experiential Christian and say that because God blessed

me that equals truth, or good, or something like that, or this is the way God wants me to walk. Then you see, I would be creating all kinds of doctrines and belief systems predicated simply, just simply on my experience.

I've told you guys, for 25 years, that back when I was about 14, 15 years old, I started just having an interest in spiritual things and the Bible. And that was right about the time, I know this dates me, but that was in the early 70s when the rock opera, Jesus Christ Superstar came out. And I got this thing in the mail that allowed me to order some albums for free if I would sign up for this record club. Yeah, records, okay? And, back in the day. And you had to then buy one every month after that. I thought, okay. I bought Jesus Christ Superstar and I think I bought, The Jackson 5 or something like that. What a great mix, huh?

But I listened to Jesus Christ Superstar over and over. I mean, I wore out the vinyl on that record and you know what? God used that record, that album to cause me to get into the Bible and start looking up things to see if, well, I wonder if that's true.

I would hear a song and I'd read the lyrics on the sleeve and I would think to myself, huh, I wonder if that's true. So I actually opened up a Bible and started looking to see if the writers of this rock opera had held to the truth somewhat. And it got me into the scriptures, it got me.

And eventually God used that to bring me into some Bible studies, and by about age 15 or so, I heard the gospel and responded to it, and it was all very cool.

Now, if I'm an experiential Christian, I'm going to say, hey, Jesus Christ Superstar, you guys, pick it up. We're going to give out free copies to everybody tonight, because look what God did in my life.

Now, the fact of the matter is, you may have never heard the rock opera before, it was not biblically sound. It was not very correct and they only hinted at the idea of His resurrection. They never even came out and said that He was raised from the dead and there was a great deal that was very unbiblical about it.

But, you see, if I'm an experiential Christian, then it doesn't matter. All those things don't matter because my experience was good, you see. Right? God blessed me. God used it in my life so it's good! Right? And that's just one rather poor example. But I think you know what I'm saying. So this is the kind of a man that Eliphaz is. He says, let me show you, let me tell you what I've seen. Let me tell you what I've experienced, Job, because that is the basis of the authority that I'm going to speak now to you.

And then here's his declaration. Look down at verse 20. You ready for this? Here's what he's experienced. *“The wicked man writhes in pain all his days, (just kind of like you, Job, right?) through all the years that are laid up for the ruthless.”*

You see what he's saying to Job? He's calling him wicked and ruthless. And he says, Job, the reason you are covered with sores, boils from the top of your head to the soles of your feet is because you're a wicked man, and because God is punishing you for your wickedness.

Now, there's nothing new in the argument here. We heard this last time. But based on assumption and predicated upon experience, Eliphaz makes his declaration. Now, Job chapter 16. That's essentially what you're going to get out of that chapter.

Chapter 16 now, Job is going to answer and he says in verse 2, *“I have heard many such things; (and we know that because we've heard them already saying this very accusation, but he says) miserable comforters are you all.³ Shall windy words have an end? Or what provokes you that you answer?”* That's a poetic way of saying, what is up with you guys that you even open your mouths at me?

He says in verse 4, *“I also could speak as you do, if you were in my place; I could join words together against you and shake my head at you.”* Right? That wagging the head and so forth.

He said also, you know what else I could do? Verse 5, *“I could strengthen you with my mouth, and the solace (or comfort rather) of my lips would assuage your pain.”* You see the point of what Job is saying?

I could do this too if I were in your place and you were the one who had suffered all this difficulty. I suppose I could slice and dice you. Cut you up into little, nice little pieces. But I could also use my mouth to bless and encourage you.

And now Job is going to turn his attention to the Lord. Skip down to verse 7. *“Surely now God has worn me out; he has made desolate all my company.¹² I was at ease, and he broke me apart; he seized me by the neck and dashed me to pieces; he set me up as his target;¹³ his archers surround me. He slashes open my kidneys and does not spare; he pours out my gall on the ground.”* And that's how Job feels about God. He feels like he's been filleted. He feels like he's been tortured by God.

Chapter 17. He continues. *“My spirit is broken; my days are extinct; the graveyard is ready for me.”*

Skip down to verse 11. *“My days are past; my plans are broken off, the desires of my heart. ¹² They make night into day: ‘The light,’ they say, ‘is near to the darkness.’ If I hope (verse 13) for Sheol as my house, if I make my bed in darkness, ¹⁴ if I say to the pit, ‘You are my father,’ and to the worm, ‘My mother,’ or ‘My sister,’ ¹⁵ where then is my hope? Who will see my hope? ¹⁶ Will it go down to the bars of Sheol? Shall we descend together (meaning me and my hope) into the dust?”*

And you can see where Job is at by what he's saying. I know it's poetic language. I know it's not the kind of thing you and I say when we're hurting on the inside, but what he's what he's saying here is, there's nothing left for me, but just to die. There's nothing left for me but the grave and all my hopes and all my desires are going to descend together to the dust along, along with me.

Now, I want to stop for just a moment to say that, we got to be careful when we're reading the Book of Job, not to read into his comments, born out of pain, some kind of doctrinal insights.

We got to be very careful here. Job is not a doctrinal book necessarily. There are some elements of it that we can compare with other verses in the Bible and say, yeah, that's squares, but, this is a poetic book expressing pain. The pain of living in a fallen world, the pain of life when it collapses all around us. How we view our pain how we view others who view us in our pain.

And most importantly how we view God in the midst of our pain and how our pain often skews our understanding of who God is and how He treats people. All right?

Job 18, *“Then Bildad the Shuhite answered and said: ² “How long will you hunt for words? Consider, and then we will speak.”* Take a look at that just for a moment, that verse that we just read. What's wrong with it? Well, first of all, Job is complaining to God, and yet these men are presuming to speak up and answer Job, which I think is not wise.

Verse 3. He says, *“Why are we counted as cattle? Why are we stupid in your sight?”*

Verse 5. *“Indeed, the light of the wicked is put out, and the flame of his fire does not shine.”* You see what he's saying? He's talking to Job. He's saying, Job,

you're treating us like we're stupid, like we don't understand things. We do understand things and what we understand is, that the light of the wicked is snuffed out and your light is being snuffed out. Ergo, you're a wicked man, it's simple.

Verse 21. Look what he goes on to say. *“Surely such are the dwellings of the unrighteous, such is the place of him who knows not God.”* Wow!

Now they're going on to assume and to comment and accuse related to Job's relationship with God. They've been accusing him of his own evil actions. Now they're presuming to say, you obviously don't know God because this is happening to you. People who know God don't live like this. They don't have these things happen to them, Job. Don't you understand that?

Do you see the cruelty? Do you see the arrogant assumption? I mean, these guys are just absolutely going overboard with their comments.

Job 19, *“Then Job answered and said: ² “How long will you torment me and break me in pieces with words?”*

Verse 4, *“And even if it be true that I have erred, my error remains with myself.”* Isn't that an interesting statement? Kind of reminds me of something David said when he, after he committed adultery with Bathsheba, when he said, *“Against you and you only have I sinned.”* (Psalm 51:4) In other words, God, it's between me. I mean, this is if there's sin, if there's transgression, it's between me and God.

Verse 5, *“If indeed you magnify yourselves against me and make my disgrace an argument against me, ⁶ know then that God has put me in the wrong and closed his net about me.”* Well, that's going to give fire them up.

“⁷ Behold, I cry out, ‘Violence!’ but I am not answered; I call for help, but (look at this, look at this) there is no justice.”

Now, this is Job's argument with God. He believes that he is not being treated fairly, he believes that he is being treated unjustly. And since he is suffering in this way without deserving it, he believes...yeah. And essentially, I mean, he's right.

Verse 11, *“He has kindled his wrath against me and counts me as his adversary.”* Or enemy. Now think about that statement for a moment. We know that's not true. Job doesn't know that. He believes it, I think with all of his heart,

but we know that it's not true. What does it say? He says, "*He has kindled his wrath against me.*"

Is this God's wrath against Job? I ask you. No, it's not, is it? And then what else? He says, He "*counts me as his enemy*" or His adversary. Is God Job's enemy? He's not, is He? No, God loves Job.

Notice the assumptions now on Job's part. Now this is so common when people are going through a hard time, they assume, God hates me. God hates me. People say things like that to me a lot when they've been praying and they don't feel like they're getting an answer or when bad things are happening to them.

I've had people come up and say to me, what did I do to deserve this? Which is a crazy question to ask, but it reveals that, that individual has a relationship with God that is based or predicated upon performance.

They believe that if they're good, then good things will happen. And they think that if they're bad, then bad things will happen. And now that they're going through a bad thing, they want to know what it is they did. What did I do? So pastor Paul tell me what did I do to deserve this? What did I do? Why is God mad at me? Why is He not hearing my prayer? Why is He punishing me in this sort of a situation? This is a very common sort of a refrain and we're seeing it here in Job.

Skip down to verse 20. He says, "*My bones stick to my skin and to my flesh, and I have escaped by the skin of my teeth.* ²¹ *Have mercy on me, have mercy on me, O you my friends, for the hand of God has touched me!* ²² *Why do you, like God, pursue me? Why are you not satisfied with my flesh?*" And that means like with your pound of flesh or something similar to that.

Verse 23. "*Oh that my words were written!...*" Look at this, check out these 2 verses. "*Oh that my words were written! Oh that they were inscribed in a book!*" Job got his wish on that one, didn't he?

Here we are, we think, we think, about 4,000 years after these events took place, and here we are reading it. And Job says, "*Oh that my words were written!... in a book.*" And we're reading them.

²⁴ *Oh that with an iron pen and lead they were engraved in the rock forever!*
²⁵ *For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth.*" What is this? What is this statement by Job in the midst of everything that he is saying?

In the midst of this cry of his pain, the cry of bitterness and disappointment, and the accusations against God of injustice, what is now this? Well, you know what? He's not done. I think this is an incredible expression of clarity and faith.

He goes on to say in verse 26, *“And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God,²⁷ whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. (and then he says,) “My heart faints within me!”* Or that means, yearns within me for that time.

What is Job doing here? What is he saying in these verses? This is an amazing expression of faith from a man who is in the midst of great suffering. Remember something about Job. Don't be so..., don't let his pain and his bitterness and his anger so color your opinion of him that we forget something about Job. He was a very godly man, very close to the Lord and a man of great faith. And a wonderful relationship between himself and the Lord.

And in the midst of all of this pain and the giving voice to it, suddenly what comes from his mouth is this incredible expression of faith. And he just, it just bubbles out.

And he says, *“I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth.”* And then he goes on to make this statement about his body. He's covered with boils. I'm sure it's a condition with which he believes he will expire, because of this illness.

And yet, what does he say about his physical condition? He says, even *“...after my skin has been thus destroyed.”* In other words, after my flesh is completely decimated, I know that *“in... (the) flesh I... (will behold my) God.”*

Now he's saying something here theologically, which is very interesting. First of all, you have to understand something about what he refers to or means when he talks about his flesh. When he first talks about his diseased flesh, he's talking about the body that he is in right now.

But when he goes on to make reference to seeing the Lord in the flesh, he has to be talking about a resurrection body because those are the only bodies that will ever be given that can stand the presence of the Lord and with which we can behold His glory. You with me?

So this is a statement of faith from Job once again in the midst of his trouble that just comes forth in a very beautiful prophetic sort of a thing in the midst of his pain where he says, *“I know that my Redeemer lives, and”* one day He'll

stand on the earth and one day I will stand and behold His glory in a new resurrection body.

Now this seems really odd, doesn't it? I mean, doesn't it seem out of place? Because the man has been just lamenting up to this point, and we've even been skipping a lot of it. And yet we can tell, wow, this man is in pain. He's speaking from his pain. He's angry at his friends. He's hurt, he's wounded.

And yet outcomes this beautiful statement of faith. Where did that come from? Well, it came from the Lord. It came from the Lord.

I've actually experienced this one time. It was in the very first, probably 6 months that Sue and I were living here in Ontario, Oregon. We'd moved here a little over 25 years ago to start this fellowship. Came from the Seattle area where we owned a home, sold it, moved down here only to find out that the sale up there went belly up.

And now we're renting a house, and we started this little church, and it was just a few people. I mean, there wasn't enough money to support a pastor. And we had, between our house payment up there, which was like \$850 dollars a month which may sound really, really, low, and it probably, I mean, it's 25 years ago. And then our rent payment, which was somewhere in the \$700s.

We weren't making that much yet here, and it was a very, very financially distressing time in our lives. And it takes a lot to distress me, just because I'm kind of a bozo when it comes to money, and not terribly affected by it. But Sue was feeling it very passionately, and our two oldest kids were very, very small at the time, like 6 and 4, and they were in bed.

And Sue and I were sitting out on the couch and I knew that Sue was very distressed, and she was crying about this thing because it just didn't look good. It looked, in fact very, very bad. We got this house up there that we can't afford. We're living in a house here that we can't afford. What in the world are we going to do?

I said, well, you need to sit down and pray. So we sat down on the couch and we began to pray and Sue was just very distressed. And what came out of her mouth was great negativity. I mean very much like Job except she wasn't cursing the day of her birth or anything like that I mean that wasn't going on. But she was very much like, we're going to die! sort of a..., that kind of sums it up right there.

And as we're sitting there just praying and I'm holding her hand, the Lord laid on my heart that He had a word to speak through her prophetically. And, so she's just like sobbing, and can hardly get a breath.

And I finally said to her, Sue, God has a word that He wants to speak through you, and she was like, no! She just, she fought it, just like, no, I'm not going to. She was just... and I, finally I just said, hey, you be obedient to God. If He's got a Word, you speak it. And remember, nothing but negativity had passed her lips for the last, whatever, 20 minutes, half hour we've been sitting there.

And suddenly she stops, swallows hard, and she begins and says, “the Lord would say to you, your day of trouble is not a day of trouble.”

And out came, out of her own mouth came the most incredible, comforting, blessing from God that said, I see your issue. Do you think this took me by surprise? I love you and I will take care of you. Stop worrying. Give it to me. Trust in me. I am the Lord, your God.

Pretty tough to cry after that came out of your mouth sort of a thing. So I've experienced this sort of a thing firsthand. Hearing someone issue forth just complains that the speed of light and then suddenly stop and with the heart and voice of faith prompted through the Holy Spirit begin to speak words of hope and life and truth, and it's a beautiful thing. And that's what we're seeing here as Job is just bringing forth this beautiful, beautiful statement.

Chapter 20, “*Then Zophar the Naamathite answered and said:*” You'd think he'd say, Job, that was really good. No.

Verse 2, “*Therefore my thoughts (he says) answer me, because of my haste within me. ³ I hear censure (or rebuke, in other words, he says, I think I hear you rebuking us and) that insults me, ...*” I just want to tell you right now, I'm insulted Job, okay.

And look what he says in verse 3, “*... out of my understanding a spirit answers me.*” This is the man who is the intellectual of the group, and he says, out of my deep cavern of understanding, I am now going to speak to you, my friend.

He says, “*⁴ Do you not know this from of old, since man was placed on earth, ⁵ that the exulting of the wicked is short, and the joy of the godless but for a moment?*” What's he saying to Job? You deserve this.

Verse 29, he says, look at what he's saying here you guys. *“This... ”* In other words, Job, you're sitting in an ash heap, you're scraping your boils with a piece of pottery. Your kids are dead, your belongings are gone.

Now look what he says in verse 29. *“This is the wicked man's portion from God, (okay? Look around, buddy, this is what you get, it's) the heritage decreed for him by God.”* And you deserve it, and you've got it, so you better own it.

Chapter 21, *“Then Job answered and said: ² “Keep listening to my words, and let this be your comfort. ³ Bear with me, and I will speak, and after I have spoken, mock on. ⁴ As for me, is my complaint against man? (in other words, am I talking to you guys?) Why should I not be impatient?”*

Verse 7. *“Why do the wicked live, reach old age, and grow mighty in power? ⁸ Their offspring are established in their presence, and their descendants before their eyes. ⁹ Their houses are safe from fear, and no rod of God is upon them.”*

What's Job saying? He says, you guys are arguing that the wicked always suffer. I don't see that, I sometimes see the wicked people prospering.

Verse 13, *“They spend their days in prosperity, and in peace they go down to Sheol. ¹⁴ They say to God, ‘Depart from us! We do not desire the knowledge of your ways. ¹⁵ What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? And what profit do we get if we pray to him?’”*

Chapter 22. *“⁴ Is it for your fear of him that he reproveth you and enters into judgment with you?”* In other words, is it because you fear God and love Him that you're now going through these things, Job? Is not.

Look at this, guys. *“⁵ Is not your evil abundant? There is no end to your iniquities. (Job) ⁶ For you have exacted pledges of your brothers for nothing and stripped the naked of their clothing. ⁷ You have given no water to the weary to drink, and you have withheld bread from the hungry.”*

Guys, Job did none of that. But it's all part of the assumption process that you're suffering therefore you've done these things. I know it, you've done this. You've done wrong, you've done evil.

Verse 9. Look, he goes on to accuse. *“You have sent widows away empty, and the arms of the fatherless were crushed. ¹⁰ Therefore snares are all around you, and sudden terror overwhelms you, ¹¹ or darkness, so that you cannot see, and a flood of water covers you.”*

And so he goes on, he says in verse 21, *“Agree with God, (would you? He says that you're a sinner so just agree with Him) and (then) be at peace; thereby good will come to you.”*

I'm telling you, Job, things will get better. What he really means is, agree with me because God already said Job was blameless. Alright?

Verse 23, *“If you return to the Almighty you will be built up; ...”* Boy, what a thing to say to somebody going through that kind of stuff. *“...if you remove injustice far from your tents, ²⁴ if you lay gold in the dust, and gold of Ophir among the stones of the torrent-bed, ²⁵ then the Almighty will be your gold and your precious silver.”*

In other words, he's saying to Job, if you just renounce your love of worldly wealth and make God your focus, then things will be better.

23 (chapter). Skip down to verse 11. *“My foot has held fast to his steps; (Job says) I have kept his way and have not turned aside.”* He's answering now these accusations.

“¹² I have not departed from the commandment of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my portion of food.” Right? He says, I cared more about God's Word than my next meal or if I ever have another meal again.

Verse 16, *“God has made my heart faint; the Almighty has terrified me; ¹⁷ yet I am not silenced because of the darkness, nor because thick darkness covers my face.”*

Chapter 24, Job continues now here. *“Why are...”* listen to what he says. *“Why are not times of judgment kept by the Almighty, and why do those who know him never see his days?”* Meaning his days of judgment?

See, you know what Job is saying? Why doesn't God ever judge people? He says, He talks about judgment, why doesn't He actually get around to doing it? Of course, his friends are telling him, He is but He's doing it to you.

This is an interesting statement and Job is expressing in it his belief that God is unjust. Let me read this verse for you, first of all, out of the NIV. It says, *“Why does the Almighty not set times for judgment? Why must those who know him look in vain for such days?”* And then even a little clearer, perhaps, in the New Living Translation (NLT), listen to this. *“Why doesn't the Almighty bring the wicked to judgment? Why must the godly wait for him in vain?”* And that is the

question that is haunting Job, and that is the essence of what he says in that chapter.

Skip down now to chapter 25. Bildad now is going to speak for the third time. Verse 4, *“How then can man be in the right before God? How can he who is born of woman be pure?”* Have you heard that before in this argument they've made? Yeah, they're just repeating the same stuff.

Verse 5, *“Behold, even the moon is not bright, and the stars are not pure in his eyes; ⁶ how much less man, (like you Job) who is a maggot, and the son of man, who is a worm!”* Wow, aren't these guys just delightful? With friends like this, who needs the enemy?

Chapter 26. Okay, at this point, Job is going to start his final discourse. *“Then Job answered and said: ² “How you have helped him who has no power! How you have saved the arm that has no strength!”* A little sarcasm there.

“³ How you have counseled him who has no wisdom, and plentifully declared sound knowledge! ⁴ With whose help have you uttered words, and whose breath has come out from you?”

Now that's a great question. Job is challenging them and saying. Just exactly whose word have you given me? God's Word? Boy, that's a great question to ask.

When we believe that we are speaking for God, which is a pretty heavy thing to do unless we're quoting scripture, and even then it has to be applied properly. But to say to somebody, so who are you speaking for here? By what spirit are you speaking?

Verse 7. He's going to talk about God now, and I want you to hear what he says here in verse 7, because this is an amazing statement. *“He stretches out the north over the void and hangs the earth on nothing.”*

Do you know that right there is a scientific statement written approximately, we think, 4,000 years ago, approximately 2,000 years before the birth of Christ. Job makes a statement here about the earth hanging on nothing. Isn't that interesting? Yeah.

Verse 8. *“He binds up the waters in his thick clouds, and the cloud is not split open under them. ⁹ He covers the face of the full moon and spreads over it his cloud. ¹⁰ He has inscribed a circle on the face of the waters at the boundary*

between light and darkness.” You might be reading this and going, What is the point, Job, that you're saying all this? Hang on, I'll give you the point in just a second.

Verse 11, *“The pillars of heaven tremble and are astounded at his rebuke. ¹² By his power he stilled the sea; by his understanding he shattered Rahab. ¹³ By his wind the heavens were made fair; his hand pierced the fleeing serpent. ¹⁴ Behold, these are but the outskirts of his ways, and how small a whisper do we hear of him! But the thunder of his power (here's the question) who can understand?”*

And that's the point of Job's remarks to his friend. He earlier asked them the question, by whose spirit do you speak? And whose words are you uttering?

Now he begins to speak of God's immensity, and greatness, and power. And he says, do you really believe you understand all the ways of God? That's what he's saying to his friends.

Now, there's some of this argument Job needs to point back to himself, and sometimes we're really good at that, aren't we? We're good at preaching to others sometimes and yet Job is making his own assumptions. He's assuming God's his enemy, He's assuming that God's wrath is upon him.

He's assuming right that God is unjust. He is assuming God is unfair. He's assuming that, we saw this last week. He said, even if God were to give me an audience, I don't think He would listen to me. Now, that's an assumption born out of pain, but it's an assumption nonetheless, and it's a wrong one. Right?

Job could be learning from his own preaching here, but what he's saying is absolutely true, and it's something we all need to take into consideration. Hey, this God you and I serve, He's incredible! I mean, He's amazing. This is that echoing of Isaiah chapter 55, where God says, my ways are not your ways, and my thoughts are not your thoughts. People want to believe that is not true.

They will judge God's actions by themselves and they'll point to something that they say God did. They'll say, I'd never do that And you know what they're saying to you? They're saying, my ways are equal to His ways. And then they're saying, and then He did this, and I don't get it, so that makes it dumb. And what they're saying by that is, my thoughts are equal to His thoughts, right? And God all the while says, my ways are so far above your ways. My thoughts are so far above your thoughts. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

That strikes at the heart of man's prideful arrogance that demands God to answer for the things that I think He did wrong. Or that I don't happen to agree with. Right? Whoo!

I mean, you get flushed just thinking about someone. It's like, what kind of human arrogance does it take to make a statement like that? I mean, just exactly how full of yourself do you have to be to say something like that?

To say, God, you're wrong in this case. We don't have all the information. Do we? We only have a... What did Paul say? We see through a mirror darkly or a dim mirror. That's the best we can see today. It's like those mirrors in the rest stops, the ones they don't want you to break. You ever seen those? You walk in there and you look at it and you're like, your reflection's like, bleh. It's like, am I at the fair looking in the mirror thing?

That's the way we see life, and yet we pound our fist and we demand God answer for the crimes with which we accuse Him. It's like you flea, sort of a thing. Anyway.

Chapter 27. Job continues to assert his innocence here. *“And Job again took up his discourse, and said: ² “As God lives, who has taken away my right, and the Almighty, who has made my soul bitter, ³ as long as my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils, ⁴ my lips will not speak falsehood, and my tongue will not utter deceit. ⁵ Far be it from me to say that you are right; till I die I will not put away my integrity from me.”*

Talking to his friends here now. *“⁶ I hold fast my righteousness and will not let it go; my heart does not reproach me for any of my days.”* What he's saying is, my conscience is clear when he says, *“my heart doesn't reproach me...”*

Chapter 28. Now in this chapter, Job discourses on wisdom. He says in verse 9. *“Man puts his hand to the flinty rock and overturns mountains by the roots. ¹⁰ He cuts out channels in the rocks, and his eye sees every precious thing.”* Meaning in the earth.

“¹¹ He dams up the streams so that they do not trickle, and the thing that is hidden he brings out to light.”

Verse 12, *“But where shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding? ¹³ Man does not know its worth, and it is not found in the land of the living.”* What is Job saying here? He's saying, man's done some pretty, and we can say that too. Every time I drive through canyon roads, like going up

into the mountains, I think to myself, how incredible it is that I'm driving on this road where a mountain used to be. I mean, they had to blast away part of the hillside and then get in here with their machinery and build a road. And then you go through those tunnels, which are amazing. They had to tunnel through the rock to get through here and who knows what all the stuff they found when they were tunneling through there. Maybe even some ores and special stuff. That's what Job was saying. Man has done this.

But he says, even with all the incredible things man has done on the earth, where is wisdom found? Where are you going to dig to find that? Where are you going to dig up wisdom, right? He says, it doesn't come from the land of the living.

Verse 16, he says, *"It cannot be valued in the gold of Ophir,..."* In other words, you can't measure it with financial sorts of things, so forth.

Verse 20, *"From where, then, does wisdom come? And where is the place of understanding? ²¹ It is hidden from the eyes of all living and concealed from the birds of the air. ²² Abaddon (which is basically, the place of punishment) and Death say, 'We have heard a rumor of it with our ears.'*

²³ *"God understands the way to it, and he knows its place. ²⁴ For he looks to the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens."*

Skip down to verse 28. Look at this. *"And he said to man, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding.'"*

It's just a great chapter because he makes this point, man has just done so much on the earth. He's dug through the crust of the earth and found amazing things. He's done amazing things. But where does he go digging for wisdom?

He says, I'll tell you where wisdom comes from. It comes to the man who fears God. And he's making a statement about his friends and it's an accurate statement.

You, my friends, do not fear God. For all of your piety, for all of your long winded words, you do not fear God. Because you have done nothing but try to wound me ever since you got here.

Ever since you opened your mouths, you have done nothing but try to hurt me. Do you really think that's the heart of God? Do you really believe that's the

wisdom of God? To take someone who is down and to kick him and to beat him with your words.

Chapter 29. Chapter 29 is just a recollection of the past. He's just saying, verse 2, he says. *“Oh, that I were as in the months of old, as in the days when God watched over me, ³ when his lamp shone upon my head, and by his light I walked through darkness, ⁴ as I was in my prime, when the friendship of God was upon my tent, ⁵ when the Almighty was yet with me, when my children were all around me, ⁶ when my steps were washed with butter, (your Bible may say cream, it's a poetic way of saying, things were good, blessing) and the rock (look what he says, the rock) poured out for me streams of oil!*

Let me ask you a question. Do rocks pour out streams of oil? No, they don't. This is a poetic statement to say, God blessed me even in places where there shouldn't have been a blessing.

Verse 7, *“When I went out to the gate of the city, when I prepared my seat in the square, ⁸ the young men saw me and withdrew, (that means they moved aside when I entered) and the aged rose and stood; ⁹ the princes refrained from talking and laid their hand on their mouth; ¹⁰ the voice of the nobles was hushed, and their tongue stuck to the roof of their mouth.*

¹¹ When the ear heard, it called me blessed, and when the eye saw, it approved, ¹² because I delivered the poor who cried for help, and the fatherless who had none to help him. ¹³ The blessing of him who was about to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.”

People understand, Job is not commending himself here. He's setting the record straight. I did not do all the things you guys have accused me of. In fact, I fought for the poor, I fought for the homeless, I fought for the widow.

Go to chapter 30. *“But now they laugh at me, men who are younger than I, whose fathers I would have disdained to set with the dogs of my flock.”*

Boy, that's an interesting statement, isn't it? These kids are laughing. I wouldn't have had their dads go out and take care of my sheep with my dogs. And yet these guys are laughing at me, they're mocking me.

Verse 9. *“And now I have become their song; I am a byword to them. ¹⁰ They abhor me; they keep aloof from me; they do not hesitate to spit at the sight of me.”* Apparently other people shared the opinion of Job's friends.

Verse 15, *“Terrors are turned upon me; my honor is pursued as by the wind, and my prosperity has passed away like a cloud.”*

Verse 19, *“God has cast me into the mire, and I have become like dust and ashes.”*

Verse 21. Look at this. Look at this. *“You have turned cruel to me; with the might of your hand you persecute me. ²² You lift me up on the wind; you make me ride on it, and you toss me about in the roar of the storm.”*

Job is talking to God here. What is he saying? He says, God, you've become cruel to me. You lift me up. You exalt me. You give me all sorts of wonderful things, and then right about the time that I'm enjoying them, you throw me down like an unwanted doll to be dashed on the rocks.

Verse 25, *“Did not I weep for him whose day was hard? Was not my soul grieved for the needy? ²⁶ But when I hoped for good, evil came, and when I waited for light, darkness came.”*

Skip down to verse 5 of chapter 31. *“If I have walked with falsehood and my foot has hastened to deceit; (fine) ⁶ (Let me be weighed in a just balance, and let God know my integrity!) ⁷ if my step has turned aside from the way and my heart has gone after my eyes, and if any spot has stuck to my hands, ⁸ then let me sow, and another eat, (in other words, let me plant my fields and somebody else take it all) and let what grows for me be rooted out.*

⁹ *“If my heart has been enticed toward a woman, and I have lain in wait at my neighbor's door, (a reference to committing adultery) ¹⁰ then let my wife grind for another (man), and (fine) let others bow down on her. ¹¹ For that would be a heinous crime; that would be an iniquity to be punished by the judges; ¹² for that would be a fire that consumes as far as Abaddon, and it would burn to the root all my increase.*

¹³ *“If I have rejected the cause of my manservant or my maidservant, when they brought a complaint against me, ¹⁴ what then shall I do when God rises up? When he makes inquiry, what shall I answer him?”*

Go to verse 16. *“If I have withheld anything that the poor desired, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail, ¹⁷ or have eaten my morsel alone, (instead of sharing it, he means) and the fatherless has not eaten of it”*

Skip down to verse 19. *“if I have seen anyone perish for lack of clothing, or the needy without covering,”*

Verse 21, *“if I have raised my hand against the fatherless, because I saw my help in the gate,²² then let my shoulder blade fall from my shoulder, and let my arm be broken from its socket.”*

Verse 24. *“If I have made gold my trust or called fine gold my confidence,²⁵ if I have rejoiced because my wealth was abundant or because my hand had found much,²⁶ if I have looked at the sun when it shone, or the moon moving in splendor,²⁷ and my heart has been secretly enticed, and my mouth has kissed my hand,”*

He's talking about if I have worshipped, even in the privacy of my own heart, the sun or the moon, which was a common pagan thing in those days. He says in verse 28, *“this also would be an iniquity to be punished by the judges, for I would have been false to God above.²⁹ “If I have rejoiced at the ruin of him who hated me, or exulted when evil overtook him”*

Verse 33, *“if I have concealed my transgressions as others do by hiding my iniquity in my heart,”*

Verse 35, *“Oh, that I had one to hear me! (Here is my signature! Let the Almighty answer me!) Oh, that I had the indictment written by my adversary!”*

Verse 38. *“If my land has cried out against me and its furrows have wept together,³⁹ if I have eaten its yield without payment and made its owners breathe their last, (fine then)⁴⁰ let thorns grow instead of wheat, and foul weeds instead of barley. (and) The words of Job are ended.”*

And that is the conclusion of Job's argument. And next week when we finish the Book of Job, we're going to hear the words of a young man named Elihu, who's going to talk and essentially defend God. And that's all he's pretty much going to do, although he's going to use a lot of words to do it.

And then God's going to speak up, and that's always cool. It is abundantly clear from what we've read tonight, what we dealt with last week, that Job has brought charges against God. He has not cursed God as Satan said that he would, but he has allowed his pain to cast a very negative light upon the person and nature of God. He is bitterly disappointed.

And next week, we are going to see how God responds to Job in his disappointment, and how he deals with that.