

Job Devotionals 2

DEVOTIONALS ON JOB

Today in the Word

Moody Bible Institute

Job ... was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil. - Job 1:1

TODAY IN THE WORD

The walk along the beach had been magical. The sky was a crisp blue, and the waves sparkled in the sunlight. Small children giggled as they splashed in gentle waves. Suddenly the mood was broken. As two young kids walked with their parents, they came across a dead gull that had been caught in a fishing net.

"How come this bird died?" asked one of the kids.

"Did he do something bad?" asked the other.

The presence of death and suffering in our world prompts these questions. Why do bad things happen for no apparent reason? Why do "good" people get cancer or some children die?

Our natural human tendency is to look for answers. We often think that if we know the reason, then we can accept the tragedy. But, as anyone who has suffered can attest, often there are no easy answers--at least humanly speaking.

The book of Job, our study this month, helps us to consider suffering from the divine perspective. Throughout Job's long ordeal, he's completely unaware that God is accomplishing His own divine purposes. It's only at the end of his trial that Job begins to see God's hand in it all. Even then, Job does not find explanations; rather, he sees God more clearly. Job is a powerful example that continues to instruct and encourage believers today.

We don't know who wrote Job. Some have suggested that Job is a fictional character, but it's likely that he was a real person who may have written part of this book himself. Others have suggested that Elihu, who appears later in this work, was the author.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

We know Job is blameless and upright. He worships God and avoids evil. He's concerned for his children's spiritual well-being (v. 5)

Job 1:6-22 TODAY IN THE WORD

A man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions. - Luke 12:15

It's hard to imagine what confronted Job in a single day! In our own time, this would be like losing our job, all our savings and investments, all our material assets, such as our house and car, and our children at once. Even Shakespeare couldn't have come up with a more wrenching tragedy.

Yesterday, we learned that Job was the greatest man among the peoples of the East (Job 1:3). Today's generation might suspect a very wealthy person of being greedy, but in the ancient world, richness was considered an indication of God's favor. In fact, this is how Satan understood Job's riches (v. 10). So Job's loss was great in part because his wealth was so vast. The most horrific part of his loss, of course, was the death of his children.

As we suggested yesterday, the book of Job offers much wisdom on suffering. Perhaps most importantly, Job teaches that a human perspective is necessarily limited. Far beyond human understanding is the mind of God. This higher perspective is introduced in Job by the appearance of the so-called divine council. In verse 6, we find the angels and Satan coming before the royal court of the sovereign Lord. Here we see the destructive nature of Satan, who is roaming the earth looking for victims. We also see his cynical understanding of faith; he claims that people only believe in God for what they can get.

The most important thing to observe in this passage is that God, not Satan, is in full control. God brings Job to Satan's attention. God allows Satan to afflict Job. This is not a teetering balance between the forces of good and evil! This is the sovereign God before whom Satan must obtain permission to act. This is one of the key points of Job, and we will return to it again.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Job's immediate response to his awful situation is to praise God. This suggests that Job already had a habit to praise God. Because he had learned to praise God in the good times, he was ready to praise Him in the bad times.

Job 1:1-22 TODAY IN THE WORD

John Paton was a missionary in the New Hebrides Islands who experienced both threats on his life and God's miraculous deliverance. On one occasion, hostile natives surrounded the mission headquarters, intent on burning out Paton and his wife and killing them. The Patons prayed through a terror-filled night.

In the morning their attackers mysteriously departed. A year later, the chief who had led the attack told Paton that they had seen many armed men in shining robes standing guard around the mission house. Only then did Paton realize that God had sent angels to protect them.

The patriarch Job was also the object of God's protective care--although it may not have seemed that way, given what happened to this man of the East. Job's story raises the timeless question of human suffering, although it may not answer every question or settle every doubt.

The first two chapters of this book also give us valuable clues in our attempt to understand the reality of spiritual warfare. We see here that Satan has access to God in terms of accusing His people. He accused Job of serving God for gain, and he accused God of building a hedge around Job so that no calamity could touch him (vv. 9-11).

The hard part of the story for us is the permission God gave Satan to test Job, even though Job was blameless. James tells us that trials mature us (James 1:2-4). But they are still hard for many of us to accept. Even through the trials, we can praise God for the sovereign control He exercises over our lives. God told Satan exactly how far he could go with Job (Job 1:12), and Satan couldn't go one step beyond God's boundaries. God's purpose was to prove and refine Job, not to destroy him.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

It's almost impossible to be in the middle of a battle and not be wounded along the way.

What separates God's people from the world is not immunity from pain or testing. It's our reaction to trials and loss that reveals God at work within us. Don't miss those two key words in verse 20. Job fell down not in despair or defeat but in worship before God.

Job 1:20-22; 2:7-10 TODAY IN THE WORD

According to a spokesperson for one veterans' service organization, observances such as tomorrow's Veterans Day evoke more than memories for military veterans. These holidays also spur many veterans to seek the medals due them for their service. This fact is prompting more veterans to file claims for their unclaimed awards.

It's understandable why a veteran who paid the price in war would want to receive a hard-earned award. War is costly; it demands everything a person has. But honor awaits those who are ready to pay the costs of such service.

True worship of God is costly too. It demands everything the worshiper has. Just ask the patriarch Job. He lost everything but his life, yet he refused to let go of his devotion to the Lord. And God honored Job in an even greater way than He humbled him (Job 42:12).

Let's admit it. For most of us, worshiping God has become a pretty comfortable experience. Our churches are well appointed, cool in summer and warm in winter. Everyone is dressed up and behaving, and the order of worship is laid out for us in the bulletin.

Does that make these things wrong? Of course not. But we need to remember that the real test of our worship is not how well we sing or how closely we listen on Sunday morning. The test is how we react when the world hits on Monday morning and begins to deprive our lives of the peace, security, and joy God gives to His own.

It's often when you decide to worship God and serve Him faithfully at all costs that Satan decides to put your commitment to the test. Some aspects of Job's experience we will never fully understand this side of heaven, but Scripture tells us that God initiated the conversation concerning Job (Job 1:).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

One reason worship is so costly is that it is so valuable to God. He is seeking people who know how to worship (John 4:23).

Have you experienced the cost of worship? If you have, you know the sweetness of being able to say, ""May the name of the Lord be praised"" (Job 1:21)--even when circumstances don't seem to call for praise.

Job 2:1-10 - TODAY IN THE WORD

Kyle Thompson was a young G.I. when he was captured by the Japanese in World War II and taken into the jungles of Thailand to build a railroad. Isolated deep in the jungle, Thompson's outfit became known as ""The Lost Battalion."" Many died of the slave labor and physical suffering. After Thompson developed a horrible leg ulcer, he was placed in a ""death hospital"" with other hopeless cases. Thompson, a Christian, prayed daily for healing; and somehow a Dutch doctor who was also a P.O.W. found some antiseptic, stopped the infection, and saved Thompson's leg and his life.

Job could have empathized with the sufferings of Thompson and ""The Lost Battalion."" This incredible patriarch of the ancient world suffered tremendously, yet he maintained his spiritual integrity (v. 9).

After reading how Satan ruined Job's possessions, his family, and his body, you may not consider these chapters good examples of spiritual victory. Job seems to have emerged from Satan's assaults much the worse for wear. But let's take a closer look.

While we cannot pretend to understand perfectly everything that was going on, several facts are evident. First, everything Satan did was by God's permission. In verse 6, God drew a line the devil could not cross, just as He had done in 1:12. But notice also that Satan lost the real battle. In none of his sufferings did Job curse God or sin (1:22; 2:10), which was Satan's goal.

In other words, Job's response reinforces a principle of spiritual warfare that we talked about earlier. Satan has only the influence in our lives that we allow him to have. He cannot force us to do anything. When we resist him, he must leave (James 4:7).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

When you think about it, Job's testimony at the end of his ordeal is amazing.

What happened to Job brought him so much closer to God that by comparison he had known God before only as a passing acquaintance. How deeply do you long to know God, to be able to say, ""Now my eyes have seen you""?

Job 2:1-13

The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised. - Job 1:21

TODAY IN THE WORD

According to some, the world hangs in a precarious balance between forces of good and evil. One can only hope that things will turn out all right in the end. Given current events, this view is understandable. The problem is that this view is contrary to biblical reality, where there's no doubt that God's victory is certain because Satan is a defeated enemy.

The picture given in Job 1 and 2 is not a balanced scale that might tip either toward good or evil! Instead, Satan must receive permission to carry out his destructive plans. This point is crucial to a correct view of human suffering. God sets the boundaries ... period.

These first two chapters of Job reveal a larger framework for understanding human suffering. Job only sees what's happening on earth, but the book of Job lets us see what's happening in heaven. Thus, the human experience of suffering is not the full story. Rather, God is actively accomplishing His own purposes even, or perhaps especially, when those who suffer are unaware of it.

Job 2 shows us more of Satan's cynical view of faith. Satan's motto would be, "When the going gets tough, the 'tough' desert God." It's impossible for him to understand how someone could remain faithful to God, even to the point of death (v. 4). (The expression "skin for skin" probably reflects Satan's view that Job's initial suffering had not really touched his body.) But the sovereign Lord has confidence in Job's character and the example he will be to others who remain faithful despite horrific circumstances.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

It's easy to miss the impact of verse 13. Job's friends' silence could seem cold and heartless. After all, aren't friends supposed to speak words of comfort? Well, not always. Sometimes there really isn't anything that can be said. Sometimes the best thing we can do is to sit silently with those who suffer and allow ourselves to enter into their pain. Sometimes our silent presence is our best and most caring ministry.

Job 3:1-26

My tears have been my food day and night, while men say to me all day long, "Where is your God?" - Psalm 42:3

TODAY IN THE WORD

In his book, *Epitome*, the Roman historian Cassius Dio recorded that one of Emperor Hadrian's enemies uttered the following curse just before his execution by order of the emperor: "... As for Hadrian, this is my only prayer, that he may long for death but be unable to die."

With all that Job had experienced, he might have felt that he had somehow received this dreadful curse. At least he believed that if he'd never been born, he would be experiencing the peace that now eluded him (v. 13). (In verses 13 and 14, we find a vague reference to the afterlife, although Job's understanding of it is not precise.) It's important to note that although Job curses the day of his birth, he never curses God, as Satan predicted he would.

Job's speech makes it clear that he "tells it like it is." These may not be the words we'd expect of a believer, but they're an honest reflection of Job's heart. Instead of worrying about the right kind of prayer, Job pours out his heart before the Lord without caring if his words were pious or theologically correct! Like the psalmist who wrote today's key verse, the depth of Job's confidence before the Lord is found in his freedom to lay bare his wounded soul.

Today's passage also begins a series of speeches that alternate between Job and his three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. As we'll see, Job's speeches offer true wisdom about suffering, whereas his friends offer "conventional wisdom" that sounds good, but actually reflects some very faulty views of God.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

As noted earlier, a common perception among Christians is that honest, deep despair somehow reflects a lack of faith. Sometimes we hear that if we were really trusting the Lord, then we'd always be joyful.

Job 4:1-21

Those who plow evil and those who sow trouble reap it. - Job 4:8

TODAY IN THE WORD

You've probably heard people say, "Well, they only got what they deserved!" or "What goes around, comes around!" Common sense suggests that there's a cause and effect relationship between people's actions and the events that occur in their life. To some extent this is true--after all, we read in Galatians 6:7, "A man reaps what he sows." The problem is that this principle cannot be applied blindly to every person or to every situation.

This is exactly what's wrong with the approach of the first of Job's friends, Eliphaz. For him, it's clear why Job suffered: Job must have sinned. In the ancient world, most people believed that suffering was due to sin, in the same way that material abundance confirmed that a person was good. So Job's affliction would have been seen as God's judgment. This way of thinking is sometimes called "retribution theology."

Eliphaz's words show why the first two chapters of Job stressed his righteous character and his blameless conduct. As we noted, this prologue showed that Job's suffering was not the result of sin. Moreover, as readers, we have been allowed to "overhear" the heavenly council, so we know that there are divine purposes at work, although Job and his friends have not been given the same insight.

Throughout the book, each of the friends' speeches is followed by a reply from Job. This juxtaposition contrasts conventional versus true wisdom. Each of the three friends will present common, but wrong, views on suffering. Job, on the other hand, will reveal a deeper view of God and the mysteries of suffering. Job is not always right, but he is real and offers many helpful insights.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

The story of the man born blind in John 9 makes it clear that many illnesses are not the result of sin (see especially John 9:1-5). This account reveals that suffering can bring glory to God.

Job 6:1-13; 7:11-21

How long, O Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Why do you tolerate wrong? - Habakkuk 1:2-3

TODAY IN THE WORD

Medical experts warn that repressed anger can cause headaches, nausea, or other health problems. Perhaps because of this, there are many who encourage people to stop bottling up their anger and to let it all out. The problem with this approach, however, is that anger can be very destructive--both to the angry person and to those around. So what are we to do with our anger, especially as Christians? Job can help us out here.

Job begins his second speech by explaining why he has cried out so bitterly. When the full extent of his suffering is understood, it's no wonder he has spoken rashly (6:3). He has moved from silence (Job 2), to lament (Job 3), to anger. Part of Job's anger is no doubt in response to Eliphaz's presumptuous accusations (see Job 6:14–30). But more importantly, Job's anger reflects his pain at being misunderstood and his deep confusion as to what is happening to him. Whereas he had once enjoyed God's favor and fellowship, it now seems that God's arrows and terrors are aimed at him (6:4). Under the crushing weight of his anguish, Job once again pleads that God might take his life.

The key to understanding Job's outburst is found in Job 6:10. Despite all that has happened and all that Job has said, he knows that he has not denied the Lord. There are several instructive observations to be made from this.

First, Job communicates his anger to God. He does not turn from God or deny Him. He doesn't take out his frustrations on others. Instead, he prays that the very One whose arrows are directed at him would graciously show him mercy.

Second, Job admits that he is angry with God. He does not understand what God is doing, and he's not afraid to let God know it. He doesn't pretend or try to cover his emotions.

Finally, Job realizes that he can't bottle up his frustration and fear (7:11). Here we find very honest, almost accusatory, words. But, and this is essential, these words reflect Job's heart; even in his anger, Job continues to talk to God.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

As we've noted, many Christians think that anger isn't an acceptable emotion. But honest anger directed to God is better than denial. Many prophets expressed honest anger with God. So we need to realize that pretending we aren't angry isn't acceptable. Instead, we need to learn how to express all our emotions to God. If we are ministering to one who is angry, perhaps the best thing we can do is to lead that person into the presence of the Lord where honest anger can be freely expressed.

Job 8:1-22

Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men. - Isaiah 29:13

TODAY IN THE WORD

In the popular musical, *Fiddler on the Roof*, the main characters, Tevye and his family, sing a rousing tribute to the backbone of their way of life ... tradition! There's no doubt about each family member's role because of tradition. All life's questions are settled by appealing to tradition.

If Job's friends were to sing from *Fiddler on the Roof*, then Bildad, the second of Job's friends to speak, would sing "Tradition!" For Bildad, the explanation for Job's suffering is found in the wisdom of the ancients. Like Eliphaz, Bildad believes that suffering is the result of some sin, either on the part of Job or his children. Therefore the solution to Job's problem must be repentance.

Bildad begins his speech by affirming God's perfect justice (vv. 2–7). Job would certainly agree with these statements, but he would deny that they fit his situation. Bildad's dogmatism leads him to suggest cruelly that Job's children brought their own deaths upon themselves (v. 4). Job 1, however, in no way indicates that Job's children had done anything worthy of death. Bildad goes on to claim that there's still time for Job to repent so that he will not suffer the same fate. Bildad simply cannot entertain the possibility that there could be any explanation for Job's suffering other than sin.

Bildad supports his claims by appealing to the wisdom of past generations (vv. 8–19). He cites proverbial statements about the fate of the godless. Just as papyrus reeds grow quickly but wither, and just as spider webs do not provide a solid foundation, so too the godless man will perish. The conclusion of these statements is that Job must be godless. If Job were as righteous as he claimed to be, then he would not be experiencing such suffering.

The conclusion of Bildad's speech most clearly shows his cause and effect thinking. If Job simply repents, his material wealth will be restored. As we have already noted, not every difficult circumstance is the consequence of sin. But, in Bildad's tidy theology, there's no possibility for a faith-building trial ordained by God.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Bildad's intentions may have been good, but his approach leaves much to be desired. Because of his rigid dogmatism, Bildad can only understand Job's searching questions as blasphemy and can only exhort repentance. But Job has not denied God. Job isn't perfect, but his questions reflect the honest doubts of a sincere believer. This encourages us that questions do not indicate a lack of faith, especially when those questions are directed to God. This also encourages us that repentance may not be the solution to every problem.

Job 8:1-22

Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright. - Job 1:8

TODAY IN THE WORD

It seemed like a long nightmare: within a few months, one family endured the deaths of a grandmother and a teen-aged niece; then while at a Christmas Eve service, their house burned down taking their four beloved dogs and most of their possessions.

In times of ravaging grief, sorrow, and loss, it's natural to wonder if we've lost the blessing of God. Thankfully, Scripture isn't shy about confronting this issue—the Psalms record painfully honest laments and the search for God in these times. Perhaps the most extensive discussion of God's presence in affliction is found in the book of Job.

The context for our reading today is important. Chapter 1 gives us the behind-the-scenes reality unknown to Job and his friends. As devastation strikes Job, he and his friends are left to wonder why he is suffering. Today's passage records one of the speeches of his friend Bildad. Under the guise of "encouragement," Bildad was quite sure he knew the reason for Job's anguish. He declared that clearly this was the result of Job's sin (v. 4).

He argued that if Job would just get right with God, he would see material blessings come flooding back into his life (vv. 6-7). Bildad had made an incorrect connection between a righteous life and material prosperity. In fact, it was the same mistake that Satan had made (1:9-11).

We find in Job's story some helpful principles regarding material possessions as blessings from God. First, the loss of material things does not necessarily mean the loss of God's favor (1:12). God rejected Bildad's arguments, pointing out that Bildad had not represented God truthfully (42:7). Second, God does sometimes choose to bless His people materially (42:12). We cannot look only at someone's wealth or poverty and make assumptions about their spiritual condition. Job himself sums up our proper attitude toward the "stuff" in our life: "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised" (1:21).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

The speeches of Job's friends provide a warning for those of us who find ourselves coming alongside friends who are in distress. Before we spout out our opinions, theories, or judgments, we should be sure that we are reflecting God's truth. The Lord takes seriously the ministry of binding up the brokenhearted, and sometimes our best recourse is simply to mourn with those who mourn (Rom. 12:15). If you have a friend who is struggling, seek God's wisdom and grace to minister in accordance with God's truth.

Job 9:1-24

Since I am already found guilty, why should I struggle in vain? - Job 9:29

TODAY IN THE WORD

The American institution of trial by jury is foundational to the governance of our country. The underlying premise of this system is, of course, that a person is presumed innocent until proven guilty. Although we rightly retain our confidence in this system, many people have recently voiced concern about the growing power of the "court of public opinion." With increased media attention, some people claim that high-profile defendants have a harder time getting a fair trial.

Job would likely agree with these sentiments. He challenges his friends that they have already judged him to be guilty before hearing his "case." Because they've already reached a verdict, they aren't really listening to him.

Job's third speech draws upon the image of a courtroom, where he feels judged by both God and his friends. He begins by readily acknowledging the justice of God, just as he has done all along. At this point, Job agrees with some of the assessments of his friends. Job is also well aware of the sovereign power of the Lord. His statements in verses 4–13 all affirm the mightiness of God the Creator. But the justice and power of God lead Job to despair for he knows that no one can resist the power of God unscathed (v. 4).

Clearly Job resents being on trial by his friends, but he is terrified to bring his defense before the Lord. He knows that he can't even find adequate words for an argument with God (v. 14). God is even more powerful than Rahab, a mythical sea creature and an ancient symbol of uncontrollable natural and supernatural force. Even so, Job's desperation drives him to spill out his accusations against the Lord (v. 13). It's clearly wrong for Job to accuse the Lord of mocking the despair of the innocent (v. 23) and of being unfair (v. 24).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

As we get to know Job's friends, it's easy to be put off by their insensitivity and dogmatism. But it's always good to stop and ask

ourselves if we are acting the same way. Are there people in our lives who are going through very difficult circumstances? Have we come to conclusions about why they have ended up where they are? Have we reached a verdict without giving them a fair trial? Like Job, most people want a chance to be heard and understood before they are convicted.

Job 11:1-20

Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart. - Ecclesiastes 5:2

TODAY IN THE WORD

The Austrian author Robert Musil once wrote, "Philosophers are people who do violence, but have no army at their disposal, and so subjugate the world by locking it into a system." This may not be true of all philosophers, but in the case of Zophar, the final of Job's friends to speak, it's rather appropriate.

Zophar is the most critical in his approach. He tries to lock Job into the same system as his friends, namely that suffering comes from sin, so the solution must be repentance. We have now seen this three times: from Eliphaz (5:17), from Bildad (8:20), and from Zophar (11:14).

In the first part of his speech (vv. 2–6), Zophar dismisses Job's words as idle chatter. He can't hear Job's anguished cries in the context of despair, but rather focuses only on Job's bold outbursts and questions. He accuses Job of being self-righteous and mistakenly charges Job of claiming to be flawless and pure before God. Yet neither of these claims can be found in Job's earlier speeches. Zophar prays that God would rebuke Job. At the end of Job, this is exactly what happens, but Zophar and his two companions are also roundly rebuked as well!

Zophar rightly claims that humans can't presume to know God's ways (vv. 7–12). But he also implies that humans shouldn't even question God's ways (v. 10). As we have noted earlier, Job has doubted and challenged God, but he has not mocked Him as Zophar claims. Additionally, Zophar harshly says that a witless (or ungodly) man could never have the wisdom to know God's ways.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Much of what Zophar says is doctrinally correct, but he lacks compassion. He has heard Job's words, but not his heart. Part of what may be motivating Job's friends is their own fears: if suffering comes from sin, then maybe they can avoid suffering if they avoid sin. But Job's situation is much deeper than that, and it defies pat answers.

Job 13:1-28; 14:13-17

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? - Psalm 22:1

TODAY IN THE WORD

Sometimes even well-intentioned Christians can hold simplistic views of God. For example, we might hear a sports star claim after an upset victory that he had prayed and knew that the Lord would give him victory. Now it's entirely right to give God the glory, but the implication here is that God's answer could only have been victory. What if defeat had been part of the divine plan?

This is an important point to ponder. Job's friends were no doubt well-intentioned, but they had a rather simplistic theology. For them, it wasn't possible both to be in God's will and experience suffering. Consequently, they ended up being judgmental of those who suffered.

Today's passage is actually the middle section of a long speech by Job. In the first part (Job 12), he replies to Zophar, in essence, saying, "Tell me something that I don't already know!" Job knew that God's wisdom was beyond comprehension. And he knew that repentance was the answer to sin. But he also knew that life was much more complicated than his friends were willing to admit. Their heartless response to his suffering provokes some rather sharp accusations (Job 13:4–12). If they were experiencing what he was, how would they fare?

Despite his friends' claims, Job knows that he is not sinless (v. 23), but he doesn't believe that his sin merits his suffering. Job realizes that a truly godless man would have no confidence to come before God (v. 16). Yet, though God may slay him, Job realizes that he has nowhere else to turn.

So again, Job comes before the Lord and asks for a fair hearing (vv. 20–28). These verses reveal how isolated Job feels from God. Whereas he once enjoyed fellowship, he now feels as if God has become his enemy.

In his current state, Job once again laments the frailty of his humanity. But for the first time, we find a glimmer of hope (Job 14:15–17). Job is beginning to envision a time when he will be restored to God. This is his first glimpse of the light at the end of the tunnel.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Like Job, many believers eventually encounter a sense that somehow God is not there or that He doesn't care . Take some time today to reflect on part of a poem that Mary Kimbrough wrote, based on Job 13:15: "Though He slay me"--can I say it / When I feel the searing fire, / When my fondest dreams lie shattered -- / Gone my hope and fond desire? "Though He slay me, I will trust Him," / For He knows just how to mold, / How to melt and shape my spirit -- / I shall then come forth as gold!

Job 15:1-35

When words are many, sin is not absent. - Proverbs 10:19

TODAY IN THE WORD

The January 1997 issue of Money magazine published the results of a survey in which people were asked whether the Panama Canal or the Suez Canal was longer, and how sure they were of their answer. Among those who were 60 percent certain, half got the answer right. But among those who were 90 percent sure, only 65 percent got the answer right. In this group, although people had a greater degree of confidence in their answer, fewer were actually correct.

The survey results could have helped Eliphaz, whose speech begins round two of the debate between Job and his friends. Eliphaz was probably 100 percent certain of his response to Job, but he was actually mistaken on some key points. You may recall from Eliphaz's first speech (see Sept. 5) that the essence of religion was that people got what they deserved: suffering comes to sinners, and rewards come to the righteous.

Eliphaz's second speech continues this theme. Even if Job were blameless at the outset of his suffering, his recent outbursts surely made him worthy of judgment now. Eliphaz has no way of reconciling Job's "empty notions" and "hot east wind" with the conduct of a wise man.

Eliphaz believes that Job is dangerous because his questions seem to undermine the foundations of religion, as Eliphaz understands it. That's Eliphaz's point in verses 7–16. He charges Job of presuming to be wiser than the ancients or of claiming to have some special wisdom. In verse 14, Eliphaz attacks Job's claim that his suffering is not the result of sin. In essence, he says, "No one is righteous." We can readily agree with this statement, but we must reject Eliphaz's simple equation that all suffering is the result of sin.

As Eliphaz continues (vv. 17–35), he notes that the ancients made clear the fate of the wicked. His speech may include specific references to Job's situation, such as the loss of riches (v. 29) and vitality (v. 33). In general, however, his views represent the retribution theology common in the ancient world, and they are still found in some circles today.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Unfortunately, as Job increases his efforts to explain himself to his friends, they become less and less tolerant.

Job 16:18-17:16

We have one who speaks to the Father in our defense--Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. - 1 John 2:1

TODAY IN THE WORD

In law, an advocate is a professional who pleads the cause of another in a court of law. In the American legal system, this is usually a lawyer. In the Bible, courtroom imagery is frequent. In the prophets, we often find God bringing charges against His sinful people, but here we find Job acting as his own advocate, pleading his case before the Lord.

Today's passage contains part of Job's fifth speech. In the opening section (16:1–17), Job expresses his exasperation with his friends. He questions what kind of comforters they really are (16:4–6). We also find another honest expression of Job's anger with God when he falsely accuses the Lord of turning him over to wicked men (16:11).

In the first part of today's passage (16:18–17:2), Job implores the earth to avenge his suffering. In the cosmic courtroom, Job recognizes that creation bears witness to human actions. More importantly, Job realizes that the only one who can defend his case is to be found in heaven. The Hebrew word that translates as witness (v. 19) refers to one who knows the innocence of the accused and who will see that justice is done.

There is considerable debate concerning the Hebrew text in verse 20, which could either refer positively to God or negatively to Job's friends. Either way, we see Job's confidence that he would ultimately find justice, if not in this life, then beyond it. Despite the fact that his friends misunderstand him (17:3–12), implicit in Job's words is his understanding that God is the One to whom he must

turn.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

The exact identity of Job's heavenly advocate is unclear to him. Job simply knows that there is One in heaven who will defend his case before God.

Although this individual may have been unclear to him, we can look back at Job and see a heart longing for Jesus Christ. Today's verse from 1 John concisely states this aspect of Jesus' identity: He is the one who pleads our case before the Father. Although we may be misunderstood on earth, there is One in heaven who knows us perfectly.

Job 18:1-21

Will your long-winded speeches never end? - Job 16:3

TODAY IN THE WORD

It goes without saying that nobody likes a temper tantrum. Crying, yelling, and flailing of arms and legs--this is no time for rational discussion! People often claim that temper tantrums are a toddler's attempt to get attention, but some experts claim that children have tantrums when they hit a point of intense frustration. They may be trying to do something as simple as tying their shoes or as normal as asserting their independence. Whatever the cause, a temper tantrum is not a pleasant experience.

Unfortunately, Job's friend, Bildad, would like to dismiss Job's recent behavior as a series of adult temper tantrums. According to Bildad, Job thinks that if he gets angry enough, he can change the laws of creation, such as the placement of rocks (v. 4). He exhorts Job to stop his foolish outbursts and to be sensible.

As we noted before (see Sept. 7), Bildad is a traditionalist. In his second speech, today's passage, he returns to the same tune he sang the first time around, namely that the fate of the wicked has been clearly spelled out. Although he does not appeal to the ancients in this speech, he reiterates many of the points that he made the first time, based on the wisdom of the ancients. His speech reads like a series of well-worn proverbs. Each point that Bildad makes has some correspondence with the events of Job 1 and 2, so it's clear that Bildad sees Job as the wicked man of these proverbial statements.

His current charge to Job, "Be sensible, and then we can talk," sounds good at first. But being sensible for Bildad means agreeing that the root of Job's problem is sin and the solution is repentance. So Bildad reminds Job--one more time--of the horrors that await those who refuse to repent and who do not know God (v. 21).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

We might wonder why the same arguments concerning suffering and sin are repeated so much in Job. Perhaps it's because these faulty viewpoints are so popular, both in Job's day and in our own. Bildad has only one way of looking at the world, and he refuses to reconsider his position when things don't line up with it. If we're getting tired of hearing the same thing, imagine how painful it is for the one who is suffering innocently to be told again and again, "Repent, and everything will be fine."

Job 19:21-29

I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. - Job 19:25

TODAY IN THE WORD

Rick Husband, an astronaut, left a note with the leaders at his church in Houston, to be read to the congregation in the event of his death. That day came last year, after the Columbia space shuttle mission he commanded burned up on reentry, killing all seven aboard. "Tell them about Jesus," the note said, "He means everything to me." His pastor commented afterwards, "Rick Husband is probably the godliest man I've ever met. He was such a lover of God and a worker for God, a kind person to everyone else."

Faith in the face of suffering and loss is tough. How can we trust God when everything goes wrong? Rick Husband knew, and so did Job. He probably lived about 2000 b.c., during the time of the patriarchs. The description of his wealth is impressive, but even more striking is his faith.

Then Job lost his family, his possessions, and his health. But he didn't lose his faith. Even when his wife urged him to "Curse God and die!" (2:9), and even when his so-called friends argued with him, he held fast to his trust in the Lord.

Job proclaimed God's sovereignty. He understood that everything that had happened to him had come from the powerful, incomprehensible, "hand of God" (v. 21; cf. 1:21; 42:3). He could have complained about people, circumstances, fate, or lesser causes, but he didn't do that. He knew the buck stopped with the Lord.

Job also demonstrated faith in divine fairness and justice. He knew he didn't deserve to suffer. He had complete confidence that God would vindicate him against his friends' accusations. He believed God judges perfectly—the unjust events he had experienced didn't change that. Even if he had to wait until after death, he knew he would be declared righteous and his friends would be condemned (vv. 25, 28-29).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Through the years many believers have seen Christ standing at the center of Job's climactic statement of hope and faith in the midst of trials and hardships.

Job 19:1-29

I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. - Job 19:25

TODAY IN THE WORD

One of the most touching Bible stories is that of Ruth and Boaz. You may recall that Ruth was the daughter-in-law of the Israelite Naomi. Because both Ruth and Naomi were widowed, they returned to the ancestral home of Naomi's husband. According to Israelite custom, Ruth hoped to marry one of her late husband's relatives to preserve the family inheritance. Eventually that person turned out to be Boaz, who acted as a kinsman-redeemer for Ruth and Naomi.

The responsibilities of this human redeemer included avenging a family member's murder or effecting the release of a relative forced into debt bondage. But the kinsman-redeemer also pictured God Himself, who released the nation from Egypt. Today's passage gives another powerful picture of God as our Redeemer.

After Bildad's speech (see yesterday's study), Job's sharp reply is no surprise. But as we look carefully at Job's and Bildad's words, we observe an important difference. For all Bildad's piety, his view of God is actually distant. Bildad talks a lot about God, but we don't sense that he's talking to God. Job, on the other hand, sees God actively involved in his plight and often speaks directly to God. Job doesn't abstractly say that the wicked are caught in a trap. Instead, he says that God has trapped him (v. 6)! Job feels utterly abandoned by God (vv. 7–12), by his friends and family (vv. 13–14), and by guests and servants (vv. 15–16), and he is unafraid to say so. In his cries, we find an echo of the suffering servant of Isaiah 53:3, which pictures Jesus' own innocent suffering.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

It's hard to match the exalted words of Job 19:25–27. They have inspired several beautiful hymns, including the beautiful soprano aria in Handel's Messiah.

Job 19:26

TODAY IN THE WORD

After John Quincy Adams, the sixth president of the United States, suffered a stroke in 1846, a friend asked him about his health. Adams replied, "I inhabit a weak, frail, decayed tenement; battered by the winds and broken in upon by the storms, and from all I can learn, the landlord does not intend to repair."

Adams was only half-right. Although the believer's body may be a tenement that God does not intend to repair, it is a dwelling place that He plans to rebuild. At the resurrection the believer will receive an entirely reconstructed body.

Job 19:23-27

I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. - Job 19:25

TODAY IN THE WORD

Representatives of several Western humanitarian organizations are dealing with Arab slave traders and middlemen in the north African nation of Sudan. The visitors bring stacks of Sudanese currency to dusty meeting places, using the money to buy back and set free women and children kidnapped and enslaved by Muslim raiders. The slaves are mostly Christians living in southern Sudan, and they are defenseless against the heavily armed raiders. Most of the families of those enslaved are also far too poor to redeem their loved ones from servitude.

This program of buying back slaves in Sudan illustrates the concept of redemption. The name ""Redeemer"" celebrates the wonderful truth that God has bought us out of slavery and set us free. But redemption comes at a cost. It took an unbelievably high price to redeem us: the blood of Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:17) poured out in His death.

The Old Testament word translated ""redeemer"" is the kinsman-redeemer, illustrated so beautifully in the story of Ruth and Boaz (Ruth 4:1-12). The kinsman-redeemer would pay the price to restore the redeemed person's fortunes, and become that person's defender and protector.

Job needed a defender. He was defending his innocence in the face of his friends' accusations, and he longed for the day when his Redeemer would stand up as a witness to Job's innocence. Then everyone would know Job was not guilty of sin.

This was not arrogance or self-confidence. Job's confidence was in God the Redeemer. Job knew that even after he was dead, his Redeemer would live on. Job also expected to see God after his death. There is some debate as to how clearly verse 26 anticipates the New Testament doctrine of a bodily resurrection. Yet Job was confident that he himself (v. 27a is emphatic) would see God beyond the grave.

Job's confidence was well placed. It's inconceivable that the God who paid such a high price to redeem us would allow us to be dragged back into the devil's market and sold into slavery again. Jesus paid the price for our freedom, and our redemption is for eternity!

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Because we belong to the Redeemer we can't be enslaved again. But sometimes we can live like people who are still in chains.

Sin has an enslaving power to it, even for Christians. If we play around with sin at all, it will soon tie us up. Take the opportunity today to do serious soul searching and make sure there is no ""pet"" or hidden sin lingering around the edges of your life.

Job 20:1-29

How long will you torment me and crush me with words? Ten times now you have reproached me. - Job 19:2-3

TODAY IN THE WORD

In music, a composition often presents a musical theme and then follows up with successive variations on that theme. A good example of this technique is Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. The final movement repeats and develops various themes that were introduced in the first and third movements. Parts of this symphony can even be heard in several of Beethoven's earlier works, such as his Choral Fantasy, Opus 80.

In the "symphony" of speeches given by Job's friends, all three play a variation on the same theme. The theme is "retribution theology," and the variants include "You reap what you sow," or "Suffering is the result of sin." The fact that Zophar repeats his own variation shows how little he has heard Job. About the only thing that Zophar has heard is Job's rebuke. It seems he cares more about his own reputation than about Job's spiritual well-being. The wording of verses 2 and 3 also suggests that Zophar is only interacting with his own thoughts and understanding. He's hardly the model of active listening!

Zophar is likely reacting to Job's warning of judgment (19:25-27). For Zophar, Job has rejected God by questioning the way that He administers justice. So Zophar condescendingly reminds Job of the obvious fact that from the beginning of time, as everyone knows, the joy of the wicked is fleeting and their life short-lived (vv. 6-8).

But Zophar presents only part of the story. In reality, the way of all humanity is brief, as Psalm 103:15-16 and other verses attest. At least Job has understood that despite the brevity of human existence, there is an afterlife where final reward or judgment occurs.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

None of Job's friends could grasp the idea of innocent suffering, but it is very important that we understand this essential theological point. As we noted, much of Job's suffering anticipates the undeserved suffering of our Lord. Take some time today to read through Isaiah 52:13-53:12, which describe the Suffering Servant. Take note of the ways that Job's experience parallels the circumstances of our Lord. For example, both were rejected by family and misunderstood by friends. Both looked to God in heaven for their vindication.

Job 21:1-34

He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. - Matthew 5:45

TODAY IN THE WORD

From 1945 to 1949, the world followed with intense interest the Nuremberg war crimes trials. Hundreds of Nazi officers, such as Hans Frank, the so-called "Butcher of Krakow," and Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop were tried and convicted. Yet despite efforts to track down and prosecute war criminals, the fact remains that some perpetrators escaped justice and quietly blended back

into mainstream society. They took on new identities and led normal lives. In the end, they died, apparently never paying for their awful crimes.

This is only one example of the particularly difficult question that theologians call “theodicy.” Why is there evil in the world? Related to this is the question of why the wicked seem to get away with their wrongdoing. There’s no easy answer to this problem, and this fact forms the basis of Job’s reply to round two of his friends’ speeches. In this speech, for the first time, Job does not address the Lord, but instead counters his friends’ claims. This speech is also much less emotional.

The biggest problem with retribution theology, Job begins, is that it doesn’t really explain the ways of the world. As he looks around, he finds numerous examples of the wicked prospering. They grow old (v. 7), they are safe (v. 9), and they are successful (vv. 8, 10–11). What’s more, they die happy (v. 13), even though they deny God. The picture that Job paints here is similar to the one that Eliphaz drew of the good man (5:17–27), so it may be that Job intends a deliberate contrast. Ironically, Job’s friends have accused him of opposing God by challenging His ways, but it is they themselves who have been, in essence, telling God how the world should be run.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

The book of Job doesn’t answer the problem of evil. We need to look elsewhere in Scripture to consider various aspects of this difficult question. Psalm 73 is a good place to start. Here the psalmist considers the apparent success of the wicked and wonders if he has been faithful in vain. The turning point comes in v. 17, where the psalmist begins to understand the final destiny of the wicked beyond this life. Then his heart is encouraged, as he considers his own eternal destiny with the Lord.

Job 22:1-30

A despairing man should have the devotion of his friends. - Job 6:14

TODAY IN THE WORD

One of the most popular recent TV shows, *Friends*, followed the lives of three men and three women who were close friends living in New York City. For five of the ten years this show ran, it ranked the number-one comedy show among adults aged 18–49. Much of the program’s success no doubt has to do with the desire all of us have for close-knit, supportive friendships.

Such friendship is what Job wanted from his three friends. Instead, in this final round of speeches, we find that Job’s friends leave much to be desired.

Eliphaz’s final speech is especially sad. It’s clear that he really cares about Job. While he has misdiagnosed the problem, he’s concerned for the patient. But he’s frustrated. Consequently, he’s becomes harsh, even cruel.

He begins by refuting Job’s idea that God is indifferent to the ways of the wicked. He claims that God doesn’t determine if a person is good or bad—he gains no benefit from the affairs of humans because He is the Almighty (vv. 2–4). Instead, success or failure lies within individuals. Therefore, Job’s claim that he suffers innocently is unthinkable.

Because Eliphaz hasn’t found real examples of sin in Job’s life, he invents some. He accuses Job of being wicked (v. 5), unjust to family members (v. 6), and uncaring to the poor and oppressed (v. 7–9). With his tidy list, Eliphaz confidently asserts that Job is now getting what he deserves (vv. 10–11). But if Job had done such cruelties, everyone would have seen it.

Eliphaz accuses Job of concealing his sin from both God and his friends. He seems to respond to Job’s claim that the wicked go unpunished in this life (see yesterday’s study) by suggesting that Job is like that godless person. Even more cruelly, Eliphaz implies that he rejoices in the ruin that Job apparently deserves (v. 19).

Eliphaz concludes his speech with his familiar appeal to repent. As we read carefully through this final section (vv. 22–30), we find more than one suggestion of a “salvation by works” mentality.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

It’s clearly right for Eliphaz to care about correct doctrine, namely that sin doesn’t go unpunished. But it’s wrong for him to insist on only one way of viewing things.

Job 23:1-24:12

If only I knew where to find him; if only I could go to his dwelling. - Job 23:3

TODAY IN THE WORD

The story of Martin Luther is one of the most inspiring in history. After nearly being struck by lightning, Luther entered a monastery in 1508, hoping to find a deeper relationship with God. But over the next few years, despite all Luther's efforts, he felt that God was not only distant, but that His wrath burned against Luther. Unable to meet the demands of the Mosaic law, Luther finally came to the realization that salvation was possible only through faith in Jesus Christ.

In today's passage, we find a similar yearning for God. Job laments that he can't find God, and his complaint remains bitter (23:2). Despite all the words that have passed between Job and his friends, Job has not given up his conviction that his only hope is to be heard before God. Although Job has said some harsh things about God and although he now believes that God is difficult to find, Job retains his steadfast belief that a righteous man can ultimately find justice with God (vv. 6–7).

More importantly, Job recognizes that God knows the truth about his life (v. 10), and that He is purifying Job by using this trial. Here Job articulates one possible divine purpose for suffering, namely, the testing of our faith and our sanctification. Still, Job is unafraid to admit that in the meantime, God seems to have His hand against Job, which makes him faint of heart (v. 16). Job implies that if God can be found, it must be a gift.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Job's bold declaration about the path that he has followed (23:11–12) is a powerful example for all believers. Despite his trials, Job has maintained three practices that are vital for the life of a believer. First, he has continued to follow God's ways: he has not forsaken the Lord as Satan had predicted, and he has not sought the counsel of unbelievers. Instead, he has continued to walk steadfastly with the Lord. Second, Job has kept God's commands. Third, Job has continued to treasure God's Word in his heart.

Job 36:1-7; 36:22-37:26

He is wooing you from the jaws of distress to a spacious place free from restriction. - Job 36:16

TODAY IN THE WORD

When it first began over twenty years ago, no one anticipated the popularity of The Weather Channel. The idea of an entire cable station devoted to the weather was a bit risky. But today, it's not that uncommon to hear people confess that they enjoy watching The Weather Channel, even beyond the local forecast. Perhaps people are fascinated by the weather because, despite modern technology, it remains somewhat unpredictable and mysterious. Forecasters can still be surprised by tornadoes or a hurricane's path. This is a good reminder that God retains final control of His creation.

This is the point that Elihu makes in the conclusion of his speech. At last, we find some softening in his words, although his presumptuous claim that God has spoken directly to him implies that God hasn't spoken to Job or the other three.

We find increased sensitivity toward Job as Elihu acknowledges that the afflicted need not necessarily be sinful (v. 6). Thus Elihu also introduces a whole new idea by stating that God does not just give affliction as punishment, but that he "woos" the afflicted and heals them. For the first time, the idea is presented that God is compassionate and brings people into a new understanding of the world through suffering that heals.

Although Elihu may have started off a bit arrogant in the first part of his speech (see yesterday's study), he certainly ends it on a glorious note. The second part of today's reading focuses on the sheer wonder of who God is (vv. 22–26). To illustrate God's wonder, Elihu offers a marvelous description of a mighty thunderstorm, in which the deafening sounds of thunder appear as God's voice. At such a display, Elihu can only marvel. The point of this weather lesson is to show that God is in complete control. The series of questions that follow show that Job is not!

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

As we noted, Elihu's speech has shifted the discussion's focus. Job's first three friends looked for reasons to explain his suffering, hoping to find some hidden sin in Job. But Elihu begins to look upward, anticipating what God might be doing. He doesn't ask "Why?" but "What?" ... "What

Job 38:1-11

Our God is a consuming fire. - Hebrews 12:29

TODAY IN THE WORD

In the beloved classic books, The Chronicles of Narnia, one of C. S. Lewis's characters, Mr. Beaver, offers a profoundly insightful picture of Christ, portrayed in the books as Aslan the Lion. Mr. Beaver says, "One day you'll see him [Aslan] and another you won't.

He doesn't like being tied down--and of course he has other countries to attend to. It's quite all right. He'll drop in. Only you mustn't press him. He's wild, you know. Not like a tame lion."

Not like a tame lion. That's what Job must now learn. God doesn't govern His universe as Job, or anyone, else thinks He should, but according to His unsearchable wisdom. God isn't "tame"--He speaks to Job out of the storm--but He is perfectly good and completely loving.

So, when Job finally gets the audience with the Lord that he requested, he's not the one asking the questions! Instead, like a prosecuting attorney, the Lord fires off the questions and informs Job, "You will answer me" (38:3). God challenges Job's insinuation that He wasn't administering justice fairly. This interrogation covers Job 38 and 39, but it could be paraphrased in this one penetrating question: "Were you present at creation?" (38:4). Of course, Job wasn't. Therefore, Job isn't in a position to accuse the Lord of being unjust or unloving.

To be fair, Job has had a few moments of brilliance in understanding God's wisdom and perfection (see Job 28). But he's also slipped into pride because he'd judged the Lord solely based on what he could see. He had failed to consider that there was more to the picture than what met his own eyes or came from his own understanding.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

As we come to the end of our study, it's a good idea to review some key points. Job is rebuked by the Lord, not because of some rebellious sin, but rather because he was unwilling to let God govern the universe as God sees fit. This is something that all of us must learn. Like Job, sincere followers of the Lord may encounter pain and suffering for no apparent reason. But like Job, we must realize that a trusting submission to God's greater purpose is required.

Job 40:1-14

We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. - Romans 8:28

TODAY IN THE WORD

We all know how easy it is to be critical. Whether we're in work situations or personal relationships, we're all pretty good at finding faults in others! Seeing the problem is usually the easy part--but when it comes right down to it, it's often hard to come up with positive suggestions to improve the situation.

In today's passage, we find the Lord taking Job to task for his harsh criticism of His ability to administer justice. In essence, the Lord says to Job, "If you're going to be so critical, then show Me that you could do a better job!"

Recall from yesterday's study that Job finally got his demand for a personal encounter with the Lord. But rather than Job questioning the Lord, the Lord cross-examined Job! This first series of questions ends with a stern rebuke: If you want to accuse the Almighty, then you'd better be prepared to answer Him (v. 2)!

And what answer does Job have? Not the one that he thought he'd have. Instead, Job is speechless. He begins to realize his own unworthiness as well as his limitations in understanding God.

You'd think that the Lord's next response to Job might be a little harsh. Instead, He repeats the exact same exhortation that He uttered before the first cross-examination: "Let him who accuses God answer him" (v. 7; cf. 38:3). The Lord continues to press Job because He knows that until the root of Job's pride is addressed, Job won't be able to enjoy the deep communion with God that he so longs for. To have Job simply stop speaking doesn't get to this root issue. In fact, it's possible that Job would just quietly smolder if the Lord didn't press hard. As Andrew Blackwood comments, "God desires, not Job's silent rebellion, but Job."

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Much of our focus has been on Job's innocent suffering, but Job isn't faultless. In fact, all of us have probably felt at some point that we could do a better job running the world than God. Job forces us to confront this pride.

Job 42:1-17

I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted. - Job 42:2

TODAY IN THE WORD

Missionary Carl Brown, who works in a Hindu country, relates the following story. A young woman, who had recently come to faith in Jesus Christ, began to take Bible classes. Soon after, she became quite ill. Her family told her this happened because she had

forsaken the local deities. So they kept her isolated and refused to help because they felt she was being punished.

When one of the Christian teachers found out about her condition, she rushed over and suspected a serious infection. Because they were convinced that she was cursed to death, the family agreed to let the Christian help the young woman. After receiving a series of antibiotics, the young woman made a full recovery and the entire village began to express interest in the Lord Jesus!

The belief that illness is judgment is common. As we have seen, Job's three friends were convinced of this. But the book of Job shows clearly that God can use suffering to bring people to a deeper understanding of Himself. Had this young Hindu woman not experienced her illness, an entire village might not have become interested in the Lord. Had Job not suffered, neither he nor his friends would have come to a truer understanding of the Lord.

After his long cross-examination, Job finally recognizes his own humility and the Lord's greatness. Job's statement in verse 6 reflects an ancient Israelite way of expressing sincere humility. Most importantly, Job experiences restoration with the Lord beyond all that he could imagine.

Job had never truly forsaken God, despite his friends' unjust claims. Now they must face the Lord and repent of the cruel things they said about the Lord and Job. What supreme irony that these "comforters" would now have to seek Job as an intercessor before the Lord (v. 1). But the Lord's charge to these three also forces Job to forgive them fully, as he must.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

As we conclude our study, we still haven't received a definite explanation for innocent suffering. The "why?" remains largely unanswered. But we have learned a lot about what God might be showing us, a deeper understanding of Him, or how He might be using suffering in our lives, to display His glory.

Job 42: 1-3; Psalm 115:1-3

All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth.
- Daniel 4:35

TODAY IN THE WORD

O Lord of Hosts, you are Lord alone. You have made the heavens and the earth and all living things that dwell there. Your hand is the soul of every living thing. I would come before you with worship and honor this day. In the name of Christ I pray. Amen.—Bob Benson Sr. and Michael Benson, *Disciplines for the Inner Life*

In his book, *The God Who Hears*, Bingham Hunter writes, "At its root, prayer grows from the certainty of God's omnipotence and sovereignty." If we didn't believe that the Lord was in charge, we probably wouldn't waste our time praying.

Yet many Christians struggle with God's sovereignty and the question, "Why don't I get what I pray for?" Sometimes unanswered prayer is the result of wrong motives, but some unanswered prayer simply defies our comprehension. For this reason, it's important to consider God's sovereignty along with His goodness.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

God's sovereignty and the mystery of unanswered prayer leads some Christians to ask, "Why bother to pray at all?" God's power could make prayer seem pointless, if the purpose of prayer were simply to get things done. Although popular sayings such as, "prayer changes things," are certainly well-intentioned, it might be better to say "God changes things" and "prayer changes us." This shifts the focus of prayer from results to relationship. Understanding God's sovereignty in this light enables us to pray with confidence, because we know that God is both sovereign and committed to our good.

"Prayer problems are usually not intellectual, but volitional," writes Bingham Hunter. Not surprisingly then, one of the ways prayer changes us is to align our will increasingly with the Father's will, which eventually brings us to a deeper level of submission to Him.

Take time today to ponder and reflect on God's sovereignty and prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any misunderstandings you may have. Then pray along with the following prayer:

Lord, I am yours; I do yield myself up entirely to you, and I believe that you do take me. I leave myself with you. Work in me all the good pleasure of your will, and I will only lie still in your hands and trust you. Amen.

—Hannah Whithall Smith, *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life*

Job 42:1-17

Now we see but a poor reflection ... then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully. - 1 Corinthians 13:12

TODAY IN THE WORD

In his book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, Viktor Frankl describes a life-changing experience he had soon after his liberation from a Nazi concentration camp. "One day ... I walked through the country past flowering meadows ... There was no one to be seen for miles around; there was nothing but the wide earth and sky and the lark's jubilation and the freedom of space. I stopped, looked around, and up to the sky-and then I went down on my knees... I had but one sentence in my mind-always the same: 'I called to the Lord from my narrow prison and He answered me in the freedom of space.' "

Job could have also offered such a prayer. The basic outline of the book of Job is fairly simple. Although blameless and upright (1:1), in a single day, Job lost his precious children and all his wealth. Then he lost his health. Through it all, he never cursed God, although he cursed his own life (3:1) and wrestled deeply with the Lord.

Many of Job's prayers are laments and pleas for God to reveal Himself. Consider this passage: "If only I knew where to find him; if only I could go to his dwelling! I would state my case before him... I would find out what he would answer me, and consider what he would say" (Job 23:3-5). Who hasn't felt this way at certain moments in life?

In response to Job's plea for God to answer him (31:35), the Lord did answer! But His answer was not as Job had expected. Using a tremendous storm and a series of probing questions, the Lord powerfully, yet graciously, revealed more of Himself to Job.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

"Biblical answers become our answers once biblical questions have become our questions," wrote Eugene LaVerdiere.

LIFE APPLICATIONS FROM EVERY CHAPTER OF THE BIBLE G. Campbell Morgan

Job 1:1

Job ... was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.--Job 1.1

That is the description of the man whose tremendous experiences are re-corded in this most wonderful Book. In the next five verses we have an account of his circumstances before the days of these experiences commenced. They constituted the accidentals. In these words we have the essentials. These are the thins of the man himself, the things of his character. It is difficult to imagine any higher praise. Two words tell the result, while two phrases reveal the secret. He was "perfect and upright": and that because he "feared God and turned away from evil." To recognize this at the outset, and never to forget it throughout the following consideration, is of vital importance. It will save us from the mistake of thinking at any point of those experiences as having their explanation in the man himself. Not for himself did he suffer., His pains were not penalties for wrong-doing: they were not even chastisements for correction. The soul of this perfect and upright man was a battleground between heaven and hell. A subtle and sinister lie of evil was met and silenced through his experiences. For a long period neither he nor his friends understood the deepest meaning of it all. We, however, are immediately admitted to the secret by the story of these first two chapters, with their account of the questions of Satan and the answers of .God. We see Job in these chapters bereft of all the things Satan said were necessary to his loyalty. We shall see him passing through great mental strain in the darkness. We shall see him emerge vindicating faith, and giving the lie to Satan. Thus we are taught that experiences through which loyal souls pass may have their explanation in some far-reaching purpose of God: and that suffering may be an honour conferred. In God's great tomorrow we shall have strange and glad surprises.

Job 2:13

None spake a word unto him; for they saw that his grief was very great. —Job 2.13.

This statement gives the true sanction for the use of the word friends, to describe these men. By this time in the narrative we have seen this man Job stripped of all the things of privilege on the level of earthly on. His property, his children, his health, and the comradeship of his wife in his faith were gone. He sat in appalling loneliness and desolation, and there was no gleam of interpreting light. He did not know of any reason for his sufferings. In that dark hour, all the acquaintances who had sunned themselves in his prosperity were conspicuous by their absence. But no, there were three men, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, and later a fourth, Elihu, who, hearing of his evil case, came to see him. They consulted together, and they came. 4lis condition touched them to the depths. They desired to comfort him. When they saw him, so changed was he that they knew him not. Then their grief found expression in tears. And then came the supreme evidence of friendship. For seven days they sat with him in silence. That is of the very essence of

friendship. Let it be remembered to their credit through all the study. They never spoke until he did. All they said was in answer to his first outpouring of grief, an outpouring made possible by their sublime and sympathetic silence. Their true friendship persisted through all the process. Their mistake was that of trying to find a solution. It was born of their satisfaction with their philosophy, the whole of which was true, but which was not all the truth. Nevertheless, their mistakes were the outcome of their friendship. It is impossible to think this through, without realizing how often the sympathy of a great silence is a far more blessed thing than any speech can be.

Job 3:1

After this opened Job his mouth, and cursed his day.—Job 3.1

This chapter records the first great out-pouring of complaint on the part of Job, and, as we have said, the opportunity for it was unquestionably created by the silent sympathy of his friends. That it is a terrible outcry, will not be denied. Taken as a whole, it was a cry for escape, rather than a description of his sorrows. These were patent, self-evident, even to the on looking friends, although they could not possibly fathom all the terrors through which he had passed, or those in the midst of which he was then living. Escape seemed the only desirable thing. There was no suggestion of seeking escape through death by his own act. But he had come to hate life. Therefore he cursed the day of his birth, and the night of his conception: he lamented that he had been preserved for such days as these: he celebrated the blessing-of death through which men escape the sorrows of life. At this point we are tempted to begin our criticism. We say none has any right to curse the day of his birth, or to lament the fact of his life. That is a cold argument—logical, and perhaps even true. But before we say a word, let us honestly place ourselves in similar circumstances. And at once let us say, and remember it throughout, that no word of God rebuked him. Moreover, let us gather the real value of this story, as it reveals to us the fact that there is relief in pouring out all the heart feels in moments of darkness. Such outpouring is a far more healthy thing for the soul than dark and silent brooding. Or to endeavour to remember the whole fact. Here was a man who through suffering which had no explanation to himself, was co-operating with God. The very agonies here expressed were part of that suffering co-operation. What a revelation this is of the greatness of man.

Job 4:18

He putteth no trust in His servants! And His angels He chargeth with folly.—Job 4.18

These words occur in the course of the first address of Eliphaz. In considering every one of these addresses of the friends of Job, we shall have to distinguish between the truths they uttered, and their failure to bring any help to Job. They were wonderful men, wonderful, that is, in the remarkable light and under-standing they possessed. I question whether any exception can be taken to anything they said. But there were so many things they did not know. They did not know the philosophy which would include the experiences of Job. Their persistent mistake was that of attempting to explain everything by their knowledge, which, spacious as it was, was altogether too narrow. Take these particular words. How true they are. So great is God, and so great the universe over which He reigns, that it is impossible for Him finally to trust in any other than Himself. In the ultimate, knowledge, even that of angels, is folly. It is all true, and reveals a very remarkable Apprehension of truth on the part of Eliphaz. But what bearing had such a statement on the case of Job? None whatever. Eliphaz thought it had, because his deduction was that such a God punishes evil. He was right so far. But when he concluded that all suffering was punishment, he was wrong. Of suffering as a way of working in the activity of God, and a way of co-operation on the part of man, he never dreamed. Yet that was going on before his eyes. His own statement was a rebuke, had he but known it. Even then God was charging him with folly.

Job 5:17

Happy is the man whom God correcteth: Therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty. Job 5.17.

Eliphaz is still speaking. We first note the inapplicability of these words to Job. God was not correcting him: the experiences through which he was passing were not of the nature of chastening. All his sufferings were produced by Satan, and permitted by God. In this permission God was honouring a man "perfect and upright," and who "feared God and eschewed evil," by admitting him to partnership in operations which at last would give the lie to evil, and indicate the greatness of the human soul. Recognizing that, we may then ponder the splendid truth which Eliphaz uttered in these words. God does correct man for wrong-doing: He does chasten His sons when by any disobedience they cease to be perfect and upright. When those who are His, depart from His fear, and compromise with evil, then by afflictions, pains, sorrows, He corrects, chastens, and so restores them. Happy indeed is the man who is the object of this severe, and yet gracious Divine solicitude and activity. The wisdom of such a man consists ever in submission to the chastisement. At the time it is never joyous but grievous: but afterwards it worketh the peaceable fruits of righteousness. God's eyes in great love are ever set upon that "afterward." What unutterable folly, if in such a case, we despise the chastening: that is, if we fail to yield ourselves to its intentions. To do so, is to prevent the peace toward which it is proceeding. Far better know the troubling that comes from God today, than the disaster of the troubles which come from our own waywardness and wickedness, unchecked by correction and chastisement.

Job 6:8

Oh, that I might have my request; And that God would grant me the thing that I long for. Job. 6.8.

The speech of Eliphaz added immeasurably to the anguish of Job. His friend misunderstood, and read the worst into the situation, attributing his sufferings to some sin in his life. Job knew that the deduction from his friend's philosophy was unjust. Even though he himself did not understand his sufferings, he knew that this solution was false. His anguish became anger, as the whole tone of this reply reveals. And what wonder? Can there be any experience of the soul more trying than that of having sin imputed by friends, when there is an inner consciousness of innocence? Tortured, by the injustice, these burning words escaped him: and those which follow give us the request. He desired that God would crush him—cut him off. We listen to him in profound sympathy, and yet, having all the story, we know how dire a disaster it would have been for him if that request had been granted. The disaster would not have consisted so much in the fact of his cutting off, as that thereby he would have been removed from the high privilege of co-operation with God. What wonderful light there is in all this for us! There is nothing wrong in giving expression even to such a desire as this, when in the fierceness of some fiery furnace of suffering we honestly feel it. But when the answer does not come, when instead of the release of cutting off, we have the continuity of pain, and a great silence, then let us remember this story: and remain confident that there is some explanation, and that when it comes, we shall thank God that He did not give us our request.

Job 7:20

If I have sinned, what do I unto Thee, O Thou Watcher of men?—Job. 7.20.

After the more direct and angry reply to Eliphaz, the speech of Job continued in a bitter complaint against the stress and misery of life generally. The toil of life is strenuous indeed. It is a warfare. Man is a hireling, a servant whose labour issues in nothing, and whose rest is disturbed in tossing. Nothing is satisfying, for nothing is lasting. Job piled figure on figure to emphasize this: a weaver's shuttle, the wind, the glance of an eye, the vanishing cloud. There is absolutely no ray of hope in this outlook on life. Because of it, he uttered his complaint, not only concerning life, but directly against God. It was a definite and determined complaint: "I will not refrain ... I will speak ... I will complain." But most carefully note it took the interrogatory form from beginning to end. These questions clearly show us how Job saw God in those days, and we know that it was a blurred vision which he beheld. But this very method of asking questions shows also that he was not satisfied with his own vision. If that be God—as though he had said—then why is He such? Every question was a great question, as any careful consideration of them will show. Moreover, there was, and is, an answer to everyone; and had it been Bible to have given those answers to Job, they would have amazed him, as they amaze us with the amazement that leads to worship. Take this particular one. Its simple meaning was that God is so great that even if a man did sin, it cannot affect Him. The answer is that this was an altogether too small a thought of God: the truth being that God is so great that He is affected, wounded, robbed by human sin. Job was, like his friends, hindered by a philosophy too narrow.

Job 8:13

The hope of the godless man shall perish. Job 8.13.

Bildad was a man of different mould to Eliphaz. His speech was characterized by greater directness. By comparison it lacked in courtesy, but it gained in force, and perhaps in clarity. In his address we discover the same philosophy as in that of Eliphaz. God is just, and prospers the righteous, and punishes the evil. No direct charge was made against Job, but the deduction was inevitable. Again we have to say Bildad was quite right in his statements of truth, and quite wrong in his intended deductions so far as Job was concerned. Recognizing this failure, we may consider the truth thus stated: "The hope of the godless man shall perish." Is there anything more perpetually demonstrated in human experience? Hope, as expectation with desire, plays a tremendous part in human life. It is the continuous inspiration of activity, whether good or evil. The output of life's energy is almost invariably the answer to desire coupled with expectation. Nevertheless, it is a patent fact that human life and experience are full of instances of perished hopes. The expected does not happen, the desire is not satisfied. It is true indeed that men are saved by hope: but it is equally true that men are lost by hope. How are we to account for this? Every-thing depends upon the nature of the hope. The sentence preceding this in the speech of Bildad explains this one: "So are the paths of all that forget God." It is the hope of the godless which perishes, and by it men are lost. Hope set on God is always realized, and by it men are saved.

Job 9:33

There is no daysman betwixt us, That might lay his hand upon us both—Job. 9.33.

Two chapters are now occupied with Job's reply to Bildad. Carefully notice the opening of it. He first admitted the truth of the general proposition—"Of a truth I know that it is so": and then propounded the great question, which he proceeded to discuss—"How can man be just with God?" We must clearly understand that this question as Job asked it, was not an expression of guilt, but of littleness and ignorance. He did not mean, "How can a man be made just before God," but rather, "How can a man prove that he is

just before God." In a passage of great power he described the greatness of God. He is infinite, invisible, invincible. Therefore it is useless for a man to attempt to be just with Him. Therefore his position is hope-less. His days sweep by him devoid of good. Then there broke from this man this deep cry, giving expression to the profoundest need of the human soul: "There is no umpire betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both." That is what man needs in a profounder sense than job intended, that, namely, of a justification which includes pardon and cleansing. That is what man needs also in Job's sense, that, namely, of a way of access to God by man, and of access to man by God so that there may be consciousness and intelligent fellowship. Necessarily our thoughts travel in adoring worship to Him Who is the Umpire: the One Who lays His hand upon us and upon God: Who intercedes with God for us, and with us for God. Through Him we have access into the grace wherein we stand: for we are justified by faith in Him.

Job 10:20

Let me alone, that I may take comfort a little. Job 10.20.

Notwithstanding the fact that Job felt that it was impossible for a man to argue with God, yet, because there was no umpire, he made his appeal to God. Turning from his answer to Bildad, he poured out his agony in the presence of the Most High. The appeal was by no means a hopeful one, but it was an appeal made directly to God. After complaining of his sufferings, attributing them all to the action of God and asking if God really delighted in what He was doing, or if His vision was faulty, Job bluntly asked God to let him alone, that he might have a respite from suffering before he died. It is a terrible revelation of suffering, and of the tempest-tossed condition of soul into which such suffering brought this man. As we read it we feel that the suggestions which Job made about God were entirely wrong: but we remember that they were not wicked, because they were honest. Again also we remind ourselves that throughout the Book there is not a hint of Divine displeasure with Job. Job did not, could not, understand: and all his anguish was part of the co-operation with God, to which he was called. We know the whole story, and therefore it is for us to learn the deepest lessons, and so again we remind ourselves that such prayers as these—perfectly honest, and not rebuked—are nevertheless answered in the highest sense, by not being granted. In that fair morn of morns that is to break, in which we shall have explanation of life's experiences, our profoundest gratitude to our Father will find expression in the thanks we give Him for His refusal to grant some of our sincerest requests. If respite means cessation of co-operation with God, better never find it.

Job 11:7

Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Al-mighty unto perfection ? Job 11.7

The method of Zophar was blunter than that of Eliphaz or Bildad. His words were fewer, and there was a roughness and directness about him that they lacked. His philosophy was the same. He argued from the suffering of Job that he must be guilty of sin. The special burden of his message was due to the fact that he felt that Job had affirmed the wisdom of God, and yet had called it in question: and in a passage of really great beauty he re-affirmed it, and insisted upon it that this God of infinite wisdom knew man perfectly. The thing he argued was indeed true, and because it was true, his deductions were false. God knew His servant Job, and all the meaning of his pain, as neither Job nor his friends knew it. We may turn then from Zophar's false deduction to his true statement. No man can by searching find out God: no man can find out the Almighty unto perfection—not even Zophar, nor Job. The application is twofold, first to those who are in such case as that of Job, and secondly to those who stand and watch as did Zophar. Let those who suffer remember that God may have reasons, which for today are not discoverable to them, for permitting their continued pain. That is the last refuge of the afflicted, but it is a safe and quiet place. Let those who watch, cease attempt-mg to explain, lest they be found to misrepresent God in their attempted vindications of Him, even more than does the sufferer in all his outpourings of inquiring agony.

Job 12:10

In Whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind.—Job 12.10.

Job's last reply in this first cycle of discussion was not only an answer to Zophar—it was his refusal to admit the accuracy of the general argument found in all the three addresses of his friends. From beginning to end it thrilled with sarcasm, while it maintained his denial of personal guilt. This chapter is occupied with his more direct dealing with these men. In its first movement we discover Job's sarcastic contempt for their wisdom: and in the second we find his declaration of his clear understanding of all they had said about God, and more. The particular words which we have emphasized show us something of his underlying faith and conviction about God. He recognized that all life is sustained by God—that of the living creatures beneath man in the scale of being, as well as that of man. This is a tremendous conception. It means that nothing ever escapes from the rule of God. In itself, it fills the soul with a sense of awe, and in some senses with helplessness. There is no comfort in it, until we learn the character of God. Job knew this only in part: and therefore, while he recognized the fact, it brought him no consolation. The truth thus emphasized needs to be perpetually remembered. Such recognition will save us from active rebellion. To realize the power of God must be to realize that our wisdom is found in His fear. When we know—as it is given us in the Son of God to know—the facts as to His character, the truth becomes our one consolation in all circumstances of difficulty. The most important question we can ask about God is not "What can

He do?", but "Who is He?" That is answered only in Christ.

Job 13:8

Will ye respect his person? Will ye contend for God ? Job 13.8.

The emphasis in these questions of Job must be laid upon the character of his friends as he understood it. He was about (as he declared, verse 3), to make his appeal to God directly. Before doing so, he addressed himself to them again in terms of anger. His contempt for them knew no bounds. He described them as "forgers of lies," "physicians of no value"; and proceeded to turn their judgment back upon themselves. They had been speaking unrighteously for God. There is great force in the conception contained in this protest. Whether it was a perfectly fair view of what these friends of his had been doing may be open to question. Personally I think it was. The idea is that men may argue in defense of God upon false lines, through limited knowledge. That is exactly what these men had been doing. The result was that they were unjust to Job. They did not know it: they did not intend that it should be so. But it was so and that proves their inability to defend God: for He is never vindicated by any argument which involves injustice to any human being. The more carefully we ponder this story, the more does the conviction possess the mind that silence is more befitting in the presence of many problems which are presented to us by the experiences of others. To sit in silent sympathy by the side of those who suffer is always helpful. To affirm to them the fact that God is wise and can make no mistake is always safe. To attempt to explain the suffering, and that by our philosophy of God, may be to lead us into injustice to the sufferer, and to misrepresentation of God. While Job's knowledge of God was imperfect, it was profounder than that of his friends.

Job 14:14

If a man die, shall he live again? Job 14.14.

Let these words be carefully considered in their setting. The end of this reply of Job to the first cycle in the discussions with his friends consisted of a direct appeal to God. In the course of that appeal he dwelt on the fact that man's life is transitory and full of trouble. Moreover, it ended in the darkness and mystery of death? "Man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?" There is hope for a tree that it will bud again, but there is none for a man. This dark assertion seems to have awakened in the mind of Job a wondering hope, and this found expression in these words: "If a man die, shall he live again?" That the question had in it the element of hope is proved by the declaration which Job made directly he had asked it, as he said that if that were so, he could endure all the days of the conflict. It was only a gleam: and was almost immediately overwhelmed in the darkness of his despair, as the next sentences show. But it was a gleam, shining up out of the deepest things in a human soul. Here we touch one of the supreme values of this wonderful Book. As we observe all the experiences through which this man passed, we discover that the human spirit is of such a nature that ever and anon, even in the midst of the most appalling darkness, it expresses its highest capacities by the questions which it asks. It was a tremendous question: but let us remind ourselves that there is no answer to it, save that which came to men through Jesus Christ and His Gospel. As Paul said, it is He "Who brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel" (2 Timothy 1.10). The question of Job was answered by Jesus, and that so completely as to leave no room for doubt.

Job 15:35

They conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity, and their belly prepareth deceit. Job 15.35.

With this chapter we begin the second cycle of discussion between Job and his friends. It is to be noted that the philosophy of these men was the same as in the first, but the method was changed. In the first cycle that philosophy was stated in general terms, and declared that God punishes the wicked and rewards the rod, the inevitable deduction being that Job's suffering was the outcome of his wickedness. Eliphaz in this address emphasized one part of that philosophy, that, namely, which declared that God punishes the wicked. It was all true, but it was not all the truth: and so it was not applicable to Job. Apart from its unsuitability to his case, this address of Eliphaz constitutes a magnificent description of the unutterable folly of the man who sins against God. These words consist of a figurative summary of the discourse. The word "iniquity" in the Revised, reads "vanity" in the King James Version. My own view is that both have missed the idea. The Hebrew word 'Aven, strictly means "nothingness," which would be expressed by vanity; but it was constantly employed to express the idea of affliction. So indeed it is rendered by the Revisers and King James' translators in chapter 5. 6. This is the thought in its application to Job by Eliphaz. All his affliction was the result of his evil or mischievous thinking. Of Job it was not true. The truth yet abides, that to conceive mischief is always to bring forth affliction.

Job 16:19

Even now, behold, my witness is in heaven, and He that voucheth for me is on high. Job 16.19.

Job's answer to the speech of Eliphaz practically ignored its argument. He first manifested his impatience with these men. Their philosophy was not new. They were "miserable comforters." He was annoyed at their pertinacity. What moved Eliphaz to answer?—he enquired. While the darkness was still about him, and in some senses the agony of his soul was deepening, yet it is impossible to

read this address without realizing that through the terrible stress he was at least groping after light. In the midst of his complaining he said: "Mine adversary sharpeneth his eyes upon me"; and again: "God delivereth me to the ungodly." That leads on to the words we have emphasized. In view of the revelation given to us in the opening chapters of the book, these things might suggest that Job was coming to a measure of understanding of the process through which he was passing, if he did not know the reason of it. The word "adversary" is not the same as that rendered "Satan," but it indicates an enemy. The statement that God delivered him to the ungodly is suggestive. Be that as it may, in the midst of all this travail of soul, his faith triumphed over his doubt. He believed that God knew the truth about him, and would be his witness. Upon that affirmation of faith he prayed that God would maintain his right with God, and with his neighbour. This is another instance of the light breaking forth, if only for a moment, from his deepest life. If the gleam were but momentary, it yet demonstrates the fact that the light had not been utterly put out. We may employ these words with greater confidence, for the Umpire has come to us, and has now gone to appear in the presence of God for us.

Job 17:15

Where then is my hope? And as for my hope, who shall see it ?—Job 17.15.

The light faded immediately, and Job passed again into thick darkness. He was in the midst of difficulties. Mockers were about him: none understood him. There was no "wise man." Yet he struggled through the darkness towards God's vindication. Again he thinks of death, but in it sees no brightness. That is the meaning of these questions. They must be read in close connection with the thrice-repeated "If" of verses 13 and 14. If he has been looking for release in death, that means also the abandonment of hope. This is a feat unveiling of a mental mood. The idea that a man can live again if he die, was here for the moment forgotten or refused. Yet the spirit of the man was in rebellion against so hopeless an outlook. I repeat that in the movement of this great answer, it does seem as though some outlines of the truth were breaking upon him. He was conscious of the action of God in his sorrows; of an adversary who followed him relentlessly, and tore him pitilessly. Somehow that adversary was at one with God, and yet he knew that God was his witness. At least we see light in these complainings, and we can well imagine how in the after-days he would come to recognize how these strivings of the soul, these passionate desires and out-cries for Divine defense, were gleams in the darkness. It is not to be wondered at that this great Book, although it gives no solution of the problem of pain, has ministered comfort and strength to countless distressed souls, as it mirrors their own experiences, and moves on to an end in which the troubled soul is led to rest, even without explanation.

Job 18:21

Surely such are the dwellings of the unrighteous, and this is the place of him that knoweth not God. Job 18.21

Bildad now resumed the discussion, and as in the case of Eliphaz it is evident from his opening rebuke that he spoke under the sense of annoyance. He was wounded at what he conceived to be the wrong Job had done him and his friends, in that he had treated them as "beasts," and as "unclean." He was angry, moreover, because he considered that Job's attitude threatened the moral order with violence. Turning from the mistaken application of his view to Job, to the things he said, they constitute a powerful statement of the issues of wickedness. These words formed the closing summary, and for interpretation we need the whole of his speech on the subject. He had first declared the preliminary experience of the wicked. His light is "put out." It is a graphic portrayal. In the case of the wicked his own spirit, "the spark of his fire," does not shine and the light without is extinguished. Therefore, his steps are straitened, and "his own counsel" destroys him. His pathway without light to death is described. Lacking the light, he falls into all sorts of snares and traps. Following his death he becomes extinct, so far as earth is concerned; "his remembrance perishes"; he is "chased out of the world"; he leaves behind him no children who enter into his inheritance. This is a tremendously powerful delineation of the way of wickedness. Again we have to say—all true, and therefore to be taken to heart; but not all the truth, and therefore of no meaning in the case of Job.

Job 19:6

Know now that God hath subverted me in my cause, and hath compassed me with His net. Job 19.6

The answer of Job to Bildad by comparison with his previous answers, is brief, but it touches the deepest note in despair so far, and presently for a moment gives utterance to the most splendid note of hope. What Bildad had said of the wicked was true of him. He was indeed abandoned by men, his kinsfolk, familiar friends, his maids, his servants, his wife, even young children. In his case this was not due to wickedness, but to some unexplained action of God. It is very questionable whether the word "subverted" in this verge is an improvement on the "over-thrown" of the King James Version. The Hebrew word death is a primitive root meaning "to wrest." It is not necessary to believe that Job was charging God with injustice. He was attributing all his affliction to His action, and that gave him his greatest pain, because no explanation of the reason of the Divine action was forthcoming. It was out of this deep darkness that words passed his lips most full of light. He affirmed his conviction that his Vindicator lived, and that at last he would see Him, and that as standing on his side—for that is the meaning of the words: "Whom I shall see on my side." The full value of what he said was not known to Job; but again we have a revelation of the greatness of the human spirit, which out of circumstances

of deepest darkness catches some gleam of the essential light. This is poetry. That does not mean that it is untrue, a baseless dream; but rather that it is an apprehension of a truth, which at the moment defies any attempt at demonstration or detailed definition.

Job 20:29

This is the portion of a wicked man from God, and the heritage appointed unto him by God. Job 20.29

Zophar replied in evident haste, and his speech was introduced with an apology for that haste, and a confession that he was angry. These closing words were in the nature of a summary of all he had been saying. The sufferings he had described were such as fell to the wicked, and that by Divine appointment. All this was true. But other things were true, of which he seemed to have no knowledge. It was true that the same sufferings came at times to men who were not wicked, and that they were not by Divine appointment, but by Divine permission. That was the story of Job. The narrowness of Zophar's philosophy made him unjust to Job. Leaving, then, the false application, and considering only the truth in itself, we have in this address a wonderful description of the nemesis of wickedness. In a passage thrilling with passion Zophar described the instability of evil gains. There is a triumph, but it is short. There is a mounting up, but it is followed by swift vanishing. There is a sense of youth, but it bends to dust. There is a sweetness, but it becomes remorse; a swallowing down, which issues in vomiting; a getting, without rejoicing. The final nemesis of the wicked is that God turns upon him, and pursues him with instruments of judgment. Darkness enwraps him. His sin is set in the light of the heavens, and earth turns against him. Let the history of wickedness be considered, whether in the individual or in nations, and it will be seen how true all this is. Godlessness is folly, for it never brings man what he seeks.

Job 21:34

How then comfort ye me in vain, seeing in your answers there remaineth only falsehood?—Job 21.34

At the close of the second cycle of discussion, as at the close of the first, Job answered, not merely the last speaker, Zophar, but the argument of the three friends. These closing words sum up his arguments as to the breakdown of these men. They had tried to comfort him, but in vain, and that because when applied to him, their truth had nothing in it but falsehood. All they had said was true, but it was not all the truth, even concerning the wicked, for in many cases, for the time being at any rate, the wicked continue in prosperity. It is impossible to read this answer of Job without realizing that, like his friends, he was limited in his outlook, and so failed to interpret accurately the facts of life. All he said was true, but it was not all the truth. If in his friends' arguments there was no comfort for him, it is equally true that in his answers he brought no conviction to them. All this is strangely suggestive. Men discussing human life are almost certain to blunder when they attempt to explain it. There are things of which the mind of man is not cognizant, qualities which elude him, facts and forces of which he is ignorant and, therefore, however sincere and truthful he may be, he cannot find the solution of many actual experiences. Two follies are revealed. The first is that of indulging in the condemnation of any soul on the ground of what we know, for there may be many things we do not know. The other is that of attempting to answer false condemnations by our own philosophies, for they may be as faulty as those of our fallible judges. There are hours in which we should be silent, in assurance that what we do not understand, is known to God. In such silence we may wait for Him.

Job 22:21

Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace; thereby good shall come unto thee. Job 22.21

With this chapter the third cycle in the controversy between Job and his friends begins, and Eliphaz is again the first speaker. In his address there are two movements. In the first he made a definite charge against Job, as he declared the sins which, according to his philosophy, would naturally account for the sufferings which he was enduring. They were the most dastardly sins possible to a man of wealth and position: those of the spoliation of the poor, the neglect of the starving, the oppression of the helpless. In this charge Eliphaz made his supreme mistake. The second movement of his address consisted of his appeal to Job. Realizing its inapplicability to Job, by reason of the falseness of the charges made, when we consider it in itself it is full of strength and beauty. What man needs in order to be blessed himself, and to be a blessing to others, is knowledge of God. The whole matter is first stated in these opening words. Continuing, Eliphaz set forth the conditions of such acquaintance with God. The law is to be received from God. There is to be return by the putting away of unrighteousness. Human treasure is to be abandoned as worthless. Then the way of the Divine answer is described. Instead of the lost treasure, shall be the possession of the Almighty. In Him there shall be delight: with Him communion: and through Him triumph. Moreover the result shall be ability to deliver others. Great and wonderful words are these. Had Eliphaz applied them to himself he would have found that his own imperfect acquaintance with God was the reason why he was not able to bring any real comfort to his suffering friend.

Job 23:10

But He knoweth the way that I take; When He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.—Job 23. 10

In replying to Eliphaz directly Job ignored the charges preferred against him. To them he returned in a later speech. He discussed Eliphaz's criticism of his view of God as absent from the affairs of men, and boldly affirmed his consciousness of the great problem. In answer to the advice to acquaint himself with God he exclaimed, "Oh that I knew where might find Him!" .He sighed after God, and principally for His judgment seat. He desired to stand before Him, to plead his cause, but he could not find Him, though he went forward or backward . He was conscious of His presence, but he could not see Him on the right hand, nor on the left. Then it was, that suddenly, in the midst of this bitter complaining, there flamed out a most remarkable evidence of the tenacity of his faith. He declared his conviction that God knew the way he was taking. He even affirmed his confidence that it was God Who was trying him, and that presently he would come forth from the process as gold. Again he insisted upon it that he had been loyal to God. Then immediately this faith merged into words of trembling and fear. Whatever God was doing, he could not persuade Him to desist! He knew His presence, but it troubled him. He was afraid of Him, because He had not appeared to deliver him. Notwithstanding these words of fear, the confession of faith was great, greater in its apprehension of truth than even Job understood. God did know; and through all the processes was moving toward the vindication of the true gold in this man. This is the persistent power of faith. It reaches out towards, and grasps great truths, which reason unaided never discovers.

Job 24:1

Why are times not laid up by the Almighty? and why do not they that know Him see His days ?—Job 24.1

In the first part of his reply Job had spoken of his consciousness of the problem of God's apparent withdrawal from human affairs as it applied to himself. Now he proceeded to speak of it in its wider application to the world at large. He asked the reason of God's non-interference in these words; and then went on to describe the evidences of it. Men still existed whose whole activity was that of oppression. In other words Job declared that the things with which Eliphaz had charged him were present in the world; and he described them far more graphic-ally than Eliphaz had done, ending with the declaration: "Yet God regardeth not the folly." Continuing, he said that the murderer, the adulterer, the robber, all continued their evil courses with impunity. He admitted that it was true that they pass and die, but for the moment they were in security. He ended all by challenging anyone to deny the truth of what he had said as to God's absence, or at least of His non-interference with the ways of wickedness. Here again we see Job breaking down, not in integrity or sincerity or honesty, but in his attempt to formulate a philosophy on the basis of the appearances of the hour. The truth is that times are laid up by the Almighty; that He does impute wickedness to men for folly. God is neither absent from human affairs, nor does He fail to interfere. There are often hours in which it seems as though God were doing nothing. Such seeming is ever false. Faith holds to that certainty, and waits the issue with confidence.

Job 25:2

Dominion and fear are with Him; He maketh peace in His high places.—Job 25.2

The brevity of this speech of Bildad is in itself suggestive, as it shows that even though Job has not convinced these friends of his that their philosophy does not include his case, he has succeeded in silencing them. Bildad showed that he was not prepared to discuss the general truth which Job had enunciated, but he had no sympathy with the personal application which Job had made of that truth. The same thing was true of Job. He did not quarrel with the general statements of his friends, but protested vehemently against their deductions as to himself. The whole discussion is a revealing one. Men are heard arguing within the limits of imperfect knowledge, and so never arriving at true conclusions. Once more we have to say that, so far as it went in positive statement, this last address of the three friends of Job has nothing in it to which exception can be taken. How true are these opening words, affirming the absolute sovereignty of God, and declaring the effect of the exercise thereof to be peace! This conviction is the very foundation of strength and confidence in human life. To act upon it, as well as to accept it theoretically, is to be silent in the presence of many things which we cannot explain. These men had a correct theory of God in so far as it went, but they did not act in complete harmony with it, or they would not have said much which they did say about His servant Job.

Job 26:14

Lo, these are but the outskirts of His ways: and how small a whisper do we hear of Him! But the thunder of His power who can understand?—Job 26.14.

In this chapter we have Job's answer to Bildad. It is characterized from first to last by scorn for the man who had no more to say. In a series of fierce exclamations he revealed the importance of all his friend had said to help him in any way. Then, in order to show the poverty of Bildad's argument, he spoke of the power of God in such way as to prove that he knew that power even more perfectly than his friends. God's power is exercised in the underworld. They that are deceased tremble. Sheol "is naked," Abaddon has "no covering." The whole material fabric is upheld by His power. The mysteries of controlled waters, and light, and darkness are within the sphere of His government. The sweeping of the storm, and its disappearance, are both the result of His power and His spirit. Having thus in remarkable poetic beauty revealed his consciousness of the greatness and government of God, he ended with these words, declaring that all these things "are but the outskirts of His ways," only "a whisper," of Him, and asked: "The thunder of

His power who can under-stand?" In all this we have a further evidence of the greatness of this man's faith, in its revelation of the remarkable apprehension of the greatness of God. The outskirts of God's ways are so wonderful, that the central facts must indeed be beyond our grasp; the whisper of God is so marvelous, that the full thunder of His speech must be beyond our comprehension. And so we are constrained to worship.

Job 27:2

As God liveth, Who hath taken away my right; and the Almighty, Who hath vexed my soul. Job 27.2.

Our reading now brings us to a new stage. Five chapters contain nothing but the words of Job. They fall into two great speeches. Each is introduced by the words: "And Job again took up his parable" (Job 27.1 and Job 29.1). In them he poured out all that was in his heart with complete abandon. After his answer to Bildad he seems to have paused, waiting for the speech of Zophar. The last of the three was silent. Then Job took the whole matter up and made general replies. He began with a protestation of innocence, and thus answered directly the charge which had been brought against him, that his own sin was the cause of all his suffering. In the course of that protestation of innocence he made use of these words, and in them we have a revelation of his state of soul at this time. His faith abides. God liveth, and He is Almighty. Moreover He is governing. It is God Who has taken away his right; it is the Almighty Who has vexed his soul. All this is the language of unshaken faith. But it is the language of perplexity and of pain. His very faith created his suffering. His right was taken away, his soul was vexed, and that not because he was a sinning man. He strengthened all the arguments of his friends as to the punishment of the wicked. It was true—all of it. But—and here was his problem and his pain—it did not account for his sufferings. There must be some other way to account for this. His friends had not found it, and he did not know it.

Job 28:23

God understandeth.—Job 28.23.

These are the strong and central words of this wonderful chapter. After his protestation of innocence, and passionate revelation of the need of some solution of his sufferings other than that which his friends had suggested, Job discussed the question of wisdom. He first described man's ability to obtain possession of the precious things of the earth. Silver, gold, and iron are mined, and the description of how man does the work is full of beauty. Having thus described man's ability, he asked : "But where shall wisdom be found?" The answer 's in these words: "God understandeth." The evidences of the truth of this are to be found in the impossible things which God does. He "looketh to the ends of the earth." He makes "a weight for the wind." He "meteth out the waters by measure." He makes "a decree for the rain." Therefore Job arrives at his conclusion that for man, "The fear of the Lord—that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." This is, indeed, at once our confidence and our comfort—"God understandeth." The things that perplex us, do not perplex Him; the mysteries by which we are surrounded, are no mysteries to Him. And there is more in the truth than that. "God understandeth" us also; He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust. When our best friends misinterpret our experiences, and therefore misunderstand our complainings, God understandeth. That is the secret of our comfort, the very rock foundation of our confidence. In the midst of all the perplexities and problems and pains of life these words are a song—"God understandeth."

Job 29:2

Oh, that I were as in the months of old, as in the days when God watched over me.—Job 29.2.

Probably, after a pause, Job resumed his speech. This second address was not so much an answer to his friends as a statement of his whole case as he saw it. He was still without a solution of the mystery of his sufferings. That of his friends he utterly repudiated. Everything in his address led up to the utterance of a solemn oath of innocence. These words introduce his description of the old days. Those days he described as to his relation with God: they were days of fellowship in which he was conscious of the Divine watchfulness and guidance. Then in one sentence which has in it a sob of a great agony, he referred to his home-life: "My children were about me." Then he described the abounding prosperity of those days. He called to remembrance also the esteem in which he was held by all classes of men, even the highest. The secret of that esteem had been that of his attitude toward men. He had been the friend of all such as were in need. Clothed with righteousness, and crowned with justice, he had administered the affairs of men so as to punish the oppressor and relieve the oppressed. In those days his consciousness had been that of safety and of strength. Those days he described in this opening declaration as days in which God watched over him. In that form of introduction his keenest sorrow is discovered. It was that of the feeling that, in some way, and for some reason, God no longer watched over him. He knew that God still saw him, as his previous words have proved, but there was a difference in the watching. Because we know the whole truth, which Job did not know, we recognize that the watchful care of God had never ceased through all the troublous times.

Job 30:1

But now. Job 30.1

This phrase introduced Job's description of the circumstances in which he found himself. It is a graphic and terrible portrayal, and is the more startling, standing as it does in contrast with what he had said concerning the old days. He first described what he evidently felt most acutely, how the base held him in con-tempt. In the midst of this reviling of the crowd, he was suffering actual physical pain, and this he graphically described. The supreme sorrow was that when he cried to God, there was no answer. He claimed that in such suffering as he endured, there was ample justification for all his complaining. It is impossible to read this section without feeling that protest was approaching revolt in the soul of this man. He did definitely charge God with cruelty (see verse 21), and in his questions, "Did not I weep for him that was in trouble? Was not my soul grieved for the needy?" (verse 25), he was contrasting God's attitude toward him with his own attitude toward suffering men in the days of his prosperity and strength. How often when "But now," is the starting-point of our thinking, and we contemplate only the things seen and near, we are driven to exactly the same agonized outcries. Then for our comfort let us remember that God still watched over His servant, uttered no word of rebuke, but sustained him even when he was unconscious that He was doing so.

Job 31:35

Lo, here is my signature; let the Almighty answer me. Job 31.35.

This whole chapter is occupied with Job's solemn oath of innocence. It was his final and explicit answer to the line of argument adopted by his three friends. In every cycle they had insisted upon one conclusion, that his affliction must be the outcome of his sin. In a systematic and carefully prepared statement he now affirmed his innocence: personally (Job 31.1-12): in his dealings with men (Job 31.13-23): in his attitude toward God (Job 31.24-34): ending thus with his signature, and demand for definite indictment. The chapter closes with the words: "The words of Job are ended," and these are generally attributed to the author of the book, or to some subsequent editor or copyist. Personally, I believe they constitute Job's last sentence. He had nothing more to say. The mystery was unsolved, and he relapsed into silence. There is an interval filled with the discoursing of Elihu. At Job 38, we shall come to the words: "Then Jehovah answered Job." No other words of argument on the part of Job shall we find in the book. He only spoke twice again (see Job 40.3-5 and Job 42. i-6) and in very different tones. At this point, then, we have reached the end of Job's expressions of pain. The end is silence. That is God's opportunity for speech. He often waits until we have said everything: and then, in the silence prepared for such speech, He answers. His answers then are not always what we have demanded: but they bring rest and satisfaction, as we shall see in the sequel.

Job 32:8

There is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty giveth them understanding. Job 32.8.

The last voice in the earthly controversy was that of Elihu. Job never had opportunity to answer him. God took no notice of him except to interrupt him. In the epilogue Elihu has no place. Nevertheless, the thought in the long speech, or group of speeches, of this man, is full of interest, and moves on a higher plane than that of the men who had already spoken. With these words Elihu introduced his argument, by declaring what he conceived to be his right to speak at all. He was not trusting to age or wisdom, but to revelation. Whether he was justified in believing that what he was about to say resulted from such revelation, may be open to question; but this statement is full of interest in that it does reveal the method by which God makes Himself and His thoughts known to man. The first sentence, "There is a spirit in man," reveals man's capacity for receiving communications from God. The second sentence, "The breath of the Almighty giveth them understanding," shows how God makes use of that capacity. In man's essential nature there is spirit, and that is a Divine creation, and of the Divine nature. That makes it possible for man to have direct and intelligent dealing with God. The breath of God reaches that spirit-life of man, and gives understanding; that is, communicates to man the thoughts of God. That God should speak to man is not supernatural, but natural. The deepest truth about man is that he was created with the capacity for fellowship with God. This capacity is destroyed by sin, but it is restored by Grace.

Job 33:29

Job 33:30

Lo, all these things doth God work, twice, yea thrice, with a man, to bring back his soul from the pit, that he may be enlightened with the light of the living. Job 33.29-30.

These words constitute a summary of Elihu's arguments up to this point, as to the methods and purpose of God in His dealings with men. He declared that God is greater than man, and that man has no right to ask explanations. This, however, is not all the truth. God does answer. He speaks "once, yea, twice," that is, in one way, yea in two. (See verse 14.) The two ways are those of the dream or vision of the night, and the operations which produce suffering. It is to this latter that the words we have emphasized refer. This suffering is the work of God. "Twice, yea, thrice," is a figure of speech indicating the persistence and completeness of the method. The purpose is that of bringing back the soul of man from the pit, the enlightenment of life. Elihu's philosophy was that suffering is educational; that through it, God is leading men to some higher plane of life. His philosophy was a wider one than that of

his friends, who saw nothing in suffering other than punishment for sin. Elihu saw that it might be a process through which the individual soul gained clearer light, and so fuller life. Undoubtedly he was right. But here again we at once see that the truth did not explain the suffering of Job. Elihu, in company with his three friends, had no conception that men may endure suffering for the sake of others and so, in suffering be co-operating with God. Evidently satisfied with his own view, he challenged Job to answer him if he had anything to say and if not, to be silent while he continued.

Job 34:12

Yea, of a surety, God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment.—Job 34.12.

Job gave no answer to the challenge of Elihu, and so he proceeded. His second address occupied this and the following chapter. It may be well to note the whole movement first. Elihu opened with an appeal to the wise men, asking that they listen, in order to try his words. The address then consists of his answers to two quotations from what Job has said (Job 34.5, 6, 9, Job 35. 3). Neither of these quotations was literal; each was Elihu's summary of what he had understood Job to mean. The first may be summarized as a contention that he had been afflicted by God notwithstanding his integrity. The second suggested that Job had argued that nothing was gained by loyalty to God. This chapter deals with the first. Elihu answered this, first by declaring that Job had been keeping company with wicked men. He then proceeded to argue for the justice of God. This is centrally expressed in the words we have selected. It was a great truth, and his arguments in support of it are incontrovertible. The authority of God is beyond all appeal. He cannot be influenced by any low motive. Therefore, whatever He does is right. Proceeding, Elihu declared that the government of God is based upon perfect knowledge. He sees all men's goings. There is no need for Him to institute special trial. His judgments are the out-come of His understanding. Therefore it is the wisdom of men to submit. How true it all is, and how important, that we should lay it all to heart! But how completely it failed to explain the problem of Job's sufferings. Once more we have to say it was all true, even about Job, but it was not all the truth.

Job 35:6

Job 35:7

If thou hast sinned, what dost thou against Him? And if thy transgressions be multiplied, what doest thou unto Him? If thou be righteous, what givest thou Him? Or what receiveth He of thine hand?—Job 35.6-7.

Elihu used these words in the course of his answer to the second of his quotations from Job. He declared, first, that when Job questioned the advantage of serving he was guilty of setting up his own righteousness as being more than God's. In these questions he attempted to lay bare the very foundations of truth concerning the sovereignty of God. He declared in effect that there is a sense in which God is unaffected by man: his sin does nothing to God: and his righteousness adds nothing to Him. This view had been already advanced in the course of the controversy. Undoubtedly there is an element of truth in it: and yet what an illustration it affords of the fact that a partial truth may become an almost deadly error; The complete revelation of God shows that, whereas according to the terms and requirements of infinite righteousness, God is independent of man, nevertheless, according to the nature of His heart of love—which these men did not know—He is not independent of man. The whole Biblical revelation, centered and consummated in Christ, shows that human sin inflicts wounds upon God, and causes sorrow to the Holy One: and that man, living in righteousness, does give glory to God, and cause joy to His heart. Elihu answered Job's declaration that there was no advantage in serving God, by saying in effect that there certainly was no advantage to God in such service, and no disadvantage if it were not rendered. Both Job and Elihu were wrong.

Job 36:2

I have yet somewhat to say on God's behalf.—Job 36.2.

After Elihu had answered the arguments of Job, as expressed in the quotations made, there would seem to have been a pause. Then he commenced his third and last address, which, as we shall see, was never finished. This address falls into two parts, and our chapter-divisions at this point confuse us, rather than help us. The first part is contained in the first twenty-five verses of this chapter, and consists of argument. The second part begins at Job 36.26, and runs through the next chapter. The first things he had now to say on God's behalf were those of a clear statement of his own explanation of Job's suffering. He was absolutely sure of his ground, and at once plunged into his theme. This opened and closed with statements of the greatness of God. Between these he uttered his words of explanation. It is not true that God "preserveth ... the life of the wicked." It is true that "He giveth to the afflicted their right." Such as are right with Him are not immune from suffering. Thus Elihu's view clearly was that God has something to teach man which man can only learn by processes of pain. This was a great advance on the solutions suggested by his three friends, but it did not so much as touch the case of Job. In his suffering, God was not attempting to teach His servant anything. He was rather using him in order to answer an essential misinterpretation of the relation between God and man, and thus was conferring high honour upon him. Yet again we feel that the great message of the story to us is that of the wisdom of silence in the presence of suffering.

Job 37:23

Touching the Almighty, we cannot find Him out; He is excellent in power; and in judgment and plenteous justice He will not afflict. Job 37:23.

As we indicated in our previous note, the second part of this address of Elihu commenced at the twenty-sixth verse of the previous chapter. Now, rising above mere argument, he proceeded to speak of the greatness of God, first as to its manifestation, and then in application to Job. It has been suggested that this last part of Elihu's speech was a description of what was happening at the time. When presently God spoke, He did so out of a whirlwind, and the idea is that it was this very storm, in its approach, which Elihu described. First, there was the drawing up of the water into the clouds, their spreading over the sky, and the strange mutterings of the thunder. Then came the flash of the lightning, followed by darkness; and again the lightning striking the mark, and the cattle were seen taking refuge from the storm. Gradually the violence of the storm increased, the thunder was louder, the lightning more vivid. In a strange mixture, the south wind and the north were in conflict, and ice was intermixed with rain. The purpose of the storm may have been for correction, for the land, or for mercy. That which Elihu desired to impress upon Job is revealed in these concluding words. He was endeavouring to bring him to realize the impossibility of knowing God perfectly, and the consequent folly of his complainings. The truth so expressed is a great one, and had application to Elihu also. He could not find God out, and he did not understand the mystery of Job's sufferings.

Job 38:3

Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto Me. Job 38:3.

With this chapter we come to the third and final movement in the great drama, that in which Jehovah and Job are alone. Out of the midst of the whirlwind the Divine voice spoke, for which Job had been waiting. Its first word was a challenge. This has been variously interpreted as applying to Job, or to Elihu. Personally, I believe the reference was to Elihu. Carefully note that the word of Jehovah did not charge Elihu with false interpretation, but with darkening counsel by the use of words which he himself did not perfectly understand. The theme which he had been attempting to discuss was too great for him, and God took it from him, and dealt with it Himself. In these words He called Job away from discussion with man, and away from lonely brooding. He was to gird up his loins like a man, and hold converse with God. This was a great call, revealing at once the Divine estimate of human dignity, and the conditions upon which God can deal with man. When a man acts like a man, God can speak to him, and he to God. That is a declaration of dignity, and a revelation of a law of life. When God thus spoke to Job, He gave him no explanation of the mystery of his suffering. The method of God was that of unveiling His glory before the mind of His servant, thus leading him to more perfect confidence in Him with regard to experiences which were not yet explained. The first movement in this unveiling had to do with the simplest facts of the material universe, which are sublime beyond the comprehension of man. Through all, God was suggesting His own knowledge, and the stupendous ease of His activity. Job was being led to forgetfulness of himself in a contemplation of God.

Job 39:1

Knowest thou?—Job 39:1

Still the great unveiling proceeded, and by these words the mind of Job was directed to recognition of its own limitation. The voice of God spoke of the mystery of the begetting and birth of the animals, with the sorrows of travail and the finding of strength; of the freedom and wildness and splendid untameableness of the wild ass; of the uncontrolled strength of the wild ox. Did Job know these things? They were all known to God, and were under His government, and within the range of His power. Yet again, the differing manifestations of foolishness, of power, of wisdom, as evidenced among birds and beasts, were dealt with. The ostrich rejoicing in the power of her pinions, and in her folly abandoning her eggs and her young, was described; and her very foolishness was accounted for as resulting from the act of God. No reason was given for this depriving of the ostrich of wisdom, but the fact was affirmed that God had done it. All the strength of the war-horse was declared to be Divinely bestowed. The hawk, with wisdom directing her to the south land; the eagle, placing her nest on high—were revealed as Divinely guided. Thus, everywhere God was revealed, guiding, governing. The reasons of what He did were not disclosed. Job was again reminded of the fact. Thus he was being led to lean not to his own understanding, which was baffled everywhere in the presence of the most common things in the midst of which he lived; and to recognize anew the wisdom and power of God.

Job 40:4

Behold, I am of small account.—Job 40:4

There was a pause in the great unveiling as Jehovah spoke directly to His servant and asked for an answer to the things He had said. The answer of Job was full of suggestiveness. The man who in mighty speech and strong defiance, had been of unbroken spirit in reply to all the arguments of his friends, now cried out: "Behold, I am of small account." The method of God was producing its

effects. Job was brought to the consciousness of his comparative insignificance in the midst of a universe so wondrously governed. This very sense of insignificance was also one of comfort, for it came connected with the recognition of the fact of the interest of God in the smallest things, and so spoke of the understanding of God, concerning himself and all his circumstances. This was but the first part of the things he was yet to know; he had yet to be taught that he was of much account to God. For the moment it was important that he should realize the greatness of God. This was breaking in upon his mind with new force. He said: "What shall I answer Thee?" There was nothing he could say. He would lay his hand upon his mouth, and so cause his speech to cease. Silence was at once his opportunity of wisdom and his manifestation thereof. Then Jehovah continued. And again He charged Job to "gird up" his "loins like a man," thus recalling him to a sense of his own dignity. Among all the things over which God ruled, man alone was able to commune intelligently with God. In the midst of his suffering Job had complained of the method of God. Jehovah now called upon Job to endeavour to occupy His place. Let him assume the reins of government in the moral realm in which he had been critical of God. There was a tender and healing satire in the suggestion, as it helped Job to a sense of his own limitation, and of the all sufficiency of God.

Job 41:1

Canst thou ?—Job 41.1

The address of Jehovah to Job ended with the suggestion that Job should make two experiments to govern, not in the moral realm, but among the great beasts. It has been objected by some that the descriptions of behemoth and leviathan are interpolations, as they do not seem to fit with the argument. This surely is to miss the meaning. The material always yields itself to man's government more readily than the moral. If then Job cannot assume the moral government of the universe, let him try in the realm of the non-moral. Again, there was the playfulness of a great tenderness in the suggestions Jehovah made to Job about these fierce creatures. Shining through all this, and perhaps perceptible to Job, there may have been suggestions concerning those spiritual beings of wickedness against which the man of faith ever has to contend. Satan may be typified here by behemoth and leviathan. Be that as it may, the question left with Job was this: "Canst thou?" Thus he was called to the recognition of his own impotence in many directions, and at the same time to a remembrance of the power of God. Thus the method of God with this man was not that of explanation of the meaning of his sufferings, but that rather of the unveiling of His own glory.

Job 42:5-6

I had heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. Job 42.5-6.

This is Job's answer to the words of Jehovah. It is characterized by the stateliness of a great submission. In his words of surrender, the ultimate greatness of the man is revealed. He had been brought to a new sense of God. In the power of it he knew that much of his past speech had been that of ignorance, and he confessed that it was so. In this new attitude of Job, there is revealed a glory of God, not manifest in any other part of the universe. This utterance of surrender is ever the vindication of God. There was no explanation of pain, but pain was forgotten. A man had found himself in relationship with God, and in so doing had found rest. The epilogue is full of beauty. Jehovah turned to the friends of Job. His wrath was kindled against them, but it was mingled with mercy. Their intention had been good, but their words had been wrong. To them God vindicated His servant in that He called him, "My servant," as He had done at the beginning. They had attempted to restore Job by philosophy. They had failed. He was now to restore them by prayer. The bands of his own captivity were broken, moreover, in his activity of prayer on behalf of others. Having passed through the fiery furnace, the last days of Job were more blessed than his earlier ones. In this great Book there is no solution of problems. There is a great revelation. It is that God may call men into fellowship with Himself through suffering; and that the strength of the human soul is ever that of the knowledge of God.

Job 1:1-2:7 I'm Under Attack

Robert Morgan

Why do bad things happen? And why do bad things happen to good people? That may be the most vexing question we ever face, and sometimes we face it in very personal ways. If God is so good, why did He allow this or that to happen?

As I began contemplating this series several months ago, I received this e-mail from Don and Debbie Mynster regarding family and friends of theirs in Virginia. It was addressed to Sherry Anderson in our church office.

Sherry, I received a phone call last night from my sister that her husband's sister and brother-in-law, Dale and Reba (Martin) Showalter, had a tragedy happen in their lives. Their family is an old-order Mennonite group who still use horse and buggy. Many of these who read this will remember them from the way they were dressed when they came from Virginia to attend Emily's funeral.

Their oldest son, Scott, has a dairy farm. He and a 23-year-old Amish man were working putting manure in a three-foot deep manure trough when apparently the pump in this trough broke. Scott had to get in the trough, as he had to do in the past. Apparently there was something different this time, for when he removed the cap from the pump he was overtaken by methane gas and lost consciousness. The Amish man ran to the farmhouse for help, and Scott's wife, Phyllis, and their four daughters came running. The Amish man and Phyllis jumped into the trough and also lost consciousness. His two oldest daughters, Tina and Shayla, ages 10 and 11, jumped into save their mother and father and the other man. They all lost consciousness, and all five of them drowned. A pastor who was living next door heard the screaming and had to hold back the two youngest daughters, ages 2 and 4, from also perishing.

When I read that e-mail, it was very disturbing to me and to everyone else who read it; and I asked myself, "Why would the Lord allow something like this to happen?" In a matter of minutes, four members of a family of six were wiped out along with another man, leaving two little girls alone in the world. Why would God allow that to happen? That's a question that comes to us very often in the face of unspeakable suffering or tragedy.

The Bible doesn't avoid this question. Bad things happened to people in the Bible, too, and very often the great heroes of the faith grappled with why certain things happened. The book of Job addresses this, and in fact this is the major theme of Job, which may be the earliest and oldest book of the Bible. As we begin reading the book of Job, we only have to read the first six verses before the character of Satan appears—and in the book of Job Satan is the unseen villain behind all of this man's disasters. Look with me at Job 1 & 2:

One day the angels came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came with them. The Lord said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the Lord, "From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it." 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."

"Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied. "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face."

Then the Lord said to Satan, "Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger." Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord.

One day when Job's sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys were grazing nearby, and the Sabeans attacked and carried them off. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"

While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, "The fire of God fell from the sky and burned up the sheep and the servants, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"

While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, "The Chaldeans formed three raiding parties and swept down on your camels and carried them off. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"

While he was still speaking, yet another messenger came and said, "Your sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, when suddenly a mighty wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house. It collapsed on them and they are dead, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"

At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship and said: "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."

In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.

On another day the angels came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came with them to present himself before Him. And the Lord said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the Lord, "From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it." 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. And he still maintains his integrity, though you incited Me against him to ruin him without any reason."

"Skin for skin!" Satan replied. "A man will give all he has for his own life. But stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse You to Your face."

The Lord said to Satan, "Very well, then, he is in your hands; but you must spare his life." So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the top of his head.

This is a strange passage, and I want to say a couple of things about it from the outset.

1. This is a story, not a creed or a doctrinal section of Scripture; it's not a systematic theology passage in which we are given a stated doctrine of Satanism or demonism. So I don't want to build a theological statement on Satanism based exclusively on this passage.

2. This is a true story, and so we can observe some things that belong to the realm of reality. This is very interesting because it takes us behind the scenes, behind the curtain, and we get a glimpse at what goes on in the unseen world around us and above us. There is an invisible sphere of the spirit, and this is one of the most revealing passages in the entire Bible about what happens in this invisible realm.

So let's work our way through this story, and I want to make five observations regarding the part that the devil plays in the problems we encounter in life.

1. Satan is our Adversary (v. 6)

Verse 6 says: One day the angels came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came with them.

The word "Satan" comes from a Hebrew word meaning "Adversary." In this passage, he is an adversary to God and to God's people. He and the Lord had a conversation about Job, and it begs the question, "Do the Lord and the devil ever have a conversation about you or me?" I'm sure that it happens. Let me show you two other times in the Bible when this happened:

Zechariah 3 says: Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him.

Revelation 12:10 refers to the devil as The accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before God day and night.

2. Satan is Prowling Around This World Like a Lion (v. 7)

The next thing to notice is that Satan is a peripatetic enemy. He's always on the move. Verse 7 says: The Lord said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the Lord, "From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it." This verse reminds us of 1 Peter 5:8: Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

3. Satan Can Do Us Great Harm (vv. 13-19)

The third observation is that Satan can do us great harm. I'll not read these verses again, but think about all the destruction that Satan caused. Now, if you had been reading the newspaper that day, there would have been no mention of Satan. You would have read headlines in the Daily News of Uz—I think the newspaper back then was called the Uz Buzz—that said:

Sabeans Attack Area Ranch.

Lightening Destroys Herd of Sheep.

Chaldean Raiding Parties Strike Region.

Strong Wind Destroys House, Kills Inhabitants.

City Leader Contracts Skin Disease.

Those were the headlines, and they are not unlike the headlines you'll read today in the Nashville Tennessean. But the devil was directly behind these events. He was the mastermind. And I believe that he is just as certainly and just as directly behind many of the headlines we read about today, and he is the lurking figure behind many of the problems that we face in our personal lives. And he can do us great harm.

4. Satan Cannot Touch God's People without God's Permission

But here is a very interesting and wonderful observation: Satan cannot touch God's people without God's permission. The Lord placed a hedge around Job and around his family and around all that he owned, and Satan was unable to penetrate that hedge without God's permission.

Now, God gave him permission, and that's what the entirety of Job is about. This book explains why the Lord did that and what the outcome was. Still, it's important to remember that when we are in Jesus Christ, we are under divine protection, and the evil one cannot do with us as he would wish.

Let me show you two or two other passages about this. One is in the famous Lord's Prayer at the beginning of Matthew's Gospel;

and the other is in the Lord's High Priestly Prayer at the end of John's Gospel

Jesus began His ministry with His Sermon on the Mount, and in that sermon He gave us one version of what we call the Lord's prayer. Notice how it's put in Matthew 6:9ff:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Jesus began His ministry by advising us to pray specifically that we would be protected and delivered from the evil one, the devil.

Now turn to the end of our Lord's ministry, near the end of the Gospel of John to our Lord's High Priestly prayer in John 17. Listen to what Jesus prayed:

I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to You. Holy Father, protect them by the power of Your name—the name You gave me—so that they may be one as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe...

My prayer is not that You take them out of the world but that You protect them from the evil one.

As I pondered this in preparation for this message, I realized that I have underestimated the importance of asking God for His specific and definite protection over my family and my church and myself. This is a lesson that goes all the way to what may well be the oldest book of the Bible—the book of Job. Think of how powerful an adversary we have. Think of what Satan brought about in the space of one day.

- He influenced and controlled human tribes of barbarians.
- He influenced and controlled the patterns of the wind and weather.
- He sent deadly bolts of fire from the sky like lightning bolts on steroids.
- He took away the lives of people in the flash of a moment as they feasted.
- He destroyed a man's health just by beaming his malevolence in his direction.
- And he did all these things undetected by any human perception.

And Jesus opened and closed His ministry by teaching us to pray to be delivered from the machinations of the evil one. It's possible that we need to take those prayers more seriously than we do.

5. Satan is a Defeated Enemy

But there's a final observation we can make about the devil in this passage—He is a defeated enemy. Job was, in a sense, a human battlefield on which God and Satan battled; and at the end of the book we see that the Lord won, Satan lost, and Job was blessed.

In the New Testament, that human battlefield was Jesus Christ. In the book of Hebrews we read that by His own death Jesus defeated him who held the power of death, that is the devil. And in Revelation 12:10, we read that the saints in the last days overcame him by the blood of the Lamb.

Recently a fascinating article appeared in the Baptist Press. It was about a man named Gwan Garrison, who was living in California with his wife Judy and their two daughters. One day Garrison discovered that one of the office supervisors who served under him was a practicing witch. They struck up a professional relationship, and she pulled him into her belief systems. She taught him how to cast spells, how to discern the future, how to influence people and to have power over them. His family was unaware of his growing involvement in the occult. He acquired satanic paraphernalia, but he kept them hidden. As time went by, Garrison began to enjoy persecuting Christians, whom he increasingly disliked. He especially resented an employee named Susan Conway, who had witnessed to him, and Garrison did everything he could to terminate her employment. But he seemed unable to orchestrate anything against her, and her pleasant personality irritated him all the more. Garrison said—and I'm quoting him: "There was such a hedge of protection around her that I could never penetrate, and it really bothered me. I loved persecuting Christians and she was one trophy that I wanted on my wall."

One day Garrison walked into his office and there on the corner of the desk was a free ticket to a drama called "The Greatest Story Ever Told." He wasn't sure what it was about, but he decided to go; and he was surprised when he pulled into the parking lot of a local church and realized this was a passion play. Nevertheless he went in and sat on the very last pew thinking that he could make a quick getaway if he wanted. But the play was a well-done one and he sat there riveted.

Suddenly the character of Jesus was dragged down the aisle right beside Garrison and out of the room. The next scene was

conducted offstage and only the sound was heard. It was the scene in which the Roman soldiers scourged Jesus. I want to quote to you what Garrison later said about it:

"The doors closed and I heard the whips hitting His back. Then something strange began to happen: Every time the whip struck Him I began having a very sharp pain in my chest that began moving down my arm. I felt like I was having the symptoms of a heart attack. Once again the doors swung open and Jesus was standing there wearing a crown of thorns. He took three steps and fell in the aisle right in front of my pew and looked up into my eyes, with blood dripping down his forehead, and said, 'I did this for you.' Goose bumps ran down my spine. I didn't know how to respond. He was speaking directly to me like He had known me forever.

"Once Jesus got to the stage, which was set as Calvary, He began crying out with each nail that was driven into his flesh. And each time the hammer hit the nail the pain in my own chest returned. I knew I was having a heart attack and morbidly thought to myself, 'Well, at least I'll die in church.'

"Then they raised the cross with Christ attached, dropped it into a hole on the stage and a tremendous clap of thunder roared over the speaker system. I heard Him say something remarkable: 'Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.'

"The house lights went down and the sanctuary was totally black. As the lights come up, the cross was empty. I was used to casting spells on others, but at this instance I was spellbound by the gospel story.

"The pastor, standing under one dim light at the front of the sanctuary, said, 'If you are hurting in your heart tonight, I want to pray for you. Please raise your hand.' With pain running from my heart down my arm I didn't wait a moment...

"I don't remember how I got to the altar when the invitation was given, I just remember kneeling with the pastor. After a moment he looked me in the eye and said, 'I've never felt the presence of evil like I feel in you tonight. I sense that Satan completely controls you. If you want to be set free from the pain you're feeling, Jesus can set you free.' As I prayed the sinner's prayer the pain immediately left."

Garrison returned home and prepared to destroy all his satanic paraphernalia. He later testified that when he picked up his satanic bible to burn it, he was struck with a force of energy that felt like raw electricity; and he finally fetched his broom and mop and used them like a giant pair of chopsticks to carry the material out to the trashcan.

Today Gwan Garrison is an information technology manager on the Florida/Georgia border and serves faithfully as a bi-vocational pastor of a Baptist church.

Satan is our adversary; he is prowling the world like a deadly beast, and he wants to do us great harm. But he cannot touch God's people without God's permission, and he is a defeated enemy for there is wonder-working power in the precious blood of the Lamb.

Job 1 & Job 42 I'm Worried About My Kids

Robert Morgan

Last week a friend of mine, David Sutton, told me of a man whom he had recently led to the Lord and baptized. This man had been resistant to the Gospel for years, and when David or others tried to witness to him, he'd shrug them off. Then, during a little episode of sickness, he had a change of heart and he accepted Christ as his Lord and Savior; and he was baptized. The unusual thing was his age. He was nearly 100 years old. David said, "He was in his 90s, and he's the oldest person I've ever baptized." When I heard that story, my first thought was: Someone undoubtedly prayed for him a long time ago. He must have had a praying mother or a praying father; and, though delayed, those prayers were answered in the end.

Now, don't listen to that story and say, "Well, I still have a lot of time; I can still come to Christ when I'm in my 90s." Not all of us will make it to our 90s, and some of us may not make it until tomorrow. Life is uncertain, and the Bible says that now is the day of salvation. No, the point I want to make is that someone prayed for that man, and it very well may have been his sainted mother or his godly father; and at last his or her prayers were answered.

The greatest thing we do for our children is to pray for them, to be their prayer warriors, to be their champions before the throne of grace, and that's what I'd like to talk about today as we continue our series of messages from the book of Job. I'd like to read with you the first chapter of this book, and let's look at it particularly from a parent's point of view.

In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil. He had seven sons and three daughters, and he owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred donkeys, and had a large number of servants. He was the greatest man among all the people of the east.

His sons used to take turns holding feasts in their homes, and they would invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. When a period of feasting had run its course, Job would send and have them purified. Early in the morning he would sacrifice a burnt offering for each of them, thinking, "Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." This was Job's regular custom.

One day the angels came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came with them. The Lord said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the Lord, "From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it." 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."

"Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied. "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face."

Then the Lord said to Satan, "Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger." Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord.

One day when Job's sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys were grazing nearby, and the Sabeans attacked and carried them off. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"

While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, "The fire of God fell from the sky and burned up the sheep and the servants, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"

While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, "The Chaldeans formed three raiding parties and swept down on your camels and carried them off. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"

While he was still speaking, yet another messenger came and said, "Your sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, when suddenly a mighty wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house. It collapsed on them and they are dead, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"

At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship and said: "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."

In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.

Now, there are many ways we could look at this chapter, and it raises many questions and teaches many lessons; but today I would like to look at it from a parent's perspective. To me, this is a tremendously encouraging chapter for parents, and we can learn four axioms when it comes to our children.

Be Blameless and Upright.

The most important thing Job did for his children was to provide them with a legacy of godliness. In verses 1-2, it says: In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil. He had seven sons and three daughters....

Notice the juxtaposition of those sentences. He was a godly man, and he was a father. His children could learn about God by watching his life. And from his life his children learned what it was to be a godly person. Now let me ask you a question. Where are children going to learn what it means to be blameless and upright? Where are they going to learn what it means to fear God and shun evil? If they don't learn it from their mother and father, where will they learn it?

In his book, *Shadows on the Wall*, published in 1922, the inimitable writer F. W. Boreham tells about a very small store in his childhood town. It was set off by itself in a remote spot about a mile from the city center. It was run by Mrs. Blundell, a gentle, soft-spoken soul with stooped shoulders and spectacles; and it wasn't for ordinary groceries. It was a sort of convenience store, to use a modern term. Very often, young Boreham was sent with a short list of things needed, and those were visits he relished. "I liked being alone with Mrs. Blundell," he wrote. "On the table by the window she had a bowl of gold fish. I have visited many aquariums since then; but none of them interested me as much as that one. Then there was Mrs. Blundell's big tortoise-shell cat: I liked to hear her tell of the mice he had caught in the storeroom at the back."

One day to his great delight, he was allowed behind the counter. There he saw lots of things that he has since forgotten, and one thing that he never forgot. On the back of the pair of scales where the sugar and flour and cocoa were weighed was a little sign, and on it were the words of Proverbs 11:1: A FALSE BALANCE IS ABOMINATION TO THE LORD BUT A JUST WEIGHT IS HIS

DELIGHT.

"There," said Mrs. Blundell, "you can keep saying that to yourself all the way home, can't you? Never mind the long words in the first part, but remember, 'a just weight is His delight.'"

"Don't forget," she called as he turned the corner for home.

And he never did.

Children learn to fear God and shun evil, they learn the power of biblical convictions, they learn to love the Lord from the example of those whom they most love and respect. It might be a friend or neighbor or teacher, but very often it's their dad and their mom.

Devotional writer Henry G. Bosch once wrote in Our Daily Bread that when he was a boy he would often work with his father during the summer months. Leaving home each morning, they would stop at a particular store for a newspaper, which they read at coffeebreak. One day, arriving at work, Henry's dad discovered that he had taken two papers by mistake because they were so thin. After a moment's thought, he decided to return to the store immediately to pay for the extra paper. "I don't want the owner, who isn't a Christian, to think I'm dishonest," said Mr. Bosch.

About a week later, some expensive items were shoplifted from the same store. The police calculated that at the time of the robbery only two men had been shopping in the store--Mr. Bosch and another man. "I know John is honest," said the storekeeper. "Just last week he came all the way back here to return a newspaper he'd taken by mistake." The police questioned the other man instead and, in so doing, apprehended the culprit who made a full confession.

"Father's honesty and Christian character...not only made a deep impression on the storekeeper," Henry later wrote, "but his actions also left an indelible mark upon my young and pliable mind."

Proverbs 14:27 says: "He who fears the LORD has a secure fortress, and for his children it will be a refuge."

Pray Earnestly

The second thing we can learn from Job is the importance of making intercession to God on behalf of our children and of praying for them. Now, Job's children were grown; they had homes of their own. But we still get the impression that Job was worried about them. He was concerned that they weren't yet spiritually mature. He was concerned that in their revelry and feasting and drinking they were allowing sin to creep into their lives. I'm sure he was thankful they were close and that they enjoyed being together. But they had these parties that worried him; and afterward he would pray earnestly for them and intercede on their behalf.

Now, these were the days before the Mosaic Law, when the father was the patriarch and priest for his family. So Job literally functioned as a priest and intercessor for his children, offering sacrifices on their behalf.

In the book of Genesis, when Adam and Eve sinned against God, the Lord clothed them with clothing made from the skin of an animal (Genesis 3:21), and apparently a sacrifice was made and this became the beginning of the pattern of sacrifices and burnt offering we see in the Bible. Later, in Genesis 8, at the ending of the great flood, Noah and his family exited the ark, and Noah built an altar to the Lord and offered on it a sacrifice as a burnt offering; and it says that God blessed Noah's family (Genesis 8:20 & 9:1). Later, in Genesis 12, we see Abraham offering burnt offerings on behalf of himself and his family.

It was only later at Mount Sinai, that this practice was codified and made part of the Mosaic Law. But from the very beginning, it represented the fact that we must come to God in intercession for ourselves and our families through the offering of a sacrificial lamb; and so we see this same procedure taking place in the book of Job. And, of course, the Bible says that it all pointed to Jesus Christ, who was the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world.

So by faith prophetically, Job was pleading the power of the blood of Christ on behalf of his children. How many times my wife and I have knelt in prayer or laid in bed holding hands and praying, and we have said, "Lord, we plead the blood of Christ on behalf of our children and hold over their heads the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ."

A few weeks ago, I conducted an interview by phone with a radio station in Fort Wayne, Indiana, and shortly afterward, I received this e-mail:

I heard you this morning on WBCL and have been listening to your sermons this morning. We have a 34-year-old-son. We do not know what to do for him. He went to Purdue after graduating high school, got his masters, had been working in Mexico, lived in Texas, making good money, doing well, good person. Last year we found out he has been on cocaine... I heard from him last week and he said he was going into rehab... I just called and the rehab said he never showed up. So we do not know where he is and the rehab cannot take him for about 6 months now. I am wondering if he is bi-polar or something else plus the drugs. We are so lost. I really think I may drive to Lafayette tomorrow and see if I can find him... maybe. I am so scared. We are raising our grandsons. Our

daughter also lives with us too, which is another story; but we cannot have our son around the boys because we cannot trust him. My husband's parents need us too; so we are helping them out. His mom is blind and her mind is not real good. His dad just had heart surgery. My husband had to retire and is also losing his eyesight slowly.

I wrote back and told her that her great weapon was prayer. Don't underestimate what God can do in response to the earnest, persistent prayers of a praying parent or loved one.

We have a man in our church—Joe Henderson—who recently told me a story from his own life. He was saved many years ago, during the years surrounding World War II. He was so excited that he wanted to witness to his half-brother, a very wealthy man and heir to a great fortune. Joe was very zealous and his witness was evidently too assertive. It caused a rupture in their relationship. For many years the brothers had little to do with each other. My friend prayed every day for his brother—and he prayed virtually every day for 56 years. Finally the man had a stroke and sent word that he would like to see Joe. Joe and Betty came and spent a half hour and prayed for the man, but they were careful to be gentle in their approach. On the next visit, the man said, "Brother, I am born again!" He gave witness to his conversion—after having been prayed for 56 years.

When his children were younger, Job was a model of godliness for them and he gave them a firm foundation; and when they were older, he was their Number One prayer warrior, literally pleading the blood of the Lamb on their behalf.

Remember the Hedge God Puts Around Us

The third axiom is to remember that God puts a hedge of protection around the families of His children. To me this is one of the most encouraging and comforting passages in the Bible, although it is spoken by the devil. You say, "How can the devil say anything that is encouraging?" But this really is. Look at verses 8ff: 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." "Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied. "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has?"

Satan is complaining that he can do no real damage against this family because God has put a hedge around Job and his household—that is, his family. The devil apparently didn't know that his words were going to be recorded for all time, and he unwittingly made a very encouraging remark when he complained that God is able to put a hedge of protection around the families of those who love Him.

In Psalm 139, the Psalmist said, "Lord, You have hedged me in; You have hedged me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain it" (NKJV).

I believe that when we love God and live under the protection of the blood of Jesus Christ, He puts a hedge of protection around our families that Satan cannot penetrate. Now, the Lord occasionally lifts the hedge and lets Satan attack. That's what he did in Job's case. For reasons known only to Himself, the Lord sometimes lowers the shields around us. That's why bad things happen to good people, and the Lord allows it for reasons that will ultimately work for our good. But there's a hedge around us—and around our families and around all that we have.

Trust God on Bad Days

And finally, Job teaches us to trust in the Lord even when we receive what appears to be bad news. I remember on one occasion I had to call a father with bad news about his youngster, and on the other end he melted down into a fit of screaming and sobbing and there is no way to describe the anguish and hurt in his voice. Most of us who are parents have felt that way, because there's no way to describe the pain that parents face when their children are in crisis. Well, on this occasion it was the worst news possible—all of Job's children had been killed in one horrific accident, and it had happened during one of those parties that Job was concerned about. Look at verse 18: While he was still speaking, yet another messenger came and said, "Your sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, when suddenly a mighty wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house. It collapsed on them and they are dead, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you."

Now, the popular opinion of the day was that Job was having these problems because he had sinned against God, and that his children perished because of their sins. Look at Job 8: Then (Job's friend) Bildad the Shuhite replied: "How long will you say such things? Your words are a blustering wind. Does God pervert justice? Does the Almighty pervert what is right? When your children sinned against Him, He gave them over to the penalty of their sin."

But the whole point of the book of Job is that these afflictions were not the result of specific sins, but because the devil was attacking Job and his family, and that God was permitting it for reasons yet to be seen.

And my own belief is that these children knew the Lord and went to heaven, because there is nothing in the book of Job to indicate that they denied the Lord. They seemed to be close, to love each other, to enjoy being together. In chapter 29, Job spoke of how wonderful it had been to have them around him in his own home. He had a father's normal concerns for their spiritual well-being;

and he was their primary intercessor and prayer warrior—and God is a God who answers prayer.

Furthermore there is one other little indication I'd like to show you. Look at Job 42, the very last chapter of Job in which all is resolved. Job 42:10ff says:

After Job had prayed for his friends, the Lord made him prosperous again and gave him twice as much as he had before.

Notice that—Job's blessings were doubled. Everything was exactly doubled. Verse 12 says: The Lord blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the first. He had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen and a thousand donkeys. And he also had seven sons and three daughters....

His sheep were doubled, his camels were doubled, his oxen were doubled, his donkeys were doubled—but not his children. Before his affliction, he had ten children; and after his affliction everything was doubled—but not his children. He had ten before and ten after. Why? Because his first ten were still alive and well and in heaven; and so he had twenty after all. Everything was doubled.

Now let me sum up. Being a dad or a mom is the hardest thing in the world, and we worry more about our children than about anything else in this life. And many times we worry about our children after they are grown more than when they were little. I never worried about my youngsters much when they were small; it was only later, after they were grown, that I suffered anxiety and anguish on their behalf. But all throughout the Bible we see the same thing. Think of the distressed parents who brought their children to Jesus. Some were demon possessed; some threw themselves in the fire and were self-destructive; some were sick; and some were even dead. There was never a time in the Gospels when Jesus failed to respond to the earnest entreaties of a desperate parent.

So be the best role model for Christ that you can be. Pray for your children and be their intercessor day and night. Remember that God is able to put a hedge around you and your household and all that you have. And trust Him even when you go through good days and bad.

Trust in Him ye saints forever

He is faithful, changing never;

Neither force nor guile can sever

Those He loves from Him.

(Thomas Kelly, 1806)

Job 1:8 I'm Trying My Best **Robert Morgan**

Have you considered my servant, Job? Job 1:8

Have you considered my servant Job? That's the question the Lord asked of the devil in the book of Job, chapter 1; and that's the question I'd like to ask you today and for the next several weeks. Have you given consideration to the biblical character of Job and what he can teach us? Today I want to begin a series of eight sermons from the Old Testament book of Job, and there's one thing I want to say right off the bat—Job was a man of incredible moral character.

And there aren't many people like that around today.

Several years ago, there was a financial journalist named B. C. Forbes who started a magazine, which today is one of the premier publications in the world of finance—Forbes Magazine. One day Mr. Forbes interviewed multi-millionaire John D. Rockefeller, asking him for his ideas and advice. Rockefeller said, "The most important thing for a young man starting life to do is to establish a credit, a reputation, character. He must inspire the complete confidence of others." (Charles E. Watson, *What Smart People Do When Dumb Things Happen at Work* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1999), p. 69.)

In other words, in the world today there's nothing more important to someone than his or her integrity and character. We need to ask ourselves: Do I inspire confidence in others? Am I a person of integrity and character? Do others trust me?

At roughly the same time B. C. Forbes was eliciting this advice from John D. Rockefeller, another journalist named Douglas Freeman, who was a journalist and historian, was writing a book about George Washington. Freeman was one of the proponents of the theory that history is largely biographical—it's not so much the story of great events, but of great men and women who inspired

and caused the events. Of Washington, he wrote, "The great big thing stamped across that man is character." And by character he meant integrity, self-discipline, dependability, honesty, and resolve. (David Hackett Fischer, *Washington's Crossing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 446.)

Now, I don't want to be cynical, but compare Washington to some of people running for the White House today. Compare the integrity Rockefeller talked about with the people that you do business with day by day. Our society is suffering from an enormous erosion of integrity and character.

In the last week or so alone, the coach who won the Super Bowl was caught cheating, and the man who won the Tour de France was found doping. And not a day goes by without stories like that.

Well, next week, Lord willing, we're going to open our Children's Ministry Center after many years of prayer and planning. My greatest hope is that in these rooms beneath my feet, men and women of integrity will be teaching children how to be boys and girls of integrity based on the enabling grace of Jesus Christ. And we can draw on Job for inspiration, for he was a man of incredible moral fiber and integrity of character.

There are two sides to the story of Job, and I'd like to show them to you today.

Integrity Comes When We Exercise Our Faith in Times of Prosperity

First, the book of Job teaches us integrity comes from exercising our faith and obedience during times of prosperity. If you can remain true to God when things are going well, then you have integrity. The Bible warns that the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil, and there's never been a more materialistic than ours.

Well, Job was a very wealthy man, and yet he had a deep faith in God and a wonderful relationship with the Lord, and out of his faith and intimacy with the Lord, he maintained his integrity. Now, I'd like to show you how we can work that out as we read through this book, and we can work it out in two ways. First, the book of Job begins with a statement summarizing his character. Look at the way Job is introduced as the book opens:

In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil. He had seven sons and three daughters, and he owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred donkeys, and had a large number of servants. He was the greatest man among all the people of the East.

This opening paragraph of Job summarizes his character and conduct, telling us seven things about him.

1. Job was a blameless man (v. 1). This doesn't mean he was perfect, but that others viewed him as being a moral and ethical man, a man of integrity and high character. The word "blameless" has to do with the way he was viewed by other people.
2. Job was an upright man (v. 1). This is the way he was viewed by God. In fact, down in verse 8, the Lord Himself commends Job: 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. Now, this is a remarkable statement coming from the lips of God. The Lord plainly said that Job was, at that particular time, the best man on planet earth. I wonder who is the best person on earth today? I have no idea who it would be. I only know that it wouldn't be me, and I suppose you would say that it wouldn't be you. It might be a persecuted Christian in an oppressed country or a self-sacrificing believer working among the neediest on earth. Here in Job 1, the Lord said, "There is no one on earth like Job; he is blameless and upright."
3. He was a God-fearing man (v. 1). Job believed in God and he knew God was a God of power and purity; and he had a healthy respect and reverence for the Lord.
4. He was an evil-shunning man (v. 1). This is a very interesting word used here in the NIV. In the dictionary, the word shun means: To avoid deliberately and habitually. Job deliberately and habitually avoided places and people and practices in his life that would displease the Lord.
5. He was a family man (v. 2). He had a wife, seven sons, and three daughters. It was a family of twelve—cheaper by the dozen.
6. He was a wealthy man (v. 3). He owned thousands of head of livestock, which in those days was the common currency.
7. He was a great man (v. 3). This initial introduction concludes with a summarizing statement that Job was the greatest man among all the people in the East.

Now, that's a digest of Job's life, but if we really become acquainted with him, we need to turn over to chapters 29-31, where Job described himself to His friends. He opened his heart and assesses his own life as honestly as he could. As I began studying these chapters several months ago, I began to see Job in an entirely different light. In these chapters, in essence, he is telling his friends: "I

don't know why all these things have happened to me, because I have tried my best to be a man of character and integrity. Let me tell you how I have tried to live. You've been telling me that these disasters have befallen me because of some terrible sin I've committed, but let me tell you how I have tried to live. Let me testify on my own behalf about my integrity."

And in chapters 29-31, as he described himself, I saw Job as I had never seen him and it spoke to me about what a person of integrity and character really looks like. Look at Job 29:1ff: Job continued his discourse: How I long for the months gone by, for the days when God watched over me, when His lamp shone upon my head and by His light I walked through darkness! O, for the days when I was in my prime, when God's intimate friendship blessed my house...

Underline those words: God's intimate friendship, for that described the kind of daily walk that Job and the Lord had together. It's similar to those Old Testament characters who talked about walking with God, or with what our Lord Jesus would later describe as abiding in Christ — God's intimate friendship blessed my house. His intimate friend blessed his home.

Now, let me just pause and ask: Does God's intimate friendship bless your house? Is your relationship with the Lord so intimate and close that it's a blessing to all who know you? Notice that this man wasn't ashamed of loving the Lord. He wasn't ashamed about talking about God's intimate friendship. He wasn't embarrassed to say that God had blessed his family and prospered him. Sometimes we're embarrassed to be very open about our Christian faith, but we should never be retiring about talking about how good God has been to us. He goes on to describe it in verses 5-6:

...when the Almighty was still with me, and my children were around me, when my path was drenched with cream and the rock poured out for me streams of olive oil.

And in the next paragraph, Job talked about how he had been a pillar in the community, a leader in his city, and a man much respected by others.

Verse 7ff: When I went to the gate of the city and took my seat in the public square, the young men saw me and stepped aside and the old men rose to their feet; the chief men refrained from speaking and covered their mouths with their hands; the voices of the nobles were hushed, and their tongues stuck to the roof of their mouths. Whoever heard me spoke well of me, and those who saw me commended me....

This man was mature and wise, and others respected his opinion. The book of Proverbs says that a good name is more to be desired than great riches, and it takes many years to build up a reputation in which others respect you and value your advice. The funny thing is, it only takes a few moments to ruin it. I know people who have just ruined their reputation by a few bad decisions or moments of immaturity or because of some outburst or childish reaction. Job was careful to win and keep the respect of others.

Part of his reputation was based on his concern for those in need. Look at verses 11ff: Whoever heard me spoke well of me, and those who saw me commended me, because I rescued the poor who cried for help, and the fatherless who had none to assist him. The man who was dying blessed me; I made the widow's heart sing. I put on righteousness as my clothing; justice was my robe and my turban. I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. I was a father to the needy; I took up the case of the stranger. I broke the fangs of the wicked and snatched the victims from their teeth.

Job bent over backwards to be kind to those with needs in their lives, and no one was too small for Job to help. He had trained himself to notice people in need. I want to tell you a personal story that happened to me about a month ago. My wife, as you may know, uses a wheelchair. We have an electric wheelchair here at church that she uses, and we have one in our home. Sometimes we call it her "Electric Chair." So I'm familiar with power chairs. The other Saturday as I was working on something in my study at home, I needed a book here at my office at church; and I decided just to come get it. As I drove to the church, I saw something in my peripheral vision. Some of the houses along that stretch of McGavock Pike have very long, steep driveways, and I noticed a man halfway up his driveway in a power chair. As I drove on, something bothered me, and so I turned around and went back and parked in a spot across the street and watched him for a moment. His hand was fiddling with the joystick, but he wasn't going anywhere. I got out of the car, crossed the street, and walked up to him from the behind. I leaned over and said, "Are you stuck." He nodded, unable to speak. This was one of those blistering 100-plus degree days. His battery had died, and he had been sitting there in the blazing sun with hundreds of people passing back and forth on McGavock, but no one had noticed him. And I probably wouldn't have noticed him, had it not been for Katrina's powerchair. I pushed him to the top of the hill and into his garage. His wife didn't even know he had gone out of the house. We got him some water and he recovered. But it made me ask myself, "Lord, how many people do we pass by every day and we don't even realize they are in crisis? How many hurting people do I pass by without noticing?" Job was always on the lookout for someone to help; that was his ministry and his life's calling.

At the end of chapter 29, Job spoke of how people called on him for advice and leaned on his counsel. Verses 21ff say: Men listened to me expectantly, waiting in silence for my counsel. After I had spoken they spoke no more; my words fell gently on their ears. They waited for me as for showers and drank in my words as the spring rain. When I smiled at them, they scarcely believed it; the light of my face was precious to them.

What did he mean by the light of his face? In part, that included his smile, the pleasant expression on his face, his friendliness. He was a pleasant man, a smiling man, a person of personal integrity.

In the next chapter, Job reviews again his problems and laments his troubles, but then in chapter 31, he goes on to give us some further evidence of his character; and he begins with one of the most important verses in the Bible relating to sexual purity. This is a verse everyone—especially every man—should memorize.

Job 31:1: I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl.

He taught himself how to look away, how to bounce his eyes from those momentary images that can tempt the mind. If he were alive today, Job would have the same commitment, but he would be horrified at what has happened to society. It used to be that pornography and sexually alluring images were in secret and hidden magazines and movies, then it took over the Internet, and now it has taken over the whole of our society. It's on the so-called family channels on television, in the advertisements at the mall; it's on the magazine covers at the grocery store, and on the billboards on the highways. Our society is being overrun by pornography and saturated by sexuality.

We may not be able to control our society, but we do have to learn to control our eyes. And this passage tells us how to do it:

I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl. For what is man's lot from God above, his heritage from the Almighty on high? Is it not ruin for the wicked, disaster for those who do wrong? Does He not see my ways and count my every step?

In other words, we learn to control our eyes when we realize that the Lord is watching us all the times, and He sees all our ways. He even counts my steps. The Lord knows how many steps you take each day. Doctors tell us that we can stay healthier if we take 10,000 steps every day, and some people wear a little device on their belts that counts their steps. But God knows each and every step we take and how many hairs there are on our heads. He knows what we do with our eyes, and we can hide nothing from Him.

Verse 9 continues: If my heart has been enticed by a woman, or if I have lurked at my neighbor's door, then may my wife grind another man's grain, and may other men sleep with her.

In other words, Job is saying, "Lord, if I have been careless in my sexual habits, then take me off the planet, kill me, and give my wife a better man."

Job goes on in verse 13 to talk about how he has treated his employees well. In verse 16 he talks about how he has helped the poor and the widow and children who needed a father figure: If I have denied the desires of the poor or let the eyes of the widow grow weary, if I have kept my bread to myself, not sharing it with the fatherless—but from my youth I reared him as would a father, and from my birth I guided the widow—if I have seen anyone perishing for lack of clothing, or a needy man without a garment, and his heart did not bless me for warming him with the fleece from my sheep, if I have raised my hand against the fatherless, knowing that I had influence in court, then let my arm fall from the shoulder, let it be broken off at the joint....

So Job testifies to his personal standards as it relates to intimacy with God, his own spiritual life, the way he treats his family, the respect he has in the town square, the advice he gives to those needing it, his humble generosity, and how he has cared for other people at his own expense. And now there's another subject—his attitude toward money. He's the richest man in the world, and yet he says, in essence, I would be just as happy with nothing. I do not put any trust or confidence in my own wealth.

Verse 24: If I have put my trust in gold or said to pure gold, "You are my security," if I have rejoiced over my great wealth, the fortune my hands have gained... then these would be sins to be judged, for I would have been unfaithful to God on high.

And finally, Job wants us to know that he is compassionate even toward his enemies. Verses 29ff: If I have rejoiced at my enemy's misfortune or gloated over the trouble that came to him—I have not allowed my mouth to sin by invoking a curse against his life.

Not only had he made a covenant with his eyes, but with his mouth.

And, to wrap things up, he talks about the fact that when he has sinned and made a mistake, he has been quick to confess it to God and to others. Look at verse 33: If I have concealed my sin as men do by hiding my guilt in my heart because I so feared the crowd and so dreaded the contempt of the clans that I kept silent and would not go outside.

So the first thing to notice and to know about Job, as he talks about his earlier days, is that integrity comes when we trust God in times of prosperity.

Maturity Comes When We Exercise Our Faith in Times of Adversity

The second point I'm just going to mention today because we'll be focusing on this during the rest of the sermon series is that

maturity comes when we exercise our faith in times of adversity.

The story of the book of Job has to do with why and how this good man suffered so many tragedies and disasters in his life. Why did God allow it? Well, one of the reasons is to take Job deeper in maturity and insight and understanding and blessing than he had ever known before.

Integrity comes when we trust God when things are going well, but maturity comes when we learn to trust God when things are going badly.

One of the most popular television shows today is NBC's hit series, *Heroes*, about a group of seemingly ordinary people who thought they were like everyone else until they began discovering that they had supernatural powers such as the ability to travel through time or to fly, and they have the capacity to use these powers to help others avoid catastrophe. I haven't yet seen the program, so I don't know much about it, but as I read the synopsis I wasn't surprised that it's become a hit show. People are looking for men and women who lead ordinary lives but who have something extraordinary about them. People are looking for heroes. And your children and mine need us to be the role models that will give them a guiding beacon.

Integrity comes when we trust God in times of prosperity; and maturity comes when we trust God in times of adversity—and we all have plenty of both. So...

When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,

When sorrows like sea billows roll;

Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say,

It is well, it is well, with my soul.

Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,

Let this blest assurance control,

That Christ has regarded my helpless estate,

And hath shed His own blood for my soul

Job 1, 2, 13, 19 & 23 I'm Going to Trust God Anyway **Robert Morgan**

Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy (James 5:10-11).

You may never have heard of Robert King Merton, the Columbia University sociologist who died in 2003 at the age of 92, but I'll bet you've heard some of the phrases that he coined. He was an expert at developing brilliant concepts, inventing a phrase to summarize them, and then popularizing those phrases until everyone began using them. Some of Merton's tag lines include self-fulfilling prophecy and unintended consequences. It was Merton who invented focus groups and who discovered and popularized the word serendipity. And it was Merton who coined the phrase role model to describe someone who provides an example of positive behavior to others.

Well, the term may be new, but the concept is as old as the Bible. In fact, we can think of the Bible as something of a handbook of mentors and role models. If you want a role model for evangelism, study the life of St. Paul the apostle. If you want an example of love, study the life of St. John, the apostle of love. If you want a role model of faith, study the life of Abraham, for Romans 4 uses him in that way. And if you want someone who can show you how to respond to suffering, pain, adversity, and tribulation, study the prophets in general and especially the life of the Old Testament hero, Job.

James said: Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

Well, in preparation for this series of sermons I've read through the book of Job several times, and it's quite clear there were times when Job didn't feel very patient, and there were times when he questioned what was happening to him. He was confused and bewildered and depressed, like anyone would be. We've all felt that way from time to time. But I've also noticed that his speeches and dialogues were punctuated with statements of perseverance and faith. It seems to me there are five great statements of faith that act as signposts through the book.

Job said, in effect, "I don't know why this is happening, but I'm going to trust God anyway. I feel pain and suffering, but I'm going to trust God anyway. I am confused and besieged, but I'm going to trust God anyway." Five times he said in various ways, "I'm going to trust God anyway."

May the Name of the Lord Be Praised

The first time is right after the first series of disasters. In Job chapter 1, we're told of how the devil stirred up trouble for Job, and the Sabaeans came and the Chaldeans came, and the whirlwind came, and by the end of the day Job had lost his herds and flocks and servants and even his children. Look at his response in Job 1:20-22:

At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship and said, "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." In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.

Now, this is a famous passage in the Bible, and I don't know how many times I've heard this on television or in the movies when someone dies in a drama or thriller. You usually hear it in the background at the graveside while the hero is scanning the faces of the mourners looking for the real killer, which often turns out to be the grieving widow who's all dressed in black. Very often it's raining. While the hero stands there in the wings taking it all in, you can hear the priest intone in the background the words "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised." I've almost never used those words myself while conducting a graveside service, but they are extremely popular on television.

Let's do a quick analysis of this passage. It says, At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head.... Those were the ways in which people in the ancient world expressed their grief. This tells us that Job was shaken to his core by the tragedies that engulfed him.

Then he fell to the ground in worship. It could have said that he fell to the ground in grief or in despair or in anger or in complete collapse. But remember what we found in Job 29: Job enjoyed intimate friendship with God. He walked with God and knew God and had trusted the Lord for a lifetime of blessing. And his instinctive response was to fall to God in worship, to say, "I'm going to trust God anyway." I used to have a professor who was well-known for saying, "Well, praise the Lord anyway." If something went wrong or he had a disappointment, he'd say, "Well, praise the Lord anyway." Job's response here is an amplification of that attitude in a time of deepest distress.

And what did he say? 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.

The New Testament counterpart to that is found in 1 Timothy 6:7: For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.

This is the biblical logic in both Old and New Testaments. We're only in this world for a short time, and we're here on assignment. Our goal is not the accumulation of things. Our goal is to be content and frugal as we serve the Lord, and when we have good days we thank God for them; and when we have bad days we trust God with them; and on both days we say, "May the name of the Lord be praised."

So that was Job's first declaration of praise, and it's a good philosophy for all of us to adopt in times of stress and strain.

Shall We Accept Good and Not Bad?

Now the second was in chapter 2. What happened afterward was this—Job's declaration of faith frustrated the devil. If you want to frustrate Satan, just trust and praise the Lord. So the devil unleashed another attack, this time on Job's health. Job found himself covered with boils and blisters and running sores from top to toe. Look at Job 2:9-10:

His wife said to him, "Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!"

The word "integrity" here is related to the word "blameless" in chapter 1. She was saying, "Are you still trying to be spiritual? Are you still trusting God after all this?" Her faith had just given out, and she was cynical and sarcastic. But Job wasn't going to put up with that kind of talk.

He replied, "You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God and not trouble?" In all this, Job did not sin in what he said.

There are several insights and attitudes woven into the fabric of this verse, but one of them is a sense of sanctified resignation and acceptance. Do you see that word "accept"? Sometimes we just have to accept things, even if we don't like them and would wish them otherwise. Remember the old "Serenity Prayer" that begins: "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change...."

- This is similar to Esther's prayer: "If I perish I perish."
- It's like Jesus' prayer in the Garden: "Nevertheless not My will but Thine be done."
- It's like what Eli prayed in 1 Samuel 3: "It is the Lord. Let Him do what seems good to Him."

Let's suppose a little girl wants to get into her mother's purse and play with her makeup, but the mother says, "No," and takes it away. Now that little girl has a choice to make. She can either fuss and cry and rebel and squall and pout and throw a fit; or she can accept the decision and find something else that's fun to do. Her emotional health and good spirits depend on her learning to do the latter. And it's just the same with God and His children. Sometimes we just have to accept things as His will and say, "Well, praise the Lord anyway."

Though He Slay Me Yet Will I Trust Him

Now, let's go on deeper into Job. After this incident in chapter 2, Job's friends come and begin discussing things with him. These conversations with his friends occupy Job 4 through 37, and during these conversations Job declares his faith three more times.

I'd like for you to turn with me to Job 13, where we have one of the greatest statements of faith anywhere in the Bible. Job was replying to his friend Zophar, and in Job 13:15-16, he said:

Keep silent and let me speak; then let come to me what may. Why do I put myself in jeopardy and take my life in my hands? Though He slay me, yet will I hope in Him. I will surely defend my ways to His face. Indeed, this will turn out for my deliverance.

This is Job's version of Romans 8:28, that all things work for good to those who love God. This, he said, will turn out for my deliverance, and therefore though He slay me yet will I trust Him. I've come to really appreciate that attitude. It conveys a sense of utter trust that God will never do anything to us that will in any real or ultimate sense harm us. He only aims for our good, however it may look at the time.

One day this week while we were having lunch I asked my wife a strange question. It was sort of out of the blue, and she didn't know what to make of it. I asked her, "What would you think if a good friend who would come up to you and slice you open with a knife?"

"Well," she said, shocked, "that would be terrible."

"Yes," I said, "but what if he were a surgeon and he was performing an operation that would save your life?"

Well, that's different, isn't it? We still wouldn't like it at the time, but we'd be grateful that we had a friend with enough skill to help us at a critical moment. What Job was saying in this passage is very important. He was saying, "I know that God loves me, that He is a Great Physician, and that He will never harm me but will always work all things for good. And even if it appears for a moment that He is harming me, I know it's in appearance only and that in reality it is for my benefit. So I'm going to trust Him completely. Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him."

I Know That My Redeemer Lives

Now, let's go on to Job's fourth declaration of faith, found in Job 19:23-27: Oh, that my words were recorded, that they were written on a scroll, that they were inscribed with an iron tool on lead, or engraved in rock forever! I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end He will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see Him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!

Now as far as I'm concerned, if you're going to read a passage from the book of Job at the graveside of a believer, this is the passage to choose.

Notice the personal pronouns. Job isn't just making a theological statement; he is expressing his own feelings: I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end He will stand on the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see Him with my own eyes—I, and not another.

His mind and thoughts are looking forward to the resurrection, to the new heavens and the new earth, and to everlasting life. In her

book, *A Little Pot of Oil*, Jill Briscoe talks about going to her first American funeral. Jill grew up in the UK, and she wasn't quite prepared for the open casket and with everyone standing around looking down at the departed person. But she stood with her friend, Jenny (the wife of the man who died), near the casket and gave comfort. By and by one woman who was a relative of the man came by and took a very long time at the casket, and she kept saying over and over, "Oh, there he is, there he is. Just look at him—there he is." Jenny stood it as long as she could, and then she said, "No, no, you've got it all wrong—there he isn't. If I believed 'there he is,' I would not be able to shut that box and put him in the ground. Steve's not in the casket. He's long gone to be with the Lord." (Jill Briscoe, *A Little Pot of Oil* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2003), p. 73. And Jill thought of the verse that says, Absent from the body, present with the Lord.

One day the bodies of those who die in Christ are going to be resurrected, and we'll catch up with ourselves, so to speak. Jesus said, "I am the Resurrection and the Life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies." And all of us in Christ can say, "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end He will stand upon the earth. After my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh will I see God."

In this verse are the truths of the redemption of the soul, the person of the Redeemer, the resurrection of the body, the Second Coming of Christ, the end of the world, and the promise of everlasting life.

He Knows the Way I Take

But there's one more great declaration of faith in the book of Job, and it's found in Job 23:8-12:

But if I go to the east, He is not there. If I go to the west, I do not find Him. When He is at work in the north, I do not see Him; when He turns to the south, I catch no glimpse of Him. But He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I will come forth as gold. My feet have closely followed His steps; I have kept to His way without turning aside. I have not departed from the commands of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my daily bread.

In other words, my trials and troubles are not going to go on forever, and they are not without purpose. I can't see how or where God is working, but He can see me. He knows what I'm going through; He knows the way I take. This is a test of my faith, and when it's over, I'm going to come forth like gold. And in the process, I'm going to closely follow His steps and treasure the words of His mouth.

Conclusion

Now, I'd like to end by going back to something that I said earlier in this series of messages. The structure and outline of the book of Job are unique in the Scripture. We have two chapters of narrative at the beginning of the book that tells us why these things happened to Job. We're told about the devil attacking him. We're taken on a behind-the-scenes tour and given insights into the reason for Job's suffering. And then in the last chapter, Job 42, we have another section of narrative in which we're told how it all turns out. But in-between we have 39 chapters of poetry and dialogue in which Job and his friends try to figure it all out.

Now, here's the great lesson of the book of Job. Job did not know the contents of chapters 1 and 2, and he did not yet know the contents of chapter 42. That is, he did not know the reason for his suffering and he did not know what the results would be. He was just in terrible crisis without knowledge of the cause or the outcome. Later on, of course, he would know the reason and later on he would know the outcome, but as we read through the book of Job, we see that at the time he did not know.

And yet—though he didn't know why it was happening or how God would resolve it—he said, "I am going to trust God anyway. May the name of the Lord be praised! Shall we accept good from the Lord and not bad? Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him. I know that my Redeemer lives. He knows the way I take."

And James said that Job is our role model when it comes to troubles in life. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy. I think it helps us during a difficult time to say out loud and even in the presence of our friends, "I'm going to trust God anyway. He knows what He's doing. He's working all for good. I'm going to trust Him with all my heart." Too often we verbalize the opposite, and by verbalizing we reinforce our doubts and disbelief. Let's be like the Captain's Daughter in that old poem by James T. Fields:

We were crowded in the cabin,

Not a soul would dare to sleep,

It was midnight on the waters,

And a storm was on the deep.

'Tis a fearful thing in winter

To be shattered by the blast,
And to hear the rattling trumpet
Thunder, "Cut away the mast!"
So we shuddered there in silence,
For the stoutest held his breath,
While the hungry sea was roaring
And the breakers talked with Death.
As thus we sat in darkness,
Each one busy with his prayers,
"We are lost!" the captain shouted
As he staggered down the stairs.
But his little daughter whispered,
As she took his icy hand,
"Isn't God, upon the ocean,
Just the same as on the land?"
Then we kissed the little maiden.
And we spoke in better cheer,
And we anchored safe in harbour
When the morn was shining clear

Job 3 I'm Tired of Life **Robert Morgan**

At last Job spoke, and he cursed the day of his birth. He said: "Let the day of my birth be erased, and the night I was conceived. Let that day be turned to darkness. Let it be lost even to God on high, and let no light shine on it. Let the darkness and utter gloom claim that day for its own. Let a black cloud overshadow it, and let the darkness terrify it. Let that night be blotted off the calendar, never again to be counted among the days of the year, never again to appear among the months....

Why wasn't I born dead? Why didn't I die as I came from the womb?

Why is life given to those with no future, those God has surrounded with difficulties? I cannot eat for sighing; my groans pour out like water. What I always feared has happened to me. What I dreaded has come true. I have no peace, no quietness. I have no rest; only trouble comes."

--Excerpted from Job 3 (NLT), presented dramatically by Darrell Fulton on October 28, 2007 during Sunday morning worship at .

In my early years here at , I invited a British pastor named Geoffrey King to preach here for a Bible conference. Rev. King, who is now in heaven, ranks among the top Bible teachers I've ever heard in my life, but he was somewhat eccentric. He dressed peculiarly, had odd views on hygiene, and constantly set me into spasms of laughter without meaning to. While he was here with us in Nashville, he had two requests. He wanted to play all the organs in town—and he wanted to ride all the rollercoasters.

One day I look him to Opryland theme park and, despite his age, he headed right to the big coasters. As we barreled down the first great drop on one of them, he turned to me with a huge grin and shouted, “Rob, Rob, never grow up! Remember that God has given us richly all things to enjoy!”

It was my one and only sermon on a rollercoaster, but I’ve never forgotten it. I understood what he was telling me. Jesus wants us to enjoy life more abundantly. He surrounds us with goodness and mercy every day of our lives, and from the fullness of His grace we have all received one blessing after another. As Proverbs 15 puts it, “The cheerful heart has a continual feast.”

But there’s another side to that truth. There are some days and some seasons in life in which it’s hard to hear the melody of the organ or whoosh of the rollercoaster. Some days and some seasons in life are so full of pain that it’s hard to function.

My favorite old preacher, Vance Havner, wrote in one of his last books: “It’s nice to visit Disneyland but we cannot live there. The Christian life is not a vacation but a vocation, not a picnic but a pilgrimage. Its mountain-top experiences can flatten out and drop from the majestic to the monotonous and even to the miserable. Even our Lord said, ‘Now is my soul troubled.’ Paul did not spend his last days writing his memoirs on the sunny Riviera. If you can believe tradition, all the disciples but one died violent deaths. The roll call of faith heroes in Hebrews lists many who subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the swords, and otherwise were eminently successful; but it lists another category (“and others”) who died in adversity.” (Vance Havner, *Playing Marbles with Diamonds* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), p. 89

Every single character in the Bible endured hardship, suffering and pain at some point along the way; and Exhibit A is this man named Job.

I want to show you what is happening in the story. In chapters 1 and 2, we’re introduced to Job, who was described as the best man on earth and the greatest man in the east. But then Satan came, and in a very short period sent one disaster after another into Job’s life. Everything dear is taken from him, including his family, his wealth and his health; and within the space of two chapters he went from highest position to deepest pain.

Well, of course, word spread like wildfire; and at the end of chapter 2, Job’s friends came to console him. Look at Job 2:11-13: When Job’s three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Sophar the Naamathite, heard about all the troubles that had come upon him, they set out from their homes and met together by agreement to go and sympathize with him and comfort him. When they saw him from a distance, they could hardly recognize him; they began to weep aloud, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads. Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights. No one said a word to him, because they saw how great his suffering was.

And now we come to chapter 3. This chapter is a soliloquy; it’s a monologue. Job opened his mouth and began ventilating his emotions and trying to talk it through and to make some sense of it all. And here in chapter 3, he had three points to make or three things to say. There is a definite progress here to his thoughts, and I don’t want to belabor it overmuch, but I’d like for you to see it.

First, Job wishes that he had never been born (verses 1-10). Listen to how he puts it: Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth. He said: “May the day of my birth perish, and the night it was said, ‘A boy is born!’ That day—may it turn to darkness; may God above not care about it; may no light shine upon it; may blackness overwhelm its light....

Notice that the dominant idea here is darkness and blackness. This is the image that Job uses over and over: ...may it turn to darkness... may no light shine upon it... May darkness and deep shadow claim it... May a cloud settle over it... blackness overwhelm its light... may darkness seize it... To Job, everything was black, darkness, and hopeless, and he wished that he had never been born.

Second, in verses 11-19, he wishes that he had died at birth. Look at verse 11: Why did I not perish at birth and die as I came from the womb? And the rest of the paragraph is an expansion and expatiation of that idea.

Third, in the last part of the chapter (verses 20-26), Job wishes that he could die then and there: 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....

So there you have a simple three-sentence summary of Job 3: I wish I had never been born; I wish I had died at birth; I wish I could die here and now. Now, what can we learn from this? Why did God put this chapter in His Book? I come away from this chapter with

four impressions.

Pain is Unavoidable in This Life

First, pain is unavoidable in this life. Every single character in the Bible encountered suffering. Look at Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David, Jesus, Paul—none of them were immune. And sometimes the level of pain that we encounter makes us want to die.

I want to say something very personal, and I've wondered whether I should even share this, but I'm going to. There has been one period in life—I'm not going to discuss details—but there's been one period in my life in which I felt a level of emotional pain that was so great that I didn't think I could bear it and I asked the Lord to take me home to heaven. There were several occasions during this period when I lay on the floor in so much pain and heartache and anxiety that I earnestly asked the Lord to let me die, because I didn't think I could bear the pain.

So this chapter in Job is very precious to me. It shows me that a great biblical hero, one of the greatest men in the Bible, once felt just the way that I have felt on a few occasions in my own life.

And not just Job. Let me show you another passage. Right now I'm reading through the book of Jeremiah for my devotions, and on Thursday I came to Jeremiah 20. Look at verses 14ff: Cursed be the day I was born! May the day my mother bore me not be blessed! Cursed be the man who brought my father the news, who made him very glad, saying, "A child is born to you—a son!" May that man be like the towns the Lord overthrew without pity.... Why did I ever come out of the womb to see trouble and sorrow and to end my days in shame?

Now, I think it's important to say that this is not suicide talk. Job and Jeremiah were not suicidal. They both felt like they wanted to die, but they made no attempt to expedite the process. But there's more! Moses once asked the Lord to take his life because he had so much pressure he didn't think he could bear it; and Elijah once asked the Lord to take his life, because his emotional pain and depression were so great.

Some of you understand this. You've been through something so horrendous—or you're going through something right now so horrific—that you just want to die. You're not suicidal, and you haven't lost your faith in the Lord. It's just that the pain is almost too great to bear.

Well, you're in good company. Some of the greatest heroes of the Bible went through a similar period in their lives, and the Bible records it for us; and somehow I find that strangely encouraging.

Pain Raises Honest Questions in our Hearts

Second, pain raises honest questions in our hearts. Look at Job 3:11, and notice the questions: Why did I not perish at birth, and die as I came from the womb? Why were there knees to receive me and breasts that I might be nursed?

Verse 20 says: Why is light given to those in misery, and life to the bitter of soul?

Verse 23 says: Why is life given to a man whose way is hidden?

When I began studying the book of Job for this series of messages, I read through all 42 chapters and listed all the questions asked in this book. I think that I jotted down every single one. There were 290 questions, and every chapter in the entire book (except for chapter 29) has at least one question mark in it. And the word "Why?" occurs 28 times.

Recently someone who was facing a crisis at the hospital said to me, "I know we're not supposed to ask questions, but I can't help having them."

Well, it's all right to ask questions, and it's all right to ask "Why?" It's not all right to let these things destroy our faith. It's not all right to become bitter or to become agnostics or to shake our fist in God's face. It's not all right to demand immediate answers for things that can only be processed and understood in eternity. But my goodness, even the Lord Jesus Himself cried out on the cross and said, "My God, my God, why...?"

Pain Makes Eternity Sweeter

Third, pain makes eternity sweeter. Now, I want to say something and I don't want to be misunderstood. We're speaking within the context of Job 3, but here's my point. It is alright for a Christian to want to die. It's alright to want to be with the Lord. Paul told the Philippians that he wanted to go on to heaven—he had a desire to depart and be with Christ, which was far better—but for the time

being it was needful for him to remain to finish his work.

Let me show you some phrases here in Job chapter 3 about this: In verse 13, Job says that if only the Lord would take him home, he would be in such a better situation: For now I would be lying down in peace; I would be asleep and at rest.

Notice these three ideas. When we die in Christ, we lie down in peace. Second, we fall asleep. Third, we are at rest. This is New Testament language. Over and over in the New Testament, when someone died in Christ it says that they fell asleep, that they rested from their labors. It doesn't mean that their soul fell asleep, but that their body fell asleep to await the resurrection.

As I studied this, I was reminded of one of the most unusual verses in the Bible on the subject of death, and it's found in Isaiah 57: The righteous perish, and no one ponders it in his heart; devout men are taken away, and no one understands that the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil. Those who walk uprightly enter into peace; they find rest as they lie in death.

In other words, sometimes God takes us home to heaven to spare us additional suffering and sorrow in this life. He rescues us. The New Living Translation says: Good people pass away, the godly often die before their time. But no one seems to understand that God is protecting them from the evil to come....

This week I visited someone in the prison, and as I was leaving I bumped into a man I knew. I hadn't seen him for quite awhile, but I heard that he had been sick. I said, "Ken, I've heard that you've had some sickness." "Yes," he said, "I'm in bad shape." "Well," I said, "you certainly look good to me." He replied, "Well, I'm about ready for a trade-in. I've got enough miles on this old body, and I'm ready for a new model. I think it's just about time to trade it in."

Well, I believe that one of the reasons God allows sickness and suffering to encroach our lives is to wean us from earth and make us homesick for heaven.

Jesus is a Pain-Management Specialist

But there's one final point that I want to make, and it's this: Jesus is a pain-management specialist, and He has the answers to all the pain and suffering in life. Years ago, someone wrote a book with a wonderful title. I don't have a copy of the book, and I'm not sure I'm quoting it exactly right, but it was something like this: The Answers of Jesus to the Questions of Job. The author evidently took many of the 290 questions in the book of Job and showed how Jesus answered them in the Gospels.

For example, the entire book of Job can fit into just one verse in the Gospels—John 13:7: Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

Just listen to our Lord say those words to you in whatever you've faced in the past or are facing right now. He spoke those words on the night He was betrayed, and 24 hours later, His pain-wracked body was pulled from the cross and buried in the tomb of Joseph. But then He arose—and the power of His death and resurrection redeems all the sin and sorrow and suffering in life. And we may not be able to figure things out now; but later we'll understand.

Not now, but in the coming years,
It may be in the better land,
We'll read the meaning of our tears,
And there, some time, we'll understand.

We'll catch the broken threads again,
And finish what we here began;
Heaven will the mysteries explain,
And then, ah, then, we'll understand.

We'll know why clouds instead of sun
Were over many a cherished plan;
Why song has ceased when scarce begun;
'Tis there, some time, we'll understand.

Why what we long for most of all
Eludes so oft our eager hand;

Why hopes are crushed and castles fall,
Up there, some time, we'll understand.

God knows the way, He holds the key,
He guides us with unerring hand;
Sometime with tearless eyes we'll see;
Yes, there, up there, we'll understand.

That poem was written many years ago by a man named Maxwell Cornelius who was a building contractor in Pittsburg. One day there was an accident and his leg had to be amputated. As time went by, he became a minister of the Gospel, but he went through many other hardships. But out of his difficulties he wrote that poem that says:

Not now, but in the coming years,
It may be in the better land,
We'll read the meaning of our tears,
And there, some day, we'll understand.

As I left the services last Sunday, someone asked me with great concern how it could be that God would allow Job to endure so very much pain and suffering. It's as though God and Satan made a wager on how much Job could endure; and it bothered this man that Job would become the rope in a tug of war, as it were, between God and Satan. How could a loving God allow Job to suffer so much?

My reply was this: If Job could beam down right now and talk to us, he would say, "Now, look here. I had a wonderful and enriching life before my troubles. And I had a wonderful and enriching and happy and blessed life after my troubles. It's true that I had a rough patch, but it all turned out well in the end, and my story occupies a central spot in the greatest and most widely-read book in history, extending for 42 chapters. I've been able to encourage every generation of human beings for the last 4000 years. And, as a result of my rough patch, I now have 20 instead of 10 children up here with me in heaven. I wouldn't want to go through it again, but I'm so glad I went through it the one time, because I learned that the sufferings of this present life are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed."

Pain is inevitable, and it raises honest questions in our hearts. But it also makes us homesick for heaven, and it drives us to our Lord Jesus Christ who alone gives us grace in time of need

Job 3-42 I'm Tired of My Friends

Robert Morgan

Someone has coined an interesting new word and I thought I'd share it with you; I think it was first used on a situation comedy on television, though I'm not sure; but now it's become something of a buzzword in our culture. It's the term *frienemies*. A *frienemy* is a combination friend-enemy. You can't tell if this person is your friend or your enemy. This is the kind of character who at least pretends to be your friend, but very often he or she causes more trouble than they're worth.

Well, that's the kind of friends that Job had, and that's our study for today. We're in a series of sermons from the Old Testament book of Job, and if you've read very much in this book then you know that the largest section of Job, from Job 4 to Job 37 is devoted to a series of rollicking conversations Job had with his "frienemies" regarding all his troubles.

This is a very interesting book in the Bible, because from time to time we all find ourselves in conversations in which we need to be able to dispense comfort and strength like the Lord Jesus would if He were in our place; and the book of Job teaches us how to really help those who are suffering. Someone recently wrote a book recently entitled, *In Every Pew Sits a Broken Heart*. Every person we know and every friend we have will someday need encouragement from us. Every time I stand to preach, I'm facing an undetermined number of hurting people. At various points in life, we, too, need comfort and encouragement from others. We're to be comforters and encouragers—that's an exhortation the Bible repeats many times. But how do we learn to do it? How do we learn to comfort and help others? Well, think of the book of Job as a training manual in which we can learn the great secrets of being an encourager. We're going to cover a vast portion of the book of Job today, and I want to give you three *be's* which I think come right out of this extended text.

Be Present

First, Be Present. This is one of the things Job's friends did right. Look with me at Job 2:11-13:

When Job's three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Sophar the Naamathite, heard about all the troubles that had come upon him, they set out from their homes and met together by agreement to go and sympathize with him and comfort him. When they saw him from a distance, they could hardly recognize him; they began to weep aloud, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads. Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights. No one said a word to him, because they saw how great his suffering was.

This is one of the finest examples of friendship in the Bible. These three men were busy men, leaders of their day. But they dropped everything and traveled to Job's side, and they were distraught when they saw him, and their hearts were troubled and burdened, and they sat down with him and mourned with him and wept with him and threw dirt up into the air and they were just there to be with their friend.

The most important thing you can do for those who are suffering is to be there, to go and sit with them, to hug them, to love them, to sympathize with them. I had a young man tell me this week, "When I'm down I just need to hang out with my buddies." That feeling goes all the way back to the book of Job; and it was even true of our Lord Jesus Christ. On the night He was betrayed, Jesus wanted to be with His friends. "With desire, I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer," He told them (Luke 22:15, KJV).

I think we're doing so much better at that here at TDF in our LifeGroups. In times of crisis or need, we just drop everything to be there, to sit with people, to hug them, to weep with them and cry with them. I remember when a young man in our church suddenly died, and the line at the funeral home stretched out for what seemed like a mile. The mother later told me, "I received strength with every hug." I remember when a young lady in our church was killed in a car wreck, and the lobby of the hospital was packed at midnight with TDF members. I remember how this church turned itself inside out to help a family whose members had been murdered. People say to me all the time, "My LifeGroup rallied around. My LifeGroup came through. My LifeGroup stood in the gap." I can give lots of examples over the years, and it's like the old hymn that says:

Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love;
The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above.

This week I read the testimony of a woman who has written a book about her battle with breast cancer. She said that her friends and fellow Christians were a big part of her beating the disease. She had friends who secretly delivered brownies to the mailbox, took her on a shopping trip for a much-needed wig, and dropped by just to iron clothes and change bed sheets. She wrote, "Being a 'safe person' for a 'hurting person' is an art. It's easy to toss out glib phrases such as 'I know how you feel' or 'Everything will be okay,' but to really walk with someone the entire way along a tough road is not for the weak-hearted." (Tammi Reed Ledbetter, "Despite Breast Cancer, I Was Not Alone," in Baptist Press, October 22, 2007.)

The Bible says, "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity."

Be Positive

The second thing we can learn is to be positive. Now, let me tell you what I don't mean by that. I don't mean that we should be glib or flippant and I don't even mean light-hearted. I don't mean that we should spout off all kinds of clichés. I also don't mean that we should never confront sin or admonish a brother or sister in a loving and gentle way when necessary to do so.

But what I do mean is that we are commanded by God to build each other up. And that's where Job's friends failed at their task. They were tear-downers instead of build-upers. Let me show you how this works out in the text.

After Job's friends had sat with him for a week without any of them saying very much, finally Job opened his mouth and cursed the day when he was born. That's the chapter we looked at last week—Job 3. He said, in effect, "I wish I had never been born; I wish I had died at birth; I wish I were dead right now." So in chapter 4, his friends started talking to him, and right off the bat they turned critical. Look at Job 4:1ff:

Then Eliphaz the Temanite replied: "If someone ventures a word with you, will you be impatient? But who can keep from speaking?

Think how you have instructed many, how you have strengthened feeble hands. Your words have supported those who stumbled; you have strengthened faltering knees. But now trouble comes to you, and you are discouraged; it strikes you, and you are dismayed. Should not your piety be your confidence and your blameless ways your hope? Consider now: Who, being innocent, has ever perished? Where were the upright ever destroyed? As I have observed, those who plow evil and those who sow trouble reap it. At the breath of God they are destroyed; at the blast of His anger they perish. (Job 4:1-9)

In other words, he is saying, “Job, I love you; but you’re just reaping what you sowed. You have surely been unethical or unrighteous in some area of your life, and this is what God does to people like you.

Eliphaz continues along those lines in chapters 4 and 5, and Job replies in chapter 6, and he’s none too happy with his friends. Look at verses 24: Teach me, and I will be quiet; show me where I have been wrong....

Job continues speaking throughout chapters 6 and 7, and then in chapter 8 Bildad has a go at him. I think Bildad was especially harsh and judgmental. Look at how bluntly he speaks in verses 4ff: When your children sinned against Him, He (God) gave them over to the penalty of their sins... \

In other words, he said, “Job, you’ve got to face the facts. Your kids were rebellious brats and God wiped them out.” Now, how do you do think that made Job feel?

After Bildad’s speech, Job replied. Look at chapter 10:2ff: I will say to God: Do not condemn me, but tell me what charges You have against me. In other words, “I’m not saying I’m perfect, but this doesn’t make any sense to me. What have I done that was so bad? What has my family done that deserves this?”

In chapter 11, Zophar speaks, and he doesn’t mince words either. Look at verse 4: You say to God, “My beliefs are flawless and I am pure in Your sight.” Oh, how I wish God would speak, that He would open His lips against you and disclose to you the secrets of wisdom, for true wisdom has two sides. Know this: God has even forgotten some of your sin.

Then in chapter 12, Job fires back. Look at chapter 13, verses 4ff: You, however, smear me with lies; you are worthless physicians, all of you! If only you would be altogether silent! For you, that would be wisdom.

In chapter 15, Eliphaz speaks again: Then Eliphaz the Temanite replied, “Would a wise man answer with empty notions or fill his belly with the hot east wind?” In other words, Job, you’re full of hot air. You’re full of empty ideas. Would he argue with useless words or with speeches that have no value? But you even undermine piety and hinder devotion to God. Your sin prompts your mouth; you adopt the tongue of the crafty. Your own mouth condemns you, not mine; your own lips testify against you.

By chapter 16, Job is getting sick and tired of these frienemies: Then Job replied: “I have heard many things like these; miserable comforters are you all! Will your long-winded speeches never end? What ails you that you keep on arguing? I also could speak like you, if you were in my place; I could make fine speeches against you and shake my head at you. But my mouth would encourage you; comfort from my lips would bring you relief.

And so it goes for chapter after chapter. We don’t have time for me to cover all the material in this section, but by chapter 38 even the Lord Himself is fed up with the critical and destructive arguments of Job’s friends. Turn over to chapter 38 and look at verses 1 and 2: Then the Lord answered Job out of the storm. He said: “Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge?”

And look at Job 42:7: After the Lord had said these things to Job, He said to Eliphaz the Temanite, “I am angry with you and your two friends, because you have not spoken to me what is right, as my servant Job has.”

Now, there’s a time for close friends who trust each other to admonish each other and to prayerfully point out areas in one another’s lives that need improvement. But just look across our landscape today and you’ll see that critical people are trivial people. Proverbs 12:18 says, “Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.”

Some time ago a book came out entitled Especially for a Woman by Ann Anderson. I didn’t read it—after all, it was especially for a woman—but I did see an excerpt from it in which the writer told a story about her sister, Jan. Jan was a schoolteacher who taught the third grade. There was one little boy in Jan’s class who adored her but he didn’t do well with his assignments, and his grades were poor. But he would love to stand at Jan’s desk and watch and talk to her and wrap a little piece of her hair into a little curl around his finger. One day Jan said to him, “Rodney, you are very smart. You could be doing so well in school. In fact, you are one of my finest students.”

Before she could go on, he opened his mouth in surprise and said, “I didn’t know that.”

Rodney went back to his seat, and from that moment on his grades improved dramatically and he did become one of the best students in the class—all because of encouragement and affirmation.

We can all do something to encourage others. I read the other day about an elderly widow, restricted in her activities, who was eager to serve Christ. After praying about this, she realized she could bring blessing to others by playing the piano, but where? The next day she placed this small ad in the Oakland Tribune: “Pianist will play hymns by phone daily for those who are sick and despondent—the service is free.” The notice included the number to dial. Soon calls began to come in. When people called, she would ask, “What hymn would you like to hear?” Within a few months her playing had brought cheer to several hundred people. Many of them freely poured out their hearts to her, and she was able to help and encourage them.

We can all learn to be encouragers, but it’s a learned art. I confess that I sometimes don’t say the right thing and sometimes I kick myself for what comes out of my mouth. But if I ever do say something that’s helpful to others, it’s only because I’ve been in the Scripture that morning, and for virtually every morning of my adult life, and God’s Word is the Word of Encouragement.

The prophet Isaiah said, “The Sovereign Lord has given me an instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being taught” (Isaiah 50:4-5).

Our ability to strengthen others is simply the overflow of what God pours into our own hearts through His Word. God wants to paraphrase His Word through us to others. And sometimes the most powerful thing we can say is simply: I don’t understand this either, but I do believe we can trust God with it.

If Job’s friends would have been wise to have just said, “Job, none of this makes sense to any of us, but we’re going to help you trust God”

A woman in our church recently sent me a letter with a story along these lines. She had some health issues with a broken bone and with a pregnancy, and then she had to make a long trip to check on her family and property. Her mother was unwell, and the family faced some difficult choices. Rolling down the highway, this TDF member found herself consumed with worry. But just then she saw a phrase someone had written by running a finger through the dirt and dust on the back of a large truck. It was a phrase in the mud and grime on the back of a truck! It said simply: “Trust Jesus!”

She felt it was a message for her, and her mind went to a little John W. Peterson song she had known years ago about trusting Jesus. And suddenly her burden lifted and she felt that it was God’s message just for her. The Lord had led someone to etch out those two words on the back of a dirty truck—and that unknown person became a divine encourager. It reminds me that our Lord Jesus once used His finger to write in the dirt.

Now Job’s friends could have done that. They could have taken their fingers and written, as it were, against the grimness and grime of all his problems, “Trust God.” They could have said, “Job, we don’t understand this any more than you do, but we have a God that we can trust. Let’s trust Him together with this and see what happens.” But instead they spent chapter after chapter after chapter saying things that were actually hurtful and harmful and critical and judgmental.

Now, in fairness to them, they did not have the Bible as we do today. But we do have the Bible—and that makes all the difference. I don’t know what I’d do without my Bible. I wouldn’t have anything to say to anyone.

Christian writer, Calvin Miller, tells of a very old friend who once attended seminary as a fervent Calvinist and believed that everything that happened to him was predestined. This man later abandoned his faith and became an atheist and was now a professor of philosophy in the city where Calvin pastored. One day after visiting a dying woman in her hospital room, Calvin Miller met his old friend for tea. As the two men talked, Miller asked his friend how he, as an atheist, would have spoken to this needy, dying woman.

The professor said he would probably have told her she must count on the love of Jesus and look to him for hope. “But,” Calvin Miller protested, “You don’t believe that.”

“No,” he said, “but what I believe would be of no help to her in her time of need.” (Calvin Miller, *Jesus Loves Me* (New York: Warner

Books, 2002), pp. 54-55.)

Without biblical theology we have nothing to say. Our hope is in our biblical truths and teachings. Job's friends certainly believed in God, but their theology was inadequate and their understanding of God was faulty. As a result, their counsel was of little help to Job in his time of need.

If you want to help others, internalize the Bible and ask God to convert it into the hidden wisdom of the heart. Memorize helpful Bible verses, not to fire at hurting people like flying darts, but to be a reservoir of wisdom out of which you can dispense a few cupfuls of grace as the Holy Spirit prompts you to. Never be afraid to quietly, gently quote a passage from God's Word as the Spirit directs. Be alert for such opportunities, and you'll be a worthwhile physician and a counselor of encouragement.

Be Prayerful (Job 42:10)

Finally, be prayerful. One thing is missing from chapters 4 through 37 of Job—at no time during those chapters did Job's friends gather around and pray for him. Now, in some of his speeches and soliloquies, Job prayed by crying out things like, "Lord, I don't understand....!" But there's no example in these chapters of Job's friends praying together or for him or for each other.

This week I visited a woman who has recently started attending . She's a brand new attender but she's already in one of our LifeGroups. I arrived for our appointment at 3 o'clock. She met me at the door and said, "Oh, I love my new LifeGroup, and I have a dear new friend who is having surgery this afternoon. I told her that I couldn't go to the hospital, but I promised to pray for her every hour today on the hour—and it's three o'clock. Before we began our appointment, would you mind if I prayed for her." And this lady proceeded to pray a very earnest and heartfelt prayer for her friend who was going into surgery.

An hour later, I was still there, and the woman said, "Oh, it's four o'clock. I promised my friend to pray for her today every hour on the hour. Would you lead us in prayer this time?" And I prayed for this one who, by then, was in the recovery room. I left the house just before five o'clock, and I have no doubt she went straight to her place of prayer and offered the five o'clock prayer. That evening I telephoned the one who had surgery and—as I expected—she was doing just fine.

In the book of Job, things worked out according to God's will when He prayed for his friends.

So be present, be positive, and be prayerful—those are the lessons we can learn from this story; and those are the lessons that Jesus Christ models on our behalf. Our Lord Jesus is present—Immanuel, God With Us. He left His ivory palaces of heaven to come to this world of woe to sit with us and weep with us and encourage us; and He says, "I am with you even to the end of the age." He was positive. He said, "Let him who is without sin among you cast the first stone." He said, "In this world you will have many tribulations, but be of good courage, I have overcome the world." He said, "Have faith in God." And He was prayerful, for He ever lives to make intercession for the saints. He's the friend who sticks closer than a brother. Is He your friend and your Savior?

I would love to tell you what I think of Jesus,
Since I found in Him a friend so strong and true.
I would tell you how He changed my life completely;
He did something no other friend could do.

No one ever cared for me like Jesus;
There's no other friend so kind as He.
No one else could take the sin and darkness from me;
O how much He cared for me.
(C. F. Weigle)

Job 16 I'm Looking to Jesus

Robert Morgan

In our series of messages on the life and message of the biblical character of Job, we're coming today to the subject, "I'm Looking to Jesus." See if there is anything in this passage from Job 16 that reminds you of our Lord Jesus Christ:

God assails me and tears me in his anger

And gnashes His teeth at me;
My opponent fastens on me his piercing eyes.
Men open their mouths to jeer me;
They strike my cheek in scorn
And unite together against me.
God has turned me over to evil men
And thrown me into the clutches of the wicked.
All was well with me, but He shattered me;
He seized me by the neck and crushed me.
He has made me His target;
His archers surround me.
Without pity, He pierces my kidneys
And spills my gall on the ground.
Again and again he bursts upon me;
He rushes at me like a warrior.
I have sewed sackcloth over my skin
And buried my brow in the dust.
My face is red with weeping,
Deep shadows ring my eyes;
Yet my hands have been free of violence
And my prayer is pure.
O earth, do not cover my blood;
May my cry never be laid to rest!
Even now my witness is in heaven;
My advocate is on high.
My intercessor is my friend,
As my eyes pour out tears to God;
On behalf of a man he pleads with God
As a man pleads with his friend.

Job 16:9-21

One afternoon this week I was trying to get some exercise in my little homemade gym and I turned on the television to a news channel. They were interviewing some learned Christian clergyman about something that Jesus had said, and they put the quote from the Gospels up on the screen and asked this clergyman about it. He said, "Well, of course, we don't know if that's what Jesus really said or not. The Gospels were written a long after the life of Christ, and many things were made up and added to them." Well, I just turned off the TV. I don't know why someone would even want to be a clergyman if he didn't believe the Bible's message. Why would I want to stand up here week after week and preach about something that I didn't believe in? There are many reasons why we

can trust the Bible. I went through a period of skepticism and doubt, but when you honestly take a considered look at the evidence for the veracity of the Scriptures, it's amazing and it's wonderful. One of the most powerful evidences for the claims of Christ Jesus comes from studying the predictions made about Him in the Old Testament.

It's important to realize that Jesus Christ was described, predicted, and prefigured in the Old Testament in hundreds of ways and in hundreds of passages, hundreds of years before His birth.

Jesus said, "Search the Scriptures (that is, the Old Testament), for they testify of Me." The Old Testament, written long before His birth in Bethlehem, is just as full of Jesus as the New Testament—and we can find Jesus in every one of the 39 books of the Old Testament. My pastor when I was growing up used to say, "The New is in the Old contained, and the Old is in the New explained."

Today I'd like to show you how Jesus shows up in the book of Job. Now, Job is quite possibly the oldest book of the Bible. We don't know that for sure, because no one knows who wrote it or when; but many experts believe that its story goes back to the days of Abraham and its composition goes back to the days of Moses. Furthermore, Job is not a book of predictive prophecy such as Isaiah or Micah is. So the references to Christ are more understated, but they are there and today I'd like to show you how Jesus shows up in Job in four ways.

Jesus is Our Answer

First, Jesus is our Answer. The book of Job anticipates that God has an answer for the questions of life—and Job is full of questions. As I pointed out in a previous sermon, there are 290 questions in the book of Job, and the word why occurs 28 times. Everyone has questions and everyone is looking for answers. I read the other day about a Junior High science teacher who over the years had accumulated some of the answers given by his students on their exams. As I read them, I thought they were illustrative of the way some people think about things. Let me give you a few of them:

- Dew is formed on leaves when the sun shines down on them and makes them perspire.
- Mushrooms always grow in damp places and so they look like umbrellas.
- The pistol of a flower is its only protection against insects.
- The skeleton is what is left after the insides have been taken out and the outsides have been taken off.
- The tides are a fight between the Earth and moon. All water tends towards the moon, because there is no water in the moon, and nature abhors a vacuum. I forget where the sun joins in this fight.
- Germinate: To become a naturalized German.
- Vacuum: A large, empty space where the pope lives.
- Fibula: A small lie.
- Terminal illness: When you get sick at the airport.
- Water is composed of two gins, Oxygen and Hydrogin. Oxygen is pure gin. Hydrogin is gin and water.
- The body consists of three parts - the brainium, the borax and the abominable cavity. The brainium contains the brain. The borax contains the heart and lungs, and the abominable cavity contains the bowels, of which there are five - A, E, I, O, and U.

Well, none of us get all the answers right; but when it comes to life itself, all our great and confusing questions can be answered in one word—Jesus.

If you are suffering, He can ease your pain.

If you are confused, He can clear your mind.

If you are fearful, He can give you peace.

If you have bad habits, He can overcome them for you.

If you have unclean spirits, He can cast them out.

If you struggle with guilt, He can forgive your sins.

If you're afraid of death, He can give you eternal life.

He's the answer to all 290 questions in the book of Job, and to all the questions in our own hearts.

Jesus is Our Advocate

Second, Jesus is our advocate. I've never been charged with a crime, but I have been involved in questions that needed legal answers and in negotiations that needed an attorney; and it is a tremendous relief to have someone representing me in my corner, someone in whom I have confidence. We all need a good lawyer from time to time.

Well, Job was being accused of wrongdoing by the devil before the Judge of all the earth, and he didn't know how to represent himself. He needed a lawyer, an attorney, an advocate. Let me show you:

Look with me at Job 9:

Then Job replied: "Indeed, I know that this is true, but how can a mortal be righteous before God?"

Do you know that that's the great question that is answered in the book of Romans? The whole subject of Romans—which is the chief theological explanation in the Bible of the person and work of Jesus Christ—is how we can be declared righteous in the sight of a holy God. Job is going to go on to say, "How can I argue my own case before God Himself?"

Though one wished to dispute with Him, he could not answer Him one time out of a thousand. His wisdom is profound, His power is vast...

Verse 14: How then can I dispute with Him? How can I find words to argue with Him? Though I were innocent, I could not answer Him....

And look down at verses 32-33: He is not a man like me that I might answer Him, that we might confront each other in court. If only there were someone to arbitrate between us, to lay His hand upon us both.

1 Timothy 2:5 (TLB): God is on one side and all the people on the other side, and Christ Jesus, Himself man, is between them to bring them together.

1 John 2:2: If anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.

In a sense, Job perfectly describes and predicts the role and the ministry of the coming Messiah and he does it with great wisdom and great specificity.

Let me show you another passage—and I think this one is very Messianic. Job 16:19-21: Even now my witness is in heaven; my advocate is on high. My intercessor is my friend as my eyes pour out tears to God; on behalf of a man he pleads with God as a man pleads with his friend.

This is referring to our Lord Jesus Christ. Job is saying: Even now my witness Jesus is in heaven; my advocate Jesus is on high. My intercessor Jesus is my friend as my eyes pour out tears to God; on behalf of a man Jesus pleads with God as a man pleads with His friend.

Jesus is Our Redeemer

Third, Jesus is our Redeemer. Now, a redeemer is different from an advocate. An advocate represents us before a higher power or in the event of a threat. A redeemer actually pays the purchase price for our freedom.

One of the most famous passages in the book of Job is in chapter 19, beginning with verse 23: Oh, that my words were recorded, that they were written on a scroll, that they were inscribed with an iron tool on lead, or engraved in rock forever! I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end He will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see Him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!

In the 1700s, there lived a man named Samuel Medley who went off to sea as a midshipman with the British Navy and was wounded in battle. During his recovery, he read a sermon by the great Isaac Watts and was converted. He later became a British pastor and a hymnist. Listen to what he wrote about this passage:

I know that my Redeemer lives;

What comfort this sweet sentence gives!

He lives, He lives, who once was dead;

He lives, my ever-living Head.

He lives to bless me with His love,
He lives to plead for me above.
He lives my hungry soul to feed,
He lives to help in time of need.
He lives triumphant from the grave,
He lives eternally to save,
He lives all glorious in the sky,
He lives exalted there on high.
He lives to grant me rich supply,
He lives to guide me with His eye,
He lives to comfort me when faint,
He lives to hear my soul's complaint.
He lives to silence all my fears,
He lives to wipe away my tears
He lives to calm my troubled heart,
He lives all blessings to impart.
He lives, my kind, wise, heavenly Friend,
He lives and loves me to the end;
He lives, and while He lives, I'll sing;
He lives, my Prophet, Priest, and King.
He lives and grants me daily breath;
He lives, and I shall conquer death:
He lives my mansion to prepare;
He lives to bring me safely there.
He lives, all glory to His Name!
He lives, my Jesus, still the same.
Oh, the sweet joy this sentence gives,
I know that my Redeemer lives!

Jesus is Our Savior

So in the book of Job, we see Jesus as our Answer, our Advocate, our Redeemer, and finally as our Savior. Now, I want to back up just a little and describe Job to you. Let's look at chapter one.

In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. Do you remember what his name means? There's been a lot of discussion about that over the centuries, but modern commentators and scholars who have studied more recently discovered tablets and documents, think that his name means: Who is my father? Or where is my father? It was a name frequently give to orphans.

This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil.... He was the greatest man among all the people of the east.

And look at how God commended him in verse 8: Have you considered my servant Job? Notice that—my servant. There is no one on earth like him. Notice that. He is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.

And then what happened? Satan attacked him, he lost all that he had, and he became a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. I believe that Job himself is a prophetic picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. You know, in the Old Testament we have types of Christ—prototypes of Christ—previews of the coming Messiah. I'm not saying that Job is officially a "type" of Christ because he isn't listed as such in the New Testament, but the parallels are so amazing that I think we can say that Job is a prophetic pre-construction of Christ, an advance replica.

Some time ago on vacation I visited a particular place where a building was planned, and they had a showroom with a model under glass showing what the building would look like when it was all done. These Old Testament types were like that. They serve as miniature advance replicas for the coming Messiah, and we see through all the way through the Old Testament. I believe Job fits into that model.

Tell me who this is talking about:

- This man's central purpose in the Bible is to grapple with the problem of evil and the mystery of suffering.
- His story is at the heart of Scripture.
- He served in a priestly capacity for those he loved.
- He was a just man – blameless in all his ways
- He was commended by God & was called God's servant
- He was attacked without mercy by Satan, yet with the Father's permission
- He became the central player in a cosmic battle between God and Satan
- This man was rich yet became poor.
- This man was great yet was despised by his friends.
- This man was strong, yet his strength was broken.
- He went through a period of unspeakable sorrow and his sufferings made him almost unrecognizable
- He was forsaken by God and denounced by his friends.
- Yet in the end he prevailed with God, thwarted Satan, overcame suffering, was restored to his former glory, and become an intercessor for his friends.

Who does that describe? It describes Job, and it describes Jesus. Even the very name Job—"Where is my Father?"—reminds us of our Lord's cry on the cross, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" And many commentators believe that the prophet Isaiah borrowed from Job's imagery in his passages about the Suffering Servant, the Messiah, in 40s and 50s of Isaiah.

Do you need an Answer to life? An Advocate? A Redeemer? A Savior? The ancient book of Job points us to Jesus Christ who, though He was rich yet for our sakes became poor that we through His poverty might become rich.

Job 38-42 I'm Nothing and He's Everything

Robert Morgan

Today we're coming to the conclusion of our series of messages from the book of Job. It's interesting to me how my perception of this book has changed since I began studying it. Instead of a downcast book, I've found it very encouraging and refreshing. It's the story of a godly man who had everything, but a series of disasters stripped him of all that was valuable and dear. His friends come and they discuss his problems among themselves, asking many questions but finding few answers. And then in the last five chapters, the Lord shows up and the story is resolved. That's the final part of Job, and it's the part we're coming to today. Let's begin our study in Job 38:1

Then the Lord answered Job out of the storm.

The word "storm" here is a Hebrew word that indicates that the storm was accompanied by a tempest of violent wind, and that's why some translations say that God appeared to Job out of the whirlwind. Try to imagine a violent weather system that suddenly

descended on these men with howling and truly frightening wind.

He said, “Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me. Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone—while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?

Even in the opening verses of God’s speech to Job and his friends, we get an idea of His approach. Rather than dealing specifically with Job’s problems, the Lord gives Job a tour of the sciences, beginning with cosmology or, more specifically, earth sciences.

Cosmology

The Lord compares His creating of the world as a construction project, with a foundation and cornerstone and dimensions and measuring lines. Some time ago, I read the memoirs of former astronaut and United States Senator John Glenn. In 1962, he became the first American to orbit the earth. I was interested in the fact that the space capsule as it was originally designed didn’t have a window. There was a small porthole that was virtually inaccessible during flight, and there was a periscope that distorted everything around the edges, but no window. Glenn said that he wanted a window. If he were going to orbit the earth, he wanted to be able to see it. The design team said that a window wasn’t very feasible, but Glenn was persistent and eventually they figured out how to do it.

Some time later, he was orbiting the earth at a height of about a hundred miles, and in his memoirs he describes how mind-boggling it was to see the blackened ball of the earth suspended in space like an ornament. In the distance he could see some lights far, far below. It was midnight on the west coast of Australia, and he was seeing the cities of Perth and Rockingham.

I can’t imagine seeing the earth from that perspective, but the Lord orbits, as it were, above the world and above the entire universe. He knows every star and calls them by name. And in the universe he created this one speck, this one spot, perfectly suited for human habitation, and not a star burns out without His knowledge, not a sparrow falls without His knowing it.

He continued in verse 8: Who shut up the sea behind doors when it burst forth from the womb, when I made the clouds its garment and wrapped it in thick darkness, when I fixed limits for it and set its doors and bars in place, when I said, “This far you may come and no farther; here is where your proud waves halt?”

Oceanography

So moving from cosmology, the Lord goes on to oceanography, telling Job that the seven seas—the great oceans of the world—are a witness to His creative and providential power.

And He goes on to remind Job that He Himself—the Almighty God of Creation—set in motion the weather patterns that cover the globe. He delves into meteorology. Look down at verse 22: Have you entered the storehouses of the snow or seen the storehouses of hail, which I reserve for times of trouble, for days of war and battle? What is the way to the place where the lightening is dispersed, or the place where the east winds are scattered over the earth? Who cuts a channel for the torrents of rain, and a path for the thunderstorm, to water a land where no man lives, a desert with no one in it, to satisfy a desolate wasteland and make it sprout with grass? Does the rain have a father? Who fathers the drops of dew? From whose womb comes the ice? Who gives birth to the frost from the heavens?

Last year, Katrina and I went on a cruise for our anniversary, the first time we’ve ever done anything like that; and in a lovely bay on the island of St. Thomas I went snorkeling. Now I’m a great advocate that every one of you who is physically able should go snorkeling at some point in your life. I’d done it once before, but this time I was impressed by the fact that when you stand on the shore or on the pier and look out over the ocean, you can’t see into very well. The sun and sky reflect off the surface, and even if the waters are blue and clear you can’t really see what its like in that watery world below. But the moment you put on a facemask and dip below the surface, it’s a world of color and beauty and strange fish all around you—it’s breathtaking. The Lord designed the world of the seven seas just as brilliantly as He created the world of land and air.

Astronomy

And now the Lord is going to bring up the science of astronomy. Look at verse 31: Can you bind the beautiful Pleiades?

The Pleiades is a cluster of several hundred stars, of which six are visible to the naked eye in our night skies during the winter. It’s interesting here that the Lord brags on this constellation and calls it beautiful.

Can you loose the cords of Orion?

This is one of the largest and most prominent constellations and it can be seen from around the world.

Can you bring forth the constellations in their seasons or lead out the Bear with its cubs? This is probably referring to the constellations that we call the Big Dipper and the Little Dipper.

Do you know the laws of the heavens? Can you set up God's dominion over the earth?

Zoology

And then, in chapter 39, the Lord is going to move on to zoology. He is going to describe a dozen different animals. It's like a trip to the zoo. I'll let you read through this passage on your own and underline each of these animals, but for our purposes today I'll just point out a few verses. Look at Job 39:1

Do you know when the mountain goats give birth? Do you watch when the doe bears her fawn? Do you count the months till their bear? Do you know the time they give birth?

And verse 5: Who let the wild donkey go free? Who untied his ropes? I gave him the wasteland as his home, the salt flats as his habitat....

He goes on to talk about the ox, and then in verse 13 the ostrich. Now if you don't think the Lord has a sense of humor, then you've never seen an ostrich. They must be the funniest looking animals at the zoo. Their odd head, long neck, big body with long stilts for legs. Look at the way the Lord describes them here in verses 13-18:

The wings of the ostrich flap joyfully, but they cannot compare with the pinions and feathers of the stork. She lays her eggs on the ground and lets them warm in the sand, unmindful that a foot may crush them, that some wild animal may trample them. She treats her young harshly, as if they were not hers; she cares not that her labor was in vain, for God did not endow her with wisdom or give her a share of good sense. Yet when she spreads her feathers to run, she laughs at horse and rider.

And speaking of the horse, the Lord goes on in verse 19 to say: Did you give the horse his strength or clothe his neck with a flowing mane?

He goes on to describe how He designed horses, and then in verse 26, He directs our attention to the hawks and eagles.

Now at the beginning of chapter 40, the Lord has just finished describing twelve different animals to Job; there's a pause to give Job time to catch his breath, and then the Lord goes on with His tour of the zoo; and in the last part of chapter 40 and in chapter 41, He's going to describe two other animals that are something of a mystery to us. They are called here the behemoth and the leviathan. We don't know what these animals were, and some people speculate that they were the last remnants of members of the dinosaur family of animals.

Certainly there were dinosaurs in the past history of this planet, and the Lord certainly made them; and He created many other species of animals that have become extinct. Look at the description in Job 40:15ff:

Look at the behemoth, which I made along with you and which feed on grass like an ox. What strength he has in his loins, what power in the muscles of his belly! His tail sways like a cedar; the sinews of his thighs are close-knit. His bones are tubes of bronze, his limbs like rods of iron. He ranks first among the works of God....

And then the entirety of chapter 41 is devoted to an animal called a leviathan, which is some sort of aquatic creature, whose armor-like scales resist harpoons and spears. Look at just a few verses of description.

V. 14: Who dares open the doors of his mouth, ringed about with his fearsome teeth? His back has rows of shields tightly sealed together; each is so close to the next that no air can pass between. They are joined fast to one another; they cling together and cannot be parted....

Vv. 31ff: He makes the depths churn like a boiling caldron and stirs up the sea like a pot of ointment. Behind him he leaves a glistening wake; one would think the deep had white hair. Nothing on earth is his equal—a creature without fear. He looks down on all that are haughty; he is king over all that are proud.

So this is an amazing perspective, and it's not the one that I would have chosen. Had I been called along to advise Job, I would have tried to take him to the book of God's Scriptures; but Job is arguably the first book of the Bible to be written. He didn't have the Scriptures. And so the Lord took him to the book of God's Creation and took him on a tour of the natural sciences—cosmology, oceanography, meteorology, astronomy, and zoology. He just said, "Job, you are boxed into your limited perspective of suffering, but lift up your eyes. Look at the earth beneath you, the world around you, the stars above you. I created all these things, and I do all things well. I know what I'm doing. I know how to take care of you, and you can trust Me even if you can't understand My ways at any given moment.

How Do We Respond?

And then we come to the final chapter of Job, and we see his response. Look at Job 42:

Then Job replied to the Lord, "I know that You can do all things; no plan of Yours can be thwarted. You asked, 'Who is this that obscures My counsel without knowledge?' Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know. You said, 'Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you shall answer Me.' My ears had heard of You but now my eyes have seen You. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes."

In other words, "Lord, You're everything and I'm nothing. You are the Creator and I am Your creation. You are the Master and I'm the servant." It reminds me of when Isaiah saw the Lord high and lifted up, and he fell on his face and said, "Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips." It reminds me of when John the Baptist said, "He must increase, but I must decrease." It reminds me of when Peter fell on his face, having seen one of our Lord's great miracles, and he said, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man." It reminds me of what the apostle Paul said in Galatians 2:20: "Not I, but Christ!"

Everything and everyone in our society is telling us that we're number one, to climb to the top, to find our fulfillment in possessions, pride, popularity, and power. And what we have lost is a vision and understanding of the glory and greatness of God, without which we can never see ourselves in a true light. Job had always feared God and shunned evil, but now through his sufferings and through a fresh revelation from God, he had arrived at a place where he saw things with unequaled wisdom and everything began to make sense.

Verse 7 goes on to say: After the Lord had said these things to Job, he said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "I am angry with you and your two friends, because you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has. So now take seven bulls and seven rams and go to my servant Job and sacrifice a burnt offering for yourselves. My servant Job will pray for you, and I will accept his prayer and not deal with you according to your folly. You have not spoken to me what is right, as my servant Job has." So Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite did what the Lord told them, and the Lord accepted Job's prayer.

After Job had prayed for his friends, the Lord made him prosperous again and gave him twice as much as he had before. All his brothers and sisters and everyone who had known him before came and ate with him in his house.

And the chapter goes on to describe the revival of Job's fortunes, and it ends with verses 16-17: After this, Job lived a hundred and forty years; he saw his children and their children to the fourth generation. And so he died, old and full of years.

Earlier in his book, Job had wanted God to speak to him and to explain why these problems and sorrows had befallen him. At length, the Lord did speak, but He did not say one word about Job's problems. He did not even refer to Job's suffering. He speaks for four chapters, and He did not answer Job's question or address the issue of Job's suffering. Instead He bids Job look around him at the wonder and mystery of this universe, at the panorama of nature, and at the omnipotence and omniscience that governs all that God has made.

It seems to me that the underlying message of the book of Job is this: If God can create and control the entire universe, He can surely take care of us; and so in times of stress and strain, we need to refresh our vision of Him through His creation and His Word and trust Him to know what He's doing and to act in our best interests.

Jesus told us the same thing in simpler language, didn't He, in His Sermon on the Mount? He said that if the Heavenly Father can feed the sparrows and clothe the lilies, He can surely take care of us.

We need more than answers. We need the God who knows the answers and who has revealed Himself through our Lord Jesus Christ.

In *The Book of Virtues*, Bill Bennett reminds us of an old Jewish folktale about two young brothers who had grown up in the city and had never seen a field or a pasture. One day they decided to visit the countryside, and as they walked along they saw something they'd never witnessed before. A man was plowing a field. "What kind of behavior is this?" they asked. "This fellow marches back and forth all day, scarring the earth with long ditches. Why would anyone destroy such a pretty meadow like that?"

Later in the day they passed that way again, and this time the farmer was sowing wheat in the furrows. "Now what's he doing?" they asked. "He must be a madman. He's taking perfectly good wheat and tossing it into those ditches."

One of the brothers said, "The country is no place for me. The people act as if they have no sense. I'm going home." And he went back to the city. But the second brother stayed in the country, and a few weeks later he saw a wonderful change. Fresh green shoots began to cover the field with lush plants, and he quickly wrote to his brother and told him to hurry back and see the great change that had occurred. The fields were beautiful.

But just as the brother returned, the farmer took a scythe and began to cut it all down. "What is this imbecile doing now?" he cried. "All summer long he worked so hard to grow this beautiful field, and now he's destroying it with his own hands! He's a madman after all! I've had enough and I'm going home."

But the second brother had more patience and curiosity. He stayed in the country and watched the farmer collect the wheat and take it to the granary. He saw how cleverly he separated the chaff, and how he stored the harvest. He was filled with awe when he realized that by sowing a bag of seed, the farmer had harvested a whole field of grain. Only then did he truly understand that the farmer had a reason for everything that he did.

"And this is how the Lord works, too," concluded the brother. "We mortals see only the beginnings of His plan, and sometimes it seems to make so little sense. We cannot understand the full purpose and end of His wisdom. So we must trust Him and have faith in His ways." (Adapted from William J. Bennett, *The Book of Virtues* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), pp. 774-775).