

Living Lessons from the Book of Job



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Victory Lectures

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Living Lessons from the Book of Job

**West Virginia School of Preaching
Victory Lectures**

**Hosted by:
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Lectureship Committee:

**Elders of Hillview Terrace Church of Christ
& Members of the West Virginia School of
Preaching Faculty**

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Foreword

Thanks be to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ who established the church (Matt. 16:18), organized the church (Titus 1:5), commissioned the church (Mark 16:16; 2 Tim. 2:2), and motivates the church through the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:10).

Having had the privilege to fellowship with Christians in preparation of this lectureship book for the 2013 West Virginia School of Preaching *Victory Lectures*, God's wisdom is clearly seen in the work of the church (Eph. 3:10). Each member has fulfilled their respective role to ensure that this lectureship book, on the Book of Job, was ready for print and that the 2013 *Victory Lectures* would successfully spread God's Word. It would be unfortunate and inappropriate to mistakenly identify the West Virginia School of Preaching as a separate institution apart from the Church of Christ, thus robbing God of His glory (Rom. 12:2). May God receive all the glory for the good accomplished by the Bible classes, sermons, and lectureship books offered by the Church of Christ at Hillview Terrace.

The Lord's church operates most effectively when qualified elders lead the flock according to the Word of God (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5). Fortunately, the Church of Christ at Hillview Terrace has been blessed with several qualified, faithful men, both past and present, who have accepted this role. The eldership has dedicated many hours to ensure that this work operates efficiently and remains sound in the Doctrine of Christ. May respect and honor be rendered to each of these men (1 Tim. 5:17-20).

The on-going Bible classes offered by the Hillview Terrace Church of Christ rely heavily upon Christian men throughout the Ohio valley to teach, preach and write. Though many of the men who teach Bible classes and have written in this book have been described as faculty, staff, authors, chairs, directors, editors, and scholars, their vocation should not be diminished by such portrayals. When faithful

men are motivated by the humble desire to serve and share the Gospel of Jesus Christ, they are much more than the aforementioned secular descriptions; they are servants and ministers of Jesus Christ (Rom. 10:15; 1 Cor. 9:16). Thank you for your efforts!

Much like every work of the Church of Christ, time and money are needed to make the West Virginia School of Preaching a success. Congregations throughout the Ohio Valley have eased the financial burden placed upon the Hillview Terrace Church of Christ by paying their local ministers salaries and then commissioning them to serve with the Hillview Terrace Church of Christ. Thank you for your continued sacrifice of time and finances which are necessary for this work to continue.

Several members of the Lord's Church at Hillview Terrace have served as editors of this book and deserve recognition for their efforts. May the good work of Seth McIntyre, Betty Fogle, Lisa Games, Kelly Petite, Christie Robison, and Gene West be added to their accounts in heaven (Phil. 4:17).

J.S.

20 August 2013

Dedication



Near the end of Paul's epistle to the Romans, a wonderful tribute is given to a first century couple (Aquila and Priscilla) whom the apostle described as "fellow workers in Christ Jesus" and "to whom not only I [Paul] give thanks, but also all the churches" (Rom. 16:3-4). In similar fashion at the beginning of this volume, being the print version of material delivered in the 19th Annual West Virginia School of Preaching Victory Lectures, we acknowledge a Christian man and woman (W. Terry Varner and Lillie Garrison Varner) for their Christian service nearing sixty years during parts of two centuries. The reasons for this acknowledgment of brother and sister Varner include, but are not limited to, the following:

The *Balance in their living*. Terry and Lillie Varner are great examples of the balance that characterizes true Christian living. Their lives include both conviction and compassion; seriousness and serenity. They know how, and when, to laugh, and how, and when, to weep. As did our Lord, the perfect example of balancing the areas of what it means to be human (cf. Luke 2:52), so have the Varners, following His example, shown us proper balance of the intellectual, physical, social, and spiritual. Terry and Lillie are individuals who are multifaceted, multitalented, and multitasking (long before this became a contemporary buzzword!). However, at the center of all of this is Christian service to family, friends, and the community of the faith—the church of the Lord. In *The Character of a Happy Life*, the English poet, Sir Henry Wotton said that one is happy who “entertains the harmless day with a religious book or friend.” Through balanced living, brother and sister Varner have taught us the value of both book and friend, and much, much more.

The *Brotherhood in their love*. The Bible says, “A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity” (Prov. 17:17). Terry and Lillie Varner have epitomized the truth of this wise saying as they have served among brothers and sisters “at all times” in six congregations at Shadyside, North Canton, Dayton, and Marietta, OH, and Dunbar and West Union, WV. When death came, when doubts surfaced, when a hand needed clasped, a heart needed comfort, a body needed food, a shut-in needed a visit, a class needed a teacher, money needed given, prayers needed offered, discouragement needed lifted, questions needed answered, etc.—Terry and Lillie Varner did all of this, and much more, among these churches. However, their service and reputation of prominence extends far beyond these churches at the aforementioned places. The Varners love the brotherhood at large (1 Pet. 2:17), and the brotherhood loves them.

The *Breadth of their leadership*. The powerful leadership of brother and sister Varner began as a partnership when they were married August 15, 1959, and has continued through the lives of their three sons (Steve, Scott, and Stuart) one daughter, Sara (Perry), children’s spouses, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. The leadership of this couple has permeated not only their family but the

church, government, health care and mortuary sciences, public and private education, and numerous segments of the private sector. Both brother and sister Varner are themselves educators in the fullest sense of the word through the home, the church, the school, and various connectives to society and culture. Significantly, in the context of the book for which this Dedication is written, brother Varner's great breadth of leadership was manifested in 1993 when he and Wirt Cook, Emanuel Daugherty, R. C. Oliver, and Charles C. Pugh III, were actively pursuing a church whose elders would accept the oversight of a school of preaching that this group of five preachers envisioned being built in the Ohio Valley. These men approached the elders of two congregations in Parkersburg, WV. Respectively, neither of these good elderships chose to oversee this exciting new project. However, both have from that time to the present continued to support the idea and the reality of this school of preaching. The school came to exist not only as a dream of these five brethren, but as a reality when brother Denver Cooper learned about what these brethren envisioned. He directed the group to the elders of the church at Hillview Terrace in Moundsville, WV. From this came West Virginia School of Preaching with brother Varner as one of the original faculty members in 1994, and he continues as an instructor at WVSOP to this day. The breadth of the Varner leadership was evidenced also for twenty-four years as he edited *Therefore Stand*, a monthly religious periodical, which ceased publication in 2008. Today that same breadth of leadership is manifested in his editorship of *Sufficient Evidence*, a fresh, unique, and scholarly journal of Christian apologetics.

The Beauty of their Lord. From reaching out to help a child, a struggling new convert, a bedfast invalid, a young married couple, or an inexperienced preacher, Terry and Lillie Varner have strengthened hands in God (1 Sam. 23:16). Through this unusual man and woman, many have been served, and faith has grown deeper and stronger; a personal victorious faith in the One who came to serve and save humanity. This is the beauty of the Lord, and we see it in the Varners. Faith is the victory (1 John 5:4)!

How fitting that the 2013 publication of the content of a rich spiritual event called the "Victory Lectures" be dedicated to these

two illustrious Christians who have shown, by how they live, the victory of the life of Christian faith! We dedicate this significant volume on living lessons from the Book of Job to W. Terry Varner and Lillie Garrison Varner. May brother and sister Varner, their children, and their families be the recipients of God's continued providential care that is so inexhaustibly revealed in the treasures of the Book of Job. On each member of the Varner family we invoke the sentiments of Paul's benediction for the Corinthians: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen" (2 Cor. 13:14).

Charles C. Pugh III

12 June 2013

Honoree: Elizabeth Robison

In a departure from the convention of honoring some present, WVSOP-supporting eldership in the lectureship volume, this year we take the opportunity to honor one godly woman.

When the West Virginia School of Preaching was established in the early 90s, the Hillview congregation had many volunteers who chipped in to make this work possible. One of those we honor at this time for her nearly twenty years of service, and for her place in our hearts.

A school is not a school without a library. A library is not a library without a librarian. Nearly from the school's inception, Elizabeth Robison has served in this capacity. With tedious care, she has catalogued every book donated and bought for WVSOP, which now makes up a first class collection. She has laboriously adhered to the Dewey decimal system, making sure to check with directors and faculty for the correct classification of new volumes. She has diligently kept up the searchable database that is on the school's website, providing an essential search engine for students or anyone wanting to find particular works easily. After retiring from thirty-nine years as a public school teacher, Elizabeth (Mom to this author) donated her time toward this vast responsibility. In doing so, she has gone above and beyond the call of duty. Students who had their wits about them were smart in bringing her their papers for proofreading before they turned them in. She was always glad to help with her keen grammatical eye. Mom, in fact, loved being around the preacher students. With tenderness of heart, she attached herself to nearly all of them, and felt the peculiar mix of emotions on their graduations: She hated to see them go but was happy for their success and the promise of progress for the Gospel. She has endeared herself to many through her work. She has frequently put in extra hours. She cared for the library as a tender-hearted mother. She hates to let it go, but due to health reasons, plans to retire from

this labor of love in the Spring of 2014.

We deeply appreciate you, Mom. Students, alumni, faculty, staff, and the Hillview eldership consider it a privilege and a blessing that you have so selflessly served to make the library what it is today. Thank you, dear sister in Christ. Thank you so much.

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The Heart's Cry for Christ

Job 9:32-35

John Board

For He is not a man, as I am, That I may answer Him, And that we should go to court together. Nor is there any mediator between us, Who may lay his hand on us both. Let Him take His rod away from me, And do not let dread of Him terrify me. Then I would speak and not fear Him, But it is not so with me. (Job 9:32-35) [All Scripture references are from NKJV unless otherwise noted.]

Introduction

Job was under the impression that he, as a sinful man, needed an umpire, a daysman, (one might say mediator) to go between him and God. Job knew his friends were not right in their assumption that his suffering was punishment for his sin, for the punishment did not match the crime. Yet Job also knew that he was not without sin. Was Job correct that he needed someone who could go between him and God? In one sense Job was correct. But the current text of this study when examined in light of the context of the book of Job will show that Job was most likely in error regarding his need in his current search from the relief of his suffering. He was viewing the *mišpāt* (justice) of God from a legal perspective. God Himself (Job 40:8) as well as the context of the book indicates that in Job's circumstances the issue is not a legal one but is rather an issue of authority—the right of a Sovereign ruler. In Job 40:8, God in His speech excludes any mention of man's idea of justice through litigation; He speaks of His *mišpāt* (authority) over the universe. After hearing God's speech Job later responds in a way that seems to show he misunderstood. Job has come to learn that God is God and he (Job) is not. In Job 42:2 Job indicates that he understands and accepts God's divine power and authority. In Job 42:6, because of this realization, Job retracts his lawsuit.

Such is not to say that Job's basic premise is not true. Job does

have a need as a sinful man for someone who was on a level with God and also on a level with man, to serve as a Mediator. Despite the views of his friends that Job's suffering is commensurable to his sin and the view of Job that he is being unjustly punished for his sins, a study of the book reveals that it is not Job's sin that is the issue at all. God's allowing of Satan to bring suffering upon Job is simply a matter of the prerogative of the Ruler of the universe. That being noted, Job's statement is a true statement. Job understands properly that just like any man he cannot approach a Holy God. As one who has sin, he has need of a Daysman. In Job's case the fact that he needs a Mediator, though true in a general sense, is not the necessarily the answer to Job's current problem.

Job Shares a Need with All Sinful Men

On the pages of Scripture Job is not the only one to recognize a vast difference or distinction between Holy God and mortal mankind. After their disobedience to God Adam and Eve no longer enjoyed the fellowship once shared with God; they hid themselves from His face. Since sin had marred their lives they felt a need to "hide from God." Since such was impossible (Ps. 139), there was an inferiority felt by the couple that God loved enough to create. Sin had brought a separation between mankind and God (Isa. 59:1-2). Though Adam and Eve received the first Messianic promise (Gen. 3:15), they were far from receiving that needed Mediator between them and God.

In the days of Noah when man's wickedness was so great that it wholly consumed their thoughts, there was no one to appease the wrath of God (Gen. 6:1-8). God, in order to be consistent with His nature, destroyed mankind from the face of the earth. It was mostly through God's grace as well as the essential element of Noah's faithful obedience, that Noah and his family was spared. This is not to say that the just and perfect man in all his generation who walked with God could on his own merit stand before God—such cannot be said when one considers the text of this study in light of God's description of the man Job.

Job, who mostly likely lived in this same Patriarchal Age, also recognized that he could not stand before a Holy God. Job realized that he was only a man and God was much more than a man. Job was

correct in his dispute with his friends—he did not have sin in his life that was commensurable to the punishment he was enduring. That being noted, Job did realize that he was not on an equal standing with God perhaps due to the sin he did have in his life.

What seems so amazing is that Job, by all accounts, is viewed by the author, as well as by God Himself, as one without comparison (Job 1:1, 8). Going back to the commencement of the writing of this inspired document known as the book of Job one might think that Job would view himself in a good light. After all the text describes him as an upright and blameless man who feared God and shunned evil. Even God in His very similar description of Job adds that there is none like Job in all the earth. Though true that Job is not necessarily aware of these high accolades, he of all people would seem to be a candidate to think that he could stand before God. And while it is true that Job does, as he reaches the pinnacle of his inability to understand what he is enduring, question God, he is quickly brought to the realization by God’s barrage of questions to him that God is God and he (Job) is not!

Those who would live later in the history of man also recognized a vast chasm between God and man. Moses of whom it is recorded that he was “...very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth” (Num. 12:3) recognized the difference or distinction between man and God. Moses’ wonderment at first as to why the bush did not burn up is indicated by this author’s rendering of the Hebrew text (MT) —“I will go over and see this strange sight-why the bush does not burn up” (Ex. 3:3). Gispfen notes, “Moses called the fact that the bush did not burn up a “strange sight.” He did not know yet that he faced an appearance of the Lord”(52). After it is revealed to Moses that it is God appearing to Moses in the burning bush his approach changes from one of wonderment to one of fear (Ex. 3:6). Because Moses is a humble man in the presence of God, he hides his face from God.

Consider one more example of a great man of God recognizing his inability to appear before a Holy God. In Isaiah 6, when Isaiah realizes he is in the presence of a Holy God, he believes his life will be taken from him. Isaiah feels he is a dead man for sinful man cannot come into the presence of a Holy God. Consider the reading

of this text:

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. 2 Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. 3 And one cried to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!” And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke. So I said: “Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The LORD of hosts.” (1-5)

Isaiah here seems to at least in part understand what he would later write—that it would be man’s iniquities that would cause separation between man and God and man’s sins that would hide God’s face from man.

Man’s Great Need

Though Job misunderstood his need for a Mediator, he did understand a need that is essential for all mankind. Sin caused a separation between God and man, and since all have sinned, the need is universal. All mankind is in need of someone to be a go between with God. Fortunately for those living after the cross that need can be fulfilled in Christ. There is a general sense in which Christ serves a mediatorial role in that as He stands between God and man He restores peace to individuals distressed by sin. There is also a sense in which Christ serves as a personal Mediator as well. He works as Prophet and Priest. As Prophet He represents and reveals God to man. As priest He presents man to God. As the High Priest He offers the sacrifice that met the demands of divine justice (putting His hand on God) and thus He fulfilled the greatest need of sinful man (putting His hand on man). He is the ultimate Daysman of whom Job could only imagine. Ryle states it well:

Let us strive to know more and more, every year we live, our need of a mediator between ourselves and God. Let us seek more and more to realize that without a mediator our thoughts of God can never be comfortable, and the more clearly we see God the more uncomfortable we must feel. Above all, let us be thankful that we have in Jesus the very Mediator whose help our souls require, and that through Him we may draw near to God with boldness, and cast fear away. Out of Christ, God is a consuming fire. In Christ, He is a reconciled Father. Without Christ, the strictest moralist may well tremble, as he looks forward to his end. Through Christ, the chief of sinners may approach God with confidence, and feel perfect peace. (133)

A heart's cry for Christ is definitely man's great need. If Job with his limited knowledge could see a need for a mediator between God and man, how much more so must man today recognize this need (1 Tim. 2:5).

The Cry of Job's Heart

The text of this study provides one of the times where Job cries out in search of an understanding of his suffering. Job 9 is Job's response to Bildad's defense of God's justice. As an upright man who is suffering torment Job is confused as to how any man may obtain justice from the just God. Job searches for the answer. To him it cannot be found for no one can contend with the LORD for He is too wise and strong. God's control of the earth and the heavens leaves Him unattainable to man. Why contend when no one could get God to withdraw his anger anyway? To contend with God in court would be useless. Job views his present agony as evidence that he could not get an impartial hearing from God. Job's exaggeration of his perfectness before God is both the result of his skewed thinking because of his suffering as well as why he seems to have lost his will to live. From the depths of despair he lashes out against God (a comfort to those who have done so in their life in a moment of despair). His life is passing rapidly. As a man he feels helpless to contend with God. Such is the setting of the cry of Job's heart—Job

9:32-25—the passage of this study.

Job 9:32 “For He is not a man, as I am, That I may answer Him, And that we should go to court together.”

God is not a man. Notice the distinction Job rightly recognizes that God is not a man as Job was. As Jackson notes this does not square with the Mormon’s belief as noted by Joseph Smith “that God himself, who sits enthroned in yonder heavens, is a man like unto one of yourselves...”(40). Perhaps much of the problem in the world today is that man thinks that God is much like man. The reverence, fear, and awe due God is not shown. Exodus 19 is only one of many places where one could go to study how one’s approach to God ought to be a holy approach rather than the mundane approach of so many today.

The recognition of Job of the distance between man and God was proper and still needed today. Too often rather than submitting one’s will to the will of God (Jas. 1:21) individuals fail to receive with meekness the instruction God has provided. Job held a proper humble view of his relationship to God.

Job, like his friends, is viewing the problem of his suffering from the perspective of a court system. They see Job’s losses and suffering as punishment from God the Judge. This seems quite understandable when one considers that the common language of the time utilized the Semitic root to refer to court settings. Consider a document written in Akkadian, *The Code of Hammurabi* and its use of the root in the Epilogue. Here the phrase *a-šar ši-ip-ṭi-im* is used and translated “the place of the sentence/judgment/decision.” Job and his friends were most likely viewing *mišpāṭ* in the context of their culture. In biblical Hebrew the root from which *mišpāṭ* is formed carries the idea both judging and ruling and the motif of the court setting even seems to gain a preference in many texts. But the Book of Job reveals that such is the wrong perspective of *mišpāṭ* in reference to God. One of the reasons that Job’s perspective (that is perhaps the predominant perspective of his times) is wrong will hopefully be explained below.

God’s perspective is that of Executive Sovereignty or the prerogative of the Ruler. Such a perspective was not foreign to

the ANE as the Ugaritic parallel of *mišpāt* reflected a meaning of dominion when used in connection with a ruler or king. Later in the history of Israel this perspective is reflected in the Hebrew text in 1 Samuel 8:9 in God's answer to the people's request for a king. Here the term *mišpāt* refers to the power of the king to rule the people (sovereignty over the people). This would include the king's right to make decisions. Herein lays the misunderstanding of Job that God will clear up when He speaks. Whereas Job was using the term *mišpāt* as man would most likely use it, the term *mišpāt* when used in connection with God refers to the LORD's executive authority or His sovereignty. After God speaks to Job, Job understands he has had the wrong perspective and repents. Through his education Job has come to learn that the cry of his heart though true regarding the relationship of men with God (man had a need for a mediator) was an improper use of the concept in light of God's purpose for Job's suffering.

Job 9:33 "Nor is there any mediator between us, Who may lay his hand on us both."

Since Job held a healthy view of who he was in comparison to who God was, he realized that to remedy the situation as he knew it to be, he was in need of help. Job also realized though that such help was not available to him because no one was qualified to fill the necessary role of Daysman or Mediator. A mediator implies at least two parties between whom he will function. Job's cry for help clearly shows how the world was helplessly in need of a mediator before the incarnation of Christ.

The Hebrew term translated by the NKJV translators is the term *môkîah*. The English translations use various terms including but not limited to umpire, abiter, arbitrator, daysman, or mediator (as reflected in the NKJV). Job had clearly spoken of all mankind's great need. Job's cry is for an intermediary who has the right to lay his hand on God and upon man. Job's desire for one who might lay his hand upon God speaks of an equality between the *môkîah* and God as well as the *môkîah* and man. The placing of the *môkîah*'s hand upon God requires that the *môkîah* shall be equal with God. The placing of the *môkîah*'s hand upon Job requires that the *môkîah*

shall stand at the same time on the level with Job as a man. Job uses terms beyond what God has revealed to man about the coming Daysman which are of necessity to be found in Him.

Job 9:34 “Let Him take His rod away from me, And do not let dread of Him terrify me.”

In Psalm 23 the rod in the hand of the shepherd protects the sheep. Here the rod is a symbol of God’s punishment and is mentioned again with the same sense in 21:9. The passage continues with the thought “Let not dread of him terrify me:” in 7:14 Job accuses God of terrifying him with dreams and visions in his sleep. Here he asks God to stop terrifying or frightening him. God’s “rod” is the instrument of his anger (Lam. 3:1; Isa. 10:5). Job desires someone to remove God’s rod from him and free him to speak up without fear against God’s mistreatment of him.

Job 9:35 “Then I would speak and not fear Him, But it is not so with me.”

“I speak” is grammatically marked as indicating a degree of urgency. The last half of the verse is idiomatic. Literally it reads, “For/but not so I with me.” Smith’s note is helpful:

If God would lay aside his awful majesty, Job would assert his innocence and plead his own cause without fear. In his own consciousness he had no reason to fear God. Nevertheless, the might of God intimidated him. He feared even worse from God should he protest his plight. (289)

The Heart’s Cry for Christ

Job cried out for a Daysman, a Mediator between himself and God. His suffering was not linked to this universal need of mankind and thus his cry, though valid for all to make, was not the answer to his suffering. In his cry Job did not understand that his cry was truly a heart’s cry for Christ. Smick writes:

We should not infer from this that the Book of Job here is directly predictive of the NT doctrine of Christ as mediator.

For one thing Job was not looking for a mediator to forgive him of his sins so that he might be received by God; Job was yearning for a mediator who could prove that he was innocent and could somehow be effective with God despite his infinite power and wisdom. But having said that, we have here a rudimentary idea that is certainly evocative of that NT concept. Even here in the Book of Job the idea will move on to greater ramifications in 16:20–21 and 19:25–26. (912)

Indeed that for which Job longed—one who can relate to both God and man—is only found in Christ. Without the union of the humanity of Christ together with His undiminished Deity, there is no Mediator, Savior, or Redeemer. Job understood the base need of man while not knowing fully the concept of a coming Messiah. Scholars today still investigate the concept behind Job’s cry as they search for the understanding of Christ as the God/man. Chafer notes:

The whole truth relative to the Christ has not been reached when perchance His essential Deity has been demonstrated; nor has it been reached when a similar demonstration of His essential humanity has been made. The Christ of God is the incomparable-and to no small degree, the unknowable-combination of these two natures. The weighing of that which is divine, or that which is human in the God-man-apart from natural limitations on the part of the student-is comparatively an uncomplicated matter. Endless complexity arises when these two natures combine in one person, as they do in Christ. (132)

How much more so today, while Christ is fulfilling His mediatorial work on behalf of mankind, should one’s heart cry for Christ?

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Biographical Sketch

Son of John D. and Margaret Board, John was married to the former Brenna S. Wiley of Fairmont, WV in 1991. John and Brenna have two daughters, Kayleigh (18) and Emaleigh (14). John received his secular education from Oak Glen High School (83) and WVU (83-85). He received his biblical instruction from the Virginia Avenue Church of Christ in Chester, WV, Freed-Hardeman College (BS), Southern Christian University (M. A. in Biblical Studies & Masters of Divinity in Christian Ministry), and is currently pursuing his PhD at Amridge University. After FHC John began working with the Oakwood Road Church of Christ as an Associate minister with D. Gene West. In 1991 John and Brenna began working with the Church of Christ in Yreka, California with John serving as their minister. From 1993 to 2008 John and Brenna worked with the Church of Christ in Bridgeport, WV. Currently John is working with the church in Elizabethtown, Ky. John is an instructor in the Southern Kentucky Bible Institute. John has been blessed to be involved with WVCYC in various capacities, to be part of mission works in Merida and Cancun, Mexico and through the World Wide Web, and to be a past instructor in the West Virginia School of Preaching.

Why Me?

Job 3:11-26

J.D. Conley

Although the book of Job is the most ancient of writings deposited in the oldest Book in the world, it is as relevant and up to date as your last facebook post. In a day and time characterized by the insatiable need for instant gratification, coupled with a phobia of being pulled out of our comfort zone, much less having to endure suffering, I commend the lectureship committee for choosing Job as our course of study. I also extend my sincere thanks for the invitation to speak and all the hard work that has been invested in hosting this lectureship. May the book and DVD's have a wide distribution and a longstanding impact on our brotherhood and communities.

Introduction

“Why me?” It’s ironic that this happens to be the title of my assignment, because this is *the* question I never asked during my two year siege with pancreatitis. I simply refused to utter it, *even once*. The reason I would not permit myself to say, “Why me?” is because I thought it would impugn God’s love and thereby cast blame on Him for my plight. Given my dire situation, that was the *last* thing I wanted to do!

James, the half brother of our Lord, wrote these well known words, “...Ye have heard of the patience of Job” (Jas. 5:11). [All scripture references are from KJV unless otherwise noted.] Here at the outset, let me assure you of the following truth, “I’m no Job!” What has happened to me in the last eleven and a half years, and what befell Job, is much more dissimilar than not. Granted, it is of some comparison, with more emphasis given to the word “some,” than the word “comparison.” Job’s ordeal and mine, only collate in one area.

The man from Uz literally lost everything with the exception of his pulse. In domino-like succession, he lost his vast wealth, his ten children, his wife (for all practical purposes), his health, his friends,

and perhaps even his reputation given the fact that he chose to sit “...among the ashes” (Job 2:8). On my end, the loss was confined to health. Although it took a hit, I retain a modicum of financial wherewithal. All of my children are very much alive. My wife has never spoken as did Job’s and I have more friends than any man deserves. My reputation is intact and as far as sitting goes, my Lazy Boy wins out over ashes. Permit me to say once more, “I’m no Job.” To say that I am, is a gross misstatement. Any parallel made between me and the beleaguered patriarch is lopsided at best.

My Inferior Bout

Through the years of battered health, well meaning brethren have made statements to the effect, “You now know how Job felt.” I’ve wanted to say, “No, I don’t, and I don’t want to know.” It’s apparent to me that the only one that could possibly know how Job felt, (with the exception of God), was the one doing the feeling, Job himself. Nonetheless, I understand that the knowledge of what I have gone through has prompted such statements. Here is the run down: I spent in excess of 160 days hospitalized due to acute necropancreatitis, 136 days of that 160, were consecutive. This condition resulted in full blown diabetes, kidney failure, six blood transfusions, an illiostomy and reversal, a billiary by-pass of the bile duct, pneumonia, five simultaneous staph infections, gangrene of the colon, five stomach surgeries, a stomach ulcer, five weeks in surgery ICU, three MRI’s, 17 CAT scans, an angiogram, two hydra scans, two lipotripsys, six endoscopies, two colonoscopies, a bone infection, a bone marrow test, two foot surgeries, a toe amputation, eleven days on a ventilator and the loss of 109 lbs. (Even as I type these words I have been off my feet due to diabetic ulcers for three months, and wearing a cast as I recover from my second foot surgery in two years.)

I include this litany *only* to show all of the things I do *not* have in common with the pitiful patriarch. Notice again, that all of my problems have been confined to the area of health, not to mention they’ve been spread out over the years. Job, on the other hand, was hit with hurricane force all at once, sweeping away *everything* that was near and dear to him, the loss of health being only one. This is why I contend I have precious little in common with him.

Other than our names beginning with the letter “J” and our loss of health, that’s about the extent of our commonality. Remember too that Satan *personally* put forth his putrid finger upon Job. With that horrid touch Hell hurled all its poisonous fury toward this rare and remarkable servant of God (Job 1:8). Hell’s bead was squarely fixed, Satan had the Uzzite right where he wanted him. Had *I* been in Satan’s crosshairs, the results may have been different. Even though my faith was immersed in the crucible, it was only tested in a *single* area. Consideration must be given to the totality of what happened to Job. If suddenly I would have to fill caskets with the bodies of my children, would I then break my silence and scream out, “Why me?” If I suddenly faced financial ruin, lost my reputation and cherished friends, would I begin to question God? If my wife told me to “curse God and die,” I know how I would *like* to react, and *should* react, but *would I*? Would my first reaction, (and yours), be to fall down and worship saying, “...blessed is the name of the Lord” (Job 1:20,21)? In short, I think I know Job and I *know* I know me. I would never presume, nor do I want others presuming, that I and Job are spiritual bookends. A physical and spiritual disparity exists, nonetheless, we do have a couple of thin similarities, those being the loss of health and the retention of faith.

The patient sage and I know what it is like to be sick, and we know what it is like to have our faith tried through suffering. But again, I must acquiesce to Job on both counts. As painful, and nauseating, and debilitating as my illness was, I never would have wanted to trade places with Job. At least I was on a bed and had a roof over my head. My pain and nausea were alleviated with a shot every four hours. But Job had no bed, no roof, only a pile of ashes. The only pain relief came by scraping his boil covered body with a shard of pottery. No, I’m no Job. How could I dare ask, “Why me?” when he suffered so?

So the title of this lesson puts me in a conundrum of sorts, i.e., how can I answer the personal question, “Why Me?” when I never asked it? I can’t. Fast-forward eleven years, despite additional on-going health issues, I still refuse to ask it. A better question might be, “Why not me?”

The Text Examined (Job 3:11-26)

In this passage, the deeply afflicted Job poses some questions that begin with the interrogative, “Why.” In fact, the word “why” is found five times in these sixteen verses. Even though Job never comes right out and says verbatim, “Why me?,” it seems to be implied by the nature of his questions. But let’s not be too hard on Job. When we consider all he went through, the celerity with which it came, and the lack of *any* explanation for it, we very well might be asking the same questions. Faced with what he was faced with, “Why me?,” might be the first words out of our mouth! Doubtless, it’s a question that more easily slips out when met with a barrage of problems as opposed to just one.

Seven wishes are set forth by Job in this section: three are morbid, three are agreeable, and one is inexcusable. The first is:

His Wish For Death (11-12)

“Why died I not from the womb? why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the belly? Why did the knees prevent me? or why the breasts that I should suck?” (11-12).

These morose words underscore the horrendous emotions Job was undergoing at the time. The chapter begins with an unusual “birthday wish,” in that Job wishes he had no birthday! But since he did, he craves it to be wiped off the calendar and expunged from the birth roll of history (cf. 3:1-10). In verses 11-12, Job continues the same line of thought by asking “why” four times regarding the circumstances of his birth. He may not have had a death wish when he said these things, but in retrospect he clearly wishes he had never been born. I don’t believe these verses teach that Job was suicidal. *If* this is what his wife had suggested (2:9), he had already rebuffed her for it. Was he depressed? Yes. Dejected? Absolutely. Despondent? Sure, who among us wouldn’t have been? Though unique (1:8), Job was nonetheless a man. But his “wish for death” was only retrospective. His “death wish” applied only to the day of his birth, there is no evidence that Job ever considered taking his life. The idea of suicide doesn’t mesh with his character. However, it is clear from these verses he wished he had never been born, because had he not been, he would have been spared in bearing these afflictions.

Instead of being suicidal, Job has resigned himself to meet life with grim resolve. It's as though he is saying, "If I had never been born, I would not *have* to live." No matter how traumatically demanding the requirements were, *living* was his decision.

Is it fair to say that Job was intimating by these questions, "Why me?" I think so. Is this not at the root of these four questions? Which essentially can be condensed into, "Why did *I* have to be born; why me?" He states, "I'd been better off had my mother suffered a miscarriage." "Why didn't that happen?" Or, "Why wasn't I stillborn?" "Why was I allowed to draw my first breath outside the womb?" "Why was I permitted my mother's nourishment?" "Why did I live long enough to be bounced on the knee?" All of these questions smack of "Why me?"

My Wish For Life

As for my ordeal eleven years ago, things never got so bleak that I began asking similar questions. But in all fairness, I didn't undergo anything remotely close to what Job did, therefore I don't impugn his queries. Even though, at times, I must cope with less than perfect health, I have never wished I had never been born, *especially* when I thought I might die. But, if I suddenly found myself sitting and scraping myself on an ash heap, having lost everything and everybody, I doubt that I could resist blurting out, "*Why me Lord?, Why did you let me be born?*"

The second wish Job expresses is:

His Wish For the Grave (13-16)

"For now should I have lain still and been quiet, I should have slept: then had I been at rest, With kings and counsellors of the earth, which built desolate places for themselves; Or with princes that had gold, who filled their houses with silver: Or as an hidden untimely birth I had not been; as infants which never saw light."

Not only does Job wish he had never been born, he also wishes he had long been interred. This morbid desire underscores just how horrible Job felt. Can you imagine the trials and afflictions of life being so bad, as to ache and pine for the grave? He essentially says in verse 13, "Had I died at birth, I would now be lying still

and quiet, sleeping in my grave.” Does this not suggest the high degree of pain and anguish Job was undergoing? If your body was covered with boils from the sole of your foot, to the crown of your head (cf.2:7), how still and quiet do you suppose you’d be? If your children suddenly met a tragic death, how effective would you be at stifling the bitter cries and moans of bereavement? Job reckons if he was in the ground he would be at rest, and untouched by such calamity and sorrow.

In verses 14-15, Job mentions entombed kings, counsellors and princes. Regarding these, Adam Clarke states: “These mighty agitators of the world are at rest in their graves, after the lives of commotion which they have led among men: most of whom indeed have been troublemakers of the peace of the globe” (33). What is Job hinting? He seems to be saying, “If war mongering kings, and blood thirsty advisors of such, are now at peace in in the grave, why can’t I be?”

He continues in verse 16 by expressing the futile wish for an early miscarriage. The word “hidden,” indicates a *very early* miscarriage, so early as to be unable to distinguish the gender of the fetus. “An early miscarriage, which was scarcely perceptible to the parent herself; and in this case he *had not been* - he had never had the distinguishable form of a human being, whether *male or female*” (Clarke 33). This wish is in harmony with his words of verse 3, “Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived.” Verse 16 clearly shows that Job is *not* saying those who are not born are not human, as the abortionists would have us believe. Neither is Job bringing into question the fact that the unborn have souls. He is only saying that those who die before they are born will not have to suffer as he has suffered.

The Grave’s Motivating Factor

Consider what caused Job his grief induced wish for the grave. Was it his loss of wealth? It’s doubtful. Because after being hospitalized only two weeks, (of what would turn into twenty), material possessions meant nothing to me. Even though I had recently bought a beautiful century old Victorian house and a new pick-up truck in the garage, they didn’t mean a thing to me. A life-threatening

illness has an uncanny way of putting things into perspective. As for Job's loss of possessions, I seriously doubt from God's appraisal of him in (1:1, 8), that he had a predilection for covetousness. His attitude, "...the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (1:21), is most admirable. Was Job's wish for a plot in the Uz cemetery brought on by the loss of health? Again, it's doubtful. Sickness made me *want* to get well. Even when I was told by my doctor that my condition had a high mortality rate, I resisted being consigned to the silent city of the dead with all the strength I could muster. So, I don't think it was the enveloping boils and fever that had Job pining for a hole in the ground. Was it the virtual loss of his wife? This surely played a role in Job's mindset. "Perhaps Satan pulled his meanest trick when he spared Job's wife" (Hamilton 37). Far from being a source of comfort to her husband, she was instead a tremendous source of discouragement. Was it the loss of social standing and reputation that had Job longing for the grave? Once more, what we know about the character of the man, and his selflessness and his lack of ego, indicates these factors meant little to Job. The things God said about him in the beginning of the book allow us to make these assumptions. Without question, the tragedy that hit him the hardest and made his life hardly worth living, was the *loss of his children*. All the rest could be regained, and was regained, according to (42:10ff). In the end he was blessed with a second set of sons and daughters (cf.42:13). But *these* original sons and daughters were gone. When I was sick the only thing on earth that mattered to me was my wife and six children. As long as I had them by my side I had all the reason in the world to fight for my life. Job did not have that. His children were in the ground while his wife was telling him "to curse God and die." Job had no inkling that God would abundantly bless him later. His attitude was simply, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in Him" (13:15). If it was God's will that he go down in the grave, so be it. He was ready and willing.

My Wish to Stay Above Ground

Though I never wished for the grave, I did reach a point where I thought my body would give out, regardless of the will I had to live. Once I realized this possibility, I did ask God to take me if He

was ready. But even then, at age forty-two, with six young children and a wife, I desperately did not want to leave. I certainly never wished for the grave as did Job. But, yet again, my plight compared to his, was of little comparison. Had I not had my wife and children I would have been more willing to go. Job had *nothing* and *no one*. I had *everything* but my health. Hence, peace was more attainable for me than he.

Job's third wish is:

His Wish For Peace (17-19)

“There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest. There the prisoners rest together; they hear not the voice of the oppressor. The small and great are there; and the servant is free from his master.”

During those one hundred and thirty-six days I was in the hospital, rest and peace were rare. I learned early on you cannot get any rest in a hospital room. I would be awakened each morning around 5:00 to have blood drawn. They would wake me up in the middle of the night to give me a sleeping pill. Hardly a day went by when I did not have to undergo some kind of test. Lights would flash and beepers would beep all night long, robbing me of any hope for sleep.

My Peace Realized

But in another sense I did find peace and rest. I believed God would eventually make me better. Though I never asked Him “Why me?,” I did ask Him, “How long?” Finally, after one hundred days in the hospital, and after being weaned off an anti-biotic to fight a stubborn staph infection, I started feeling better. I knew that my prayers and the prayers of my brethren had been answered, and just a little over a month later I was discharged. I understood first hand what Paul meant when he said, “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philip. 4:6-7). Even in a time when I, nor the doctors, knew what was going to happen with me, I experienced this unexplainable

peace of which Paul spoke.

Job's Lack of Peace

In verses 17-19, Job is utterly bereft of this kind of peace. Rather, he is still longing for peace at six feet under. He's desirous of the reputed peace one savors when freed from the difficulties of life, and *not* the peace one can have in spite of them! In his limited understanding, Job sees no suffering in death. He was not privy to New Testament teaching, e.g., (Matt. 11:28-30; Luke 16:19-31; Heb. 4:9; Rev. 14:13, et. all). Be that as it may, "Job teaches mankind that death is a great leveler. All men are going to be on the same level in death....kings, counsellors, princes, the wicked and the prisoners. The small and great will undergo the same experience" (Wright 54). Job's concept of death was simply an escape from all of the miseries of life. But we are blessed to know it's infinitely more than that. For the faithful Christian, it is the entrance into the celestial realm of God and the redeemed of the ages. For the wicked, death is a casting into everlasting fire from which there is no escape (Matt. 18:8; 25:46; Rev. 20:14; 21:8). Remember that Job's wish for peace was misguided, being made in the thick haze of grief. However, his probing question, "If a man die, shall he live again?" (14:14), reveals that he had hope for more than just a grave to occupy.

Job's fourth wish is:

His Wish For Understanding (20)

"Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul."

Here Job skirts even closer to asking the lamentable "Why me?" He seeks understanding; he gropes for an answer. Wayne Jackson explains, "The word "light," as the parallelism would suggest, is used in the sense of life, i.e., light of life, sensitivity, ability to feel, etc." (31).

Job had been materially blessed beyond compare (cf. 1:2-3). In addition to that, he was "one of a kind" in the spiritual department (cf. 1:1, 5, 8, 20-22; 2:3, 10). Therefore, what could be the reason for all of this untold tragedy? In other words, he appears to be asking, "Why did I enjoy such a high quality of life, only to be on the verge

of having it miserably snuffed out?” Let’s not accuse Job of throwing a pity party, although many have done so over much less. He seems to be asking this question sincerely. How could he possibly foresee the impact his life and patience would have on every generation to follow? His story is ubiquitous!

My Blessing Of Understanding

Unlike Job, I had the hindsight of Scripture which reveals distinct benefits attached to suffering. This was one advantage that enabled me, (and still does), to have the will not to complain or inquire of God, “Why me?” I understood that suffering helped me to see my dependence upon God (Ps.18:6; 103:3; Dan.5:3; Acts 17:28). My illness also helped me see the inherent power of prayer (Matt. 7:7-8, Jas. 5:16; Philip. 4:6-7; 1 Pet. 3:12; 1 John 5:14-15). Suffering can bring us closer to God (Ps. 119:67, 71). Suffering can cause us to have a greater appreciation for our blessings. Suffering causes us to possess empathy for others who are undergoing heartaches and trials (Heb.2:18). Suffering also builds patience (Jas.1:2-4). I knew all of this firsthand, but Job didn’t. This should cause us to have even a greater appreciation for this battered man. His faith was simple, but strong. May we seek to emulate Job in the trials and sorrows of life.

Job’s fifth wish is similar to his first wish in that:

His Wish For Death Is Restated (21-22)

“Which long for death, but it cometh not; and dig for it more than for hid treasures; Which rejoice exceedingly, and are glad, when they can find the grave?”

Oh how Job must have suffered! Later he states: “...my soul chooseth...death rather than life,...my days are extinct, the graves are ready for me” (Job 7:15; 17:1). “Job longs for death with greater passion than one who digs for buried treasure, but, alas, it comes not” (Jackson 31). It’s difficult to imagine one’s pain and grief being so intense that they would rather dig their own grave than dig for treasure. They’d rather plan their funeral than their portfolio! Although Job is ready to die, and craves death, plus realizing the fact that no one would blame him if he took his life, he knows he cannot!

My Wish For Life Restated

Doctors say the pancreas is the most unforgiving organ in the human body. Once it is disturbed, it is never quite the same. Thus, pancreatitis is a dreadful illness to endure. Not only is it chronically painful and nauseating, the treatment for it is not pleasant. The *only* way the condition can be successfully treated, provided it does not first take your life, is by a method called NPO. NPO is simply the cessation of all food and liquids being taken into the body by mouth. Consequently, the patient not only has to endure agonizing abdominal pain and non-stop bouts of vomiting, they are also denied any intake of food or liquids, even ice chips in my case. I found myself dreaming of ice cold Cokes and buckets of iced tea. All I was permitted was the poor substitution of oral swabs. As my condition grew worse, I received nourishment through a feeding tube. I went four months without any solid food. I was too weak to open a can of Ensure. But, in spite of it all, even though I thought I might, I never relished going to an early grave. This fact alone tells me Job had it far worse than did I. Even though his seige lasted for a period of months (14:5), and mine has had residual and chronic effects for eleven years, I never wished to “find a grave,” much less “rejoice exceedingly,” over finding it. Instead, I dug for the treasures of life. I fought to live; I did not covet death. I tried to keep the mere thought of dying out of my mind, though tacitly my doctors kept reminding me I might. In short, it was the fear of death that helped keep me alive. Originally, I did not know if that would be enough. My doctor came in one morning with a grave look on his face. He said “John, your CAT scan results show us that you must have surgery.” He then informed me that it was a “high-risk surgery and that a lot of people died from it.” I asked him, “Do you think I’ll make it?” After what I thought was far too long of a pause, he replied, “I *think* so...it’s a judgment call.” It was not what I would call a confident reply! I then asked, “What if I don’t have the surgery?” He said quite bluntly, “You’ll spike fevers and die.” So, if I didn’t have the surgery I *would* die. If I had the surgery I *could* die. I had no choice. One doctor was no encouragement at all in telling me in a most dour tone, “Mr. Conley, there is *nothing* good about this surgery.” But because I *so*

wanted to live, I put myself in God's hands and went under the knife.
Job's sixth wish is:

His Wish to Blame God (23-25)

“Why is light given to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in? For my sighing cometh before I eat, and my roarings are poured out like the waters. For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me.”

Obviously, *this* is the wish I previously characterized as “inexcusable.” Later on, Job seems to aim his remarks toward the Almighty by suggesting that if life's injustices are not the Lord's fault, *who else is responsible* (9:24)? “Infinitely worse than asking, “Why me?,” Job in (23-25), is guilty of criticizing God. Here is where Job's sheen loses some luster. He is human after all. Regarding Job's mindset, Wayne Jackson states:

The language he chose is quite interesting. Earlier, Satan had charged that the man of Uz served God selfishly because the Lord had “made a hedge” of blessings about him. Now, with the same term, Job complains that God has *hedged him in with suffering!* This is the first indication that the patriarch now *blames God* for his anguish. With his lips, he has sinned. (31)

As bad as things were, Job had no right to cast blame on God. No matter how bad things presently are, or one day may be, we too have no license to charge God for life's troubles. Random things happen (Eccl. 9:11). However, most blame for the trials of life, can ultimately be traced back to man and placed squarely on his shoulders. “Ideally, it was never the Divine Will that human beings be heir to misery” (Jackson 4). God intended that Adam and Eve not only live forever, but do so without sin. Yet, they chose not to and suffered the sad consequences. Suffering is in this world for a host of reasons, *none* of which make God culpable. Why would anyone who is experiencing suffering, want to impute the only *One* that can deliver them? Why is God so quick to be blamed? Just a perusal of the problem reveals human derivation, either our own, or someone

else's. "It is very important in our Christian lives not to confuse *life* with *God*" (Butt 256). True! The majority are guilty of this grossly mistaken practice. They look at "life" and "God" as being one and the same. Flawed thinking such as this makes *any* undesirable situation ripe for condemning God. Sadly, Job had slipped to the point where he could no longer distinguish between his deplorable life and the Divine God.

The next two verses (24-25) reveal both the physical and emotional turmoil Job was enduring. He says, "For my sighing cometh before I eat..." There are two possible explanations. The NIV has, "sighing comes to me instead of food," suggesting a loss of appetite. The text of the ASV reads just like the KJV, but has the footnote, "like my food." Thus an alternate reading would be, "For my sighing cometh like my food." This suggests that his pain was as regular as his meals. Either explanation shows the physical side of his affliction. From the emotional standpoint Job declares, "... and my roarings are poured out like the waters. For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me (24b-25). These "roarings" would be groanings brought on by both the physical and emotional trauma he was enduring. Regarding these "roarings" poured out like water," Albert Barnes states, "...*in number* - they were like rolling billows...Perhaps also in *sound* like them...also he means to say that his groans were attended with "a flood of tears," or that his tears were like the waves of the sea" (138-39).

Verse 25: "For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me."

There is no justification for assuming that Job lived in morbid fear of one day losing it all. What happened to him was so unusual, even unique, how could he begin to anticipate it? Job was not an alarmist, what he *feared* was God (1:1). What does he mean then? Recall how he was the recipient of one piece of bad news, one right after another (1:13-19)? Upon hearing the first news, he didn't even have time to compose himself before he was told another, and another. Four horrible news bulletins coming in almost simultaneously! As the news was carried to him by lone survivors, he undoubtedly dreaded, "What's next?!" Therefore, what Job greatly feared was the next

piece of bad news, as well as having to cope with the sorrowful days to follow.

My Wish to Praise God

The news I kept getting from my team of doctors progressively grew worse as well. But I never was tempted to blame God. Like Job, I too lost my appetite, the mere thought of food repulsed me. I did a lot of moaning and groaning too, a lot of tear shedding as well. But what I did, most of all, was pray. Brethren all over the world prayed for me. If I get to Heaven the first thing I want to ask God is, “How many prayers came up to You when I was sick in 2002?” Until that time, I will remain curious. For without those prayers, I would not be typing these words. One of the passages that aided me greatly in my struggle for life, was this one, “Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases” (Ps. 103:1-3). In my Bible, at the top of the 103rd Psalm, I have etched in ink, “Remember 2002.” It serves as a constant reminder to praise God for all He has done, and continues to do for me.

Job’s seventh wish in the passage is *possibly*:

His Wish For The Former Days (26)

“I was not in safety, neither had I rest, neither was I quiet; yet trouble came.”

Job appears to be referring to when calamity first struck and kept on striking. But Adam Clarke writes, “If this verse be read *interrogatively*, it will give a good and easy sense: *Was I not in safety? Had I not rest? Was I not in comfort? Yet trouble came*” (35). Throughout Job’s ordeal, he unquestionably longed for the former days of security, peace, and comfort. But as far as he was concerned, such days were gone forever. Did he appreciate them as much as he should have? I believe he did, since he was a man who worshipped God and was held by Him in high esteem (1:1, 5, 8). God must have known Job to be a grateful man because He blessed him with “... twice as much as he had before” (42:10). What about us? Are we as grateful as we ought to be for God numberless blessings?

My Wish For The Former Days

I long for the days when I could take two steps at a time; when I weighed 250 lbs. and could bench press my weight; when I could carry two 90 lb. bags of cement under each arm; run six miles and not breathe hard. I'd like to go back to the days when I could simply *feel* a pair of shoes on my feet. But more than all of that, I'm thankful for *today* and each and every day God has given me since he raised me from my sick bed. Live for today, not yesterday. And...

Conclusion

May we ever refrain from asking our all-loving God, "Why Me?"

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Biographical Sketch

J. D. Conley was born in El Paso, TX., in 1959. He is a third generation gospel preacher and is in his twentieth year of full-time preaching. He preached his first sermon in Larose, LA., at age 15. He majored in Bible at Freed-Hardeman University and is a graduate of the Brown Trail School of Preaching in Fort Worth, TX. He is now in his ninth year working with the Harmar Hill church in Marietta,

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Worthless Physicians

Job 13:4

Justin Odom

I would like to express my thanks and gratitude to the elders of the Lord's church at Hillview Terrace for their oversight of this lectureship. I also must express my gratitude to the lectureship committee for inviting me to speak and be a part of this great study on the book of Job.

The study of the book of Job is often neglected by many in our society, especially so within the church. Too often when a class is taught from this tremendous book, the first two chapters are examined and then chapters three through forty-two are lumped together. This does an injustice to this great book of wisdom literature. Owens writes, "Even more clearly than most other Wisdom Literature, Job illustrates the importance of asking the right questions, exploring the possible answers fully, and applying the answers to specific life situations" (84).

While the world may be content just knowing about the "perseverance of Job" (Jas. 5:11 NKJV), we must delve into the depths of this rich book. Francis I. Andersen commented about this book:

The task of understanding it is as rewarding as it is strenuous. For this help, the modern student has a rich legacy from the labours of the past. It is a tribute to the greatness of the book that the work of interpreting it is never finished. After each fresh exploration the challenge to scale the heights remains. One is constantly amazed at its audacious theology and at the magnitude of its intellectual achievement. Job is a prodigious book in the vast range of its ideas, in its broad coverage of human experience, in the intensity of its passions, in the immensity of its concept of God, and not least in its superb literary craftsmanship. (16)

Homer Hailey adds:

The book of Job is something of a microcosm of man's efforts to learn and understand the true wisdom with which to meet some of life's struggles and problems. The battle must be fought out in the heart of man...Job symbolizes this spirit. It must characterize men of all ages if ultimately we are to arrive at divine truth. (16)

The theme for this lecture hour is Empathetic Failures. The word "empathetic" means "the capacity for participation in another's feelings or ideas" (Webster 373). Each speaker will be looking at the failure of those in the book of Job to understand or participate in the suffering of Job.

The text under consideration for this hour is Job 13:4, "But you are forgers of lies, You are all worthless physicians." Our goal is to study this passage of Scripture by looking at the context of this passage and the application this verse has for us today.

The Context

From the narrative we read in the first two chapters of this book, we understand the suffering of Job has been caused by Satan. The attempts by this old dragon to force Job to turn his back on God have not succeeded. The student of this book has the curtain pulled aside in the beginning to see where Job's suffering comes from. Job, unfortunately, does not have this luxury, nor does his friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. While we can answer why Job is suffering, they struggle to make sense of the situation. This will prompt speeches from these four men in chapters 3-13. However, the question remains, why did Job call his friends "worthless physicians"? These men had heard the suffering Job was facing and travelled a great distance to try and comfort him. They even sat with Job for seven days in stunned silence. How could they have been worthless to Job?

Job will begin by detesting the day of his birth, "May the day perish on which I was born, And the night in which it was said, A male child is conceived" (Job 3:3). Job's lamentation is so great he

concludes by saying, “I am not at ease, nor am I quiet; I have no rest, for trouble comes’ (26). At this point, the friends of Job can hold their silence no longer. Michael D. Guinan writes, “With his failure, Satan too disappears into the wings; in what follows, his work will be furthered by Job’s friends, until now silent” (15).

The basic thrust of Eliphaz’s response to Job in chapters four and five is that Job has sinned and is being chastened by God. Job’s friend remarks in Job 4:7-8 “Remember now, who ever perished being innocent? Or where were the upright ever cut off? Even as I have seen, Those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same.” This begins the insinuations and accusations of these friends. Hailey comments, “Although the friends had said things that were true, the implications and applications of their points regarding Job were false – half-truths – that made the whole a lie generally” (124).

While it is a Biblical doctrine that we reap what we sow (Gal. 6:7) and the soul that sins shall die (Ezek. 18:24), this glimpse into the life of Job tells us that not all suffering is because of sin (Luke 13:4). The friends of Job will only hold to the position that Job has sinned and brought all this destruction and suffering upon himself. Bildad speaks in chapter eight telling Job to repent and Zophar will go so far in chapter eleven to call Job a liar that God needs to correct (11:4- 5). J. Vernon McGee makes an interesting comment about the accusations from Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar and Job’s response to them:

Job is making a plaintive plea. He says, “I can’t even tell you how terrible my grief is. I can’t explain to you this awful thing that has happened to me.” You can see that Eliphaz had not helped him at all. Just to say, “You have some secret sin and the thing for you to do now is to confess and get right with God,” is not always the correct thing to say. (53)

Thus we understand the statement by Job, “But you are forgers of lies, You are all worthless physicians” (13:4). Job has not sinned, he has not sown iniquity, and his suffering is not a result of those things. The student of this book will quickly condemn the friends of Job for behaving in a way that is ungodly, but are we any different?

Are there times when we today can act like worthless physicians? As Homer Hailey puts it, “Should we, or should we not, tell an individual that he and his teachings are wrong? If yes, then be sure that the accusation is true and not a point of prejudice for a human tradition” (124).

The Application - What makes for a worthless physician? *A Lack of Brotherly Love*

When one is sick physically, he will seek out a professional that can diagnose and treat his problem. Specialists may be consulted to deal with the problem at hand. We certainly would not be pleased with a doctor that looks at our broken leg and says, “You’ll be fine, there’s nothing I need to do.” We would consider him a “worthless physician.” We have come to him with pain, looking for relief only to find rejection.

This can also be the case within the Lord’s church. We become worthless physicians when others come to us in pain, either emotionally or physically, and we turn them away. A lack of brotherly love is an indication of a worthless physician. Jesus taught us a powerful lesson about love:

Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said to him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commands hang all the Law and the Prophets. (Matt. 22:36-40)

Paul records by inspiration in Galatians 6:10, “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.” As Christians, we have a duty and responsibility to all people to show compassion in their time of need, not just offer lip service (Jas. 2:15-17). Jesus taught that all men will know that we are His disciples by the love we show toward one another (John 13:34-35). Adam Clarke writes “The disciples of different teachers were known by their habits, or some particular creed or rite, or point of austerity, which they had adopted; but the

disciples of Christ were known by this love which they bore to each other” (e-sword, 2012). We are empathetic failures if we do not keep the commands to love one another, “If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he had not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also” (1 John 4:20-21).

False Teachers

Another indication of a worthless physician is one that teaches error instead of truth, false teachers. Millions are listening to these men and women as they blaspheme the Word of God, believing their spiritual condition to be secure, when in reality, they are being condemned. False teachers are worthless physicians spiritually when they “turn the grace of our God into lewdness” (Jude 4). They are taking the grace of God and turning it into an excuse to sin! Paul wrote that we are to not continue in sin thinking that grace may abound (Rom. 6:1-2), yet false teachers are telling people it’s acceptable to sin because grace is greater than sin.

False teachers are worthless physicians when they promote peace when there is none, as in the days of Jeremiah, “For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly, Saying “Peace, peace!” When there is none” (8:11).

False teachers are worthless physicians when they promote the traditions of men over the commands of God, “All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition” (Mark 7:9).

False teachers are worthless physicians when they flatter with enticing words, “Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for so did their father to the false prophets” (Luke 6:26). “Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words” (Col. 2:6).

False teachers are worthless physicians when they teach what others only want to hear, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables” (2 Tim. 4:3, 4). “But there were also false prophets among

the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction” (2 Pet. 2:1).

False teachers are worthless physicians that can only bear bad fruit. “You will know them by their fruit...Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit” (Matt. 7:16, 17). F.B. Meyer notes:

The worth of the gospel has been attested all down the ages by the characters which it has produced and which have been the world’s salt and light. No other teaching has produced such results. Here is the supreme test. There are many new systems of theology, many nostrums are being loudly advertised, but the one test of them all is in the fruit they bear (e-sword 2012).

False teachers are worthless physicians because they are against Christ, “For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist” (2 John 7).

Those who would present any information that is false as something true are harming those seeking spiritual guidance. They are no better than the three friends of Job.

Broken Homes

The writer of Proverbs once wrote, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (22:6). Parents have a tremendous responsibility to teach their children in the ways of God. They can become worthless physicians when they abdicate the roles that God has given them in the home. Can we truly expect children not to drink when they see their father come home drunk each Friday night? Can a mother teach a daughter to be a faithful wife when she is having an affair? Too many parents have adopted the “do as I say, not as I do” mentality and in the process have become worthless physicians! Children are looking for stability in the home. Ann Smith reports in a 2013 article on Helium.

com:

Children also need to have parents who are dependable and who are responsible. Children get stability from schedules being set for them and from living in conditions that are clean and calm. As a parent, your choices in type of music played and volume, for example, can influence your child's stability while he sleeps. Key to stability for a child, too, is how the adults in his life treat one another. A child who grows up in a place full of conflict can sense that things are wrong and will not feel stable.

The children will seek support and stability from their parents. To avoid becoming worthless physicians, the parents must heed the instruction given by Paul in Ephesians 6:4, "And you fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord."

There are also times when a younger couple will look at the marriages of those around them for guidance during struggles. How many young newlyweds have been influenced by worthless physicians? How many marriages have been destroyed because they could not find godly examples of what a marriage should be? Paul makes it clear, "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord...Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her" (Eph. 5:22, 25).

The older woman have a responsibility according to Titus 2:4-5, "That they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed." Too often, the older women have left poor examples for the younger women to follow.

Turn to the Great Physician, Jesus the Christ

When the disciples of Jesus were asked about their Master's association with tax collectors and sinners by eating with them in Mark 2, Jesus hears the question and responds, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come

to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance” (17). The proper place of Jesus would be around those that were sick. He would be able to heal the physically sick, but it was His mission toward the spiritually sick that makes Him the Great Physician. Jesus cannot and will never be listed in the same category of worthless physicians as was Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar.

The physician of the soul is a common picture in the Scriptures. Jeremiah mentions it in Jeremiah 8:22, “Is there no balm in Gilead, is there no physician there? Why then is there no recovery for the health of the daughter of my people?” God would have been the one to heal the hurt of the nation of Israel and the same is true with Jesus in our lives. Barclay writes, “The physician is the man who sees what is wrong, for no cure can follow until the cause of the trouble is diagnosed. Jesus Christ can diagnose the sickness of sin, and can reveal just where that sickness attacks each individual” (206-07).

Jesus is the Great Physician because He is our Counselor, “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6). As our Counselor, Jesus is able to guide us in paths of righteousness. “It is expressive of great wisdom and of qualifications to guide and direct the human race” (Barnes, e-sword). Young comments on Isaiah 9:6 by saying, “In this King there will be hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, for He must be properly equipped to redeem His people” (335). Even at an early age, the people in the temple marveled at the understanding and answers He had (Luke 2:46-47).

Jesus said in Matthew 12:42, in reference to Himself, that a greater than Solomon is here. When the student of the Bible considers the wisdom Solomon possessed, the statement by Jesus should give us pause. In the case of Solomon, the queen of the South (Sheba) came from “the ends of the earth” to hear the wisdom of Solomon. In the case of Jesus, being wiser than Solomon, we can find the answers to the struggles in our lives. As the Great Physician, Jesus has the words of eternal life (John 6:68), the words for a more abundant life (John 10:10), and the word of reconciliation to God (2 Cor. 5:19).

Jesus is considered the Great Physician because He, unlike the

three friends of Job, has experienced the same trials and temptations that we have. Satan will use the same three avenues of temptation, lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16), on us that he used on Jesus (Matt. 4:1-11). Paul wrote, “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man...” (1 Cor. 10:13). Jesus is no stranger to our temptations.

The writer of Hebrews states dramatically, “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin” (4:15). It is admittedly much easier is it to be empathetic to those around us when we ourselves have been through the same trials. The friends of Job had never lost all their possessions and family in one brief stroke. They could only condemn Job for the alleged sin he had committed, even as Job proclaimed his innocence. Jesus will not treat us in the same fashion. As we struggle with the difficulties of life, we know that if we do sin “we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1). We have not a worthless physician, but a Great Physician that can provide counsel, guidance, grace, and defense in our time of need (Heb. 4:16).

Conclusion

The friends of Job did well until they began to speak! They came not to console but to condemn. Job was right in calling them “forgers of lies, worthless physicians.” Even in his own defense in chapter 12, Job declares he knows that people suffer for sin but still “With Him are wisdom and strength, He has counsel and understanding” (13). God is indeed in control, and even though Job may not understand why all this calamity has happened to him, he still trusts in God.

Occasionally, we will become as Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. We will become conceited in our own arrogance enough to presume we know everything that happens in this life. Let us not become worthless physicians, but rather heed the words of Job, “Oh, that you would be silent, and it would be your wisdom!” (Job 13:5).

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Biographical Sketch

Justin Odom grew up in Reader, West Virginia and is married to the former Kristina Deagel of Moundsville, West Virginia. They have three children, Ben (15), Jenny (14), and Hannah (12). Justin is a 1997 graduate of West Virginia School of Preaching and is currently working on his Master’s Degree in Bible from Bear Valley Bible Institute of Denver. After graduation from WVSOP in 1997, Justin preached for the Pennsville church of Christ in Pennsville,

Ohio, then with the Rt. 38 church of Christ in Washington Court House, Ohio. He has been working with the church in Fairfield, Illinois since 2006. Justin works with the Little Egypt Christian Youth Camp in Belle Rive, Illinois every summer and directs a preacher's retreat there each June.

Sovereignty of God

Job 12:7-25

D. Gene West

Introduction

There are many different concepts of the sovereignty of God held in “Christendom.” These often vary one from the other. For example, the Catholics and the Orthodox do not see eye to eye on this important biblical matter. Furthermore, the doctrines of the reformers differed from one another, sometimes to a remarkable degree. Zwingli and Calvin could not agree on this matter. Nor could Calvin agree with Luther. The traditions of these men often come down to us through the teaching of various religious bodies that claim to have descended from them. Even among Churches of Christ the view of the sovereignty of God differs. There are those who believe that God has a separate plan for the lives of each of us, and if we are going to do the will of God we must wait for some indication of that plan and follow it through to the end regardless of the cost to us. Others of us believe that God has one plan for all people and that more than directly involving our day-to-day activities that are not sinful; God’s plan for us is that we make every effort to live according to His revealed Will since He saw fit to redeem us by the Blood of Christ.

However, in the study before us today, we are not deeply concerned with any of these matters, but with the sovereignty of God as set forth in the 12th chapter of the Book of Job, which the speaker calls His wisdom and strength or power. There are many practical lessons for daily living that are to be found in the Book of Job, and one of these is: who it is that is in charge of the universe and all things therein, including the highest of all God’s creation—man.

When we look at our subject in the chapter referenced above we are utterly amazed at the simplicity with which Job expresses these matters to those “friends” with whom he has carried on his relentless debate regarding his having some fault that has brought all his trouble. Job rises to a simple eloquence that defies imagination

and expresses truths to Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar that they should have readily recognized, but apparently did not! There are bad things that happen to good people in this life for which sin is not the explanation, as these men constantly urged on Job.

Background

There is a sense in which the entire Book of Job is the background for this chapter. However, it seems to comprise a large part of the heart of the Book, beginning in the 3rd chapter and going through the 25th. In the verses before us Job defends the wisdom and power—the sovereignty of God. Though all things involved in this contest between God and Satan cannot be easily explained, nor easily understood they can be accepted with trust in the sovereignty of our Creator and Sustainer. While Job does not appreciate all that is happening to him, and will eventually question it, nonetheless his integrity and faith in God’s rightness, wisdom and power will cause him to submit, however painfully.

Though man may, as in a glass darkly, see the sovereign will, wisdom and power of God, he knows not its limits. Therefore, he approaches the God in whom he has believed with a child-like trust when trouble comes, knowing in his heart and conscience that all is well with him spiritually, though it may not be physically, for there is a God who rules in the affairs of men and nations, whether we like to admit that or not.

Immediate Background

In the 11th chapter Zophar delivered a speech to Job in which he urged him in the strongest terms to repent. In the 12th chapter Job began his response to Zophar urging, with more than a little sarcasm, that he is as much of a man and scholar as this man and inferior to him in no way, intellectually or otherwise. Zophar, and others, were so wise in their own eyes. Job accused Zophar of believing that all wisdom would die with him! He thus indirectly accused him of arrogance. He pointed out that though he is mocked and ridiculed by his friends, he truly knows his own heart and has committed nothing making it necessary for him to repent. Job avowed that disaster comes and they that suffer it are despised by those who are at ease.

In his work *The Book of Job*, Gibson translated the 5th verse as follows: “In the thought of him that is at ease there is contempt for misfortune; It is ready for them whose foot slippeth.” However, the thought seems to be: Evil people prosper, while the righteous often do not and those who sin against God appear very secure in their life-style while those who truly serve God do not. In 11:20 Zophar had insisted that the wicked go to hopeless ruin—destruction. Job answers that does not seem to be the case, at least not in this life. It is the wicked who seem to prosper most in every way and the righteous God-fearer does not. The famous Heidelberg professor of theology, D. Friedrich Wilhelm Carl Umbreit, in his work *A New Version of the Book of Job* expressed it as follows:

Proceeding to confute Zophar’s arguments, he first sets practical experience at variance with the theoretical wisdom of his concluding words, and demonstrates the opposite of Zophar’s assertion in ch.xi.20, viz. that the wicked go to hopeless ruin. On the contrary, they seem to be the earth’s most prosperous children; those who plunder the dwellings of other, do themselves abide in undisturbed repose; those who provoke God the most, enjoy the most uninterrupted security; and in like manner, those who carry God in their hands. . . . (I 218-19)

These are not really secure, but vulnerable as Job knows well. An intimate interaction with God does not guarantee that life will be a rose garden!

How does one explain that? The only explanation man is capable of grasping is that all is a part of the wisdom and power—the sovereignty of God. That we may easily see at times because it is manifested in nature around us, but do we understand its depth? Observe nature and then declare that there is no God, or that if He exists at all He is weak and impotent.

Job gave five (the number may vary depending on where the student makes the breaks) illustrations of God’s power and sovereignty and appealed to Zophar to accept this truth, though if he were as wise as he thought he was, he should have known these

things all along.

All Nature Proves That God Is and That He Is Sovereign

Job's first challenge to Zophar was:

But now ask the beasts, and they will teach you; and the birds of the air, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth, and it will teach you; and the fish of the sea will explain to you. Who among all these does not know that the hand of the LORD has done this . . . ? (Job 12:7-9 NKJV)

Let Zophar and all other wise men interrogate (observe) the beasts, the birds, the wee beasties of the earth and they will teach them: (1) these are the creations of God; (2) He regulates their behavior—they behave precisely as God intended in every instance, and their behavior has not changed since time began. They do not commit crime against one another, they do not falsely accuse their kind of doing that which he has not done, and they utterly fail to step outside the scope of their God-given instinctual behavior. If all the lower creation does not behave in the instinctual manner God gave them, why do they not take man to court, or sue one another for dereliction of duty? Because they instinctually realize that man is to behave toward them as he does and they are to behave toward one another as they do. They complain not of their lot in life—their place in God's plan. God, through his immutable laws of nature given at creation, rules this part of His creation, and they are content to have it so. We have never heard one bull say to another, "I believe God has cheated me and put me in a male body when my real desire is to be female. I think all the rest of you should pay for an operation so that I can be a cow!" Nor have we heard a cow say, "I have had a baby every year of my adult life and I think that is enough. I think that society should pay for me to get rid of the one I now carry!" Only human kind is so foolish! And if humans had created the animals they might have the same silly notions as we!

But God rules in every regard and has set up laws and codes of behavior for mankind as well. In verses ten through twelve, Job challenges Zophar a second time to recognize the wisdom and power

of God saying: “In whose hand is the life of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind? Does not the ear test words and the mouth taste its food? Wisdom is with aged men, and with length of days, understanding” (Job 12:10-12 NKJV).

God holds in His own power the life of everything that lives and that includes mankind. It was God who breathed into the nostrils of Adam “the breath of life” and he became a living soul. Such an assignment was not left up to the animals that were first created or to the silly and unproved “laws of biology” as set forth in the equally silly and unproved machinations of the hypotheses of evolution. Why does the ear not taste and the palate not hear? Because God made the palate for tasting and the ear for hearing and everyone knows that! Is it not therefore presumptuous for any man to assume that he knows the extent of the relationship of another man with his God? Is it not the case that wisdom is with aged men, not the young? Is it not true that length of days is what gives understanding and not a college classroom? An old man can learn something new every day! I know one that does! He may be a bit slower than in younger years, but usually learns more thoroughly and retains much longer. Why is it that way? Because God made it that way! This is the reason that He said, “You shall rise before the gray headed and honor the presence of an old man, and fear your God: I am the LORD” (Lev. 19:32 NKJV). Only arrogance, like that of the friends of Job keeps us from obeying such commands.

What a great need there was in the days of Job to understand the nature of God, and that need is not less today. We may not be able to understand His every action, but we can understand, at least to a certain degree, His nature as being both absolute and powerful beyond comprehension, and His wisdom as being the greatest that can be thought. Jeremiah declared: “O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps (Jer. 10:23 NKJV). Furthermore, Isaiah quoted God as saying: “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts” (Isa. 55:8-9 NKJV). And the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write: “Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the

weakness of God is stronger than men” (1 Cor. 1:25 NKJV). Are we ever going to learn these truths and humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God so that He can lift us up in the last day? Or will we continue as did Zophar being wise in our own conceits?

Job’s point is driven home by implication. If wisdom is with aged men, and it is; and understanding comes with length of days, and it does—since God is the most ancient of all beings in the universe, should not His wisdom and understanding be greater than the most ancient of men who have ever lived? Should these men have such simplistic explanations of Job’s trials and tribulations? “Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?” If God knew and Job knew there was no cause for repentance in him, who were they to contradict his testimony of innocence?

Job’s Defense of God’s Actions in the Affairs of Men

Next Job turned to God’s interaction with men to prove His sovereignty (vv. 13-25). In this section, Job speaks of matters that all observant persons who have come to adulthood have seen with their own eyes! Man may attribute these things to nature, to happenstance, to bad luck, but Job points out that all come about because of the sovereign power of our Almighty God. Even the evil that comes upon man from the hand of Satan comes only because God allows it and if He did not it would never take place.

Job began speaking of matters in more or less general terms, but by the time the paragraph is complete he speaks of specifics that take place in our God-governed world. God shows His sovereign power through wisdom and strength, not through boasting, empty or otherwise. John E. Hartley in his work *The Book of Job* wrote of this 13th verse:

All aspects of wisdom—connoted by the four terms *wisdom* (*hoḵmâ*), *might* (*gʿbûrâ*), *counsel* (*ʿēṣâ*), and *understanding* (*tʿbûnâ*)—reside in God (cf. Isa. 11:2). That is, God possesses both the *wisdom* to plan the best course of action and the *might* or power to carry out that course. In ancient Near Eastern myths the qualities of wisdom and power often resided in different gods. The strongest gods, not being

the wisest, did things that often had terrible consequences. And since the wisest god was not the strongest, he could be rendered inept before the ferocity of the mighty gods and would have to resort to magic to counter their ill-conceived designs. But in the OT wisdom and strength are in the true God. The following hymnic lines testify primarily to God's power over all earthly leaders and nations with the inference that all of his mighty deeds are accomplished in wisdom and that no earthly ruler or nation is strong enough to resist his purpose. (213)

Job began declaring in the 13th and 14th verses: “With Him are wisdom and strength, He has counsel and understanding. If He breaks a thing down, it cannot be rebuilt; if He imprisons a man, there can be no release” (Job 12:13-14 NKJV). God certainly illustrated this truth by breaking down the ancient empires of the Babylonians, Medo-Persians, Greeks, Romans, and the ancient Jewish capitol—Jerusalem. These were never rebuilt, but replaced by the great spiritual Empire of Christ just as the Old Testament Prophets foretold. It is both moving and mystifying as one watches God move in the affairs of men, pushing mighty human empires around like men on the chessboard to accomplish His ends. These men acted as servants of God and did not know that was the case (cf. Jer. 25:9; 27:6 & 43:10). Few men more heartless, cruel and sinful than Nebuchadnezzar ever lived in our earth, yet God used him to punish His people most severely, and then destroyed his empire.

In verses 15 and 16, Job by inspiration continued to extol the virtues of God's eternal sovereignty when he announced: “If He withholds the waters, they dry up; If He sends them out, they overwhelm the earth. With Him are strength and prudence. The deceived and the deceiver are His” (Job 12:15-16 NKJV). All can recall the days of Elijah and his great victory on Mount Carmel. But Elijah also called out for God to forbid rain until there was repentance among God's people, and it did not rain for three years and six months (1 Kings 17:1ff). If one returns to the era of Noah, he finds God sending out a flood of rain that overwhelmed the whole earth, and all died save those who were found safely inside

the great Ark (Gen. 6 – 9). Both those who deceive and those who are deceived are under the mighty power of God’s sovereignty. No mere human can do, say or think anything that is not fully known in the Courts of Heaven—by the mind of the Almighty One. He uses both the deceived and the deceiver to accomplish His divine goals and they never know it! Steven J. Lawson in his *Job* found in the *Holman Old Testament Commentary* put the matter very succinctly when he wrote:

Job knew whether God brings **drought** or flood, his sovereign will remains unhindered. To God alone belong **strength** and **victory** as the sovereign Lord over all the affairs of men. God’s power cannot be resisted, and it leads to his own triumph no matter how great the opposition. . . . Even those who advise and direct others are proven to be helpless under God’s all-controlling providence. (112)

Further Evidence of God’s Divine Sovereignty

In the 17th through the 19th verses, Job continued his debate with the myopic ideas of Zophar by adding more evidence to bolster his case for the power, wisdom and strength of God saying: “He leads counselors away plundered, and makes fools of the judges. He loosens the bonds of kings, and binds their waist with a belt. He leads princes away plundered, and overthrows the mighty” (Job 12:17-19 NKJV).

Were we to return to Zophar’s speech, to which Job is responding, we find that he praised what appears to be the depth of God’s hidden wisdom and understanding; he wanted the wisdom of God to appear mysterious implying that Job could not know of it, so he should repent in order to recover from his horrific ordeal. However, Job is not buying this hidden wisdom—the mysterious—no matter how much he suffered at the hands of Satan whom God permitted to afflict him as no other human being has ever been afflicted. Hence in the last paragraph Job continued to itemize the events of life that show the nature of God—His might, wisdom, understanding and prudence. In the verses now under discussion Job pointed out in an almost mocking sarcastic tone that Zophar did not know what he

was talking about as the observation of history and life plainly show.

God can, and does, take the wise and crafty in their own conceits. They are plundered, *i.e.* they are left bereft of advice and have no wise counsel when it comes to the realms in which God moves. They are like men robbed by highwaymen and left poor, destitute, naked and wounded. Their wisdom, no matter how great it may have appeared to be, is gone, and they have nothing to draw upon and nothing to offer—for the ultimate wisdom belongs to the God who made them and their puny minds.

Furthermore, *He makes fools of judges*. Part of the government of mankind has always been the judiciary, whether combined in one man or distributed among many. Judges wrestle with the great questions of life and often think they have done very well in rendering their judgments, but in reality they have acted as those who know nothing. Throughout the annals of time God has demonstrated this time and again. The more they tend to forget God and turn to their own wisdom the greater fools they become. We can cite some cases that have taken place in our own lives. The abortion decision of 1974 and the recent (June 27, 2013) decision on “gay marriage” are examples of what Job spoke of in the verse before us. Look at the detrimental and silly judgments of Sampson in the Book of Judges to see how selfishness destroys sound judgment as well as the lives of people. There is an old saying, “The man who pleads his own case has a fool for a lawyer.” Many of the jurists who have graced the benches of every land on earth have demonstrated that courts of law often have fools for judges.

In the 18th and 19th verses Job dealt with the matter of Kings and Princes, those great and mighty rulers of the earth who could have done so much good for the people of the earth but instead have done great evil. Job wrote: “He loosens the bonds of kings, and binds their waist with a belt. He leads princes away plundered, and overthrows the mighty” (Job 12:18-19 NKJV). God has no hidden wisdom when it comes to dealing with the Princes of this earth. He loosens their bonds. The astute Homer Hailey pointed out that the word bonds here means, “chastening, correction, discipline and restraint” in his *Now My Eye Seeth Thee A Commentary on Job*. He wrote:

So God loosens or removes the chastening restraint that hold in check kings, monarch or chief magistrate. The loins as the seat of strength (40:16) are bound with a girdle (a part of the soldier's attire) for war, or for captivity by which he is led away. In either case, God determines the use and destiny of kings. (119)

Kings and Emperors tend to make gods of themselves, failing to acknowledge that they are mere human beings who must die and one day meet their Maker to whom they will give account. Recall the Pharaohs of Egypt and the Emperors of Rome as examples. Yet like Nero they become pitiful simpering crying little children when it comes time to put off the robes of royalty and put on the robes of death! It is God who calls them, places them on thrones, removes them, and calls them into account to the King of kings.

Job added that He “leads princes away plundered.” One's mind goes almost immediately to Zedekiah of Judah, who was placed on his throne by Nebuchadnezzar and was removed by the same overlord only eleven years later. Zedekiah was led before the Babylonian monarch, who had Zedekiah's sons slaughtered before his eyes and immediately blinded him so that the last picture his eyes painted on the mind was that of his dying sons (Jer. 39:4-7). Thus, the power and wisdom of God outshines that of man as the sun outshines the stars in the day. Another prime example of a “plundered prince” is that of Belshazzar regent of Nabonidus of Babylon. It is recorded in the 5th chapter of the Book of Daniel that in the midst of a drunken feast the fingers of a man's hand appeared and wrote on the wall the Hebrew words *Mene Mene Tekel Upharsin*, which meant Belshazzar was weighed in the balance of God and found wanting. He had desecrated the vessels of the Holy Temple of God by having his heathen guests drink wine from them. Daniel further interpreted the writing as saying that on that very night Belshazzar's life would be forfeited. Hence, another Prince who thought himself too high to humble himself before God found that he had been plundered totally. Though God used the Medes and Persians to do His work, it was accomplished nonetheless. Oh, how He “overthrows the mighty!”

In the 20th and 21st verses Job continued in the same line of

reasoning regarding strength and wisdom of God, telling Zophar: “He deprives the trusted ones of speech, and takes away the discernment of the elders. He pours contempt on princes, and disarms the mighty” (Job 12:20-21 NKJV). If indeed as Wayne Jackson suggests in his wonderful work *The Book of Job*, Job spoke here in terms of bitter sarcasm as he answered Zophar, this passage can be summarized as Jackson wrote:

Others suggest that these passages are further sarcastic affirmations of the patriarch in which he seems to be saying that the world is filled with outrageous acts of divine intervention; who therefore, knows *what* God is doing?! “And how cleverly Job demolishes his counselors’ counsel: If their theological system were followed, then all the world’s authorities ought to be blessed by God. But history destroys that logic, as Job has just shown (12:13-25). (42-43)

There can be little doubt that Jackson and the others are right in this matter, but Job’s almost inexhaustible list deserves close attention. His statement that God’s power and wisdom deprives trusted ones of speech does not mean that all are stricken mute, although that has happened throughout biblical history. However, the depriving of speech has reference to such ones as Balaam who would have cursed Israel for wealth. It was impossible for him to do such and he ended up blessing Israel instead—much to the fury of Balak (Num. 23 – 24). Prior to this time Balaam had been a trusted one of God, but money, or the hope of gaining it, turned him from God to greed. Furthermore, we as a nation are determined to turn away from God as Israel did in turning to idols, the discernment—judgment, reasoning, understanding—is taken from the aged who were formerly wise, and their advice is to do evil; the opposite of what it should be!

Job offered the truth that God has His ways of pouring contempt on princes, as He did the princes of the Philistines when David disarmed and killed the mighty Goliath of Gath. David executed God’s judgment on the mighty braggart with his own sword, decapitating him after stunning him with a stone from his sling (1

Sam. 17).

God And Obscurity

In the 22nd of these 25 verses, Job, still speaking of the power and majesty of God said: “He uncovers deep things out of darkness, and brings the shadow of death to light” (Job 12:22 NKJV). Since there is no such thing as a lack of knowledge, “darkness,” or obscurity with God—nothing is unknown to Him—Job must be speaking of the things that God uncovers on behalf of man. There are innumerable things that are deep things and hidden in darkness so far as the mind of man is concerned, but not so with God. For example, what would we know about the afterlife or of Heaven or Hell were it not for that which is revealed in God’s divine Word? Ancient men, even Job himself, longed for life that went beyond the grave. There are glimmers of that found in the Old Testament. But the certainty of life beyond the grave is boldly stated in the preaching and teaching of the New Testament. It is indeed true, as Paul affirmed when he wrote to Timothy saying:

Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel (2 Tim. 1:8-10 NKJV)

Hence, God has brought the “shadow of death to life!” The true believer need no longer fear death, and the secular non-believers never have—for they have the mentality of animals when it comes to death. Just consider the spiritual darkness and obscurity in which we would abide if “. . . life and immortality” (eternal life, par. added) had never been made known to us through the glorious Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ! It is to the biblically informed—unimaginable!

Roy Zuck in his *Job*, one of the volumes in the *Everyman's Bible Commentary* series, put the matter clearly when he wrote:

Is this an answer to Zophar's question "Can you discover the depths of God?" [11:7]. If so Job's response is that he cannot comprehend the infinite ways of God, but neither can Zophar! If man is ever to understand anything of what is incomprehensibly dark, God must take the initiative in revealing it to him. (57 emph. added)

Next Job drew a contrast, no doubt by God's divine Inspiration, when he said in verses 23 through 25:

He makes nations great, and destroys them; He enlarges nations, and guides them. He takes away the understanding of the chiefs of the people of the earth, and makes them wander in a pathless wilderness. They grope in the dark without light, and He makes them stagger like a drunken man. (Job 12:23-25 NKJV)

God not only makes nations, but He makes them great and then reverses what He has done and destroys them. He enlarges and guides them, but then he allows them to turn from Him and His Law, and they are no longer under His leadership. He throws the once enlightened and God-fearing minds into darkness so that no matter how great they are they lead their people around wandering in the wilderness of godlessness. He not only makes the obscure things light by His revelation, but once learned His ways are not learned forever for every generation. When it comes to God, man is only one generation away from apostasy. This principle is set forth very clearly in the Old Testament history of Israel. To see it happen repeatedly one need only note the history of nations, even the history of our own nation. Kings, princes, presidents, court justices, department heads, etc., etc. ad infinitum stagger and grope around in spiritual, intellectual and moral nothingness like a drunkard staggers and falls on a dark night in vain attempts to make his own way home. Darkness enshrouds nations little by little until finally it is

so thick that few if any can see any of the light of God. One reason for this is that their laws forbid the teaching of God's Truth and they are convinced that Satan's "truth" is indeed truth—by Satan they have been devoured! With no guidance, they wander through the wilderness of sin, hatred, murder and mayhem thinking that if they die committing an unspeakable act of barbarity some pagan god will reward them in his paradise with the worldly pleasures of seventy-five virgins! That is darkness and depravity at its final stages!

Conclusion

Never have the arguments of any person been answered more thoroughly than that which Zophar received from Job. In the 13th chapter Job continued by pointing out: (1) He knew of that which he spoke since his eyes had seen and his ears heard all that he had rehearsed to Zophar. (2) Job knew all that Zophar knew and was in no way inferior to him—as a matter of fact he was superior to Zophar because he and the others were forgers of lies regarding Job's righteousness—they were worthless physicians and Job wished they would be silent. He seems to have wearied responding to these men and wanted to turn to God for the final answers to his dilemma.

Job's understanding of his own situation, that of his detractors, and most of all his confidence in God seem to shine through this book like a lighthouse on a darkened shore. His intimate knowledge of the Providential Sovereignty—the Might and Wisdom of God are such that we would do well to study this book often and thoroughly!

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Biographical Sketch

D. Gene West is the preacher for the Hillview Terrace Church of Christ in Moundsville, WV where he has labored for a total of twenty years in two stays. He is married to the former Shirley A. Bissett and they are the parents of three children, Kandi Davis of Pickerington, Ohio, Mary Amy Kessinger of St. Marys, WV, and Todd C. West of Morgantown, WV. One of their sons-in-law, Ken Davis, is an elder in the Pickerington church; another is a preacher of the Gospel in St. Marys, WV. They have seven grandchildren: Nathan, Jacob (Nicole), Rebekah and Aaron Davis, D. J. and Thomas Kessinger and Luke West.

The Wests recently celebrated sixty years of preaching the Gospel of Christ and look forward to at least a few more. He has authored commentaries on Acts, Romans, Galatians, Philippians, Philemon, Hebrews and Revelation. Acts and Revelation are now in print and it is hoped the rest will be during this year, all God willing, of course. It is also hoped that the future will see the resuming of mission work in the United Kingdom where he has made five previous trips.

Love for God's Word

Job 6:10; 23:12

David Deagel

There can be no greater a declaration made concerning the Bible's prominence in the realm of human existence than that of Paul in which he states, "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12 NKJV). The second President of the United States of America and one of the two signers of the Bill of Rights, John Adams, states concerning the Bible, "I have examined all religions, and the result is that the Bible is the best book in the world" (85). The Bible is set apart from all other books in its unique composition, theme, message, inerrancy, scientific accuracy, predictive prophecy, and unity. The President of Congress and the Director of the United States Mint, Elias Boudinot, states:

For nearly half a century have I anxiously and critically studied that invaluable treasure; and I scarcely ever take it up that I do not find something new – that I do not receive some valuable addition to my stock of knowledge or perceive some instructive fact never observed before. In short, were you to ask me to recommend the most valuable book in the world, I should fix on the Bible as the most instructive both to the wise and the ignorant. Were you to ask me for one affording the most rational and pleasing entertainment to the inquiring mind, I should repeat, it is the Bible; and should you renew the inquiry for the best philosophy or the most interesting history, I should still urge you to look into your Bible. I would make it, in short, the Alpha and Omega of knowledge. (15)

Speaking of the Bible, Benjamin Rush, signer of the Declaration of Independence and Treasurer of the United States Mint, affirms

that, “The Bible contains more knowledge necessary to man in his present state than any other book in the world” (93). He continues saying, “The Bible. . . should be read in our schools in preference to all other books because it contains the greatest portion of that kind of knowledge which is calculated to produce private and public happiness” (100). The Bible has been considered for centuries the ideal source for wisdom, knowledge and the state of man. The Bible declares to God’s creation the way of salvation, the malice of sin, and the detriment of unbelief.

The Bible, the inerrant complete inspired Word of God, is the fabric of faith that was woven together within the heart of Job to comfort and nourish him during a time of sorrow and suffering. Job’s revelation which he received by God, not in bound book form, but breathed out by God Himself to the ears of a mortal man became the lamp that guided his steps and lit the path he should take.

There can be no grain of doubt in one’s mind upon reading the record of Job that he had a great passion and a deep love for God’s Word. Love for God’s Word implies a great deal of many things. Today we will examine the implications of the COST associated with loving God’s Word; Confidence, Obedience, Sacrifice, and Testimony.

Love for God’s Word Implies Confidence (23:10)

The Book of Job opens with an introduction to Job of the land of Uz. Job has been greatly blessed (1:10) with ten children (1:2) and great possessions (1:3). He was a man of great character and integrity (1:5, 8; 2:3). From Satan came his affliction experienced through his family and his finances. Job experienced great loss through the death of his children (1:18-19), servants (1:15), and livelihood (1:16-17). He suffered additional loss from a discouraging spouse (2:9), great physical decline (2:7, 8, 12; 3:24, 25; 7:5; 9:18; 16:16; 19:17, 20; 30:17, 30) that lasted for months (cf. 7:3; 29:2), and the belittlement of three accusative friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar.

Yet in spite of all the afflictions in which Job finds himself, he declares, “But He knows the way that I take” (Job 23:10a). It seems that Job is fully aware that God is knowledgeable of the state in which Job has been in misery for this extended period of time. His

“inability to find God does not in any way interfere with His perfect knowledge of me” (Spence 392). Spence continues to add, “Job implicitly repelled the imputation (from Eliphaz) by recognizing that God’s presence, if unseen, was still working around him, and God’s hand, though ever veiled, was always working” (395). Job has confidence in the fact that God has taken notice of the perils he has endured and that God has seen his faithful response to the afflictions of which Satan was given power. Job has confidence just as the Psalmist David in the fact that God is watching over His creation, in his words “What is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him” (Ps. 8:4). Job’s friends have accused Job of willfully sinning against God as an explanation of the affliction he endures. However, Job has confidence that God has seen his actions and knows that the accusations are “wholly destitute of proof, being mere inferences from a principle, which, as has now been shown, is not verified by the actual experience of the world, [and therefore] Bildad cannot again repeat them in the face of Job’s solemn asseveration of his innocence and his appeal to the Searcher of hearts (Green 232).

Job had complete confidence that the source of the affliction was a testing from the Almighty. Job states, “when He has tested me. . .” (23:10b) a direct reference to his belief that God is testing him. It is not unlike God to put persons to the test, or to prove them (cf. Deut. 8:2; Ps. 66:10; Prov. 17:3; Zec. 13:9 et al.); however, the testing of Job was through the work of Satan through the allowance of God. The testing of Job was being accomplished just as in many ways that God’s work was carried though utilizing various means by various mediums.

Job has complete unwavering confidence that when the testing of his sincerity to God is complete that he would be refined and shown as pure gold. Homer Hailey states that, “Job reaffirms his confidence that God knows the direction of his life in all its ways. He expresses his confidence that when the test should be completed, God will find his life and character to be pure as the most precious metal” (209). Job grasps the concept which thousands of years later the Apostle Peter will pen in 1 Peter 1:6-7, “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various

trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” Job being refined by his suffering has complete confidence in God and in His commands that have been written on his heart.

Love for God’s Word produces confidence within the heart of the Christian. There is no need to question our salvation. John reminds us that we can have complete confidence in the salvation we find in Christ Jesus (cf. 1 John 5:12-13; Rom. 8:16; Heb. 3:14; 2 Pet. 1:10-11 et al.). He also reminds us that the Christian can also have confidence in knowing that God hears our petitions in prayer. (cf. 1 John 5:14-15; Eph. 3:12; Jas. 1:5-6 et al.) The Christian should also have confidence in the providence of God. Job understood providence in that God would provide. (cf. Job 13:15). God provided for the faithful wanderers in the desert, for Joseph, for Onesimus, and for countless others.

Love for God’s Word Implies Obedience (23:11)

Not only is Job confident of God through his great affliction but he remains obedient to the commands God had given him. Job continues his statement to his accusers by saying “My foot has held fast to His steps; I have kept His way and not turned aside. I have not departed from the commandment of His lips” (Job 23:11-12a). Job believes whole heartedly that his integrity and steadfastness in doing what pleases God will be the reason he will endure and flourish at the seemingly unending test.

Job gives his reason for the robust belief in pleasing God, it is the fact that Job has firmly, without any hint of wavering, held to the path which has been laid out before him by the Almighty. The poetic scripts of the Old Testament repeatedly refer to “a way” some 140 times within the wisdom literature of the Old Testament. The ‘way’ is the trodden path that is the guide which the obedient of God follow; it is what God has already laid out before. This is the path or way which Job demands that he has followed. Job knows that his heart has remained right with God though all the suffering. That he has not lived a life of sin as his friends have accused him, but on the contrary he has endeavored in every essence of his life to travel

down the straight and narrow path (Matt. 7:14) and to not turn aside (23:11). Job has clung to the very words which have been spoken to him by God. Job's steadfast obedience is seen in "his claims to have kept God's Word with a degree of zeal which exceeds the normal requirements decreed as Job's lot in life. The portrait of Job the patriarch offering sacrifices for possible sins his children may have committed in their hearts illustrates the tradition of Job's excessive piety" (Habel 350).

Job's feet have not moved from the path which was laid out for him by God. In regards to the command given by God to Job, Dhorme insists that commandment or "precept of His lips' denote the law which God commands men to obey" (349). He continues to add that "we have a parallelism between the singular and the plural..." (349) in regards to the Hebrew terms translated in that the commandment which was given to Job which he obeyed is not singular. However, it denotes a plurality of commands that were spoken by God to Job. Incidentally the particulars of that revelation will be discussed shortly. Job was adamant, while being accused by his friends for wrong doing and sin in the eyes of God, that he had done everything conceivable to align himself after the commands of God and to follow them without fault. Job loved God's Word to the extent he would obey at all costs.

As Job loved God's Word and was compelled to become obedient, all man-kind must adhere to the precepts of God. The Apostle Paul pens in the letter to Rome, "But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness" (6:17-18). Just as the hymn of old says so eloquently, 'trust and obey for there is no other way' salvation is dependent upon obedient faith, of which Job knew whole-heartedly.

Love for God's Word Implies Sacrifice (23:12)

Job continues within this discourse after the accusations made by Eliphaz that, "I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food" (Job 23:12b). Job had accumulated great wealth and possessions, but yet those things were not what guided Job's life.

Job's treasures were not things that were of earthly substance. He did not store up his physical possessions as something to be treasured or of the upmost importance. Job sacrificed "all that ministered to the appetites of the body" (Jamison, Fausset, and Brown 385) to follow the commands of God. The things that were the dearest and of the most prominence in his life were the very words that God spoke and nothing else.

It seems that Job, even through his wealth and eventually his great suffering, sacrificed to keep true to God's Word. In his wealth and prosperity, Job certainly could have increased his affluence and personal fame through deceitful actions or diminishing help from the deprived. However, Job's love for God's Word compelled him to sacrifice his own personal desires and align himself with that of God. Job, "has held fast to Heaven's way (11); he had not been preoccupied with earthly treasure (cf. 22:24), rather, God's words have been his treasure" (Jackson 59). During the time of his suffering, Job could have heeded the advice of his wife to curse God and die. Job could have ended his life and thus end his physical suffering. However, he loved God and His Word more and would sacrifice his physical wellbeing and suffer through his infirmities than to defile himself against God.

For Job, God's Word was more important to him than the necessities that sustain life. He could survive without food, water, family, friends, material goods, comforts of life. Job could sacrifice all except for the truth of God's Word. It is God's Word that sustains him and strengthens him both in times of prosperity and times of suffering. Dhorme reminds us that the translation is not:

I have made my own will subservient to the words of His mouth. . . [an] artificial interpretation. . . The right reading, I have hidden in my bosom the words of His mouth as one hides a treasure. Job alludes to the injunction of Eliphaz, who told him (22:22): Receive instruction from His mouth and store up His words in your heart! For long he has practised [sic] this advice. (350)

The idea is that Job did not just merely put God's commands above

his own personal desires, but on the contrary, Job received, with great love, the commands from God to the extent that the commands of God became the only personal desires that blossomed within Job. To this Hailey adds, “Job’s attitude towards God’s law had been as to an inward treasure, not merely an outward observance. He valued ‘the words of [God’s] mouth’ more highly than the essentials of physical life” (210). Habel adds, “the way for Job includes the way of God to which Job has adhered unswervingly”(350).

The statement from Job, “treasuring the words of His mouth,” undoubtedly expresses the necessity for Divine Revelation from God to Job in some personal way. There is no mention of any form of structured law from God which was revealed to Moses. Although, within the Book of Job there is no direct statement that Job received direct Revelation from God, and no mention of God speaking directly to Job, save chapters 38-41, the very fact that the existence of Job predating the Mosaic Law and the placement of his life during the Patriarchal Age would necessitate a Divine Revelation directly from God in order for Job to make the statement of treasuring the words of His mouth.

Job’s love for God’s Word gave him confidence that he was living a life that pleased God. His love for the Word led him to obedient faith to which God could declare that Job was blameless, upright, and shunned evil. In this passage, Job’s love for God’s Word was seen in the sacrifices made to adhere to the Word.

One of the greatest verses, in my opinion, dealing with Christian sacrifice is the writing of the Apostle Paul in the book of Romans. He writes, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service” (Rom. 12:1). The greatest sacrifice has already been given, Christ Jesus (cf. Heb. 7:27; 10:12). However, there is still a necessity for the Christian to become a self-sacrifice to God. Our lives become as Job’s life, we make the commands of God our own. Our desires, wants, and wishes are no longer ours but that of our Master, Jehovah God.

Love for God’s Word Implies Testimony (6:10)

Job, near the beginning of his suffering affirms that “I have not

concealed the words of the Holy One” (Job 6:10c). Job’s love for God’s Word caused him to evangelize. There was no command from the mouth of God that came to Job that he did not speak to others. He kept the words of God in his heart. Those words changed Job so that his own personal desires were no longer his but those of God’s. However this inward desire and love for God’s commands were not shut up and hidden from those to whom Job would associate with. On the contrary, Job did not conceal God’s command but spread the knowledge of them to the extent that his example was clearly known to others. This knowledge of Job’s piety through his actions and example should have been sufficient evidence to his accusers of his guiltlessness and freedom from the reproach to which he has been indicted. “Job is still too conscious of his dignity and moral elevation to expressly defend himself...only incidentally there escapes him, with a certain emphasis, the recollection that he has never resisted God” (Ewald 114).

Interestingly, of this passage, Thomas Aquinas seems to suggest that the reason Job was appealing for death was that, “he feared that he might be induced to contradict the speeches of the Holy One” (140). However Dhorme argues from the text that the “key to this verse is supplied by Psalms 119:50...the adverb still gives more emphasis to the phrase ‘consolation will still remain for me’...the sense of the 3rd hemistich is therefore ‘because I shall not have hidden the ordinances of the Holy One....It is impossible for him to conceal them” (82). The context of the verse is Job’s appeal that God, albeit misunderstood to whence the suffering came, remove His hand of affliction and allow Job to die. In addition, Freehof expresses of this passage, “I would not consider my death a defeat...I would glory in it...I have not denounced God...it would be a moral triumph in that I have lived through all the suffering and not lost my faith in Him” (38).

Death for Job would be a time of rejoicing and pleasure. First, because of the great physical pain and emotional suffering that he has endured, death would be an end to the earthly suffering. Secondly, Job would rejoice in death because he has not kept secret nor hidden those things which God had revealed to Job. On the contrary, Job had lived the words of the Holy One, not only that,

but freely communicated those words to others and will continue to do so in the face of the opposition and allegations of his associates. Habel writes:

The climax of Job's cry in this unit is an anticipated consolation and celebration amid his excruciating pain. He finds no comfort in his past record of support for the weak and even less in the sustenance offered by Eliphaz. The friends have failed in their assigned task of comfort. Instead of traditional comfort or deliverance from affliction, Job prefers a daring alternative...that he will never conceal the truth, that is, he will expose the truth about the 'decrees of the Holy One.' (147)

Job's life was filled with holding fast the Words of God. His love for such compelled him to neither hide, conceal, nor destroy the decrees God has revealed. Albert Barnes beautifully penned of Job:

I have openly and boldly maintained a profession of attachment to the cause of God, and to his truth. I have, in a public and solemn manner professed attachment to my Maker. I have not refused to acknowledge that I am his; I have not been ashamed of him and his cause. How much consolation may be found in such a reflection when we come to die! If there has been a consistent profession of religion...if in all circles, high and low, rich and poor, gay and serious, there has been an unwavering and steady, though not ostentatious, attachment to the cause of God, it will give unspeakable consolation and confidence when we come to die. (167)

As we consider the boldness of Job in his love for God's Word that he was compelled to speak the truth of the commands of God and withhold nothing, we should give great pause to reflect upon our own boldness in speaking God's Word. Job's confidence in death is that he has held nothing back. He has not withheld the truth of the words of the Holy One for selfish ambitions nor for fear of rejection,

persecution or death. However, facing the possibility of death Job can leap for joy because he clearly spoke the Word. Paul declared to his son in the faith, Timothy, “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching” (2 Tim. 4:2). Due to the Apostle Paul’s adherence to his own advice he exclaimed upon the time of his own death:

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing. (2 Tim. 4:6-8)

It seems as though Paul had complete assurance that he, just as Job, had not hidden God’s Word, but out of love, exclaimed His commands to the multitudes. As Christians we must speak the “whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27). We cannot conceal the unpopular or those passages to which we have grown indifferent. If we truly love the Word of God as we should let us all be as Job and Paul and know with full assurance at the time of our departure that we have not concealed the words of the Holy One.

In Conclusion

Job tolerated great physical and emotional affliction at the hands of Satan. He suffered belittlement from friends. He grieved the death of his children. In spite of the tragedies which befell Job, one constant remained his deep passion, desire and love for God’s Word. That love gave Job confidence in what seemed to be a nearing and welcomed death. His love for God’s Word led him to an obedient God fearing life that was witnessed by others. His love for God’s Word caused him to sacrifice through the pains of suffering and loss. His love for God’s Word compelled Job to share the truth of God with humanity. However great the pain and sorrow, Job persevered to the end. However harsh and tragic the predicament, the faith of Job conquered all through the words of the Holy One.

The great record of Job is a picture-perfect pattern of patience and the endurance one can have if their priorities are in the correct place, in God's everlasting Word.

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Biographical Sketch

David Deagel is a native of Moundsville, WV. Born March 9, 1979 to Edward and Cathy (Sole) Deagel. He is a graduate of West Liberty University and a 2009 graduate of the West Virginia School of Preaching. He has done graduate work at West Virginia University and Ohio University. He currently serves as the Pulpit Minister at the Washington Church of Christ in Washington, PA. He and his wife, Amanda (Rider) have three children, Hailey, Zechariah, and Alyvia Deagel.

Though He Slay Me

Job 13:13-19

Terry Jones

Introduction

Never does the subject of patience arise but what one does not immediately think of Job. That is so because no greater example of patience can be found than that God-fearing man from Uz (Job 1:1). [All scripture references are from NKJV unless otherwise noted.] James said, “. . . You have heard of the perseverance of Job . . .” (5:11). It is interesting that James assumed that his readers had heard of Job. He did not tell them Job’s story. It seems that Job has become the universal standard of patient endurance.

Is it not the case that the same thing is true when it comes to the subject of human suffering? A discussion of suffering does not usually get very far without some reference to the Book of Job. No matter the extent of one’s suffering, he can always find consolation in the fact that Job’s suffering was far greater, and yet he was blessed by God.

It would appear that there is another wonderful characteristic of Job that is often overlooked and that is his great faith in the God of heaven. In spite of all that he was called upon to endure, at the end of it all, Job had lost everything but the most important thing – his faith! Contrary to the thinking of many, the main theme of The Book of Job is not patience. Nor is it suffering. It is faith! Satan was not after Job’s camels, nor his cattle, nor his children. What he wanted was to turn Job away from God. That is made clear in his conversation with God. “So Satan answered the Lord and said, ‘Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. But stretch out Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will surely curse You to Your face!’” (Job 2:4-5). Satan’s mission was not to destroy Job’s fortune or his family, but his faith! Job’s great trust in God can be seen throughout the book from the first verse to the last.

The assigned text for this lecture contains a great statement of Job’s faith. Henry Morris said, “It would be hard to find anywhere

in the Bible a stronger statement of confident and submissive faith in God than Job uttered when he said: ‘Though He slay me, yet will I trust him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him. He also shall be my salvation, for an hypocrite shall not come before him’” (Job 13:15-16) (75). As we examine the text, let us observe some things about Job’s faith.

The Call of Faith (Job 13:13a)

After Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar had accused him of sin and urged him to repent, Job now calls for their silence that he might maintain his innocence. “Hold your peace with me, and let me speak...” (13a). There are times when false accusations and erroneous assertions demand a response. On Pentecost when the disciples, having been filled with the Holy Spirit, began to speak in tongues, some mocked them accusing them of being filled with new wine. “But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, ‘Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words’” (Acts 2:14). There are just some things that must be answered. “It is possible that Job may have perceived in them some disposition to interrupt him in a rude manner in reply to the severe remarks which he had made, and he asked the privilege, therefore, of being permitted to go on, and to say what he intended, let come what would” (Barnes 257). By faith Job called upon his friends to remain silent and let him speak.

The Consequences of Faith (Job 13:13b-14)

We are well aware that there are consequences for sin (Rom. 6:23). However, we must also be cognizant of the fact that there are also sometimes consequences for an obedient faith in God. Such was the case with Job. He was suffering severely in spite of his faith and loyalty to God. “Then the Lord said to Satan, ‘Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil? And still he holds fast to his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to destroy him without cause’” (Job 2:3).

Job was perplexed about the cause of his suffering, but he was sure that it was not because of his sin. So he said, “Then let come on

me what may! Why do I take my flesh in my teeth, and put my life in my hands?” (13b-14). Though the exact meaning of this proverbial saying may be difficult to ascertain, the sense of it is pretty clear. Job declares that he is going to answer the criticism and defend his integrity, with a willingness to accept whatever consequences would follow, either from them or God. He indicates that this could even lead to death as indicated by the words, “and put my life in my hands.” Franklin Camp explained, “Job said that he had all he could take (13:13-14). Now he is going to have his say, even if it costs him his life” (39).

The Confirmation of Faith (Job 13:15)

We are here reminded that Job was not just ranting or carelessly “spouting off.” He had been faithful to God and he confirms that nothing would ever change that.

His Undying Devotion (15a). “Though he slay me, yet will I trust Him.” Job believed that further calamity might come upon him, perhaps even death. Although he was unsure of God’s role in all of this and why God had remained silent, one thing was for sure, his trust in God would not cease. The Lord’s words in Revelation 2:10 come to mind, “Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.” In the face of severe tribulation, Job confirms his undying devotion to God. No wonder Smith has commented that, “Job 13:15 as translated in the KJV is one of the greatest statements of faith in the entire Bible” (90). Concerning that, Albert Barnes has made an extraordinarily astute observation.

The *sentiment* here expressed is one of the noblest that could fall from the lips of man. It indicates unwavering confidence in God, even in death. It is the determination of a mind to adhere to him, though he should strip away comfort after comfort, and though there should be no respite to his sorrows until he should sink down in death. This is

the highest expression of piety, and this it is the privilege of the friends of God to experience. When professed earthly friends become cold towards us, our love for them also is chilled. Should they leave and forsake us in the midst of suffering and want, and especially should they leave us on a bed of death, we should cease to confide in them. But not so in respect to God. Such is the nature of our confidence in him, that though he takes away comfort after comfort, though our health is destroyed and our friends are removed, and though we are led down into the valley and the shadow of death, yet still we never lose our confidence in him. We feel that all will yet be well. We look forward to another state, and anticipate the blessedness of another and a better world. Reader, can you in sincerity lift the eye toward God, and say to him, "Though Thou dost slay me, though comfort after comfort is taken away, though the waves of trouble roll over me, and though I go down into the valley of the shadow of death, yet I will Trust in Thee; - Thine I will be even then, and when all is dark I will believe that God is right, and just, and true, and good, and will never doubt that he is worthy of my eternal affection and praise?" Such is religion. Where else is it found but in the views of God and of his government which the Bible reveals. (259)

Though Job's suffering was unbelievably intense, his faith was uncommonly immense. No matter how great the burden, God will not allow it to grow beyond our ability to withstand. Paul asserted that, "no temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. 10:13). Hebrews 11 mentions several great Bible characters known for their extraordinary faith in God. There we read the names of such notable folks as Abel, Enoch, Noah and Abraham. Job's name is conspicuously absent from this list, however, it would appear that the Holy Spirit could have easily included it. Myriads of individuals have lost their faith in God under much lesser circumstances, but Job

convinces us that no matter how severe the trial, it cannot exceed our faith unless we allow it.

His Unbending Defense (15b). Having confirmed his faith in God, Job then said, “Even so, I will defend my own ways before Him.” Though weakened physically and mentally, Job displayed an unbelievable spiritual stamina. Satan, through the friends of Job, could not cast doubt in his mind that his suffering was the result of his own sin. He declared that he would defend his ways and that through it all he would remain God’s friend.

Daniel’s friends made a similar affirmation of faith in God when they were threatened by death if they didn’t bow down to the gold image. “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, ‘O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up’” (Dan. 3:16-18). They openly confessed their devotion only to God, expressing their faith that He is able to deliver them from death, but even if He didn’t they would not forsake Him.

The Consummation of Faith (Job 3:16)

In the aftermath of such catastrophe and in the midst of such deep suffering, one would surmise that Job, perhaps, would give up on life, lose faith in God and give serious consideration to suicide. Instead, the inspired record states, “Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped. And he said: ‘Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.’ In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong” (Job 1:20-22).

Job had the wise ability to see the big picture and to realize that God was not the problem, He was the solution. Job said, “He also shall be my salvation, for a hypocrite could not come before Him” (Job 3:16). Taking the risk to defend his ways before God, he believed that that his faith in God would result in his salvation.

The apostle Peter spoke similarly when he said, “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith – the salvation of your souls” (1 Pet. 1:6-9).

Job’s argument seems to be that his willingness to come before God was proof of his innocence because a hypocrite would never do such a thing. Certainly there seems to be some validity to that sort of reasoning. Following the sin of Adam and Eve, the Bible says, “And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, ‘Where are you?’ So he said, ‘I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself’” (Gen. 3:8-10). The hypocrite becomes faint and frightful at the thought of meeting God, but not so for the faithful. Paul said, “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philip. 3:20). Hebrews 9:27-28 states, “And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.” By faith Job realized that God was not just the source of life’s blessings, but He is the source of salvation.

The Confidence of Faith (Job 13:17-18)

As this line of reasoning continues to build, we now see the boldness and confidence of Job’s faith. “Listen diligently to my speech, and to my declaration with your ears. See now, I have prepared my case, I know that I shall be vindicated” (Job 13:17-18). “This paragraph describes the confidence Job had in the justice of his position. Since his argument did not rest on the ground of any claim to great righteousness, he was ready to face the test if called

upon to do so” (Zerr 366).

There are three things to which we would give attention from these verses. First, let us notice *Job’s declaration* (17). He calls for them to tune their ears to listen to his speech and his declaration. “That is, the declaration which I have made of my innocence. He refers to his solemn declaration, (ver. 15, 16) that he had unwavering confidence in God, and that even should God slay him he would put confidence in him. This solemn appeal he wished them to attend to as one of the utmost importance” (Barnes 260). Second, let us notice *Job’s preparation* (18a). He had given extensive consideration to the circumstance of his loss, the character of his life, and the contention of his loyalty. He has gathered the evidence, formulated his arguments, and is prepared to present his case. Third, let us notice *Job’s vindication* (18b). Once again, Job clearly states his confidence that ultimately his innocence will be proven when he says, “I know that I shall be vindicated. Rowley commented that, “Job has marshaled his arguments and he is confident that he will win his case” (101).

The Contention of Faith (Job 13:19)

Through the entire catastrophe that afflicted him and all of the charges from his acquaintances Job still contends that he is innocent. He asked, “Who is he who will contend with me? If now I hold my tongue, I perish” (Job 13:19). “That is, ‘I have maintained my cause, I will say no more. If there is any one who can successfully contend with me, and can prove that my course cannot be vindicated, then I have no more to say. I will be silent, and die. I will submit to my fate without further argument, and without a murmur. I have said all that needs to be said, and nothing would remain but to submit and die’” (Barnes 261). Wayne Jackson observed that, “If anyone, even God, could prove him guilty, then would he be quiet and die” (43).

It has become very obvious at this point that Job had not trusted in material possessions because having lost all of those things he maintained his faith in God. Nathan Liddell has made a marvelous observation concerning that.

Had he not suffered the loss of his abundant wealth, we

might believe that his happiness, his preservation from life's troubles, and the future good that would come his way were somehow a result of his riches. But he lost those riches (Mat. 6:19-21). Had he not suffered the loss of his family and their support, we might falsely conclude that life's troubles may be warded off and certain future happiness found in family alone (Mat. 10:36ff.). But Job did lose his family. Again, had he not lost his physical health, we might be tempted to believe hope for future improvement of life's circumstances or future preservation is bound up in the strength of our physical bodies (Ecc. 12:1-7). But Job did lose his health. The fact is, Job lost everything – except God! (171)

In looking to Job, we ought to see a man of extraordinary faith. His faith enabled him to endure the most severe storms of life. His faith enabled him to outlast the darkest of nights. What kind of faith does that? Let us notice the kind of faith Job had.

A Steadfast Faith. A weak man would have given up and lost all hope, but Job was steadfast through it all. Paul said, “And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope” (Rom. 5:3-4). Trying times are when faith must increase, not decrease. “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58). Many a time had Paul demonstrated steadfastness in his own life, not the least of which was during his ordeal in Philippi. Having been beaten, thrown into prison, and their feet fastened in the stocks, the record says, “But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them” (Acts 16:25). It is that kind of steadfastness that we see in Job.

A Strong Faith. Who can question the strength of Job's faith? A man of lesser faith would have likely taken the advice of his wife to just “curse God and die” (Job 2:9)!

We are pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed

– always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death is working in us, but life in you. But since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed and therefore I spoke," we also believe and therefore speak, knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you. For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God. Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. (2 Cor. 4:8-18)

A Suffering Faith. We must learn the value of trusting in God at all times, in all places, and in all circumstances. Job understood that true faith is not regulated by adversity in life. He believed that one's faith should not be diminished by suffering. This is seen in his response to his wife. "But he said to her, 'You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?' In all this Job did not sin with his lips" (Job 2:10).

A Sure Faith. In the midst of physical, emotional, psychological, social, and spiritual agony Job did not know what was going on behind the scenes. He had no knowledge of the conversations between Satan and God. He was unaware that Satan's attack upon him was because of God's faith in Job (Job 1:8). Satan's attack on Job failed because of Job's sure faith in God. Job accepted his lot, but sought the reason why he was suffering. His friends believed that he was being punished for some secret sin in his life. He maintained his integrity and called upon God to vindicate him by providing an

answer. God finally spoke, but never revealed the reason why.

In His speech to Job, God explained neither about His meeting with Satan nor about the accusations and request made by Satan. He did not explain about the test for which he had given permission to Satan. No doubt, if Job had known all of these details, it would have been much easier for him to have borne all of the suffering. But God did not explain. He did not explain about the request of Satan. He did not explain the details about the Coming Redeemer. He gave no explanation of the general problem of suffering.

Why was God silent on all of these problems which plagued the soul of this good man? Because it was His desire that Job would continue to trust Him in spite of not having the answers to these problems. (Warren 104)

A Saving Faith. In the end, Job was vindicated by God and his friends were rebuked and commanded to go to Job and offer sacrifices and have Job pray for them (Job 42:8). He did not let his highly educated and sophisticated friends convince him to do something that was not right. “For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe” (1 Tim. 4:1).

In Job we find one of the greatest examples of faith in all of the Bible. May we learn from Job’s example and with him be able to say, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.”

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Biographical Sketch

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If a Man Dies Shall He Live Again?

Job 13:13-19

W. Terry Varner

The words, “If a man dies, shall he live again” (Job 14:14) occur within the cycle of controversy with Zophar. Zophar, agreeing with Eliphaz and Bildad, claimed Job’s suffering was the result of Job sinning. Job replies to Zophar in chapters twelve, thirteen, and fourteen. The question of Job, “If a man dies, shall he live again?” is addressed to God.

The setting of Job 14:14.

Job 14:14-15, “If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my hard service I will wait, till my change comes. You shall call, and I will answer You” must be placed in its immediate context. [All Scripture references are from NKJV unless otherwise noted.]

- 14:1-6—The brevity and difficulties of life befall all men.
- 14:7-12—The death of man is the end of mortal life, while man’s soul abides in *Sheol* [New Testament, *hades*].
- 14:13-17—God will call man’s soul from *Sheol* [*hades*], raise, and change his mortal body (physical) to immortality.

The immediate context must be understood within the remote context of the book of Job and the entire Bible as a unit. The story of Job begins in happiness with Job’s life being described as “blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil” (1:1).

God allowed Job’s faith to be tested by Satan. Satan insisted that Job’s blamelessness was due to God placing “a hedge around him” (1:9-12). Satan tested Job’s faith in four ways meaningful to all men.

- *Materially*—Job lost all his possessions in one day (1:13-16).
- *Death*—Job lost his seven sons, three daughters, and his

servants 1:17-19).

- *Health*—Job’s body was covered “with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head” (2:7-8).
- *Marital*—Job’s helpmate, life’s companion, and mother of their ten children insisted that Job “curse God and die” (2:9-10).

Job was well-known and highly respected among all who dwelt in the East (1:3); subsequently, his three friends—Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar—came to “mourn and comfort him” (2:11). After their arrival they and Job were silent for “seven days and seven nights” (2:13). Job finally speaks from a heavy, grief-stricken heart, “his grief was very great” (2:13). His words pulsate with his apparent misery from both his body and soul. Job’s words portray a troubled heart. Why not? He expresses to his three friends, as well as to all readers, the possible innermost thoughts of a human heart in the tumult of despair. His grief, agony, and doubt are expressed without sin or wrongly accusing God (1:22).

- Job wished he had never been born (3:3-10).
- Job was bewildered as to *whys* he suffered in his life (3:11-19).
- Job experienced both physical and mental bewilderment of his miseries (3:20-26).
- Job could not understand *why* he should be the object of such intense affliction (3:17-18).

Job saw little hope for better days in his life; consequently, he raises the question, which was/is quite natural, “If a man dies, shall he live again?” (Job 14:14). His experience seemed to be against man living again. He observed that a fallen tree will sprout again (14:7-9). However, Job had never seen a man laid in a grave rise again (14:12). While Job longed for rest from his afflictions and the question of a man in the grave, he did not desire to remain there. At the same time, Job gives no hint of the doctrine of annihilation; i.e. the soul ceases to exist after physical death. He desired that God would call him from the grave. Job declares, “You shall call, and I

will answer You” (14:15). This was Job’s hope! This is the context of Job 14:14, “If a man dies will he live again?” While Job’s inquiry is not answered convincingly until it is answered in the affirmative by Jesus, Job 14:14, as well as many other Old Testament texts, hint at the biblical concept of immortality. Job “was baring his soul. He was expressing what he felt . . . viewing his life on the side of the physical. Yet . . . there was a sudden recognition that he was more than dust . . . that dying meant giving up the spirit” (Morgan 42).

Immortality

When Job asked, “Behold man dies and is laid away; indeed he breathes his last where is he?” (14:10), he asked a question as old and as universal as life itself. It is as old as mankind whose life has always been interrupted by physical death with two exceptions: (1) “Enoch walked with God and he was not, for God took him” (Gen. 5:24, ESV) or “was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him” (Heb. 11:5, ESV). (2) “Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven” (2 Kings 2:2, 11).

While the question of immortality does not press on our mind at all hours, sooner or later, the question arises with all and demands a hearing and answer. As we gaze into the face our loved one in the casket or we visit their grave in the silent city of the dead, we cannot help thinking and asking, “where is he?”

While all men are faced with the question, “where is he?” as they lose a loved one, sadly they do not all give identical answers. When men reject biblical revelation they create false teaching. There are at least three answers given by men to the question, “where is he?”

- **Annihilationism.** While there are differences among the advocates of annihilationism; the annihilationist will answer, “Nowhere.” Annihilationism is built from the Latin word *nihil* meaning “nothing.” The basic emphasis is that the human soul, both good and bad, “will cease to exist after death” (Nicole 43). The annihilationist considers Matthew 10:28, “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul, but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” as

conclusive evidence for their teaching. Matthew 10:28 does not teach that physical death is annihilation, nor does the text teach that physical death results in the death of man's soul. McGarvey argues the annihilationist have overlooked "that this passage utterly refutes the doctrine that the soul dies with the body. Jesus says, 'Fear not them who kill the body, but *cannot kill the soul*'; . . . To destroy is not to annihilate, but to bring to ruin . . . when they are cast into hell" (93).

- **Soul-Sleeping or Psychopannychy.** Those who advocate soul-sleeping teach that "the soul becomes unconscious at death [physical] and that it continues in that condition until the resurrection. . . . [having] no knowledge, consciousness or activity" (Boettner 108). A simple refutation of soul-sleeping is Luke 16:19-31, the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus. The souls of both were found in the *hadean* world. The following is a good summary and refutation of the false doctrine of soul-sleeping from Luke 16:19-31: "(1) both the wicked and righteous are conscious after death; (2) after death, some men are comforted, and other men are tormented; (3) after death, both wicked and righteous people remember events and persons from their earthly experience" (Warren, *Immortality* 52).
- **Immortality.** This writer affirms that the Bible teaches that the soul of man, after the death of both good and evil men, continues to exist eternally. Immortality is defined variously: "[I]mmortality in the biblical sense is a condition in which the individual [soul] is not subject to death or to any influence which might lead to death" (Kerr 280-81). The immortality of the soul is "the conviction that after death man continues to exist in a conscious state of either bliss with Christ or misery in hell" (Schep 219-20). We prefer the following definition by the late Thomas B. Warren, "the soul of man does not die at the time of his physical death. . . . [M]an's personality persists beyond the time of physical death. . . . [and] will

continue to exist as a conscious personality separate from the physical body ” (*Immortality* 10).

In developing the biblical doctrine of immortality, we must allow Scripture to explain Scripture; i.e. we must consider the teaching of the entire Bible on immortality, as with any subject. Warren writes that it is necessary in our study to grasp.

the meaning of God, man, and the world. It involves at least **theology** (the doctrine of God), **anthropology** (the doctrine of man), **cosmology** (the doctrine of the world), **soteriology** (the doctrine of salvation), **harmartiology** (the doctrine of sin), and **eschatology** (the doctrine of last things. (“Summary” 23)

Theology (the doctrine of God). Gods is *eternal*; i.e. without beginning or end. To say that “God is eternal means that He is not bound by restrictions of time; His knowledge or consciousness is above time. . . . It is all *now* to God” (Cottrell 255). These comments are implied in the following descriptive phrases: God exists from “of old” (Ps. 55:19), “everlasting to everlasting” (Ps. 90:2), “God, our God forever and ever” (Ps. 48:14), “who is and who was and who is to come” (Rev. 1:4, 8; 4:8), et al.

God is *self-existing*. God is not dependent for His existence upon anything outside of Himself. God has no needs beyond Himself. His being is uncaused. He just exists; therefore, God stands in stark contrast with man whom He created, as well as, all other life. God is “I AM WHO I AM” (Ex. 3:14). God is “incorruptible” (Rom. 1:23) and “alone possesses immortality” (1 Tim. 6:16).” God is the eternal first cause, who Himself is uncaused and no-dependent” (Turner and Myers 36). He has “life within Himself” (John 5:26).

Cosmology (the doctrine of the world). God in reference to the world is both *immanent* in the world and yet *transcends* the world, but is concerned with the world (Warren, *Atheists* v-vi). The ultimate source of all that exists is God, the Creator (Gen. 1:1-31; Ps. 33:6, 9). God created the universe with purpose and planned all things in His Creation to be in accordance with His eternal purpose in Christ

Jesus (Eph. 1:9 -11; 3:11; 1 Tim. 1:9-11); therefore, we can conclude that the doctrine of Creation provides understanding of the purpose man and his immortality.

The universe was created “to be inhabited” (Isa. 45:18) temporarily by man. This temporary habitation is described by Warren as the “vale of soul-making” i.e. “Man’s earthly life is a probationary period during which his fate in eternity is settled. . . . God created man for sonship (with himself) and, concomitantly for brotherhood (with his fellow-man” (*Atheists* 84, 96). God wants man to have sonship and brotherhood with Him through the work of His Son (John 3:16; Gen. 3:15; Rom. 5:8-9; 12:1-2; et al.). Gibbons states, “It seems originally man was created with the potential to live indefinitely in this physical body” (1). Once man disobeyed God, he was separated from the Garden and faced physical death as promised by God (Gen. 2:17; 3:2-3).

Genesis 4 opens with Adam and Eve begetting their first child, Cain. Adam and Eve came into existence by the creative (miraculous) power of God, but Cain (and all mankind since) came into existence as the result of the natural laws of procreation. If Adam and Eve “had never sinned, they would have continued to live without any fear of death” (Warren, “Summary” 22). Their removal from the Garden was to prevent them from taking “of the tree of life . . . and *live forever*” (Gen. 3:23, emp. added).

Anthropology (the doctrine of man). God created man in His image and likeness (Gen. 1:26-27; 2:7). Man is the apex of all Creation and the *only* being created in God’s image and likeness. God’s creation of man involves his *physical* (body) and his *personality*, as well as, his *spirituality*. In his creation man has been given free will to obey (serve) or to disobey (not serve) God. The following syllogism sets forth the immortality of man’s soul (spirit) based on the creation of man.

Major Premise: If God created man’s soul (spirit) immortal, then man’s soul (spirit) continues to exist eternally after physical death.

Minor Premise: God created man’s soul (spirit) immortal.

Conclusion: Therefore, man's soul (spirit) continues to exist eternally after physical death.

Man's body was made from the dust of the ground and God "breathed into his [man's] nostrils the breath of life (spirit); and man became a living being (soul)" (Gen. 2:7). "The dust (body) returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it" (Eccl. 12:7).

Among the many things these texts emphasize, besides the origin of human life, is that human life is sacred and precious above all other life. However, man created in God's image and likeness does not mean man is divine. "Man is not divine, but wholly created; both body and spirit [soul] are created beings" (Cottrell 57). Man's creation in God's image and likeness implies man's total dependency upon God; therefore, he is a creature with meaning. The questions, "Who am I?", "Why am I here?", and "Where am I going?" are most important. Remove God as the Creator and man has no answers to these and other questions.

The phrases, "in Our image, according to Our likeness" (Gen. 1:26-27) have "great importance to the present investigation" (Warren, *Immortality* 108) in relation to Job's question on immortality, "If a man dies, shall he live again?" (14:14). The phrases "in Our image" and "Our likeness" refer "to something other than that constituent element of man which is physical" (Warren, *Immortality* 109). The phrases show that "Man is not only made after the deliberate plan and purpose of God but is also very definitely patterned after him" (Leupold 88). Clark writes, "God is the fountain whence the spirit issued; hence the stream must resemble the spring which produced it" (38).

God the Creator is worthy of worship. Man, made in God's image and likeness, is to worship God. "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created" (Rev. 4:11). The angelic being in John's vision cried "with a loud voice, 'Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water'" (Rev. 14:7). "Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel

before our Lord and Maker. For He is our God” (Ps. 95:6-7a).

God created man with a body and soul (spirit). In 1 Thessalonians 5:23 man is described as “spirit, soul, and body.” Coffman suggests these words refer to “man, like his Creator, is a trinity” (72). However, man is never described elsewhere in the Bible as a triune-being. In light of the Bible’s use of the “outward man” and “the inner man” (2 Cor. 4:16), we contend the terms “spirit, soul, and body” in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 are used to describe “the entire man” (Kelcy 123). A similar expression is found in Matthew 22:37 where Jesus commands men to love God with all his heart, soul, and mind; i.e. the totality of his being.

Harmartiology (the doctrine of sin). “Sin is lawlessness” (1 John 3:4). “All unrighteousness is sin” (1 John 5:17). Man sins when he “knows to do good and does not do it” (Jas. 4:17). When God created man and placed him in the Garden of Eden, man was *accountable* to God. Consequently, man, in his freewill, could either choose to serve (obey) God or not to serve (disobey) God. With the freedom of choice, man could choose to eat (disobey) or not eat (obey) of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:17). This evidences that God created man with the freedom and capacity to sin or not to sin—intellectually, morally, and spiritually—(Warren, “Summary,” 21). When the serpent tempted Eve to sin and she influenced Adam to do likewise (Gen. 3:1-8; 1 Tim. 2:13-15), they disobeyed God (Gen. 3:7) and impugned God’s integrity (Gen. 3:5). This resulted in their being banished (separated) from the Garden (Gen. 3:16-24) and incurring various punishments for their sin that remain with the human race through time.

When Adam and Eve sinned, God punished Eve with pain and travail in childbirth (Gen. 3:16) and punished Adam with tilling and working the ground for food until he dies (Gen. 3:17-19). As the result of their sin, God banished (separated) them from the Garden of Eden “lest he . . . take . . . of the tree of life, and eat, and *live forever*” (Gen. 3:22, emp. added). In emphasizing the horribleness of sin, God expelled man from the Garden of Eden and from the tree of life. God placed cherubims at the Garden’s entrance (Gen. 3:24) to prevent them man from returning to the tree of life.

Death was to befall Adam and Eve “in the day” (Gen. 2:17)

they ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This is not to be understood they would immediately drop dead. The words mean that when man fell the reign of death would begin in human experience (Rom. 5:12-21). These texts deal with both physical and spiritual death. Sin brings death to the soul (Ezek. 18:4) requiring man again be made “alive to God” (Rom. 6:11).

Since the consequence of man’s sin involves both physical death and spiritual death, the phrase, “you shall surely die” (Gen. 2:17) means that man became mortal and continues to be mortal until he finally dies. Clark writes: “This we find literally accomplished; every moment of man’s life may be considered as an act of dying, til soul and body are separated” (38). This is a reference to James 2:26, “the body without the spirit is dead.”

In man’s life-long, horrible struggle with sin, God gives man a ray of hope. Speaking to the serpent, God said, “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel” (Gen. 3:15). We will develop this ray of hope in the following section.

Soteriology (the doctrine of salvation). Man’s basic problem with God is sin which has made man the object of God’s wrath. God’s work of salvation solves the problem of God’s wrath for man. With the entrance of sin into the human race, God’s holy nature requires that He execute His wrath upon the sinner, while, at the same time, His attribute of love shows His desire to embrace sinners when they repent (cf. Luke 13:3, 5) with divine forgiveness. This is the true picture and meaning of God’s nature, Calvary, and man’s salvation (redemption). God promised in His ray of hope for man when He said to the serpent, “you shall bruise His heel” (Gen. 3:15). This is a divine promise and prediction of Calvary.

A good commentary on God’s wrath and love in relation to man’s sin is: “[F]or all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, because of His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (Rom. 3:24-26).

The apostle Peter stated that God is “not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9). The apostle Paul declared, “For the wages of sin is death, but *the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*” (Rom. 6:23, emp. added). Jesus, the ray of hope for fallen man (Gen. 3:15), came to earth in the likeness of sinful flesh (John 1:14; Heb. 2:14) to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10; Matt. 1:21; Rom. 5:8-9).

Jesus was victorious over Satan, sin, and death in man’s behalf. Jesus became flesh (John 1:14) and lived in the likeness of man without sinning (Heb. 2:14). Jesus “knew no sin” (2 Cor. 5:21), “committed no sin” (1 Pet. 2:22), and “in Him there is no sin” (1 John 3:5). He was the sinless Lamb of God who removed man’s sins (cf. John 1:29)! Through His death on Calvary’s cross Jesus brought salvation (redemption) to men setting them free from the penalty of sin. God’s grace offers salvation to all men (Titus 2:11-12). The offer of salvation to all men is made possible through His blood (Matt. 26:28; Rom. 5:8-9; Acts 20:28; Eph. 2:8-10; 1 John 1:7; Rev. 1:5); therefore Calvary (atonement) is an essential element in man’s salvation!

In the salvation of man, Jesus’ work was not finished when He died on the cross of Calvary. Though He cried out from the cross, “It is finished” (John 19:30), He was referring to His ministry of revealing God and His message of salvation (redemption) to man (John 1:18; 3:16; 14:7-9; Acts 4:12). *Vitally related to man’s salvation is the resurrection of Jesus!* The resurrection of Jesus from the dead cannot be redefined to mean anything other than a literal, historical, and bodily event. This is what God promised in his ray of hope in Genesis 3:15, “He [Christ] shall bruise your [Satan] head.” This is a prophecy of the literal, historical, and bodily resurrection of Jesus.

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead resulted in defeat for Satan who “had the power of death” (Heb. 2:14). When His body was raised from the tomb (Luke 24:6) and His soul from *hades* (Acts 2:31), “death no longer has dominion over Him” (Rom. 6:9), nor over those who live in Christ (cf. Eph. 1:6-13). He possesses the “keys of *hades* and death” (Rev. 1:18), signifying His power of these domains. His resurrection is described as “first fruits” (1 Cor.

15:20, 23), which serves as a *guarantee* that we too will be raised. The resurrection of Jesus is the basis of our faith (1 Cor. 15:1-4) and apologetically serves our hope (1 Pet. 3:15) in that “God . . . has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Pet. 1:3).

With Jesus’ resurrection, God makes available to the sinning man an opportunity to reverse the condition of death imposed upon him by his sins. The opportunity enables and empowers us to be restored to life again (John 10:10; 6:63; 14:6; 1 John 4:9-10) and have the promise of “hope of eternal life” (Titus 1:2). 2 Timothy 1:10 teaches that Jesus, “abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” The text explains that man’s soul dies because of sin but does not die the same identical death as man’s body (Warren, *Immortality* 235). The soul is eternal (immortal) and stands in contrast to the physical body (mortality) which dies, decomposes, and decays.

Our physical body is in a constant state of change, medical science verifies that the body of those who have lived to a ripe old age have changed many times; however,

[O]ur conscious personality [and the soul] must be distinct from matter. . . . [I]ts persistence during this course of years . . . affords the strongest reason for believing that it will continue to persist after their [body’s] dissolution. . . . [O]ur consciousness respecting the reality of our moral nature. . . proves that there is something within us distinct and wholly different in character, from the particles of matter which compose our bodies. . . . Death [physical], therefore, cannot be the termination of man’s existence. (Row 296-300).

No wonder Paul wrote: “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most pitiable” (1 Cor. 15:19).

The nature of the penalty of man’s sins can be summarized in one word: *death!* Inspiration records, “The wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23; Gen. 2:15-17). This includes *physical death* because of Adam’s sin and or sin, “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread

to all men, because all sinned” (Rom. 5:12). “[T]he body is dead because of sin” (Rom. 8:12); the soul (spirit) separates from the body at death (James 2:26). However, included is *spiritual death* or separation from God because of our sins (Isa. 59:1-2; Eph. 2:1, 5; 1 Tim. 2:5-6).

Our condition of *spiritual death* can be replaced with *spiritual life*. “But God . . . loved us even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive . . . raised us up together . . . in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:4-6). In man’s obedience to the gospel, God’s power to save (Rom. 1:16-17), we pass “from death to life” (John 5:24; 1 John 3:14). To benefit from God’s offer of salvation (redemption), we must firmly “believe in your [our] heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you [we] will be saved” (Rom. 10:9).

The Roman letter teaches that when a sinner responds to God’s command of baptism, he interacts with the saving power of Jesus’ death (atonement). When he rises from the waters of baptism, he interacts with Jesus’ resurrection “that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4; cf. Col. 2:12; Rom. 12:1-2). Our baptism “saves us . . . through the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 3:21). Indeed, “the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6:23). The Bible emphasizes the importance of the literal, historical, bodily resurrection of Jesus.

Eschatology (the doctrine of last things). The doctrine of last things involves a number of events which occur at the second coming of Jesus (Heb. 9:27; 1 Thess. 4:13-17; 2 Pet. 3:1-9). He will raise all the dead (John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15), destroy the earth (2 Pet. 3:10-14), destroy man’s last enemy, death (1 Cor. 15:26), and preside at judgment of all men (Acts 17:30-31; Rev. 20:11-20) distributing their reward and punishment resurrection of all dead (Dan. 12:2-3; Matt. 25:31-46; Rev. 20:11-20), et al.

Immortality is the biblical doctrine that the soul of men, whether good or evil, lives on after physical death, either (1) in glory with God in the eternal state of heaven (Dan. 12:2-3; Matt. 25:46; Rev. 21:1-70; or (2) in punishment in the eternal state of hell with Satan and his angels (Dan. 12:2-3; Matt. 25:41, 46; Rev. 20:11-20). At the

second coming of Christ all who experienced physical death and all who are living must be prepared for their eternal state of heaven by being changed in a “twinkling of an eye” (1 Cor. 15:52-53) to live immortally in eternity.

1 Corinthians 15:35-58 teaches that the physical bodies in the graves will be raised so as to prepare for the eternal state. 1 Corinthians 15:35 asks two questions: (1) “How are the dead raised up?” and (2) “[W]ith what body do they come?”

To answer the first question, Jesus said they would hear His voice and come forth (John 5:28-29). His resurrection serves as a guarantee of our resurrection; i.e. He is the “first fruits” from the dead (1 Cor. 15:20, 23).

The second question is answered in 1 Corinthians 15:36-58.

You do not sow that body that shall be, But God gives it a body as He pleases, The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. . . . However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. . . . Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. . . . [T]hen shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (emp. added)

The Scriptures affirm a literal, physical, bodily resurrection of both “the just and the unjust” (Acts 24:15; cf. John 5:28-29). To argue for any other resurrection, such as a spiritual resurrection, contradicts the biblical doctrine of the literal, physical, bodily resurrection of Jesus. He is the “first fruits” from the dead (1 Cor. 15:20, 23), implying that those who are raised are raised exactly as

He was raised. The Scripture states in 1 Corinthians 15:52 that the physical body of the dead will be raised literal and will be changed in a “twinkling of an eye” “put[ting] on immortality” (1 Cor. 15:53); i.e. “the state of not being subject to decay/dissolution/ interruption, incorruptibility, immortality” (Danker 155).

Paul writes in 2 Timothy 1:10 that Jesus “has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” This describes the work of Jesus as our Savior. Because of His life and work, Jesus abolished death but “not in the sense that he saves mankind from dying but that he destroyed the hold of death over man. He showed by his own death and resurrection that death is not the final state. His resurrection is the guarantee of our own” (Roberts 75).

Man experiencing physical death can pass through the valley of shadows (Ps. 23:4) due to the fact that Jesus in abolishing death (Heb. 2:14) “brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Tim. 1:10). The word *light* means to make something known; therefore, man’s freed will allows him either to accept and receive the offer of life or to reject life. This is done “by the facts and teaching of the gospel the meaning of life and the fact of immortality—that the soul does not die at death—became known” (Roberts 75). The word immortality means “imperishable” in 1 Corinthians 15:52-53. The body of the resurrected saint and sinner will never perish, but are changed and prepared for their respective eternal state; i.e. heaven and hell. Ward makes An interesting comment on life and immortality:

If anything were needed to make, *life* everlasting, this word do it. . . . *Life and immortality* depend upon and are *through the gospel*. . . . Life in him is enjoyed by the believer here and now. The life which he will have is brought . . . to light through the resurrection of Jesus. The Lord will restyle the Christian’s earthly body to bring it into conformity with the body of resurrection glory. (Ward 153-54)

Job asked, “If a man dies, shall he live again?” (Job 14:14). Our Lord answered Job in 2 Timothy 1:10. The exact nature of the

everlasting body is unknown; however, we have the promise of John, “Beloved, now we are the children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2).

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Biographical Sketch

W. Terry Varner married Lillie L. Garrison from Littleton, over 50 years ago. They have 4 children, 11 grandchildren, and 5 great-grandchildren. Terry received formal education from Abilene Christian University, Waynesburg University, West Virginia State University, Moody Bible Institute, National Christian University, Malone College and Alabama Christian School of Religion.

Varner has extensive teaching experience from conducting Bible classes at various congregations for more than 50 years. He has also taught 3 to 5 classes, at a time, at the West Virginia School of Preaching since its beginning. Varner was involved in located

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Varner has also dedicated himself to proclaiming the Gospel in written form as well. He owned and published *Therefore Stand*, a monthly eight-page paper for 24 years. In addition to *Therefore Stand* he has also written and/or published several books which include such titles as: *Studies in Biblical Eschatology (An Answer to AD 70 Theory)*, *Elkins-Ross Debate* and *The History and Use of the Cross*, which has seen four reprints.

When Friends Forsake Us

Job 6:14-30

Mark Jones

Upon arrival in the land of Uz, the assumedly dearest friends of Job sat with him in silence for seven days. They watched their gaunt and ghastly friend sit in ashes, covered with boils and filled with despair beyond understanding. They listened to the “greatest man of the East” curse his birth on wave after wave of his rotten breath. After all this, Eliphaz presented his argument disclosing the sentiment shared by all three friends: *your sin has brought your calamity*. It is within Job’s first response to this accusation that we find the assigned text and topic for this lesson. The following examination of the text will define the type of forsaking Job’s friends did, observe Job’s illustration of why this forsaking is so miserable, and give a practical application of Job’s chastisement of his friends.

Defining “Forsaking”

Job, his address already in progress, states in Job 6:14, “To him who is afflicted, kindness should be shown by his friend, even though he forsakes the fear of the Almighty.” [All scripture references are from NKJV unless otherwise noted.] At this point it would be useful to introduce the textual conversation concerning this verse. Some scholars note the Hebrew to be very difficult, whereas others find no difficulty at all (Andersen 130). Difficulty or not, there is a difference of English translations. As is stated in the NKJV, kindness is to be shown to a friend, even if that friend forsakes the fear of God. The RSV translates the verse thusly, “He who withholds kindness from a friend forsakes the fear of the Almighty.” This translation places the emphasis of “forsaking the fear of God” on the one who is not kind to a troubled friend. In order to discover the type of forsaking Job’s friends displayed, as the lesson title dictates, it must be established that Job’s friends did the forsaking. Additionally, consideration must be given to the reason why translations like the RSV place the forsaking on Job’s friends, while other translations, such as the

NKJV and ASV, affirm Job has in some way forsaken the fear of the Almighty.

The root of the problem stems from the original meaning of the Hebrew word translated “afflicted” by the NKJV. One meaning gives the connotation of *melting* or internal *despair*, which would poetically connect with verses 15 and 16 and is the choice of many English translators. Thus, Job’s internal despair and melting of his faith and trust in God is only compounded because his friends do not show him kindness. Other translations, including the Syriac Version and the Targum, choose a cognate emphasizing a *deprivation*, *refusal*, or *removal* of kindness from a friend. This view would poetically connect the word “afflicted/refused” with “forsakes” in verse 14, i.e., *he who refuses a friend forsakes God*, as indicated by the RSV. Assuming scholars will not come to a quick agreement on the meaning of the word in question, let us turn to other factors that will help in deciphering the meaning of the text.

First, two key words in this verse, *kindness* and *Almighty*, give a fuller picture of the concepts the original language conveys. Kindness in this verse is not just a friendly gesture, but an established loyal kindness between friends, especially in time of need. This loyal kindness might even have been established by a vow before God. Therefore, Job’s friends “are guilty of failing to fulfill their covenant obligations with him” (Hartley 137). This obligation is before the Almighty, or *El Shaddai*. This name for God appears over thirty times in the book of Job and is used by both Job and his friends. The name derives itself from a “verb meaning to deal violently, to devastate, to ruin” (McCord 23). Its first appearance in Genesis 17:6 would indict nothing of destructive powers, only that God is all powerful and His will is accomplished. Job gives his understanding of *El Shaddai* in speaking about the futility of the plans of the wicked: “Yet they say to God, ‘Depart from us, For we do not desire the knowledge of Your ways. Who is the Almighty, that we should serve Him? And what profit do we have if we pray to Him?’ Indeed their prosperity is not in their hand” (Job 21:14-16).

Even if the wicked live and prosper, their prosperity is not in their control. And if the Almighty provides the ease of the unrighteous, He also provides the suffering of the righteous. In all things, the fear

of the Almighty must be given.

Kindness, as a display of loyal friendship, should be shown regardless of situational parameters. Therefore, when refusing kindness to a friend based on either an affliction or a spiritual fault, a transgression of friendship has occurred. Any transgression is offendable and accountable to God Almighty. It is then evident that Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar chose to withdraw their kindness of loyal friendship to Job based on his affliction, and that choice forsook the fear of the Almighty.

Second, the *contextual flow* of this passage helps to establish the primary message of the verse. Chapter three more than adequately gives a depiction of Job's expression of his misery. Even so Job began his defense of chapter six by letting his friends know the weight of his sorrow is beyond measure. This is the reason why his statements have been rash. He continued by stating the afflictions of God left nothing desirable in his life and that it would be good for God to grant his request of annihilation. Job had conceded that if it was the will of God to crush him he would accept that will and exult God in it. "Then I would still have comfort; though in anguish, I would exult, He will not spare; for I have not concealed the words of the Holy One" (Job 6:10).

Job then proceeded with a series of rhetorical questions to unequivocally affirm that he was without strength. And in his time of greatest need for kindness, his three friends came to him with preconceived notions of the evil Job must have committed. Job gave stern advice to his friends in 6:14 by pointing out that their lack of kindness was a forsaking of the Almighty. He reinforced this sentiment when he said, "Teach me, and I will hold my tongue; Cause me to understand wherein I have erred. How forceful are right words! But what does your arguing prove?" (Job 6:24-25).

In this brief study of key words and contextual flow, we may establish the friends of Job have forsaken kindness, and by doing so, they have forsaken the fear of the Almighty. It is also good to remember Job is categorically wisdom literature. Wisdom literature is poetry. In poetry, it is the emotion of a phrase and not necessarily the technical definition of a word that is most important in translation. It would not be good to scrutinize this book searching for "syllogistic

logic” or biblical absolutes in every line, for while Job “is a faithful depiction of what was said by all, by no means is all that was said divine truth” (Lewis 6, 51).

Let us now turn our attention to the task of defining the type of forsaking Job’s friends committed. A lack of kindness shown to a friend in a time of need transgresses the Will of God. As the old saying goes, a friend in need is a friend indeed. When Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar approached Job, they wept, tore their clothes, and sprinkled ashes on themselves. In addition to sharing in a portion of grief with Job, his three friends were concerned about him. They did not spit upon him or encourage him to curse God, but rather wished to see him overcome his adversity. None of this seems to forsake kindness. We are then left with the method in which these men chose to confront Job’s problems that showed their unkindness.

Who among us has not found himself or herself making a situation worse though means of good intentions? Or perhaps we have passed judgment without investigation? I have known men and women who could not be accused of speaking falsehoods, but their tone, timing, or intents were less than honorable. Within reason, the same could be said concerning the words of Eliphaz in Job chapters 4 and 5. They may have been well intended and based on what Eliphaz believed to be true, but for Job, they were barbs. Job admitted his words were rash because of his grief. Eliphaz’s words were harsh because of their premeditation. “Harshness might precipitate him into the abyss from which love will keep him back” (Keil 307).

A major lesson of Job is that even faithful followers of God suffer hardships. A major lesson of God’s Word is that we should love our neighbors as ourselves. The account of Job and Jesus’ parable of the Good Samaritan have striking parallels, with the exception that Job’s “good Samaritan” could not be found, and a priest did not stand over the Jewish man giving him a lecture as to how sinful he was for being robbed and beaten. Homer Hailey asks, “how virulent must a sin be considered in the mind of a friend for it to drive him from sympathy and compassion toward one who has been so close and dear to him?” (74).

The answer to Hailey’s question is fear. Not the fear of the

Almighty, rather fear of mortality. Fear that a wise man doesn't have a ready answer for every question. Fear that if a righteous man can suffer great calamity that same sorrow could befall anyone. Fear that if you listen to the weaknesses and needs of others that you just might have to admit you share those same vulnerabilities. Fear that after a lifetime of study, observation, and discovery the apparent indicators of righteousness have been based on untruth. Fear that accompanies the witnessing of a dear loved one agonizing with no relief. If the wise man can just figure it out, use his proofs, solve the problem, then all the fear will be dissipated. The truth is the only answer to the problem of suffering is *trust in God*.

In time of need a friend needs comfort most of all. An elder of the Lord's Church once recounted the events shortly following the death of his mother. He remarked that as he was met by a fellow elder and a preacher in the hospital, the three men just stood together silently and cried. This, the elder said, meant more than anything else those men could have done or said. The first step of comforting a friend is to be present. The second is finding out what would be most helpful to the friend. Some needs will be obvious and others will take time and effort. Job's friends were present, but they were not willing to investigate Job's needs beyond assumption and this is why they failed.

Paul teaches us to restore the sinner and bear the burdens of our brothers (Gal. 6:2). This action fulfills the law of Christ. Paul also says, "Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things" (Rom. 14:1). In efforts to encourage and edify the church at Corinth, Paul asks them, "Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and a spirit of gentleness?" (1 Cor. 4:21). These words express the compassion and dedication a friend must have to help. Too often, fear dissuades our comfort and concern diminishes our kindness. Remember the words of the apostle who overcame fear with love and stood at the foot of the cross: "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love" (1 John 4:18). The love of Job's friends was consumed by fear and they forsook him and the Almighty.

When finally confronted by God in Job 42:7-8, God said to

Eliphaz that he and his two friends did not speak the truth concerning God. They then had to give sacrifices for their transgressions. In Job's time of need, his friends were present and concerned for his restoration to God. Yet in their eagerness to help, they neglected to investigate and contemplate Job's true needs. In their love of "truth," they forsook the fear of the Almighty. And in their fear of Job's calamity, they forsook the love of their friend.

Job's Illustration

After pointing out the friends' unkindness, Job gave an illustration as to why their thoughts were so miserable to him.

My brothers have dealt deceitfully like a brook, Like the streams of the brooks that pass away, which are dark because of the ice, and into which the snow vanishes. When it is warm, they cease to flow; when it is hot, they vanish from their place. The paths of their way turn aside, they go nowhere and perish. (Job 6:15-18)

He speaks of streams that in the spring of the year are overflowing from the ice and snow melting from mountain peaks. The water is deep, dark, and cold, in the mountain gullies. These waters will flow all the way into the wilderness and desert where they eventually dry up or sink into the sand. This type of seasonal stream is known as a wadi.

Job begins verse 15 referring to Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar as his brothers. This again emphasizes the loyal friendship Job was expecting from these men. The depth of their friendship was like the deepest waters in the mountain gullies. The strength of their friendship was like the strength of the glacial waters, unyielding of even the slightest evaporation to the noonday sun. But as the waters flowed, they also warmed. And as they continued to spread, they vanished. This was how Job viewed his dear friends' brotherly kindness. At one point their friendship had been deep and strong, but their kindness was seasonal and could no longer be found. Yet Job's illustration was not finished.

In verse 18, a question arises as to whether or not the verse should

be translated, “the *paths* of their way turn aside” or “the *caravans* that travel by the way of them turn aside.” A subtle spelling difference in the Hebrew draws an argument as to how the verse should be translated. The stronger argument is with the streams running out of their paths and turning aside to waste away in the desert. Even the ASV, which chooses the *caravans* translation, has a footnote stating the *paths* turn aside, not the *caravans*. It would seem strange that the caravans would turn aside and go to waste in verse 18, then in verse 19 be searching for waters after they have perished.

So, Job included in verse 18 that the streams dried up because turned aside from their places. Job’s friends have turned aside from God’s wisdom. Job says to his friends, “And if indeed I have erred, my error remains with me” (Job 19:4). Their accusation of Job was that he had done something so terrible and that was why God had punished him. Job wanted the proof. No one had been able to call to mind any obvious transgression that would merit such punishment. Yet his friends persisted in their judgment. These wise men forsook the paths of wisdom and their kindness departed.

As Job continued his illustration, he spoke of himself as a caravan searching for the wadi. He knew they should be there, but were gone leaving him confounded and ashamed. “The caravans of Tema look, the travelers of Sheba hope for them. They are disappointed because they were confident; they come there and are confused. For now you are nothing, you see terror and are afraid. (Job 6:19-21). These caravans are not just any caravans, but those of Tema and Sheba. Between these two groups, no portion of the Arabian Desert was left uncharted. These caravans knew where permanent sources of water were, as well as where, and when, the temporary wadis would be. These tribes were professional desert merchants and they mapped their routes with the greatest of care and certainty. Imagine a seasoned nomad standing in a dry river bed, embarrassed and confused as to where the water was, only to find out that instead of following the established path, the water diverted its course and dried up. Job expected support from his friends but discovered there was no kindness to be found, and he sat ashamed and confounded. The ancient commentator Didymus the Blind notes, “Even this happened to test Job. For the absence of friends in the midst of

suffering is no small pain” (Simonetti 38).

Job then traded illustration for direct words to address his friends. As if to give them the moral of the story he says, “For now you are nothing, you see terror and are afraid” (Job 6:21). They forsook wisdom, which in turn, led them to forsake kindness. They witnessed the terror that was Job and his misfortunes and they turned aside to fear. This left Job with more misery than before. “He thirsts for friendly solace, but the seeming comfort which his friends utter is only as the scattered meandering waters in which the mountain brook leaks out” (Keil 307-08). The Psalmist relates to the defeated spirit of Job as he writes in Psalm 142:4, “Look on my right hand and see, for there is no one who acknowledges me; refuge has failed me; no one cares for my soul.” Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar were the last hope for comfort in Job’s miserable life, and even they were a torment to him.

Lesson’s From Job’s Chastening of His Friends

Job then came to the heart of his speech and gave practical applications as to how his friends ought to treat him. “Did I ever say, ‘Bring something to me’? Or, ‘Offer a bribe for me from your wealth’? Or, ‘Deliver me from the enemy’s hand’? Or, ‘Redeem me from the hand of oppressors’” (Job 6:22-23)? He began by asking a series of rhetorical questions in the hopes that they would consider their approach with more thought. He did not ask of them to bring a gift, offer a bribe, risk their lives, or interrupt their lives on his account. In fact, they on their own agreement decided to make the journey together for the purpose of comforting Job (Job 3:11). He pled with them to return to their original purpose of comfort.

In verse 22 the *gift* and *bribe* deal with appeasement for debts owed to tribal leaders or local magistrates, an “all too prevalent Eastern custom” (Driver 65). The rescue and redemption of verse 23 refer to being delivered from the captivity of a more substantial force. None of these were the actual case for Job, thus he spoke concerning the gifts of knowledge his friends bestowed upon him. They brought these gifts to bring an acquittal of God’s judgment upon Job. Yet Job had never asked to be acquitted from his burdens.

Job knew that only God could allow such devastation to come

upon him. He also knew that sin could bring about hardships and punishment from God. But Job was certain that he committed no sin that would incur the amount of retribution he was suffering. So when it comes to the reason for his sufferings, he knows that only God can tell him. From his friends, he expects only comfort.

Show Kindness to the Suffering

Herein is the first practical lesson, *to those who suffer, bring kindness*. Perhaps this is the obvious lesson of the text, but it deserves further examination. Job's friends, in their discourses, expounded on arguments they believe were based on true principles. This article will not scrutinize the validity of each argument; rather draw a parallel between the friend's words and our own words. Surely when we speak to our friends in their time of need, the words we speak come from what we believe to be a source of truth. It also could be the case that, like Job's friends, we might not bring kindness with our truth. And it might be the case that we do not bring truth with our truth.

Here is an unfortunate illustration of these points. A dear sister in Christ passed away after a short struggle with a chronic illness. Though in her eighties, she was one of the most active members of the congregation and a woman of virtue and great faith. On the day of her funeral, her grief-stricken son said to a fellow church member that he had comfort knowing his mother was safe in Christ. The fellow church member replied, "I hope so." This statement brought sorrow to the heart of the son.

I have no doubt that this particular church member believed this statement to be true, not wanting to subvert the Judgment of Christ. Yet Jesus said, "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). Paul states in 2 Timothy 1:12, "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day." Paul knew his eternal destination because he knew the truth about Christ. Paul, along with others, instructs us to imitate Christ and faithful followers of Christ. This requires an individual to know not only the example of Christ, but also how to discern good examples of Christianity. The statement, "I hope so," negates both of these abilities while also casting doubt

on the legitimacy of one's adherence to the truth.

So how do we avoid such a situation? In times of sorrow our focus must be on kindness. Think of a how a trauma doctor or nurse assesses a situation. They are aware of cuts and bruises and broken bones, but all of those maladies can wait when there are more critical injuries that must be addressed. Likewise, the emotional traumas of life must be assessed wisely. The primary response in addressing a friend's needs must be filled with kindness. "What is desired in a man is kindness" (Prov. 19:22).

Strengthen the Bonds of Brotherly Love

Next, Job spoke about the uselessness of the friends' words and gave a clear picture of how their "good" intentions had been wasted.

Teach me, and I will hold my tongue; cause me to understand wherein I have erred. How forceful are right words! But what does your arguing prove? Do you intend to rebuke my words, and the speeches of a desperate one, which are as wind? Yes, you overwhelm the fatherless, and you undermine your friend. (Job 6:24-27)

With these words Job gives us our second practical application which is *showing kindness to a suffering friend strengthens the bonds of brotherly love*.

Job offered his willingness to listen to the instructions of his friends even if that teaching included truth that was difficult for Job to hear. Eliphaz has already stated, "Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects; Therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty" (Job 5:17). Job challenged his friends to show him his error, and then, he would gladly follow their teachings. The book of Job does not make the claim that Job was a sinless man, but rather a man that "was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil" (Job 1:1). Job would readily follow even the most "forceful" teachings of God if that was necessary for the retribution of his error. Problematically, there was no error and his friends' words were useless arguing.

Paul rejoices with the repentant Corinthian church after he sent

them a letter of “forceful right words.” Paul said that their mourning turned to godly sorrow which led to repentance and produced salvation (2 Cor. 7:7-10). The polarity of Job’s situation to that of Paul’s message is striking. Job, who had not sinned, received great sorrow, to which his friends added all the more. Paul remarks in 2 Corinthians 7:10, “the sorrow of the world produces death.” There was nothing Job could do to relinquish his pain. At the very least his friends’ kindness could have eased the burden. They, instead, offered more sorrow.

Helping bear another’s burden strengthens our brother and us. Think of the example of the yoke. Those that are yoked together must work together, not overpower one another. James reminds us that though the tongue is such a small member of the body, it is very powerful (Jas. 3:5). Job’s friends were overpowering him with their words. Job was perplexed that his friends were unable to discern that his words came from a source of despair and were like the wind. He accused his friends of taking advantage of him in his time of need as someone takes advantage of an orphan after the death of his father. None of this adds strength to Job or his friends.

James offers us a way to increase our strength and the strength of others by conducting ourselves according to heavenly wisdom. He says, “the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy” (Jas. 3:17). In application to Job’s friends, their conduct should have first been pure, then, in a word, kind. Notice James’ eight attributes of wise conduct (some stated in different ways for positive emphasis): purity, peace, gentleness, patience, mercy, fruit-bearing, love, and sincerity. These attributes are compatible with the beatitudes of Christ, the fruits of the Spirit, and the definition of Love. If applied, these virtues of godly wisdom produce brotherly love.

Yet the friends of Job chose another conduct of wisdom to follow. James writes again of demonic wisdom saying, “if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts” “confusion and every evil thing are there” (Jas. 3:14a, 16b). Job observes both of these evils in the actions of his friends. His friends undermine him by a type of envy and they rebuke him in self-seeking arguments. Confusion

then sets in as they are unable to discern Job's pointed pleadings for understanding. This is the danger of demonic wisdom not grounded in truth or love.

It is clear by the plural use of the third person pronoun in verse 27, Job intended his words for not just Eliphaz, but all three friends. Unless these men were strict ascetics and they envied Job's pain, the only thing left to envy was what Job did not have. Let's call their unorthodox envy a case of "one-up-manship." They envied Job's sorrow in that he possessed knowledge of an experience they ultimately could not comprehend. Because of their incapability to understand the experience, they offered their confused answers in bitterness.

Wayward Christians sometimes want to return to Christ, yet hesitate due to the fear of harsh treatment fellow Christians might show them. One might pass this off as a weak excuse, but remember Christ's words concerning the older brother's response to the rejoicing at prodigal son's return, "But he was angry" (Luke 15:28). Envy is a real threat to brotherly kindness. We think of envy as something that is predicated by possessions or positions, but often it has no tangible factors. If you find yourself in the midst of helping a weaker brother and feel thoughts of envy, quickly remember godly wisdom to help defeat the temptation and continue in brotherly love.

The self-seeking aspect of demonic wisdom derived itself from fear. Fear brought forth actions of self-preservation for Job's friends. This fear is sometimes described as a natural reaction, and as such, a good reaction. But is this always a good thing? Have you ever noticed that after the initial news stories of severe devastation are broadcasted, you begin to hear stories on 'acts of courage' and 'acts of kindness' during those events? These are not common and are heralded as honorable. God calls us to be courageous and kind, not impulsive. Yet as Job's friends beheld him, even from a distance, they were afraid and scrambled for self-preservation.

Brotherly love demands spiritual strength. "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted" (Gal. 6:1). Once again, the type of kindness that Job sought is mentioned by Paul. Job's friends were unable to help him

because they had become self-seeking when confronted with the great suffering that had befallen their friend. These three were true friends, even as close as brothers, and they still were overcome by envy and selfishness, and they forsook kindness.

Brotherly kindness can only be practiced by those who prepare for it. It can be easily achieved when there is little resistance. But to forsake kindness in the time of need is hypocrisy and breaks the bonds of love. To forsake kindness is to forsake the wisdom of God, and “confusion and every evil thing are there” (Jas. 3:16). Note the poetic parallel of the virtuous woman, “She opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness” (Prov. 31:26).

Listen and Understand the Suffering Friend

Finally, Job’s address to his friends in Job 6:28-30, brings us to our last practical application, *kindness involves listening and understanding*. “Now therefore, be pleased to look at me; for I would never lie to your face. Yield now, let there be no injustice! Yes, concede, my righteousness still stands! Is there injustice on my tongue? Cannot my taste discern the unsavory?” (Job 6:28-30).

Verse 28 gives an incredible insight to the fact that as Job speaks his friends will not look at him. They should know that Job would not lie to them and if they looked at his face they would be reminded of the honesty their longtime friend speaks to them. Yet they will not yield their unjust conclusions. Job informs his friends that the soundness of his judgment, like his righteousness, remains intact.

There are few things more frustrating than not being listened to or being misunderstood. This frustration can quickly become disparaging when such treatment is displayed by friends. How often do we read the Biblical illustrations of those who will neither listen nor understand as ‘blind’ and ‘deaf’? Solomon writes in Proverbs 20:12, “The hearing ear and the seeing eye, The LORD has made them both.” Job’s friends failed to listen and understand because they neglected the godly use of their eyes and ears.

Paul tells the Colossian Christians he is sending Tychicus so “he may know your circumstances and comfort your hearts” (Col. 4:8). Note the sequential nature of his mission: know the circumstances and then comfort the hearts. To achieve such a task, one must listen

and understand. These are difficult virtues to master. James sets forth this related formula to avoid the deception of sin, “let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (Jas. 1:19). Satan has many snares and traps that ultimately proceed from one salacious whisper...*don't listen*.

In the Garden of Eden, in the heart of Ahab, in the audience of Isaiah, and even in the wilderness as Jesus fasted, the voice of the Adversary said, *don't listen, don't heed, don't understand*. On the first day of the class, my Family and Individual Counseling professor spent the first five instructional minutes absolutely silent. This became very uncomfortable and the class squirmed worse than if a pop quiz had been given. At the end of the five minutes the professor said, “This is your first lesson. Learn to become comfortable with silence.” Listening requires discipline that not only is profitable for friendship, and, as James sets forth, resisting the devil.

Admittedly, Job's friends were silent for seven days. Therefore we see listening entails more than just not talking, but also understanding. Understanding is the combination of empathy and reasoning. To understand someone's circumstances we must have a caring commitment to investigating and processing the facts. There is no possible way Job's friends could have grasped his immense pain. But Job did not need them to understand his pain, rather, he needed them to understand that he did nothing wrong to deserve such agony. Because the three friends were unwilling to listen to Job's circumstances, they were unable to comfort his heart.

Job pled with his friends to yield their injustice, for they falsely accused Job of sin. He saw the weakness in their argument and asked them to concede. He then compared their injustice of words to that which was unsavory on his tongue. That is to say, for him to speak a lie about his righteousness would be as a bitter taste upon his tongue. The antithesis of such a remark can be found in David's meditation over his enemies plans for him, “You love all devouring words, you deceitful tongue” (Ps. 52:4). Deceit and injustice would not be found on Job's tongue. His friend should have admitted that and ended their arguing.

The Bible directly states Satan was not permitted to take the life of Job. Indirectly, the student of Job recognizes that Satan did not

afflict Job's mental capabilities. This, of course, would be fruitless as Satan's goal was to persuade Job's mind to leave the service of God. This could not be accomplished if Job's mental state was invalidated. And so we see Job comparable to those unfortunate cases of patients receiving operations fully aware, but physically paralyzed by anesthesia and unable to signal their pain. In an odd paradox, Job is like the rich man in torment. And where Abraham is unable to refresh the rich man with a drop of water, Job's friends are unwilling to refresh Job with their kindness.

James again warns us, "If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit" (Jas. 2:15-16). Job's friends came very close to providing Job's need, but ultimately failed him because they did not listen and understand. As Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar drew near to Job and rent their clothes as a sign of their sorrow. These words of Joel would have been very useful in that moment, "So rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm" (Joel 2:13). And so should it be for true friends everywhere.

From this small passage in the book of Job we find that even the dearest of friends can deal treacherously with one another. This treachery springs forth from forsaking wisdom and being overcome by fear, envy, and selfishness. With such behavior, kindness is impossible to show. We then must learn the importance of our reliance on God and our love for our neighbor at all times. And in their time of need, we must bring a kindness that strengthens the bonds of brotherly love through listening to and understanding the needs of our struggling friends. "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10).

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Biographical Sketch

Mark Jones received his BA in Biblical Studies from Freed-Hardeman University in 2003. He is currently the minister for the Pumpkin Center church of Christ in Fairview, WV and teaches Church History and Restoration Movement at the WVSOP. He is married to the former Megan McVey of Chattanooga, TN. He would like to express his appreciation to his dearest friends, two of whom are on this lectureship, for their unyielding and unequivocal kindness at all times.

The Speeches of the Miserable Comforters

Job 16:1-2

Phil Grear

It is hard to watch a good friend suffer. There is a feeling of helplessness, as you want to do something to ease their pain, but often nothing can be done. The words just do not seem to come, and the ones you do find seem hollow and trite. You mean well, but the words come out wrong. You go away thinking, “Why did I say *that*?” The whole situation is so frustrating.

Job’s friends desperately wanted to help him. “Now when Job’s three friends heard of all this evil that was come upon him, they came every one from his own place; Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite: for they had made an appointment together to come to mourn with him and to comfort him” (Job 2:11). [All scripture references are from the KJV unless otherwise noted.] But they were not prepared for what they saw when they arrived. His appearance had been so distorted by his grief and physical suffering that they were unable to recognize him. They were so overwhelmed by his situation that they “lifted up their voice, and wept; and they rent every one his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven” (Job 2:12). Apparently struck speechless by what they saw, “they sat down upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spoke a word unto him, for they saw that *his* grief was very great” (Job 2:13).

We know very little about these three men. Eliphaz is said to be a “Temanite,” perhaps indicating he was from the city of Teman in Edom. Teman was known for its “wisdom” (Jer. 49:7). Esau (also known as Edom) had a son named Eliphaz (Gen. 36:15). Could this be the same man? Bildad was a Shuhite. Was he a descendant of Shuah, the son of Abraham by Keturah? (Gen. 25:2). Zophar was a “Naamathite.” We know nothing more of this name.

All indications are that Job’s three friends meant well. Their

anguish at their friend's suffering appears to be genuine. Their intention was to mourn with him and comfort him. "Comfort" is from a word meaning "sympathy" (Wilson 86). The English word "comfort" comes from two Latin words meaning "with strength." His friends should have been trying to provide him the strength needed to get through his terrible ordeal. They showed great wisdom when they sat with him in silence for a full week. Words can be more hurtful than helpful, and just "being there" may be the best medicine in a difficult hour. A person may find the strength to go on just knowing you care enough to be present.

Job was the one who broke the silence with a highly emotional speech that asks, "Why me?" (Chap. 3-4). His friends then take up the task of trying to answer that question. Job would have been better served if they had continued to be silent. Although they meant well, their speeches showed a severe lack of understanding of the true nature of suffering in general, and Job's in particular. They just did not have all the facts, but they spoke with great certainty anyway. Their false premise resulted in false conclusions. Their personal attacks on Job's integrity merely added to his pain and grief, so much so that Job finally exclaimed, "miserable comforters are ye all" (Job 16:2). He actually asked them when they would finally be quiet, "Shall vain words have an end? Or what emboldeneth thee that thou answerest?" (Job 16:3). If the best they could do was accuse him of great wickedness, then he wanted them to just be quiet.

We have all been in situations where we felt obligated to speak, but then wondered if we had said the right thing. No one wants to be a "miserable comforter." So how do we avoid the mistakes made by Job's three friends? What made them "miserable comforters?" Their mistakes stemmed from three sources.

Prejudice, Not Proof

Prejudice is determining your beliefs before you have all the facts. Having made up your mind prematurely, you cling to those beliefs even if there is no proof for the truthfulness of your position. Job's three friends had absolutely no real knowledge of the facts behind Job's suffering. They knew nothing of the conversations between God and Satan in chapters one and two, and made no effort

to learn the cause of Job's suffering. Perhaps they could have used the seven days of silence to investigate the events leading up to Job's tragic circumstances, but they did not. When Job attempted to challenge their prejudices, he was asked by Eliphaz, "Should a wise man utter vain knowledge, and fill his belly with the east wind? Should he reason with unprofitable talk? Or with speeches wherewith he can do no good?" (Job 15:3). Rather than listen to him they accused him of uttering "vain knowledge" and making windy speeches. Apparently they had made up their minds and had no interest in being confused by the facts.

Their prejudiced view said that suffering always resulted from sin. Eliphaz asked, "Remember who *ever* perished, being innocent? Or where were the righteous cut off? Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same. By the blast of God they perish, and by the breath of his nostrils are they consumed" (Job 4:7-10). Bildad argued, "Behold, God will not cast away a perfect *man*, neither will he help the evil doers" (Job 8:20). Zophar even insisted Job was not punished as much as he should have been. "But oh that God would speak, and open his lips against thee: and that he would shew thee the secrets of wisdom, that *they are* double to that which is! Know therefore that God exacteth of thee *less* than thine iniquity *deserveth*" (Job 11:5-6). Bildad was so certain of this position that he was actually offended Job did not accept their rebukes. "Wherefore are we counted as beasts, *and* reputed vile in your sight?" (Job 18:3). Hailey says, it appears that these men "fell into the fault of man: if one fails to meet the facts of truth and argument, leave these and attack the person, manufacture charges" (197).

Having decided that sin is the only explanation for suffering, they set out to prove Job guilty of wickedness, and deserving of everything he got. There were no attempts to determine exactly what sins he had committed, just repeated charges of horrible offenses. They accused Job of ignoring the needs of the poor and downtrodden. Eliphaz said Job had once been a source of strength to the needy. "Behold, thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the weak hands. Thy words have upheld him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees" (Job 4:3-4). But Eliphaz insisted

that Job had turned his back on these noble principles and now was guilty of exploiting the poor for his own advantage.

For thou hast taken a pledge from thy brother for nought, and stripped the naked of their clothing. Thou has not given water to the weary to drink, and thou hast withholden bread from the hungry... Thou hast sent widows away empty, and the fatherless have been broken. (Job 22:6-10)

These were serious charges, but they had no evidence that Job was guilty of any of them. But, according to their prejudice, Job's suffering was sufficient proof of his guilt. Nothing more was necessary to confirm their false views.

They refused to listen when Job denied the charges. He adamantly maintained that he had not withheld assistance from the poor or deprived the fatherless. He had never allowed anyone to perish for lack of clothing (Job 31:16-19). He admitted he was not perfect, but insisted that his sins did not merit this level of suffering.

They also accused Job of hypocrisy. Only a hypocrite would claim innocence in the face of such overwhelming evidence of his wickedness. Bildad argued, "So are the paths of all that forget God; and the hypocrite's hope shall perish" (Job 18:4). Zophar attributed Job's past blessings to the fact that he was a hypocrite, and now God had finally taken those things away from him. "Knowest thou *not* this of old, since man was placed upon earth, that the triumphing of the wicked *is* short, and the joy of the hypocrite *but* for a moment?" (Job. 20:4-5). Again, with no evidence whatsoever, they attacked Job's integrity in serving God.

No wonder he called them "miserable comforters." Job deserved better from them in his darkest hour, but they were too committed to their preconceived ideas. Shackelford observed, "Ideally, the encouragement of Job's friends would have bolstered him so that he did not forsake the fear of the Almighty" (87). "All that he (Job) looked for was a gesture of kindness and sympathy from his long-time friends, which would have cost them nothing, but he failed to find this in them" (Hailey 76).

We must not to allow our prejudices to blind us to the truth. Just

because we have personally witnessed suffering result from sinful choices does not mean that all suffering stems from sin. Jesus suffered more than any human being, in spite of his sinless life (Heb. 4:15; 2 Cor. 5:21). Some suffering is caused by sin, but not all, and it is unfair to the one suffering to make such a wrong assumption.

Tradition, Not Truth

Why did Job's friends believe that sin always comes from suffering? It is simple. They had always been told that. Eliphaz challenged Job's denial of sin by saying Job was too young to be arguing with the wisdom of the ages.

Art thou the first man that was born? Or wast thou made before the hills? Hast thou heard the secret of God? And dost thou retain wisdom to thyself? What knowest thou, that we know not? What understandest thou, which is not in us? With us are both the grayheaded and very aged men, much elder than thy father. (Job 15:7-10)

How could Job possibly argue with those experienced old men who knew so much more than he? Could he possibly be so conceited as to believe he knew more than they?

Bildad declared it to be a well-known fact that suffering is punishment for sin. He told Job to research this fact, and it would be obvious.

For enquire, I pray thee, of the former age, and prepare thyself to the search of their fathers: (for we are but of yesterday, and know nothing, because our days upon earth are a shadow:) Shall they not teach thee, and tell thee, and utter words out of their heart? (Job. 8:8-10)

Eliphaz and Bildad made a very common mistake. They accepted something to be true because it has always been believed to be true. Sometimes false views are perpetuated through the ages because no one thinks to examine their accuracy. While it is good to respect the wisdom that comes with age, it is also possible that the "wisdom of

the ages” may be based more on tradition than truth. Just because a view is “time-honored” does not mean that it is accurate.

It is difficult enough to find the right words to comfort a sufferer without falling prey to parroting false views just because they are commonly accepted. Our traditions must comply with the truth as revealed in the Word of God. At times the most unfortunate things have been said by well-meaning people. “It was God’s will” may be an attempt to help the sufferer cope with a tragic event, but it overlooks the Biblical point that death was Satan’s idea, not God’s. “God needed your mother more than you” is of small comfort to a child who is trying to understand why her mother was taken from her. “God needed another angel” ignores the fact that angels were created by God as angels, not made from righteous human beings. “It was their time to go” smacks of Calvinism, not Scripture. And to look at someone still in shock from the loss of life’s beloved mate and say, “I know what you’re going through” probably just is not true. These comments, although well-intentioned, portray tradition rather than truth. David Pharr said,

The practical lesson is that we not be unsympathetic sympathizers. Sometimes to say, *‘I know what you are going through’* is more an insult than a consolation. Efforts to explain *‘Why God let this happen’* may even be blasphemy. And to think we can see specific Divine Justice in every human tragedy is foolish indeed. (166)

Due to their loyalty to what had always been taught Job’s three friends increased his misery rather than ministered comfort. Eliphaz claimed to have researched the matter. “Lo this, we have searched it, so it *is*” (Job 5:27). But he had drawn the wrong conclusions, and so was no real help. Job asked Eliphaz, “what doth your arguing reprove?” (Job 6:25).

Those who are suffering do not need trite phrases repeated from generations that did not understand suffering any more than we do. They need to be pointed to God and His Word for the strength to outlast the suffering.

Haughtiness, Not Humility

Job's three friends were absolutely convinced that Job was suffering because of sin and they were equally as convinced that they were the ones to help him make things right so the suffering would end. Eliphaz told him, "If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up, thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacles... For then shalt thou have thy delight in the Almighty, and shalt lift up thy face unto God. Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him, and he shall hear thee" (Job 22:23-27). Zophar exhorted him,

If thou prepare thine heart, and stretch out thine hands toward Him; if iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles. For then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot; yea, thou shalt be steadfast, and shalt not fear: because thou shalt forget thy misery, and remember it as waters that pass away: and thine age shall be clearer than the noonday; thou shalt shine forth, thou shalt be as the morning. And thou shalt be secure, because there is hope; yea, thou shalt dig about thee, and thou shalt take thy rest in safety. Also thou shalt lie down and none shall make thee afraid. (Job 11:13-20)

These three men intended to provide Job a sense of hope that his situation was not permanent. He may have brought the misery on himself, but it could all be made better if only he would quit stubbornly denying his sin, and return to God. Eliphaz maintained that Job was displaying a haughty, arrogant, rebellious attitude toward God by his bold refusal to admit his sin. "Should a wise man utter vain knowledge, and fill his belly with the east wind? Should he reason with unprofitable talk? Or with speeches wherewith he can do no good? Yea, thou castest off fear and restrainest prayer before God" (Job 15:3-4). "Why doth thine heart carry thee away? and what do thy eyes wink at, that thou turnest thy spirit against God and lettest such words go out of thy mouth?" (Job 15:13-14) He implored Job to repent so that God would "save the humble person" (Job 22:29).

Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar meant to help, but their attitude

in approaching Job was all wrong. The apostle Paul expressed the need for a particular attitude when approaching a fallen brother, “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in *the spirit of meekness*; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Gal. 6:1; emphasis mine, PLG). There was nothing meek about the way these three men approached Job. Their speeches could only be characterized as harsh, unkind, and sometimes even cruel. They accused him of hypocrisy, secret sin, lacking compassion on the poor, and turning his back on God.

The reader cannot help being struck by the haughtiness of these three men who arrogantly appointed themselves to be Job’s judges. They knew they had all the answers and Job would do well to listen to their rebukes for the sin that was causing all of his problems. They even accused him of pride and arrogance. Eliphaz asked Job, “Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his maker?” (Job 4:17). He even suggested that Job believed he could hide his sins from God. “And thou sayest, How doth God know? Can he judge through the dark cloud? Thick clouds *are* a covering to him, that he seeth not; and he walketh in circuit of heaven” (Job 22:13-14). Bildad rebuked Job for accusing God of being unfair. “How long wilt thou speak these *things*? And *how long shall* the words of thy mouth *be like* a strong wind? Doth God pervert judgment? Or doth the Almighty pervert justice?” (Job 8:2-3). Bildad wondered where Job got the nerve to consider himself wiser than his three friends. He was actually offended by Job’s arrogance. “Wherefore are we counted as beasts, *and* reputed vile in your sight?” (Job 18:3). He challenged Job to consider the God with whom he was dealing.

Dominion and fear *are* with him, he maketh peace in his high places. Is there any number of his armies? And upon whom do not his light arise? How then can a man be justified with God? or how can he be clean *that is* born of a woman? Behold, even to the moon, and it shineth not; yea the stars are not pure in is sight. How much less man, *that is* a worm? And the son of man, *which is* a worm? (Job. 25:1-5)

Bildad believed that if Job would consider the power of God He would be forced to realize that no mere man can be considered righteous or clean. He would realize that he was merely a worm. Perhaps, then Job would humble himself before God and admit his sin.

These three men completely missed one very important point. They were the ones displaying the haughty arrogance, not Job. They were the ones claiming to speak for God. Eliphaz seems to claim divine inspiration when he describes a dream as the source of his message (Job 4:12-21). He insists that he had carefully studied the reason for suffering, and he now had the answer. So Job should be wise enough to listen. “Lo this, we have searched it, so it *is*; hear it, and know thou *it* for thy good” (Job 5:27). He offered himself as an example of one who always listened to God. “I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause” (Job 5:8). Eliphaz even claimed that his very words were “the consolations of God” (Job 15:11).

Apparently it never occurred to them that in they were not only condemning Job, but themselves as well. If no man who is born of a woman could be justified by God, were they not also unrighteous? Were they not also born of women? By their reasoning, should they not also have been suffering as Job? It manifests a remarkable level of haughtiness to criticize someone in harsh terms, when such condemnation also condemns you. Paul said one who restores the erring should “consider” himself as well as the one to whom he was speaking. “Consider” is from a word that means “to look” (Vine 230), so Paul is saying that, when restoring an erring brother, we must also look to ourselves, “lest we also be tempted.” Jesus warned against such hypocritical judgment, “Judge not that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged” (Matt. 7:1-2). Such an unfair, judgmental attitude displays an arrogant superiority that makes it more difficult to reach an erring sinner. A humble, meek, and gentle spirit will be much more effective.

It is easy to see why Job referred to them as “miserable comforters.” Instead of coming with sympathy and support they had come with verbal sledge hammers to pound him into the ground. He had expected better from them. “To him that is afflicted pity

should be shown from his friend” (Job 6:14). They had done him more harm than good. “How long will ye vex my soul, and break me in pieces with words? These ten times ye have reproached me: ye are not ashamed that ye make yourselves strange to me” (Job 19:2-3). “How then comfort ye me in vain, seeing in your answers there remaineth falsehood?” (Job 21:34). “How hast thou helped *him that hath* no wisdom? *How* savest thou the arm *that hath* no strength?” (Job 26:2). He says he would have treated them better if the situation were reversed. “I also could speak as ye *do*: if your soul were in my soul’s stead, I could heap up words against you, and shake my head at you. *But* I would strengthen you with my mouth, and the moving of my lips should assuage *your grief*” (Job 16:4-5). Was their approach the one they would have wanted Job to use if the tables had been turned? He had not been able to find one wise man among them (Job 17:10). Shackelford observed, “Job saw his unremitting suffering as intensified by the lack of sympathetic words for his fellow human beings” (216). Billy Bland asked, “Couldn’t they be satisfied with the fact he was physically suffering? Must they also torment his soul?” (190).

Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar made one fundamental error in their attempts to explain Job’s suffering. This mistake has been repeated throughout the ages. They considered all human suffering to be punishment for sin. “What did I do to deserve this?” has been asked in many a difficult hour. Shackelford said, “They accepted this principle as a universal rule. As a result, a general truth was turned into falsehood when no exceptions were allowed” (66). It is true that sometimes sin does result in suffering, but not always. It may result from the sins of others, as in the case of Job’s possessions being stolen by the Sabeans and Chaldeans (Job 1:14-15, 17). It may come from natural disaster as in “the great wind” that took the lives of Job’s ten children (Job 1:18-19). Truthfully, Job had done nothing to deserve any of this. We make a serious mistake when we take a principle that is sometimes true and apply it to every situation.

Job’s friends never learned of the discussions between God and Satan. They never knew that he was being used as a test case. They had reached their conclusions without all the facts, but that did not prevent them from being absolutely positive of their positions. They

were certain, but they were certainly wrong. God was angered by their lack of compassion and their unauthorized speaking for Him. He told Eliphaz, “My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me *the thing that is right*, as my servant Job hath” (Job 42:7). This statement must have shocked Eliphaz and his friends. After all they had done to convince Job of his sin, how could he possibly be right and they wrong? It seems to be poetic justice that he is told to have Job offer sacrifices on their behalf or God would “deal with you *after your folly*” (Job 42:8). Although this must have been a bitter pill for them to swallow, they “did as the Lord commanded them” (Job 42:9).

Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar then disappear from the pages of the Bible, leaving us with many unanswered questions. It is satisfying to read of God’s vindication of Job. “And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he had prayed for his friends” (Job 42:10). Job had not been misled by their false ideas and accusations. He stayed true to his God, and his rewards were great.

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Biographical Sketch

Phil Grear was born in Parkersburg, WV and graduated from Harding University. He has preached for churches in West Virginia

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Phil and his wife Darleen have two children, Amy Andrick (husband, Luke) of Galloway, OH and Katie Gilchrist (husband, Jack) of Hermitage, PA. They have three grandchildren, Joanna and Emily Andrick, and Andrew Gilchrist.

The Justice of God

Job 34:1-30

Steve Snider

What a grand theme has been assigned me for our study this hour. “The Justice of God” is certainly a topic all mankind should be concerned with and yet it is one many give absolutely no thought to, or has so seriously distorted and perverted the idea that it would not be recognizable in light of what the Word of God teaches.

In order for us to understand our text Job 34:1-30 it is important to go back to the beginning of chapter 32 where a new character comes on the scene. Job’s three friends have had their say and Job has answered them, refusing to admit that what they had said was true. They said Job was suffering because of his sins and Job knew this wasn’t true. But Job appears to be struggling with how to reconcile his own righteous living with the righteous character and justice of God. Job can’t seem to put these two together. Now Elihu comes on the scene and his approach is going to be different. He will make a few mistakes in his thoughts but he looks at Job’s suffering from a different standpoint than the three friends. He doesn’t believe that Job is suffering because of his sins, but is suffering because of a gracious design on the part of God. He will try to convince Job that God is not his enemy and he is not suffering because of the wrath of God but is suffering because there is good to be found in the suffering.

On the one hand Elihu recognizes the complete failure of Job’s three friends; *“Also against his three friends his wrath was aroused, because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job”* (32:3). Isn’t that an interesting approach that many use today! So many in the religious world have no response to the clear truth of God’s word, yet they continue to condemn that truth and those that proclaim it! While recognizing the failure of the three friends he also sees a problem with Job in that Job tried to justify himself rather than God: *“Then the wrath of Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram, was aroused against Job; his wrath*

was aroused because he justified himself rather than God”(32:2). He gives his reasons for remaining silent up to this point. “I am young in years, and you are very old; Therefore I was afraid, And dared not declare my opinion to you. I said, ‘Age should speak, And multitude of years should teach wisdom” (32:6-7). After setting forth his reasons for not speaking, Elihu now wants everyone to remain silent while he speaks and gives his thoughts as to what has happened with regards to Job. “Therefore I say, ‘Listen to me, I also will declare my opinion.’ Indeed I waited for your words, I listened to your reasonings, while you searched out what to say. I paid close attention to you; And surely not one of you convinced Job or answered his words” (32:10-12) Elihu further points out that age does not always bring wisdom (32:9) and some believe claims for himself some revelation from God that has given him understanding on these matters (32:8). When Elihu speaks of “great men” he is referring to men of age and while the Bible teaches us to respect older servants of God (Lev. 19:32; Prov. 16:31; 20:29; 1 Tim.5:1-2) it must be understood that simply living a long time does not necessarily provide one with wisdom. Even among God’s children, there are some things that cannot be learned simply by experience but can be learned only by coming to the Word of God. It is God’s Word, not simply experience, that provides us with a knowledge of God, the will of God, and the ways of God. (Prov.2:6; Ps.119:105; 2 Tim.3:16-17; 2 Pet.1:3)

Moving on to chapter 33 Elihu seems to have a more sympathetic spirit than Job’s three friends (v.1-7).He pleads with Job to listen carefully to his words (v.1). He states his words are coming from an upright heart and then he gives God the glory as the one who created him. He tells Job in v.5 that he will give Job a chance to respond and then in v.6 admits that he too is made from clay and thus understands the struggles humans face. In v.7 he tells Job there is no need to fear him and he is not there to burden Job, so it seems he is saying he is not going to treat Job as his three friends treated him. Surely there are lessons for us to be learned in Elihu’s approach to Job’s struggles. Hopefully we will always remember that we are humans and we too have our weaknesses and our struggles. (Gal. 6:1). Hopefully it will never be our desire to unduly burden someone

who is already burdened, but instead will want to ease the pain and help them find peace and comfort through God and His word.

Continuing on in chapter 33:8-11 he then begins to refer to some things Job has said as he has defended himself against the charges his three friends were making. I think Elihu may have misunderstood what Job was saying as he defended himself against his three friends because Elihu seems to believe that Job is claiming to be sinless! I am not sure that is what Job meant. I don't think Job was claiming sinless perfection but was claiming that he was not a "rebellious, willful sinner" as his three friends had stated he must be! In v.10 Elihu points out that Job had said God was his enemy, and this is what Elihu intends to prove, that God is not his enemy. Job would say God had "set him up as a target" (7:20) had "regarded Job as His enemy" (13:24) and has counted Job as "one of His enemies"(19:11). Elihu intends to show this would violate the righteous character of God and also show that God may have had other reasons in mind for allowing these tragedies to come Job's way. Then in v.12 Elihu begins setting forth his case and he states some things that are important in our understanding the justice of God. In v.12 Elihu points out that God is greater than man. In v.13 he stresses God does not have to give an account of Himself to man. God is not accountable to us, we are accountable to God. We should always remember that because many people seem to forget it and seem to think just the opposite. Then in v.17-18 he tells Job that suffering can be used to cause us to stop and think about what is really important in life. How many times has someone who seemed to have no interest in spiritual matters, changed when some difficulty in life came their way? It can humble us and make us realize that we can't get along without God and that the things of this world can't really help us in times of great distress. Job may have drifted toward pride as he defended himself against his three friends and Elihu is pointing out that suffering can humble us, that it may not always be a punishment, but may be a disciplinary action to keep us from sin.

This brings us to our assigned passage, Job 34:1-30. Elihu pleads again for those present to hear his words and suggests that through hearing we test a truth just as we test food by tasting it. It would seem that Elihu had some understanding of the need to examine

what a person says and not simply accept it as truth because it is what we have always heard or believed! (Acts 17:10; 1 Thess. 5:19-21). At this point Elihu begins to recap what Job has said (v.5-9). Elihu points out that Job has declared his innocence and contends that God has taken his justice away. Job then proclaims that he would be a liar if he said otherwise and that the things he has suffered are beyond repair. Elihu states that Job has gone so far as to say “*it profits a man nothing that he should delight in God.*” Isn’t it fascinating how the thinking of men never changes through the ages! How many times have we heard people, in the midst of suffering, proclaim it apparently does not do anyone any good to serve God. Elihu seems shocked and scared by these claims of Job and tells Job that he scorns God as though he were simply drinking water and in behaving this way has identified himself with the wicked. I believe Elihu is making a very powerful point, even if he is misunderstanding Job’s intentions a little! How frightening it should be to any person to bring charges against God or make the accusation that there is no benefit in serving the God of heaven. At this point Elihu comes to a defense of the justice of God. He will state some things about God’s character that he believes will refute Job’s three friends arguments as well as what he believes Job is contending.

God Does No Wrong (10, 12)

While we believe this statement is true it might also be true that in making this statement Elihu is making the same mistake Job’s three friends made. It would appear he is telling Job that whatever has happened to him cannot be wrong because God does no wrong. If he is saying Job is getting what he deserves then he is wrong, but if he is simply saying that whatever is going on God cannot be accused of wrong then he is right! The prophet Habakkuk described God as one who has eyes too pure to look on evil or wickedness. (Hab. 1:13). The Psalmist would declare in Psalm 92:15 that God is upright and there is no unrighteousness in Him. Remember the question of Abraham to God when He told Abraham He was going to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah! Abraham asked “Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?” (Gen. 18:25). Of course, the answer to that question is, “Of course He will.” When we speak of God’s

justice we know it will always be just because the God of heaven can do no wrong. Paul would tell the Jews in Romans 2:5 “you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.” Paul would again say to persecuted Christians in Thessalonica that it will be a “righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you.” We can conclude this thought with Paul’s question in Romans 9:14, “What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not!”

God Will Repay Each Man According to His Works (11)

The second thing we learn about God’s justice is the simple truth that God will reward each person according to their deeds. As with the last point this truth is stressed in both the Old and New Testaments. The prophet Jeremiah would proclaim, “You are great in counsel and mighty in work, for your eyes are open to all the ways of the sons of men, to give to everyone according to his ways and according to the fruit of his doings” (32:19). Paul would say in Romans 2:6 that God “will render to each one according to his deeds;” and our Lord would say “And behold I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work” (Rev. 22:12). And maybe the passage we are most familiar with is found in Paul’s second letter to the church at Corinth when he wrote “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (5:10). It is an eternal principle that one reaps what he sows. We need to desperately believe that “God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows that he will also reap. For he who sows to the flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life” (Gal. 6:7-8). In Ezekiel 18 the people were obviously accusing God of being unfair. “Yet you say, the way of the Lord is not fair. Hear now, O house of Israel, is it not my way which is fair and your ways which are not fair?” (25). Then God explains that each person will be rewarded according to what they have done! If a righteous man turns from righteousness to iniquity he will die, but if a wicked man turns from his wickedness to righteousness, he will live (18:26-27). Then in 18:30 God declares “Therefore I will judge you, O house

of Israel, every one according to his ways.” Mankind may not like these results when his time on earth is done, but when it comes to the justice of God it will be completely fair because God will reward each person according to what he has done.

God is Impartial in His Judgments (19)

Elihu attempts to make clear to Job that God does not give special favor to anyone on account of his rank, his wealth, or from favoritism and partiality. As with each of these characteristics of God’s justice, this truth is found throughout God’s Word. In Leviticus 19:15 it is written “You shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty But in righteousness you shall judge your neighbor.” From the book of 2 Chronicles we read, “Now therefore, let the fear of the Lord be upon you; take care and do it, for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, no partiality, nor taking of bribes” (19:7). This was spoken to Jehoshaphat and notice that all the things we have mentioned up to this point are included here. Jehoshaphat needed to “do right,” needed to remember that God does no wrong, and that God’s judgments will be impartial! When Peter finally realized the significance of the vision that had sent him to Cornelius he declared “In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him” (Acts 10:35). To Christians at Rome it was simply stated “For there is no partiality with God.” (2:11). To slave owners Paul would warn, “And you masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master is also in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him” (Eph. 6:9). Many other passages could be cited but the meaning in all of them would be clear; God is entirely impartial in his dealings with mankind, and treats all as they ought to be treated. He shows favor to no one on account of wealth, rank, talent, office, or apparel, and he excludes no one from favor on account of poverty, ignorance, or a humble rank in life. In making this point Elihu further stated in Job 34:19, “For they all are the work of his hands.” God regards them all as his creatures. No one has any special claim on Him on account of rank, talent, or wealth. Every creature that He has made, high and low, rich and poor, bond

and free, may expect that impartial justice will be done him, and that his external circumstances will not control or modify God's determinations in regard to him, or God's dealings toward him.

As Judge, God Sees and Knows (21)

As the preceding verses showed that God's creative order excludes all partiality, so this verse shows that His omniscience qualifies Him to be an impartial judge. He sees everything, nothing can escape His gaze; He sees through man without being obliged to wait for the result of a judicial investigation. God is omniscient, and can discover that which is most secret. Just as the strongest cannot oppose His arm, so the most subtle cannot escape His eye. Everything is open before Him! "For His eyes are upon the ways of man." Not only is everything within reach of his eye, so that he can see them, but his eye is upon them, so that he actually observes and inspects them. He sees us all, and sees all our goings; go where we will, we are under his eye; all our actions, good and evil, are regarded and recorded and reserved to be brought into judgment when the books shall be opened. Nothing is or can be concealed from Him "There is no darkness nor shadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves" (v.22). There is nowhere man can go to hide himself from the discovering eye and avenging hand of the righteous God. There is no doubting that the workers of iniquity would hide themselves if they could from the eye of the world for shame (and that perhaps they may do), and from the eye of God for fear, as Adam attempted among the trees of the garden. They would gladly be hid even by the shadow of death, be hid in the grave, and lie for ever there, rather than appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; but it is vain to think of hiding from God's justice. The workers of iniquity may find ways and means to hide themselves from men, but not from God. As Solomon concluded his amazing book of Ecclesiastes he did so with these words. "Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing; whether it is good or whether it is evil" (Eccl. 12:13-14). The Hebrew writer would proclaim. "And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him

to whom we must give account” (Heb. 4:13). One of the criticisms of the use of capital punishment in our country is the risk of putting to death an innocent person. While it might be possible for a jury of men and women to misread the evidence in a trial and thus make a wrong judgment, such will never be the case with God! Elihu points out in v.23-25 that there is no need of investigation in order for God to make a proper judgment because He knows their works.

God Brings Judgments to Bring Men Back to Him (23-30)

God is here pictured as bringing judgment against individuals and nations because “they turned back from Him and would not consider any of His ways” (v.27). In v.30 the idea seems to be that God does this in order to keep wicked and hypocritical people in their place and to also keep others from being trapped by the idea that sin will go unpunished. The Hebrews writer taught the important principle that God chastens those He loves (12:5-6) and while the chastening may not seem pleasant or joyful (12:11) if accepted it produces the fruits of righteousness. Man needs to study God’s Word, look at the judgments God has brought against nations and individuals and learn from them that we might not make the same mistakes they made (1 Cor. 10:1-11).

Conclusion

Let me close our study of the justice of God by reading two more passages. The first is Deuteronomy 32:1-4 “Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak; And hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. Let my teaching drop as the rain, My speech distill as the dew, As raindrops on the tender herb, And as showers on the grass. For I proclaim the name of the Lord: Ascribe greatness to our God. He is the Rock, His work is perfect; For all His ways are justice, A God of truth and without injustice; Righteous and upright is He.” Then the Psalmist would proclaim in Psalm 33:5 “He loves righteousness and justice; The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.” All people need to be aware of the justice of God. For those who are living in sin it will be a terrible day to experience the justice of God, but to those who are following Him, trusting Him, serving Him, it will not be a day of fear but a day of great joy as they receive their eternal reward.

We can rest assured today that whatever God's judgment it will be right, because God does no wrong, God will simply reward each person according to their works, God is impartial, and God sees all and knows all. Only God can bring that kind of justice to the world.

Works Cited

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Biographical Sketch

Steve Snider was born in Clarksburg, WV in 1954. He is married to the former Dianne Hatcher and they had two children Aaron and Stephanie. Before Aaron's passing, he was a Gospel preacher. Stephanie is a school teacher and is married to a Gospel preacher. Steve is a graduate of Preston Road School of Preaching. He also received a B.A. from Southeastern Biblical Institute and a M.A. from Southern Christian University.

Steve preached for the church in Barrackville, WV from 1977-1981, the Alpharetta church of Christ in Alpharetta, GA from 1981-1983, and then returned to preach for the church of Christ in Barrackville in 1983 and is still working with the church there. Steve has been making yearly mission trips to India since 1991. Steve became part of the faculty of WVSOP in its second year and has been teaching several classes ever since.

The Benefits of Suffering

In Job and Elsewhere

Earl D. Edwards

The word “suffering” is not found in the New American Standard translation of the book of Job, but the concept is found there. “Suffering” refers to the “bearing of pain, injury, or loss” (Funk 874). Though Job was, comparatively speaking, a righteous man (1:3), yet tragedy came upon him. His donkeys and oxen were stolen and some of his servants slain (1:14-15). His sheep and other servants were burned to death (1:16). His camels were stolen and others of his servants slain (1:17). His children were all killed by a “great wind” (1:19). He was struck in his entire body “with painful boils” (2:7). In addition, his wife abandoned him by advising him to “curse God and die” and several “friends” came and began rebuking him for alleged flagrant, hidden sins (4:1ff). We can only imagine how he suffered.

But can such suffering bring benefits, blessings? James says it can. He writes, by inspiration, that one should “. . . count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing” (1:2-4, NKJV). And, the same James even gives Job as an example of one who reaped benefits from his suffering. James says, “Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful” (5:11). Amazingly, he affirms that Job was “blessed” by enduring suffering. As Gary Holloway writes,

James’ readers knew Job’s story and had seen (literally in Greek) “the end of the Lord.” End here might mean both culmination and purpose. Job’s sufferings did not last forever but came to an end. God also had an end or purpose in mind in causing Job to suffer. His suffering was not meaningless. In the same way, Christians may suffer now,

but if they persevere, their troubles will end, and they will see their purpose. Thus, “end of the Lord” refers to the end of Job’s story, as the NIV translates, “What the Lord finally brought about.” Job sees the coming of the Lord God in the whirlwind (Job 38-41). As a result of God’s coming, Job’s prosperity is restored and even increased (Job 42:10-17). Christians wait for the coming of the Lord Jesus who will restore their fortunes. (121)

Yes, Job was blessed by his sufferings and we can be also. However, to enjoy those promised blessings, we must manifest the right disposition. And what is the right disposition? Does that mean never complaining about sufferings? It does not. As Holloway says,

If one reads the book of Job, he seems an unlikely example of patience since he loudly complains to God. However, it is not quiet patience James has in mind here but heroic endurance. Job endured all that Satan threw against him and still maintained his relationship with God. (121)

Indeed, Job complained, but his disposition was that of maintaining his relationship with God despite the sufferings he was undergoing. He said, “As long as my breath is in me, I will not put away my integrity” (Job 27:3-5). With this disposition we, too, can reap benefits from our sufferings. But what are these benefits?

Knowing God Better

In the first 39 chapters of the book, Job thinks of God as a being with whom he can sustain and even win a discussion about his sufferings. He even comes to the point of challenging God. As Don Shackelford writes (about chapter 10, verse 2),

At this point in the dialogue Job entered into direct confrontation with God. Job addressed his questions to the only One who could provide answers to the perplexities of life. “I will say to God, ‘Do not condemn me’.” Literally, Job said, “Stop condemning me as wicked.” In reality, God had

not done this. However, Job shared the same presuppositions held by his friends—that the righteous prosper and the wicked suffer.

“*Let me know why You contend with me.*” The text literally says, “Cause me to know why You contend with me.” Job wanted God to clarify His charges against him. James Strahan noted that in chapter 10 Job “reaches the highest point of alienation.” He not only felt he was alienated from God, but also that God was unjustly condemning him through the suffering he experienced. (121)

In fact, in the next verse (10:3), Job very nearly accuses God of supporting the wicked and oppressing the righteous. And down in verse 20, he even challenges God to “leave” him “alone” and seems to imagine he has won the debate! In chapter 23:3-6, he says of God:

Oh, that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come to His seat! I would present my case before Him, and fill my mouth with arguments. I would know the words which He would answer me, and understand what He would say to me. Would He contend with me in His great power? No! But He would take note of me.

As John Hartley says,

Job focuses his attention on his primary wish, an audience with God. If he only knew where to find God, he would enter the hall leading to God’s *throne*. . . . Before the heavenly court, Job would persuasively present his case before God. Out of his mouth would pour an array of convincing arguments. (338)

He believes he fully knows God and he would be able to sustain a discussion with Him to get all the wrongs against him corrected. But how did it turn out when Job finally attained his audience with God? We see that beginning in chapter 38.

Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said: “Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me. Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?” (vv.1-7)

Then throughout chapters 38 and 39, God asks Job dozens and dozens and dozens more questions about the creation and the functioning of the physical universe. Then in chapter 40, God challenged Job, “Would you indeed annul My judgment? Would you condemn Me that you may be justified?” (v.8). Then God shows Job two beasts of His creation (behemoth and leviathan) and asks him if he is strong enough to subdue them. And, of course, he is not.

And how does the previously confident Job answer all these queries? “Then Job answered the Lord and said: ‘Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer You? I lay my hand over my mouth’” (40:3-4). And again he answered in chapter 42 –

I know that You can do everything, and that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You. You asked, “Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?” Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. Listen, please, and let me speak; You said, “I will question you, and you shall answer Me.” I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. (2-6)

Through his suffering, Job had come to *know God much better*. As Shackelford says (in his comments on 4:5), “Job contrasted his prior knowledge of God with what he had come to know after the Lord’s speeches” (494). He learned that God is all powerful and all wise

and man knows so little about God and His universe that it is foolish for man to question God's doings. Man can't even *see* a millionth part of God's universe! How, then, can he tell God how to run it?

When I suffer and am tempted to ask WHY, as Job did, I cannot expect to have a personal audience with God as the patriarch did, but I can learn a lot about God, get to know Him better, if I will allow my pain and suffering to drive me to study the book of Job and other Biblical books. I must admit when I lost a dear loved one several years back, I was tempted to do a "Why me?" pity party. But the study of Job and other biblical books reconfirmed in me the conviction that, though I may not understand what is happening to me at the moment, God does. And, therefore, I need to simply trust in Him because, as James affirms, "the Lord is very compassionate and merciful" (5:11). And, if I trust Him, all will end well. Indeed, my suffering can help me to know God better. That's the first benefit. But, note, a second benefit of suffering.

Knowing Myself Better

My suffering can also help me know myself more fully. Before the attack of September 11, 2001, on New York and Washington, D.C., many Americans felt like the U.S.A. was not vulnerable. Jerusalem and Rome and even London might be attacked, but not New York. But when we lost nearly three thousand fellow Americans, we were forced to re-evaluate. We were vulnerable. We came to know ourselves (our real situation) much better and it is beneficial to understand your real situation so as to better prepare yourself for future challenges.

Before his encounter with God, Job did not fully know himself. Yes, he thought of himself as having sinned (13:26), but still he believed he was a rather good model of an upright man. In fact, in chapter 31, he even takes "a vow of innocence" in which he lists numerous kinds of sins (some list twelve types which run from falsehood to sexual sins, failing to help orphans, trusting in wealth, and worshipping heavenly bodies) and swears that he is not harboring such sins. In fact, the oath consists of saying, "God, if I am telling a falsehood I invite you to strike me dead or punish me in so-and-so manner!" Hartley notes that in the ancient world,

The swearer usually suppresses the actual curse either with evasive language or abbreviated formulas, no doubt fearful of the very verbalizing of a specific curse. But Job is so bold that four times he specifies the curse that should befall him if he be guilty (vv. 8, 10, 22, 40). His wreckless [sic] bravery reflects his unwavering confidence in his own innocence. (406-07)

And, so far as we know Job was innocent of those particular sins (see 42:8), but what he did not realize is that while he was bragging about barring his front door against those sins, pride and arrogance were sneaking in his back door! He did not fully know himself and so after he sees the bigger picture he cries out, “Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand . . . therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (42:3, 6). Job does not brag about the self he now sees, he “abhors” it. As Lewis Browne says, “. . . thus Job is made to realize at last the arrogance of his complaints. He becomes aware that the entire problem of human-suffering is infinitesimally small when seen in relation to the entire cosmic scheme” (71). Indeed, Job’s suffering helped him to *know himself better*, causing him to “repent in dust and ashes.”

Doesn’t our suffering sometimes help us to know ourselves better? I have a relative who was in his earlier life very strong physically and rather arrogant in his assessment of his own abilities and rather intolerant of others’ weaknesses. He didn’t need anyone to help him! But now in his old age he has become sickly and almost blind, thus dependent on others for almost everything. Such dependence causes him a great deal of suffering. He seems to be mellowing, becoming less arrogant and more kind. I am hoping that his suffering will lead him to understand himself better (that he is not perfect) and to eventual repentance. As Edward Myers says,

The man who spends some time *on his back in a hospital room often sees things in a clearer light* than he ever saw them while he was going through life without a care or a worry. This is not to say that when a man becomes sick there

is rejoicing; but to accept illness in the proper manner can be a blessing, both to the person involved and to those with whom he comes in contact. (174)

Indeed, instead of arrogantly defending ourselves as totally innocent we need to cry as the psalmist did: “Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my mind and my heart” (26:2). In other words, help me to fully know myself.

As Eddie Cloer says, “try” in this verse “indicates his plea to be put in circumstances that would put his faith into action” (343). Said “circumstances” might well include suffering. Indeed, suffering can help me know myself better. But, now note a third potential benefit of suffering.

Comforting Others Better

There is nothing in the book of Job that speaks to this point but other Scriptures do tell us that our sufferings can aid us in ministering to others who suffer. The supreme example of this is Jesus Himself. The Hebrews writer says of Him, “For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted” (2:18).

In commenting on this verse, Jim Girdwood & Peter Verkruyse say, “Jesus’ suffering came from temptation, as does our suffering. It made him able to help all of us who also suffer and are tempted. Knowing that he also suffered, we open ourselves to him” (101-02). We go to Him because we know He understands. He is a better Comforter, because He has been where we are. And not only has He been there, He dealt with His suffering successfully, without sinning (Heb. 4:15).

Paul also teaches us that our “tribulations” (sufferings) prepare us to be better equipped to be able to help others. He says,

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort. Who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. (2 Cor. 1:3-4)

It is clear “that” (v.4) one reason God comforts me in my “tribulation” is in order that I might “be able to,” in turn, “comfort those” others who need it. In other words, my suffering and the comfort God gives me while going through it helps prepare me to be a better comforter to others. We are “created in Christ Jesus for good works” (Eph. 2:10) and this is one “good work” he wishes us to do. And if I have gone through suffering myself and been comforted by God, I have been prepared by Him to be a better comforter.

My wife has, in the last fifteen years, been through two successful series of chemotherapy treatments for cancer. There were some pretty difficult moments – hair loss and nausea and loss of appetite and strength – but God comforted her and for several years now she has been cancer free. Early this year her younger sister in California was diagnosed with cancer and is undergoing weekly treatments. My wife has been on the phone with her weekly and sometimes daily talking about what to expect and how she can beat it if God wills. She is a better comforter than I because she has had cancer. This is a benefit of suffering. But now note a final benefit of suffering.

Desiring Heaven More Passionately

There is much suffering and many tribulations to be endured by each one of us here on earth. Surely, Bert Thompson is correct in affirming that “Suffering and evil serve to remind us that this world was never designed to be man’s eternal abode” (284). We are only strangers and pilgrims here, looking for a better place to live, that is a place with God. In fact, as Thomas B. Warren affirms, whether in persecution or other suffering, the faithful Christian “must trust God, as his Father, to have designed his environment so that he has some morally sufficient reason (providing him ‘a vale of soul making’) for having created a situation in which such events could occur. One must say, in effect, ‘Even though I die, yet will I trust him’” (73).

Notice Warren’s description of this world as a “vale of soul making” where our sufferings, when approached with a proper attitude and prayer, can help us to *develop our souls*, preparing them for eternity where we can live with God forever in a place where “God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no

more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away” (Rev. 21:4). G. K. Wallace wrote,

If we never had any trouble in this world, we would have no desire to leave it. No one desires to move unless he finds better conditions. . . . The prayer of a man will sometimes indicate whether or not he has known trouble. . . . In the hour of great trouble we realize that we are entirely and wholly dependent on Jehovah, our God. A grandmother knows how to sympathize because she has known trouble. . . . Jehovah not only promises to sustain his children during the hour of trouble but to go with them through the valley of the shadow of death. (8)

And, we add, he will then escort them into that beautiful place called heaven, the “beautiful land of light.” As I was writing this lesson in the last week of March (2013), I called to check on the state of the health of a fellow evangelist of mine who served as a missionary in Italy with me. He was in very bad physical condition with heart trouble, diabetes, and a broken hip. He was in intense pain and in a very weak voice he cried and said, “Earl, I want to go home.” He did not mean his earthly residence! Indeed, our sufferings *here* intensify our desire to be over *there*. This is still another benefit of our sufferings.

Conclusion

Wayne Jackson does a good job of summing up some of the benefits of suffering. He wrote,

Let us briefly consider some of life’s lessons, learned only in the crucible of agony. (a) Suffering throws a floodlight upon human frailty. If one is wise, adversity will drive him to his knees and impel him to search for the noble meaning in life. As Israel’s king once confessed: “In my distress I called upon Jehovah, and cried unto my God” (Ps. 18:6). (b) Suffering can sharpen our awareness of the real value of

things. It can bring family members together and underscore the value of precious friendships. The poet John Dryden wrote: “We, by our sufferings, learn to prize our bliss.” (c) Suffering can bring forth the finest moral/social qualities of which the human being is capable. For example, we are able to show compassion for others who are hurting when we have passed through the fires of pain ourselves (cf. Heb. 2:18). And think about “courage.” Who among us does not honor that admirable trait? Yet courage could never exist but for the presence of *danger*. And what of “patience”? Is this rich quality, so coveted by rational people, ever needed—except in an environment of distress? It is a foolish person indeed who sees suffering only in a negative light. (143-44)

Indeed, there are many benefits to be derived from suffering. God help us to gain them when we face sufferings in our lives.

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Biographical Sketch

Since 1997, Earl D. Edwards has served as one of the evangelists at the Finger, TN, church of Christ and since '99 as one of the elders. In addition, Edwards preaches in about 20 meetings, seminars and lectureships each year all over the U.S. and in numerous foreign countries. In 2007, he published *Protecting Our "Blind Side,"* which deals with many "contemporary issues" in churches of Christ. In 2008, he authored the Truth for Today commentary volume on *First and Second Thessalonians*.

An Ethical Life

Job 31:1-40

Roger Rush

Introduction

I want to express my appreciation to Andy Robison and the elders of the Hillview Terrace congregation for the invitation to be a part of the WWSOP Victory Lectures this year. I appreciate the good work being done here, and the growth of the kingdom and salvation of souls which will result from the effort put forth to train men to preach the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ.

My assignment is to address the subject of an ethical life from Job 31:1-40. Students of the Bible immediately identify Job as the Old Testament character singled out by Satan for special testing. The Devil argued that Job was only righteous because God had built a hedge around him. If the Lord withdrew His blessing, Job would curse God to His face. Of course, that was not the case. Job's wealth was stolen, his children killed, and his health destroyed, yet Job refused to blame God. He said: "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly" (Job 1:21-22). Even after his wife challenged him, "Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die (Job 2:9), he replied, "Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips" (Job 2:10).

Calamity had struck this righteous man through no fault of his own. He did not know why, but he did know that he could not abandon his faith. He had many questions, but no answers. His three friends were of no comfort. Their responses are best summarized in the words of Eliphaz the Temanite when he said to Job: "Remember, I pray thee, who *ever* perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off? Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same" (Job 4:7-8). Bildad and Zophar

reinforced the message that Job had no one to blame for his troubles but himself, leading Job to call them “miserable comforters” (Job 16:2), and “physicians of no value” (Job 13:4).

Throughout much of the book which bears his name, Job struggled to understand the cause of his suffering. Personally, I’m not sure that he ever truly understood why his life fell apart, but he had no intention of turning away from God because of it. On one occasion he asserted: “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him” (Job 13:15).

It is interesting to see the progression in his thinking as he dealt with his ordeal and the arguments of his friends. He responded in a very human way. The progression is summarized as follows:

“I wish I had never been born” (3:3, 11).

“I wish I was dead” (6:8, 9; 7:13-16).

“I wish I understood” (9:32, 33; 10:2)

“I wish you would just shut up” (13:1-5).

“I wish I had better friends” (16:1-5).

“I wish I wasn’t so alone” (19:13-19).

“I wish life was fair” (21:7-17).

“I wish God would explain it to me” (23:1-5).

“I wish it was like it used to be” (29:1-11).

It is worth noting that Job was a man of great integrity, moral uprightness, and genuine faith, yet he still had doubts. He did not understand everything. The trouble which came to him was inexplicable, but that was no reason to abandon faith or disparage righteousness.

An Overview of Job 31:1-40

Job rejected the idea that he had been guilty of lustful thoughts. He had not looked upon a woman with lust in his heart because he knew that God looked upon him and followed his every step (vs. 1-4).

He denied that he had ever treated others dishonestly. If he had cheated others by using a false balance, he was willing to be weighed in the same scales by the Almighty. He had striven throughout life to

be honest in business and knew that God would find him blameless (vs. 5-8).

Job was committed to the sanctity of marriage. He had been faithful to his wife. He was no adulterer. If he had been, he deserved to be punished. His own wife should be given a menial task and defiled by other men, but no such sin had characterized his life to justify his suffering (vs. 9-12).

The servants of Job had been treated fairly with the dignity all men deserve, regardless of their social standing. He had heard their complaints with impartiality and responded justly. If he had not done so, he would have no right to complain to God as he was now doing (vs. 13-15).

Job denied ever oppressing the poor or needy. He had not lived a selfish life. Charges that he had failed in this area (22:7-9) were completely untrue. He had been especially responsive to the needs of the widow and orphan. If that was not true, then he deserved punishment (vs. 16-23).

Materialism and idolatry were also denounced. Job had not trusted in riches, nor did he turn to other gods. He had not worshiped gold, nor had he looked to the sun and moon in worship of creation as was common among many of his contemporaries. To do so would have made him untrue to God (vs. 24-28).

Job had not been guilty like other men of rejoicing in the calamities of his enemies. Those of his household always had plenty to eat, and strangers enjoyed his hospitality too. He was not a hypocrite either. What people saw was the real Job, not an act for public consumption (vs. 29-34).

Job simply desired a fair hearing. His accusers were not listening to him. He was not arrogant. He was sincere. If his friends could show him his transgressions, he would not deny them, but they were unable to do so. He was ready to take his case to the high court of heaven, and plead his case before the Almighty. He would come before God like a prince before the king. He would give a full and honest account of his life (vs. 35-37).

A wealthy landowner, Job had not mistreated his servants, and was guilty of no fraud or injustice. His fields had not been overworked, nor his servants abused. If so, he would deserve punishment. Thus,

he concluded his defense (vs. 38-40).

Innocent of the charges leveled against him, he denied almost a dozen specific sins in his final defense. He was ready for God to step in and make it all clear to him. If he was truly innocent, God would vindicate him, and if guilty, he deserved the punishment inflicted upon him. But, God remained silent for the moment. He would speak when He was ready. He could not be goaded into action. He was still in charge, and the time to respond had not yet arrived, but Job had shown himself a morally and ethically upright man, the kind of man we should all strive to become.

An Ethical Life

According to A. W. Tozer,

One of our great tasks is to demonstrate to the young people of this generation that there is nothing stupid about righteousness. To do so, we must stop negotiating with evil. We Christians must stop apologizing for our moral position and start making our voices heard, exposing sin as the enemy of the human race and setting forth righteousness and true holiness as the only worthy pursuit for moral beings. I have no doubt that historians will conclude that we of the twentieth century (should the Lord tarry) had intelligence enough to create a great civilization but not the moral wisdom to preserve it. (No page number provided)

There are only two approaches to ethics and morality. Either we believe that right conduct is based on some authoritative standard, or we believe that morality is entirely relative --- that there are no fixed standards of right and wrong. If we do not accept some standard as authoritative in regard to moral and ethical issues, then we are put in the position of making those decisions for ourselves. The Bible describes this attitude when the historian wrote concerning the period of the Judges: “In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judg. 17:6). As you might imagine, chaos was the result.

For the Christian, the Bible is our standard for right and wrong.

On its pages we discover what is authorized, approved, and desired by God in the heart and actions of his people. Some things are always right and some things are always wrong!

Right and wrong are not determined on the basis of what is easiest, brings the most pleasure, or feels best in a given situation. Proper moral and ethical conduct is prescribed on the pages of God's word. With the Psalmist we should exclaim, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Ps. 119:105).

It is our belief that the Bible offers the only basis upon which we may make morally and ethically sound judgments.

Definition of Terms

Ethics is the discipline dealing with what is good or bad and with moral duty and obligation; a set of moral principles or values; a theory or system of moral values (the present-day materialistic ethics).

Morality: a moral discourse, statement, or lesson; a doctrine or system of moral conduct.

Moral: of or relating to principles of custom; conforming to a standard of right behavior; expressing or teaching a conception of right behavior. "Moral implies conformity to established sanctioned codes or accepted notions of right and wrong; Ethical may suggest the involvement of more difficult or subtle questions of rightness, fairness, or equity" (Merriam-Webster 756)

The terms morals and ethics are closely related in original meaning. The first term comes from the Latin "moralis" and the second from the Greek "ethos". Both terms meant "the custom or way of life" (Titus 359).

The terms right and good are also frequently used in ethics and must be understood. Right comes from the Latin "rectus," meaning "straight" or "in a line." It implies conformity to some standard. Good applies to that which has desirable qualities, satisfies some need, or has value for human beings.

Approaches to Ethics and Morality

The need for ethical and moral principles to guide us should be self-evident. Life demands that we make decisions. Some are trivial, and others are so important that they affect our entire lives and the lives of others. In order to have an orderly social life we must have agreements, principles, and rules of conduct. We cannot choose whether or not we will have them, but we can choose whether or not we will conform to them. We cannot divorce ourselves from moral and ethical decisions. We must make moral and ethical decisions every day. Therefore, we need some basis or standard whereby we can make good moral judgments.

There are only two possibilities to consider. We may hold to the belief that moral and ethical conduct is based on some authoritative standard, like the Bible, or we may claim that morality is entirely relative. That means that there are no fixed moral or ethical standards. This may be referred to as ethical relativism or subjectivism.

The subjectivists in ethical theory are saying that whatever an individual or a group thinks or feels to be good is good -- for him or it. Ethical statements, they say, refer to the feelings and emotions of men; therefore there are no permanent principles of morality and no objective standards on the basis of which we may judge an act right or wrong (Titus 3:6).

Subjectivists believe that all truth is relative. What might be true for one person might prove untrue for another. Christians, on the other hand, hold to the idea that truth is absolute. There are some things which are always wrong and never right, and there are some things that are always right and never wrong. The subjectivist responds that "there are no absolutes, and of that they are absolutely certain." To that argument we raise one question, "When is it ever right to mentally, physically, or sexually abuse an infant or small child?" If the answer is never, then subjectivism is false, and if subjectivists seek some situation as justification for such abuse, they are shown to be morally bankrupt.

Proposed Ethical Standards

Over the centuries various ethical standards have been set forth.

What follows is a very brief overview of some of the more popular ones.

Moral Law As The Ethical Standard - sometimes called formalism, was developed by Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). Kant sought moral principles which were inherently right or wrong apart from any particular circumstances. He believed in a sense of duty or reason from within man himself.

Pleasure As A Guide To Ethics – posits the idea that pleasure or happiness is the greatest good in life and is also known as hedonism, Epicureanism, or utilitarianism. Utilitarianism stresses the consequences of conduct.

Self-Realization – was the system advocated by Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. The good life avoids the extremes of both excessive repression and excessive indulgence.

Situation Ethics - or contextual ethics argues that authoritative rules and regulations are to be rejected. Joseph Fletcher says, “Anything and everything is right or wrong, according to the situation” (Fletcher 124). Moral and ethical decisions are based on the question, “What would love do?”

Biblical Ethics And Morality – argues for the fact that our world could not have happened by accident. There is a benevolent, divine being, and He created us in his image. Such a God would not leave his creation without specific instructions regarding moral and ethical decisions. The Bible serves as the basis for all moral and ethical choices (2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

The post-modern world has declared the Bible an outdated and irrelevant book, perhaps in part, because of the fact that it is so relevant. It addresses the moral and ethical questions most significant to modern society, but in a way that society finds highly objectionable. The Bible sets forth moral and ethical principles which modern men find repressive and unacceptable. Rather than simply acknowledge an unwillingness to subscribe to Divine principles which have served humanity well for several millennia, it is deemed easier to entirely discredit the Book.

Faulty Standards

It almost goes without saying that modern man has embraced

almost every basis for moral decisions but the Bible. Some believe that moral and ethical decisions can be based on feelings. If it feels right it must be right, but feelings are not an adequate basis upon which to make right choices (Prov. 16:25; Matt. 7:21-23). Others believe that we should simply follow our conscience. But our conscience can deceive us (Rom. 14:23; Acts 23:1). Still others believe in common sense. Jeremiah rejected common sense as the sole basis for making decisions (Jer. 10:23).

We believe the Scriptures are the only absolute, objective standard by which moral and ethical decisions can be made. They are the “commandments of the Lord” (1 Cor. 14:37), and are thus perceived not as “the word of men, but the word of God” (1 Thess. 2:13). “All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

Acknowledging the Bible to be the Word of God, we approach the matter of an ethical life from the perspective that we are accountable to a Higher Power (Eccles. 12:13, 14). We are incapable, on our own, of navigating the moral and ethical seas in which we find ourselves adrift (Prov. 14:12, 16:25; Jer. 10:23). But we have not been left to drift aimlessly upon this sea. God has given us a compass (the Bible) by which we may chart our course in a morally and ethically upright manner (Ps. 19:1-3, 7-11).

Rather than simply deal with the “thou shalt” and “shalt not” passages of the Bible, we will emphasize the importance of discovering the basic Biblical principles which were to govern men under both covenants (Old & New Testaments).

Old Testament Moral and Ethical Principles

First, we see the emergence of the individual and the transition to full individual response-bility. Instead of meting out punishment to an entire group, we read: “The soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezek. 18:20; Deut. 24:16; 2 Kings 14:6; Jer. 31:29, 30; etc.).

We see emphasis upon personal purity and sincerity in place of ritual and outward con-formity. “Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart (1 Sam. 16:7). “What

doth the Lord require but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God” (Mic. 6:8).

There is a growing social passion for justice and righteousness in the affairs of community and nation (Amos 2:6, 7; 5:11, 12; 8:4-6).

New Testament Moral and Ethical Principles

Jesus emphasized the value of the self or person. Man is of greater value than anything else. Other things acquire their value according to their relation to or effect upon man’s life (Luke 12:15; Matt. 16:26).

This is apparent in the way first century society regarded the Sabbath, and in particular Jesus’ religious contemporaries. He and His disciples were frequently criticized for supposed violations of the Sabbath law. Jesus taught that “The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27). Further, He accused them of being more interested in clinging to their traditions than obeying the laws of God (Matt. 15:1-13).

Jesus emphasized the principle of the progressive growth of personality. Life was not static. It does not stand still. It is either grow or die! He saw in all men the prospect of growth - tax collectors, the immoral, etc. all had worth and deserved opportunity to change. His exchange with the woman at Jacob’s well (John 4), and His treatment of the woman caught in adultery (John 8) both illustrate this principle. No one is beyond the scope of God’s love. Every soul has worth or value, no matter how scarred or stained by sin. We can illustrate this by taking a ten dollar bill, old and dirty, perhaps torn and smudged. Wad it up, step on it, spit on it, stain it with coffee, yet it is still worth ten dollars. So it is with man! Every soul is worth saving, because every soul has value. We are all made in the image of our Creator. Jesus died for us all.

He emphasized the law of love (John 13:35; Luke 10:25-37). The kind of love He emphasized promotes the interests of others above our own (Philip. 2:1-8). It demands equality of treatment, even toward our enemies (Matt. 5:38-48; 7:12). It requires sincerity of motivation or intention (Rom. 12:9). The scope of this love must go beyond self and neighbor to encompass God (Matt. 22:37-39).

Jesus emphasized right conduct and religion as inseparably linked. Luke recorded what He began to do and teach (Acts 1:1). He lived a sinless life (1 Pet. 2:22; Heb. 4:15). Although we cannot be sinless, we can be faithful! A morally and ethically upright life demands holiness, righteousness, and godliness (Titus 2:11, 12; 1 Pet. 1:15, 16; Heb. 12:14).

Many questions of a moral and ethical nature are easily answered. God has addressed them in His word with a clear “thou shalt” or “thou shalt not.” Some examples include “thou shalt not steal,” “thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s wife,” and “thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” It would be nice if every moral and ethical question was easily answered, and for the most part they are, but there are some moral and ethical questions which may not be as black or white as we would desire. It is to those questions that the above cited principles prove indispensable, and even then, good men may find cause to disagree, but we would hope, always in the spirit of Christ.

Here are some moral and ethical questions where good men have disagreed. Is capital punishment acceptable under the gospel dispensation? A follow-up to that question would be: Do the Biblical demands of the Old Testament hold true today, or are they trumped by the ethics of Jesus? Another area of honest disagreement involves the question: Can a Christian serve his country in the military, other than in a non-combat role? A further question might also be raised. To what extent can one take up arms to defend himself, his family, or others?

It would be remiss not to raise this question: “Can manmade moral and ethical laws supersede or overrule Divine Law?” A majority of the public and an even greater number of our political and educational leaders seem to think so. It is because of their arrogant indifference to the moral and ethical principles of our Creator that we have abortion on demand, legalized gambling, easy divorce, rampant sexual immorality, the advancement of a homosexual agenda, and an effort to redefine marriage. That list is by no means exhaustive. Christians are first and foremost amenable to the law of God. When confronted with these issues, and others, we must not forget the response of the Apostles, and reply in kind, “We must

obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29 ASV).

Job set a high standard of moral and ethical conduct. Jesus set an even higher one. To the extent possible, it should be our desire, like Job, to set an example of the highest moral and ethical conduct we are capable of demonstrating as we conform to the words and example of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

Our postmodern culture argues that the Bible is an outdated, irrelevant text. Therefore, it is wrong to appeal to it as an authoritative standard for morality. Robert Williams, in his book, *Just As I Am: A Practical Guide to Being Out, Proud, and Christian*, offers the following argument in defense of homosexuality:

The point is not really whether or not some passage in the Bible condemns homosexual acts; the point is that you cannot allow your moral and ethical decisions to be determined by the literature of a people whose culture and history are so far removed from your own. You must dare to be iconoclastic enough to say, “So what if the Bible does say it? Who cares?” (128)

Sadly, Mr. Williams echoes the sentiments of a lot of folks when he dismisses the moral relevancy of Scripture. People have a problem with authority, especially Biblical authority. Folks want to be religious, but they also want to be free to do as they choose. This is not something new. Again, it was said of the children of Israel in the days of the judges, “In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judg. 17:6; 21:25).

An iconoclast is somebody who challenges or overturns traditional beliefs, customs, and values. For the iconoclast truth is whatever he wants it to be. Anything in the Bible which is objectionable is declared to be culturally irrelevant. The argument is generally framed as follows. The Bible is thousands of years old. The fastest Moses, Jesus, Paul ever traveled was five or six miles an hour. Today, we can board a plane and fly anywhere in the world at six hundred miles an hour. How can the Bible possibly be relevant

in our modern, highly technological world? The answer is pretty simple. A man can lust, covet, or slander his neighbor at six hundred miles an hour just as easily as he can at six miles an hour. Make no mistake, our world is far more technologically advanced than the world of the Bible, but people are still the same.

The Bible anticipated the iconoclasts and their attacks on the integrity and relevancy of Scripture when it asserted: “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb. 13:8). Is there a part of the *Sermon on the Mount* that doesn’t resonate today with the honest reader? What truth in God’s ancient book can be demonstrated to no longer be true?

Either the Bible is the word of God or it isn’t. It claims to be inspired, authoritative, all-sufficient, and by implication inerrant (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). Those claims can be defended. Therefore, to reject what the Bible says about morality or any other matter is to reject the authority of the Creator Himself. Biblical morality may not be popular, but it is right!

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Biographical Sketch

Roger Rush is a native of Fairmont, WV. He is married to the former Diane Bond of Senecaville, Ohio. They have two children,

Angela and Adam. Both live in Columbus, OH. Angela is a C. P. A., and is married to Mike Willman. Mike and Angela have 7 year old twins, Abby and Andy. Adam is a Physician at Riverside Methodist Hospital in Columbus. Roger has worked with the Sixth & Washington Streets congregation in Marietta, OH since October of 1985.

The Witness of Heaven

Job 16:18-22

Aaron Burch

“O earth, do not cover my blood,
And let my cry have no resting place!
Surely even now my witness is in heaven,
And my evidence is on high.
My friends scorn me;
My eyes pour out tears to God.
Oh, that one might plead for a man with God,
As a man pleads for his neighbor!
For when a few years are finished,
I shall go the way of no return.”

In these verses, Job expresses the pain, the desire, and the hope of an embattled soul. Chapter 16 falls within the second cycle of speeches by Job and his 3 friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar (chaps. 15-21) (Archer 504; Zorn 348). Throughout the first cycle of speeches (chaps. 4-14), Job consistently and vehemently argued his innocence (cf. 10:1-7; 12:4; 13:7-19, 23). Chapter 15 records the second speech of Eliphaz, in which he berates Job’s wisdom [i.e., the righteous suffer and sometimes the wicked prosper (cf. Job 12:1-13:19; 21:7-33)] and argues that the wicked do not prosper. Chapters 16-17 entail Job’s response. In chapter 16:1-17, Job rebukes his friends (vv. 1-5), details the suffering God has brought upon him (vv. 6-16), and once again asserts his innocence (v. 17).

Following his assertion of innocence, Job expresses a call (v. 18), a confidence (v. 19), and a cry (vv. 20-22). In verse 18, he calls upon the earth not to “cover” his “blood.” Job apparently believed he was about to die and implied that his death would be the equivalent of murder. In the Old Testament, the blood of the murdered cried to God for justice, for the perpetrator to be punished, for the crime to be avenged. Abel’s blood cried out against Cain (Gen. 4:10). The blood

of the innocent cried out against Jerusalem (Ezek. 24:7-8). Innocent blood could only be avenged in two ways: 1) If the people knew who committed the crime, they had to execute the murderer (Num. 35:33). 2) But, when a person was found murdered and the people did not know who committed the crime, the elders of the nearest city had to take a heifer to a valley with a creek, break the heifer's neck, wash their hands over the heifer, and declare they were innocent and did not know who committed the crime, so that they would not be guilty of innocent blood, so that the blood would not cry out against them (Deut. 21:1-9). Vengeance in this latter case was placed in God's hands, for he alone knew the murderer's identity. Job called for the earth not to cover his blood so that his blood would continue to cry out for justice.

In verse 19, Job expresses a confidence. Although he believed that he was about to die unjustly, he also believed his "witness" was "in heaven." The word "witness" (*'ed*) occurs in the Hebrew Old Testament 69 times; 4 of those are in Job (10:17; 16:8, 19). "Witness" (*'ed*) often occurs in legal and judicial texts. Jeremiah purchased a field in the presence of "witnesses" (Jer. 32:10, 12, 15). Boaz called for the elders and the people to be "witnesses" when he acquired Elimelech's estate (Ruth 4:9, 11). The Law forbade false "witness" (Exod. 20:16; 23:1; Deut. 5:20; cf. Ps. 14:5, 25). Capital punishment required no less than two "witnesses" (Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6); lesser crimes required multiple "witnesses" too (Deut. 19:15-21).

From the foregoing, a "witness" was expected to tell the truth or to confirm facts and truth (Clines 389; Koehler, *et al.* 788). People, stone heaps (Gen. 31:48, 52), songs (Deut. 31:19), the written Law (Deut. 31:26), and even an altar (Isa. 19:20) served as "witnesses." Isaiah also foretold the time in which God would establish his servant David as "witness" for the people (Isa. 55:4). In the New Testament, Jesus of course is the "faithful witness" (Rev. 1:5; the Greek term is *martyrs*, the same as the Septuagint translation of Job 16:19a; cf. Rev. 3:14). Biblically speaking, God is the quintessential "witness" (Gen. 31:50; 1 Sam. 12:5; 20:12; Jer. 29:23; Mic. 1:2; Rom. 1:9; 2 Cor. 1:23; Philip. 1:8; 1 Thess. 2:5). With God, the term sometimes connotes judgment and punishment for failure to keep an oath, vow,

promise, or trust of some sort (Jer. 42:5) (Koehler, *et al.* 788). God, of course, is the perfect witness – he is faithful, trustworthy, honest, just, all knowing, and always present.

The second line of Job 16:19 places “witness” in parallel with “evidence.” Not only was Job’s witness in heaven, his “evidence” was also “on high.” In other words, his “evidence” was also in heaven. Since “witness” and “evidence” are parallel, they presumably refer to the same thing; Hebrew poetry uses parallelism to advance ideas (Woods 12). “Evidence” (*sahed*) only occurs in the Hebrew Old Testament in this verse. Because of the term’s rarity, a number of translations have been suggested: “record” (KJV), “advocate” (NASB95), “he who testifies for me” (ESV), “he that voucheth for me” (ASV, RSV), “defender” (Hartley 262), “confessor” (Keil and Delitzsch 402), and “witness” (Koehler, *et al.* 1311). The Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, has *sunistor*, a “witness” (Liddell, Scott, and Jones 777). “Evidence” probably then emphasizes either the testimony of Job’s witness or the defense of Job by the witness.

The striking aspect of verse 19 is the place of Job’s witness and evidence; both are “in heaven,” “on high.” Job’s witness is in the presence of God!

In verses 20-22, Job expresses a cry. He cried out essentially for an understanding mediator. Prior to chapter 16, he stated: “For *He is not a man, as I am, That I may answer Him, And that we should go to court together. Nor is there any mediator between us, Who may lay his hand on us both*” (Job 9:32-33). Job desperately desired a mediator. But, instead, his friends “scorn[ed]” him and God did not answer his cries (v. 20; cf. Job 17:1-5). So, he cried for someone to “plead” on his behalf with God, someone who could relate to his plight and plead for him either *like* a “neighbor” or like a man *against* a “neighbor” (v. 21) (see Clines 390-91; Hartley 264; Jackson 48; Keil and Delitzsch 402-03). In this context, “plead” means to “mediate” and argue for justice (Koehler, *et al.* 410; Keil and Delitzsch 403), to “defend” (Hartley 264). The belief that his death was near drove Job’s cry for such a mediator (v. 22). The phrase “a few years” does not mean that Job believed he would live for a few more years. Rather, the phrase suggests the brevity of life

(Keil and Delitzsch 403). In fact, Job believed that his life was about to end (Job 17:1-2).

But, who or what is Job's witness in heaven? David Clines argues that Job's witness in heaven is his "own protestation of innocence and his formal deposition that requires God to give an account of himself," his "affirmation of innocence" or "legal cry" (390). God, he suggests, could not be Job's witness because God is Job's murderer (389). Any view that holds God as Job's witness, he reasons, is thus "paradoxical" (389). God is the one who has crushed Job (cf. Job 16:6-14), which, according to Clines, contrasts with Job's "confidence" in a just heavenly witness (389). Also, Job desires a mediator between God and himself, suggesting that Job's witness is someone or something other than God (Clines 389).

While Clines' view may be possible, a couple problems exist. First, paradoxical does not mean impossible (Hartley 264). Indeed, Job's view of God was paradoxical. Job began with the astonishing statement: "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21). At the end of chapter 2, he rebuked his wife with the amazing question: "Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?" (Job 2:10). Then, in Job 13:15, he declared: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him." Job's life was filled with paradox. God is the one who gave Job life and yet crushed him too. For the sufferer, the knowledge of God's omnipotence, omnipresence, and omni-benevolence, his sovereignty over the world, and the reality of the sufferer's pain boggles the mind. "How can God allow this?" "Why is this happening?" The view that God is both witness and adversary, although paradoxical, is not beyond the scope of the book of Job. In fact, that very thought is part of Job's struggle. Hartley explains:

For a moment Job sees God as his steadfast supporter. In this plea he is expressing the trust God had expressed in him in the prologue because he is pushing through the screen of his troubles to the real God. He is not essentially pitting God against God; rather he is affirming genuine confidence in God regardless of the way it appears that God is treating him. (264)

Second, Job wants a personal witness, not something impersonal like his cry. He desires a human mediator (v. 21). Later, Job declares his belief in a “Redeemer,” who will “stand at last on the earth” (Job 19:25). Because of the wording, this “Redeemer” must be a personal being (Coffman 173). It appears that Job’s heavenly witness is also a someone, not a something!

In contrast to Clines, many commentators believe that God is Job’s witness (Brown, Driver, and Briggs 729; Hailey 155; Hartley 264; Keil and Delitzsch 402). Indeed, throughout the Bible God is witness. His omnipresence and omniscience make Him aware of all human activity: “And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account” (Heb. 4:13).

But, could Job have another witness in mind? From our Christian perspective, we surely might ask: “Could Job be speaking of Christ?” Homer Hailey did not believe such was the case:

Earlier Job lamented the fact that there was no umpire between himself and God (9:33). But he does have a witness in heaven who knows the facts of his life (v. 19); and later he knew that his redeemer lives (19:25). Are the witness and the redeemer two parties or one? It is best to interpret in light of the context above and accept God as the witness and redeemer, rather than God and another. (155)

The broader context of Job may agree with Hailey. God is Job’s witness in the beginning of the book (cf. chaps. 1-2) and at the end of the book (cf. 42:7-8). Also, the form of Job’s statement in Job 9:33 was “contrary to fact” (Clines 390). In other words, Job expressed a wish that he did not believe was true. But, maybe Job received revelation from God. He certainly speaks with God and functions as a patriarchal priest (Job 1:5; 42:7-9). Perhaps the evidence is inconclusive or perhaps like Caiaphas Job did not fully understand what he said (cf. John 11:49-52).

Nonetheless, whether or not Job had Jesus in mind, his desire for a mediator and confidence in a heavenly witness articulates an innate human need that finds ultimate fulfillment in Jesus alone (Hailey

98; Jackson 40, 48-49). The New Testament writers unanimously declare that Jesus is man's heavenly witness and mediator (Rom. 8:34; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 7:25; 9:24; 1 John 2:1). G. Campbell Morgan wrote concerning 1 Tim. 2:5:

[T]he argument of the writer is that there is now One Who is God in His own nature and yet is actually Man, Who stands in the presence of God, knowing perfectly, and He does so on our behalf. He stands before God vindicating the sinner. He has become the Witness...Christ has entered in, and there is our Witness, our Recorder. He is the One Who perfectly knows, and therefore is able prevailingly to mediate. (53)

Morgan also noted:

In Him therefore we find the complete fulfillment of what dawned upon Job in the midst of the darkness, as the shining hope and confidence. The One Who ever lives came into our earthly life, stood upon the dust for us, and argued our case on the earth level. By that unveiling we are brought to an understanding of how He forever represents us, and argues our case in the high courts of heaven. (62)

While Job searched passionately and desperately for a witness, a mediator, Christians stand in the light of God's completed revelation – we have a “witness in heaven,” Jesus Christ!

In what ways is Jesus our “witness in heaven” (and for that matter God as well, both being divine)? Several come to mind. God is our witness in sinfulness or sinlessness. The ever-present eye of God beholds all the actions of men, good and bad (Prov. 5:21). He sees our sin; he sees our righteousness. God knew Job's character. Job was innocent and God knew it. In Job 1:8, God confessed: “[T]here is none like him [i.e., Job] on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil.” When challenged by Satan a second time, God again recognized Job's character: “[H]e holds fast to his integrity” (Job 2:3). However, at the end of the book, God also knew the shortcomings of man. He rebuked Job with the

rhetorical question: “Who *is* this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge?” (Job 38:2). God also reprimanded Job’s three friends. To Eliphaz, God said, “My wrath is aroused against you and your two friends, for you have not spoken of Me *what is* right, as My servant Job *has*” (Job 42:7). In fact, God required Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar to have Job sacrifice and pray for them, apparently for forgiveness (Job 42:8-10). Jesus, as God and witness, knows our sinfulness and our sinlessness.

Jesus is our witness in sorrow. Job “pour[ed] out tears to God” (v. 20). Although Job thought God had abandoned him, He had not. He knew Job’s sorrow and He was concerned. The apostle Peter encouraged his readers to pray, “casting all your cares upon Him, for He cares for you” (1 Pet. 5:7). Does Jesus care? Indeed He does and He “sympathize[s] with our weaknesses” (Heb. 4:15).

Jesus is our witness in scorn. Rather than help, Job’s friends hurt. They were “miserable comforters” (Job 16:1), “forgers of lies,” and “worthless physicians” (Job 13:4; cf. 21:34). When human witnesses fail, as they all will do, a divine witness, one “closer than a brother” (Prov. 18:24), exists. “[N]o one else but He [i.e., God] is the final refuge of the oppressed” (Keil and Delitzsch 402). “There’s not a friend like the lowly Jesus!”

Jesus is our witness in silence. Perhaps the most difficult part of Job’s trial was God’s silence, His apparent abandonment of His faithful servant. Job just wanted an answer from God. In describing his own personal experience, C. S. Lewis probably summarized Job’s thoughts well:

Meanwhile, where is God? This is one of the most disquieting symptoms. When you are happy, so happy that you have no sense of needing Him, so happy that you are tempted to feel His claims upon you as an interruption, if you remember yourself and turn to Him with gratitude and praise, you will be – or so it feels – welcomed with open arms. But go to Him when your need is desperate, when all other help is vain, and what do you find? A door slammed in your face, and a sound of bolting and double bolting on the inside. After that, silence. You may as well turn away. The longer you wait,

the more emphatic the silence will become.... Why is He so present a commander in our time of prosperity and so very absent a help in time of trouble? (2-3)

The book of Job reveals that, even when God and Jesus seem silent, they are still witness and really “not far from each one of us” (Acts 17:27).

Lastly, Jesus is our witness in suffering. Throughout Job’s entire experience, the death of his children, the loss of his possessions, the faltering of his wife, the torment of his ailments, the torture of his friends, the distress of his emotions, God was witness. Unbeknownst to Job, God walked with him “through the valley of the shadow of death” (Ps. 23:4) and brought him safe to the other side (cf. James 5:11). Jesus has witnessed our human plight in an even more personal form, experiencing the struggles and enduring the sufferings of this world as a man (Philip. 2.6-8). Like no other, Jesus is the “witness in heaven”!

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Biographical Sketch

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Where Can Wisdom Be Found?

Job 28:1-28

Greg Tidwell

There are many theories concerning the authorship and the historical setting of the Book of Job. Liberal scholars doubt the historical accuracy of the book, as they doubt most of the narrative of Scripture. However, as the prophet Ezekiel of the Old Testament and James, the brother of our Lord, depict Job as an actual person, we may be sure that he was (Ezek. 14:14,20; Jas. 5:11). Yet, even among conservatives – those of us who believe in the book’s divine origin, and, therefore, inerrancy – there is no consensus as to the historical setting of the story or of the identity of its author.

In approaching our study, we must also remember the division of the book into chapters is a matter of human judgment, as is the case with all chapter divisions in Scripture (excepting the Psalms).

Some scholars believe Job chapter 28 to be commentary written by the author who compiled the book and who supplied the narrative portions. This is certainly possible as the chapter seems to stand on its own – both in the craft of its poetry and in the cogency of its flow of thought.

In my opinion, however, chapter 28 is best seen as a continuation of Job’s speech which began in the previous chapter. I will, for this reason, be ascribing the words of this text to Job, rather than to the unnamed narrator who compiled the book

Job chapter 28 falls naturally into three sections. The first two sections conclude by a form of the question: “Where can wisdom be found?” The third section, in turn, presents the need for divine revelation as the only source of wisdom.

Human Ability to Comprehend Mysteries is Great, but Limited

Job speaks of the discovery of natural objects – gems, metals, and minerals. Beyond harvesting substances, he describes feats of engineering. Yet, have we, with all our skillful labor, gained wisdom?

In this passage, consider the catalogue of human accomplishments

in exercising dominion over creation. Job begins, “Surely there is a mine for silver, And a place for gold which they refine. Iron is taken out of the earth, And copper is molten out of the stone” (Job 28:1f). [All references are from the American Standard Version, 1901.]

The knowledge of smelting ore into usable metals is one of the building blocks of technological advance. Seemingly copper, which is one of the few metals appearing in a pure state in nature, was the first to be used to craft implements. With the discovery of tin, bronze could be formed as an alloy. Last of all, iron was extracted from ore – first by the Hittites about 1300 BC. (This mention of iron, by the way, is why I date the events recorded by Job as no earlier than the time of the Judges of Israel.)

Beyond the utilitarian metals of copper and iron, Job mentions the precious metals of silver and gold. In highlighting precious metals, Job is not condemning wealth. Job had been, before his trials, an immensely wealthy man, and he would be so again. The furniture of the Tabernacle in the time of Moses was overlaid with crafted gold, ordered by God for His people to use in His service. Even more precious metal would be devoted to God in Solomon’s Temple. Silver and gold are no more evil than are iron and copper.

Job’s point is to show the excellence of human craft in obtaining physical riches. He describes this ingenuity,

Man setteth an end to darkness, And searcheth out, to the furthest bound, The stones of obscurity and of thick darkness. He breaketh open a shaft away from where men sojourn; They are forgotten of the foot; They hang afar from men, they swing to and fro. (Job 28:3f)

Even in ancient times, people were astute in finding the resources they desired. “Man setteth an end to darkness,” there is no treasure in the physical realm beyond his scope. In our own day, human ingenuity has succeeded in extracting valuable fuels from the roots of mountains and out of the depths of the sea.

Job refers to “stones of obscurity and of thick darkness.” By “obscurity” he is referencing the rarity of valuable minerals; they must be sought out. “Thick darkness” calls to mind the dense color

of ore when it is full of metal to be extracted.

Describing the work of miners, Job says “He breaketh open a shaft away from where men sojourn.” Those who live in Appalachian coal country can certainly identify with this imagery. Note the force required to create a mine – he pictures a shaft being broken open.

The miners who extract the ore were resourceful, but they were also daring. “They are forgotten of the foot; They hang afar from men, they swing to and fro.” Job pictures men suspended on ropes as they work the face of a cliff or the wall of a mine. Like pendulums, they swing back and forth as they work to take out the ore.

Human industry and skill have managed to extract useful and precious metals from the ground, but the earth hides even greater treasure.

As for the earth, out of it cometh bread; And underneath it is turned up as it were by fire. The stones thereof are the place of sapphires, And it hath dust of gold. (Job 28:5f.)

Agriculture is of immense value and was the first skill mastered by the human race – going all the way back to the Garden of Eden. People bring bread out of the ground in the form of grain. But a more thorough plowing brings a more valuable harvest. “And underneath it is turned up as it were by fire,” Job references the use of heat to help break through dense rock. Such plowing the earth yields gemstones.

This skill and cunning marshaled in exploiting the treasures of nature show an intellect unique to human beings in all the physical creation. As Job notes,

That path no bird of prey knoweth, Neither hath the falcon’s eye seen it: The proud beasts have not trodden it, Nor hath the fierce lion passed thereby. (Job 28:7f.)

The falcon, with its acuity, and the lion, with its strength, are unable to match the skill and power engaged by human beings as they pursue the riches of this life. “Thou madest him a little lower than the angels,” Hebrews 2:7 tells us, “Thou crownedst him with glory

and honor, And didst set him over the works of thy hands.” The human race is uniquely blessed in bearing the image of God and in this unique position has dominion over the rest of creation.

Beyond the extraction of metals and gems from the earth, Job goes on to describe the engineering prowess of the human race.

He putteth forth his hand upon the flinty rock; He overturneth the mountains by the roots. He cutteth out channels among the rocks; And his eye seeth every precious thing. He bindeth the streams that they trickle not; And the thing that is hid bringeth he forth to light. (Job 28:9-11)

The great civil engineering of the ancient world continues to amaze us. The Pyramids, which were already old when Abraham visited Egypt, still stand as a tribute to the genius of human ability.

The ancients knew how to divert rivers, bringing water into cities through aqueducts. We read of such a project in 8th century Judah, “This same Hezekiah also stopped the upper spring of the waters of Gihon, and brought them straight down on the west side of the city of David...” (2 Chron. 32:30).

In the late 1800s, archeologists found Hezekiah’s tunnel – just as the Bible had described it. What was extraordinary about this conduit is the passage was dug through 1,750 feet of solid rock by two teams of workers, one digging from each end. Using the primitive tools at their disposal, these two teams met in the middle to complete this project.

In the face of the skill, craft, and technological accomplishments of the human race, Job poses a question, “But where shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?” (Job 28:12). We may have the expertise to divert the waters of a river, but how do we divert the unanswered questions of our own lives?

Recognizing the cleverness of human beings in exercising dominion over nature, we must confess: there is no rest, no peace, no satisfaction in cleverness of this kind.

Materialistic Knowledge Is Limited

In the second section of this chapter, Job sets forth the truth that,

though the riches of the material world are exceedingly glorious, yet there is an impassable limit beyond which they cannot go. There is a field of knowledge unattainable through material means; it is only accessible through divine revelation. Nature affords us no light whatever in solving the depths of spiritual truth.

The whole range of the physical creation, whether open to the examination of humanity or beyond our reach, is declared incapable of answering the question: "Where shall wisdom be found?" Job describes the futility of the search for wisdom in the physical world:

Man knoweth not the price thereof; Neither is it found in the land of the living. The deep saith, It is not in me; And the sea saith, It is not with me. (Job 28:13f.)

The land of the living is the surface of the earth which men inhabit. The deep is the underworld. Neither there nor in the sea is true wisdom to be found.

As for its price, however earnestly men may desire to possess wisdom, no treasures are of any use; it is not to be bought in any market, as Job enumerates:

It cannot be gotten for gold, Neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, With the precious onyx, or the sapphire. Gold and glass cannot equal it, Neither shall it be exchanged for jewels of fine gold. No mention shall be made of coral or of crystal: Yea, the price of wisdom is above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, Neither shall it be valued with pure gold. (Job 28:15-19)

Job's valuation of wisdom is reminiscent of Proverbs 3:13-15:

Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, And the man that getteth understanding. For the gaining of it is better than the gaining of silver, And the profit thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies: And none of the things thou canst desire are to be compared unto her.

Though one may amass a large fortune in material goods, material fortune will not provide meaning in life. Our Savior observed in Luke 12:16-21:

... The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he reasoned within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have not where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, be merry. But God said unto him, Thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee; and the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

Job had previously enjoyed the pleasures of vast wealth and had learned through bitter experience the transient nature of material riches. He returns to the question: “Whence then cometh wisdom? And where is the place of understanding?” (Job 28:20).

The Fear of the Lord, That Is Wisdom

Closing the book on a physical quest for enlightenment, Job notes it is unavailable in all of creation. “Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living, And kept close from the birds of the heavens” (Job 28:21). Even having the vantage point of a bird surveying the landscape from the sky, we could not attain wisdom.

Job then looks beyond the physical and lays aside even the possibility of metaphysical wisdom coming from the realm beyond. “Destruction and Death say,” concerning wisdom in Job 28:22, “We have heard a rumor thereof with our ears.” Job lays aside the possibility of human beings attaining enlightenment through their own efforts. As Paul observes in Romans 10:6-11:

But the righteousness which is of faith saith thus, Say not in thy heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down:) or, Who shall descend into the abyss? (That is, to bring Christ up from the dead.) But what saith it? The

word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach: because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be put to shame.

We neither could, by our efforts, have effected the Incarnation nor the Resurrection of Christ – we could not bring Him down from heaven or up from death – but we receive the blessings of Christ when we receive the word of God with obedient faith. In the same way, Job answers the question “Where shall wisdom be found?” with a call for obedient faith:

God understandeth the way thereof, And he knoweth the place thereof. For he looketh to the ends of the earth, And seeth under the whole heaven; To make a weight for the wind: Yea, he meteth out the waters by measure. When he made a decree for the rain, And a way for the lightning of the thunder; Then did he see it, and declare it; He established it, yea, and searched it out. And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; And to depart from evil is understanding. (Job 28:23-28)

“The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom; And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (Prov. 9:10). Sometimes we imagine our faith can be constructed out of our own cleverness – this is the root error of denominationalism, of man-made religion.

We can only come to faith because God in His grace spoke to us in His wisdom. “So belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ” (Rom. 10:17). It was Augustine of Hippo who said, “I do not seek to understand in order to believe; I believe in order to understand.” We see meaning and order in life only within the framework of faith, and we only grow in faith through the truth God

gives us in Scripture.

Job brings all of wisdom down to the point of submitting to God. This summation is also found at Solomon's close of the book of Ecclesiastes:

The Preacher sought to find out acceptable words, and that which was written uprightly, even words of truth. The words of the wise are as goads; and as nails well fastened are the words of the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd. And furthermore, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh. This is the end of the matter; all hath been heard: fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. (12:10ff.)

“Fear God, and keep His commandments,” all of wisdom comes down to receiving the word of God in obedient faith. This obedient faith is what we sing about in the familiar hymn:

Trust and Obey

When we walk with the Lord
in the light of His word,
what a glory he sheds on our way!
While we do His good will,
He abides with us still,
and with all who will trust and obey.

Trust and obey, for there's no other way
to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

(John H. Sammis)

“The light of His word” is what Solomon described as being secure nails “given from one Shepherd.” Job, in answering his question: “Where can wisdom be found?” describes God as the One who

establishes all wisdom, and Who speaks words of wisdom to mankind.

Wisdom cannot be found in precious metals or in gemstones; it will only come when we receive the word of God in penitent faith. Such faith, the apostle Peter reminds us, is more precious than gold:

Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, ye have been put to grief in manifold trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold that perisheth though it is proved by fire, may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ: whom not having seen ye love; on whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. (1 Pet. 1:6-9)

Let us seek wisdom in the one place it can be found, in holy Scripture, the word of God. Knowing that He was at the beginning, before the Creation of the world, and He will send His Son to end this world in Judgment, let us hold fast to His word, for by it we will be judged. In faith, following His word, we can be sure of the salvation of our souls.

Biographical Sketch

Serving as an evangelist for the church of Christ at Fishinger and Kenny Roads in Columbus, Ohio since 1984, he is also editor of the Gospel Advocate.

Hard Days and Sleepless Nights

Job 7:1-21

Don Schuler

No book of the Bible stands alone. Each is a part of God's gradually unfolding plan of redemption for mankind. The book of Job is one among many intended to reveal His plan of grace. The books of Moses contain God's covenant with Israel as a nation. The historical books record His dealings with the people as such. The books of the prophets make known His will to Israel and concerning Israel as the people of God. But Job is unique. He is dealt with as an individual, not as one of a certain race or nation. He is not dealt with as one of a covenant nation, for he did not belong to such. In his history we see the righteousness of God in its relation to a single man. A single man who, "was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil" (Job 1:1). One of three men whom the Lord God said, "should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness" (Ezek. 14:14).

This man's life was hit by a relentless storm. His world came crashing down upon him. His body was riddled with pain physically and mentally. Few have faced the adversities that could be thrust upon one in such a short period of time. Yet, through it all he, "sinned not, nor charged God foolishly" (Job 1:22). His afflictions were a test of the sincerity and strength of his fear of God and confidence in God's righteousness to carry him through successfully. He clung to his belief that, "God is faithful" (1 Cor. 1:9). Yes, God is reliable and trustworthy. He would not desert Job. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5).

Job faced, what appeared to be, insurmountable odds. He lost his children. He lost his health. His wife deserted him spiritually. The people who knew him turned against him. His friends, who came to provide comfort, stayed to torture him. They became more harsh and intolerant to Job as time goes on. "But Thou, O Lord, art a shield for me: my glory, and the lifter up of mine head" (Ps. 3:3). God was closer to Job than he realized. "But the Lord is in His holy temple:

let all the earth keep silence before Him” (Hab. 2:20). Take courage, “submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you” (Jas. 4:7-8). We are warned of “the wiles of the devil” (Eph. 6:11) and reminded that we should not be “ignorant of his devices” (2 Cor. 2:11). Draw near to the heart of God. Be assured that the just shall live, the truth shall prevail, and God is ready at this very moment to fortify the believer and to save the lost. “Seek ye the Lord” (Zeph. 2:3).

The suffering of Job is extraordinary in the annals of history. His description is that of a fierce battle in which the fighting never ceases. The misery continues days without end. The nights are filled with tossing and turning until dawn. He is emotionally drained, mentally confused, and cannot understand why God will not answer him. “Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice” (Ps. 130:1-2).

Each of us fights a gigantic battle in keeping sin out of our everyday lives. The devil causes sin to be very alluring. Its pleasures are deceptive, temporary, high-priced and eternally a bad bargain. As the great poet Alexander Pope said:

We don't go down with a quick, hard fall,
We just glide along;
Little by little we lighten our load
Till we cannot tell right from wrong.
Sin is a monster of such frightful countenance
That to be hated needs but to be seen.
But seen too often, familiar with its face
We first endure, then pity and the embrace!

Sin is deceitful because its only goal is hell. There is no future in a sinner's life. David, Demas and Diotrephes did not begin in Satan's grasp, but before they realized it, he had engulfed them. In contrast, Joseph, Joshua and Jesus fled from sin, purged it and gained the victory. May God help us to take the “way of escape” (1 Cor. 10:13) when sin comes knocking at our door so that we might gain “the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15:57). “For

the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:23).

In Job chapter 7, Job directs a prayer to God in the presence of his friends. He speaks openly and honestly to God. All the great servants of God were individuals who fervently and passionately sought to move the heart of God. The prayer of faith believes that God will intervene in our lives and in the lives of others. Most assuredly, “the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that He appointeth over it whomsoever He will”(Dan. 5:21). David “sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears” (Ps. 34:4). Pilate questioned Jesus, “Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee” (John 19:10). Jesus answered, “Thou couldest have no power at all against Me, except it were given thee from above” (John 19:11). “For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God” (Rom. 13:1). As A. M. Murray so graciously expresses this thought:

They cannot shell His temple,
Nor dynamite his throne.
They cannot bomb His city,
Nor rob Him of His own,
They cannot take Him captive,
Nor strike Him deaf and blind,
Nor starve Him to surrender,
Nor make Him change His mind.
They cannot cause Him to panic,
Nor cut off His supplies;
They cannot take His kingdom,
Nor hurt Him with their lies.
Though all the world be shattered,
His truth remains the same,
His righteous laws still potent,
And “Father” still His name.
Though we face wars and struggles,
And feel their goad and rod,
We know above confusion,
There always will be God.

“For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth” (Rev. 19:6). When we pray in faith, we fix our heart and mind with the expectation of the Lord of heaven and earth hearing us when we, as His children, call upon Him in accordance with His will. “And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us” (1 John 5:14).

Sadly, many Christians do not believe their prayers have any bearing on events in their lives. God’s servants in former days felt differently. At the coronation of Saul, king of Israel, the prophet Samuel testified to the people, “God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way” (1 Sam. 12:23). The psalmist did not consider it a useless endeavor to appeal to God. “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases” (Ps. 103:2-3). Jesus taught His disciples the necessity of constant fellowship with the heavenly Father, “And He spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint” (Luke 18:1). The brethren in Thessalonica were admonished by the apostle Paul to, “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17). Yet, there are times when we do feel as if God does not hear us or there is no answer. That was the circumstance facing Job in chapter seven. Job is on the hot seat. The fire is burning. No answer comes.

When we study the book of Job, we are essentially studying God Himself. It is God who captures our attention and makes us wonder about the events taking place. “God is good; for His mercy endureth forever” (1 Chron. 16:34). He is “touched with the feeling of our infirmities” (Heb. 4:15). He “knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him” (Matt. 6:8). He “satisfieth thy mouth with good things” (Ps. 103:5). As we encounter Job, God has stepped back permitting Satan to afflict His servant as He remains silent and refuses to answer when Job pleads for an explanation.

God has instructed us to know Him and His ways. “But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth” (Jer. 9:24). We desire to pursue this divine understanding. We dig deeper, but there is only so much that we can

comprehend. As God expresses that thought through the prophet Isaiah: “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts then your thoughts” (Isa. 55:8-9).

The apostle Paul wrote a profound statement regarding our Lord. “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out” (Rom. 11:33). It is important that we realize that our God is not like us. We are finite. He is infinite. Our ways are limited. His are unlimited. We are small. He is vast. The book of Job reveals to us that we do not fully understand all of God’s ways. “The secret things belong unto the Lord our God” (Deut. 29:29).

Helpless

One word that could be used to describe Job in chapter seven would be helpless. Job sees himself being beyond help. He speaks of the brevity of life and how swiftly time passes by. He has no hope that his days will become any better. He turns to God. His entire being complains. He is in complete distress. God is opposing him and harassing him for no cause. He has become a target of God’s punishment. Death is viewed as his only alternative. He asks only that God permit him to spend his last days in peace. He desires to be forgiven and left alone.

Amid the trials of life, we desperately need a sustaining element. That element is hope. The hope of an abundant harvest sustains the farmer. The expectation of graduating encourages the student. The hope of recovery sustains the sick. The expectation of reaching the Father strengthened Jesus for the hardships He endured. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father” (John 14:12). “Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2). The hope of someday being with the Father is the Christian’s anchor. “Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul. Whether the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus” (Heb. 6:19-20). Jesus cleared the way for us

to follow in His steps. And He goes nowhere that His people cannot follow. God wants us to be doubly sure of this hope. He not only made a promise, but He also confirmed that promise with an oath. “That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation” (Heb. 6:18). He does not tease us with this promise, in order to mock us. His promise will be kept. An advanced payment has been made. “According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4). This hope gives rest to the Christian’s soul, work for his character, and a goal for his ambition.

Honest

Another word that might describe Job in this chapter would be honest. Job was honest and forthright with God. Sometimes we are too timid when we approach God. We must be willing to speak our minds to God, to share our deepest thoughts. The more direct, personal and heartfelt our prayers, the more meaningful they will be. “for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart” (1 Sam. 16:7). My every thought occurs in God’s presence. “For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether” (Ps. 139:4). “We must lay before Him what is in us, not what ought to be in us,” wrote C. S. Lewis. We must trust God with what God already knows.

Prayer is a struggle. It can be a lonely struggle. The honest heart withdraws from the world and thinks only of God. The deep desires of the heart are unknown to all except God. If you are not willing to struggle in prayer, then why should God listen? Prayer is to submit. Humble submission to God is crucial. “Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared” (Heb. 5:7). In prayer we must surrender to God. “Seek the Lord and His strength, seek His face continually” (1 Chron. 16:11). “Take with you words, and turn to the Lord” (Hos. 14:2).

Before making crucial decisions in His life, Jesus prayed. When He was extremely busy, Jesus prayed. In times of crisis, Jesus

prayed. Following critical events in His life, Jesus prayed. When death was staring Him in the face, Jesus prayed. E. M. Bounds said of Jesus, “Prayer was the secret of His power, the law of His life, the inspiration of His toil, and the source of His wealth, His joy, His communion, and His strength.”

Job poured out his heart unto God. He had experienced the best and the worst in life. He had trusted God in the past, now he must continue to trust Him. Submission is trust. He must leave everything in the Lord’s hands. Jesus was submissive to the Father in every respect and left the cross in His care. “Not My will, but Thine be done” (Luke 22:42).

Disciplined

Job was a very disciplined man. He believed in always doing that which was right and teaching others to do likewise. Even though he lashed out at God, he did not entertain the thought of committing suicide or having someone else assist him in taking his life. He knew that life was precious and a gift from God. He had patterned his life as one that would be pleasing unto God. He always chose to make wise decisions concerning himself, his family, and his fellow man. “And this is love, that we walk after His commandments” (2 John 6). The lack of discipline will only reap havoc. “Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it” (Ps. 127:1). It makes a difference what we believe, what we teach, and what we practice. As Jesus bluntly challenges us, “Why call ye Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46).

Job knew “there is no power but of God” (Rom. 13:1) and that “He ruleth by His power for ever” (Ps. 66:7). “From everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God” (Ps. 90:2). Is it any wonder that the apostle Paul wrote these powerful words: “Let God be true, but every man a liar” (Rom. 3:4)? Because Job had patterned his life in accordance with God, he knew “My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth” (Ps. 121:2). He would not be moved because, “god is our refuge and strength” (Ps. 46:1). God’s purpose for Job was the same as it is for us, “Be ye holy for I am holy” (1 Pet. 1:16).

It is an absolute waste of our lives to live them in rebellion to God.

“The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God” (Ps. 14:1). We must “fear God and keep His commandments for this is the whole duty of man” (Eccles. 12:13). There is no future for the person who has not surrendered their lives to the instructions of our Lord. “For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword” (Heb. 4:12). “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb. 10:31), because “our God is a consuming fire” (Heb. 12:29).

This is not to say that our God is not a God of love. He most certainly is, for “God is love” (1 John 4:8). But He is also a God who demands obedience and discipline. “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams” (1 Sam. 15:22). God wants us to be His children and we are not only called to be His children, but we are to be “obedient children” (1 Pet. 1:14). You are one of His children if you have “obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you” (Rom. 6:17). You have “purified your souls in obeying the truth” (1 Pet. 1:22).

When people go through life without ever finding real incentive for living, or a goal to tie to, they are miserable, confused, and without peace. To go through life without loyalty to the sovereign God is just too horrible to contemplate. How sad it would be to have never found Jesus. A brilliant poet helps to express that thought:

To think of the years spent without Him,
How wasted they were I now see;
For the world is a snare,
And the power of prayer
Is the only way we can be free.
If only I'd found Jesus sooner,
If the past I could only recall;
But how thankful I am
For the blood of the Lamb,
And the fact that I found Him at all!

Job was struggling. We struggle. “But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15:57).

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Biographical Sketch

Don Schuler was born and raised in Wheeling, WV. He was baptized into Christ September 13, 1991, by brother Denver Cooper. He has a BS degree in Medical Technology from West Liberty State College (now University) and is a graduate of West Virginia School of Preaching class of 1995. He presently works for The Institute of Transfusion Medicine in Pittsburgh, PA, Washington Hospital Blood Bank in Washington, PA, Canonsburg Hospital in Canonsburg, PA and Dr Sushil Mehrotra's office in Wheeling, WV. He preaches for the Belmont, OH church of Christ and serves as a Deacon for the Hillview Terrace church of Christ in Moundsville, WV. He is married to the former Patricia Ann Fecat of Moundsville. They are blessed with five children: Jason, a graduate of Harding University and Central Michigan University; Kristin, a graduate of Harding University, who is married to Jeremy Antill, a graduate of West Virginia School of Preaching; Denver, Erin and Lindsey, who are all students at Harding University.

Forsaken by Family

Job 19:13-22

Jason Hoeflich

Background to the Text

The situation in which we find Job, the patriarch from the land of Uz, in Job 19:13-22 [All Scripture references are from NKJV unless otherwise noted.] is seemingly one of defeat. This is the result of many catastrophic physical and spiritual events which have been thrust upon Job in rapid fire succession. It is in these verses that the reader sees Job's personal anguish at its lowest point, right before seeing Job's faith reach one of its highest (19:23-27). In fact, Jackson comments that the nineteenth chapter of the book of Job is, "A skyscraper among the forty-two chapters of Job that form this poetic masterpiece... he complains that his kinfolk have left him but, through the eye of faith he is confident that he will ultimately see God" (50). When one considers the gravity of the prior events that lead us to Job's state in Job 19:13-22, it no doubt causes the reader to share a sympathetic understanding of Job and his situation.

Prior to Satan's attacks upon Job's property, family, relationships, and health, the Scriptures present Job as a man of great reputation who is also God fearing (Job 1:1-5, 8). Following the first meeting between God and Satan (Job 1:6-12), Job learns of a Sabean raid in which his livestock are stolen and his servants are killed (Job 1:14-15). Next, Job learns of a fire that rained from heaven causing the death of his sheep and more of his servants (Job 1:16). Following this announcement Job then learns of another raid, this time at the hands of the Chaldeans, where Job's camels were taken and again his servants were killed (Job 1:17). If the totality of these horrible events had not been enough, Job learns that while his children were eating together at his eldest son's house a great wind caused the house to collapse, killing all ten of his children (1:18-19).

Following a second meeting between God and Satan (2:1-6), Job is struck with boils, extreme illness, and pain (Job 2:7-8; 19:20; 30:17, 30). Job's wife then tells him to, "Curse God and die," which

prompts Job to respond that she “speaks as one of the foolish women speaks” (2:9-10). This is the first of only three times that Job’s wife is mentioned in the book, and the only recorded time where she speaks (Shackelford 39). A case can certainly be made that Job’s wife was not of his particular level of spiritual understanding. However, one must be careful in being too dogmatic to this end. It is important to remember that she has also lost her property and all ten of her children as well, which we know through Job brought about excruciating grief (1:20). Shackelford shares this view as well, “Certainly her pain and loss must have been as great as Job’s in the first test. At this point she was deprived even of the company and support of her husband... before we are too quick to blame her, let us realize that sometimes death may seem preferable to living” (40). Shackelford’s analysis is based upon his belief that Job’s wife is wishing aloud to Job for an end to his suffering. Her purpose for the words she utters in Job 2:9 is rooted in the idea that death may be preferable to the pain he endures. This seems unlikely based upon the first part of her statement, “Curse God.”

Although it may seem harsh, her reaction to Job seems to be made in the heat of her own pain and anguish. It is also likely that this does not necessarily reflect her true feelings about her husband at that given time. Sagberg and Røen deduce from case studies in which loss of a family member has occurred that a person’s grief, in this case Job’s wife, can be so great that the person is unable to meet the needs of their own children or spouse (348). This would seemingly be the situation facing Job’s wife in dealing with her husband.

It can be said of Job that he is experiencing grief as great as his wife’s, if not more intense, since he lost his children, his wife’s approval and affection, and has even been struck with tremendous illness. Job’s grieving process, as suggested by Bill Flatt, identifies the source of his highs and lows commonly seen throughout his speeches in the book. Flatt states:

I have identified ten stages of grief that people who are grieving the loss of loved ones and other significant losses often experience: shock, lamentation, withdrawal,

frustrations, panic, depression, detachment, adaptation, reinvestment, and growth. Job is grieving multiple losses. His is a cumulative grief. (159)

Given what we know about grief and mourning today the reaction from Job's wife, which certainly would have added to Job's feelings of being forsaken in 19:13-22, seems understandable. However, Job does not just feel forsaken on account of his wife's anger or grief. Job indicates that his physical illness, which has affected his breath, was offensive to his wife (Job 19:17). Thus, Job's feelings of being forsaken by his wife were realized on both an emotional and physical level, in Job's eyes his current condition is affecting all of his personal relationships (Job 19:13-22).

Despite everything facing Job, the most agonizing feeling of all was that he had been forsaken by God and was now His enemy (19:6-12). Job, faced with the loss of his property, family, health, seemingly forsaken by his wife, and in his mind forgotten by God, is then visited by his three friends Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar (Job 2:11). Instead of providing comfort to their friend Job, they attack him with false accusations and bad advice in three cycles of speeches which prompt responses from Job (Job 4-14; 15-21; 22-27). It is within the second cycle of speeches that we see Job's reply to Bildad and the text of this study Job 19:13-22.

An Examination of the Text

The nineteenth chapter of the book of Job finds Job reaching what seems to be one of his lowest moments of the book, which then concludes with one of his most faithful assessments of God. Francis Andersen observes, "He leaps to this height from a state of despair caused by the reproaches of his friends (verses 2-6), his devastation by God (7-12), and his sense of utter forsakenness (13-22)" (205).

Job 19:13-14

It seems that a parallel exists in Job 19:13-14. The relationship between the word "brothers" or "brethren" of verse 13 may be connected to the word "relatives" or "kinsfolk" of verse 14. A second parallel may exist between these two verses with "acquaintances"

from verse 13 and “friends” from verse 14 (Shackelford 214-15). The essential drive of Job’s words in Job 19:13-14 is that the people whom he knows and deals with every day, the people closest to him and even his mere acquaintances, have “failed” him and “forgotten” him. This is something that would be a painful event in any person’s life, yet Job states that the reason he finds himself in such a state is because, “He has removed my brothers,” that it was God whom he believed brought this upon him. This would appear to be the logical conclusion or transition from which a direct assault from God would bring upon him (Job 19:1-12). Furthermore, Job 19:13-22 appears to be what Job was working toward in his speech when he states, “He has stripped me of my glory, and taken the crown from my head” (Job 19:9). This view is shared by Keil and Delitzsch who contend that, “Job describes the course of wrath, which he has to withstand as if he were an enemy of God, in vers.13 sqq. he refers back to the degradation of verse 9” (340).

What is meant in the parallels of Job 19:13-14 is of some debate. The Hebrew word for “brothers” or “brethren” used in Job 19:13 is *’ach*. William Mounce in his Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words states that *’ach* simply means one who is close in some type of human relationship, or to a lesser extent a business or treaty relationship (86). The word seems to carry an overall universal meaning that includes people ranging from flesh and blood family to business partners. The word may also mean “relatives” (Mounce, 574). Some have argued that here in verse 13 Job is referencing his literal family as well as those related to him (kinsfolk – *qarowb*) in addition to his friends and acquaintances. Yet, “brothers” as it is used in Job 19:13 may mean brothers in the flesh, relatives, friends, or fellow-countrymen (Hailey 172). Keil and Delitzsch believe that the meaning is broader than literal brothers and is instead a reference to, “those who know him intimately” (340). This particular view is shared by Hailey who believes that, “the author has *fellow-countrymen* in view” (172). Thus, Job is referring to his friends and acquaintances.

While it is possible that Job had close friends in mind, since family is addressed in Job 19:17, it makes little difference to the overall theme of his speech. No matter whom Job has in mind in Job

19:13-14 it does not detract from the emphasis of these verses that Job has been abandoned by those closest to him, whether family or friends, and that in his mind God was the cause.

Verse 15

The phrase seen in verse 15, “They that dwell in my house,” seems to be referring specifically guests that Job is hosting. As Shackelford notes, “*Those who live in my house* translates a participle form of the verb (*gur*) and refers to *guests*” (215). Allowing strangers, travelers, and sojourners to lodge in one’s home was a tradition of hospitality (Gen. 18:1-8; 19-13) (Hailey 173). Furthermore, it can be argued that this tradition endured even into the days of the early church, “Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for *strangers*, who have borne witness of your love before the church” (3 John 5-6). Certainly the culture in which we see Jesus living was one that valued hospitality (Luke 7:44-46). Job was no different, and he gave strangers, or guests, a hospitable stay. This certainly would support Job’s statement in Job 31:32 that, “No sojourner had to lodge in the street, for I have opened my doors to the traveler.”

Job’s physical appearance was what gave him problems. Those people whom he allowed to lodge in his house should have treated him with the utmost appreciation. Instead they treated him like a “stranger” and to them he was an “alien.” Keil and Delitzsch argue that, “These people, who ought to thank him for taking them into his house, regard him as one who does not belong to it; he is looked upon by them as a perfect stranger, as an intruder from another country” (341). Essentially Job felt unappreciated and unwanted in his own home. It is an understatement of the grandest kind to say that Job’s feelings were hurt.

Additionally, Job states that his maids, and servants (19:16), also treated him in the exact same manner. “Maids” most likely means slaves or female servants who would have labored in Job’s house. These maids also disregarded Job and treated him in the same manner that his guests treated him. His physical appearance must have been so shockingly grotesque and frightening that everyone around him believed it to be in their best interests to stay far away from him.

Verse 16

Job 19:16 paints one of the saddest pictures of the entire book. A servant was a slave and as such would respond his master's call without hesitation. Perhaps even the servant would know his master's "gestures and obey without a word spoken (Ps. 123:2)" (Shackelford 215). Job's "entreating" of his servant but with no answer shows that he received no sympathy or help in his time of great illness and loss. This goes beyond the slave-master relationship. This is cruel neglect to the needs of a suffering human being. Barnes notes that Job had resigned himself from this point to no longer expect obedience, that he was no longer the master of his own house (317).

Verse 17

One of the side effects of Job's illness was bad or offensive breath. It was because of this that Job's interactions with his wife, which were emotionally and spiritually previously (Job 2:9-10), had culminated to the point where her physical affection was now gone. Although she was not dead, Job had lost his wife emotionally, physically, and spiritually. Job had already stated that he lost those who were close to him (Job 19:13-14); his guests and his servants (15-16), and now he had lost his wife in all respects, the one person he should have been able to turn to no matter what.

Here is where the strongest evidence for Job 19:13-14 to mean close friends or acquaintances comes to light. Job has culminated to this verse with a description of those whom he is now estranged to because of the great loss and illness he is suffering. If in fact Job 19:13-14 were speaking of literal flesh and blood brothers then the sequence of events he speaks of in Job 19:13-17 would be as follows: loss of family (verses 13-14); loss off guests, maids and servants (verses 15-16); and again the loss of family (verse 17). This would be repetitive, especially without any sort of grammatical emphasis that Job was showing 19:17 to be a paralleled yet emphatically more detailed state of 19:13-14. The answer lies in the phrase, "I am repulsive to the children of my own body," (Job 13:17b). Contextually, this passage does not make sense since Job's children were dead. So, either Job has other children that are only mentioned

here, perhaps by another unmentioned wife, has lost touch mentally, or there is a better translation of this particular part of the verse. Keil and Delitzsch note that Job is never mentioned as a polygamist, and that the idea subscribed to by some that, “the children of my body,” being grandchildren he longed for and would never see is equally improbable (345). Yet perhaps a better explanation still exists. The Hebrew used in this verse, according to Keil and Delitzsch, indicates that this phrase, “children of my own body,” to be significant in that it:

Signifies not Job’s body, but the womb that conceived him (*vid.* ch. iii. 10); and thus, therefore, it is not merely possible, but it is natural, with Stuhlm., Ges., Ueber., and Schlottm., to understand [*the children of my own body*] as sons of his mother’s womb, i.e. of her who bare him; consequently of natural brethren (brothers and sisters). (346)

From a contextual standpoint this would certainly make the most sense, and is a view also shared by Shackelford (215). This would allow Job 19:17 to stand as the epitome of Job’s being forsaken. It then makes Job’s mention of “brothers” or “brethren” in 19:13-14 easier to understand as friends when Job builds a verse by verse case of those who are now estranged to him. Thus, each account of being forsaken is worse than the other, culminating in being forsaken by his own wife and his literal flesh and blood siblings here in verse 17.

This understanding of verse 17 allows all references to literal family to continue to be such while still fitting Job’s contextual progression. It would then be such that the sequence of events related by Job would be meant to demonstrate: the loss of friends and acquaintances (verses 13-14), loss of guests, maids and servants (verses 15-16), and again the loss of family (verse 17).

Verse 18

Job was despised by young children, whom he recalls later had once given him their respect (Job 29:7-11). The issue is to what end was the once respected Job despised? Jackson believes that he was their contempt or object of disrespect (51). Knowing the nature

of children who at times engage in cruel teasing make this verse sound as if this was how Job was treated. Hailey concurs, “These young children looked upon the suffering patriarch with contempt, which they expressed in rude irreverent speech” (174). Shackelford believes that these children, despite an upbringing that would taught them to respectful, ridiculed Job with verbal abuse (215). However, once again the context must be examined in order to fully understand Job’s intended meaning.

While it may certainly be the case that Job was verbally teased or cruelly made fun of, this simply does not fit the theme from which Job has been stressing. Over the entire course of the text of this study, Job has stressed being forsaken. For Job this has been both a mental and physical calamity. Job who was once respected was now disdained, but perhaps instead of verbal assault the disdain facing Job was again one of abandonment and loneliness. There was simply no mind paid to him by these young children, Job commanded no respect even from them as he once had. Clines agrees and writes:

If the philological decision taken here is correct, that the children “turn their backs” on Job, rather than that they “talked against” him (RSV), “ridicule” him (NIV), or are “ever ready with a jibe” (JB). The dominant impression Job conveys is of the silence that surrounds him. In former days the silent withdrawing of the young men when he would go into the city gate (29:7) was a welcome mark of respect, for it was only a prelude to a rich interchange of words (29:11-13); now the silence of children signifies not respect, but only isolation. (449)

Contextually the idea of abandonment and loneliness would more accurately fit Job’s description of being forsaken. While it cannot be said dogmatically that this is the case, it does make the most contextual sense. What can be said is that Job was not the man he once was in the eyes of everybody who knew him. He emphasizes this fact by stating that not even children, be it those who are guests in his house or of other families nearby, respected him.

Verse 19

Job concludes in chiasmic fashion, that his, close friends” or the “men of his council” and his “loved ones” had forsaken him. Keil and Delitsch believe that these are people in whom he confides his closest affairs or dealings (347). However it also stands to reason that these people mentioned in Job 19:19 are similar in nature if not the same people mentioned in Job 19:13-14. Clines writes, “His intimates (men of my council) and “loved ones: are perhaps roughly identical to the groups we distinguish as “friends and relatives” vv 13-14” (449-50). With this verse ends Job’s catalog of rejection of those who had forsaken him. In Job 19:20-22 we see Job entering into a plea for pity from Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar.

Verse 20

This verse has been called by some one of the most difficult verses of the entire book. Job’s sudden shift from those who have forsaken him to his physical condition, with the exception of verse 17 as a reason for rejection, seems to be out of place. Clines states that this shift is strange (450), while Hailey admits that difficulties exist with the verse (174). In addition, it has been argued that Job’s phrase “I have escaped by the skin of my teeth,” is out of place since Job is still in the midst of suffering. Any comment of escaping would seem better suited for the end of the book not in the midst.

However, once again context may provide a simple yet sufficient explanation. Job’s shift from those who have forsaken him to his physical state makes perfect sense when one remembers that Job is responding to a second attacking speech from Bildad. Job begins the chapter by proclaiming that he was an enemy to God (Job 19:1-12). Job then explains that in addition to becoming an enemy of God that he had also been forsaken by everyone he knew and loved. This transition in Job 19:20 demonstrates Job’s third appeal, that he is extremely ill. Essentially Job has argued that he has lost everything that a person can possibly lose: God, friends and family, and health. Job’s statement in Job 19:21 summarizes perfectly his intentions, “Have pity on me, have pity on me, O you my friends.” Job has essentially made his case, “This is everything I have been through!” The conclusion he attempts to deliver to these three men, it would

seem, is that Job is saying, “This is everything I have been through: I have lost favor with God, I have been forsaken by my friends and family, and I am near death with illness. So back off and cut me some slack.” This is a paraphrase of course, but this thoroughly explains within the context of the book why Job has made this transition, and furthermore, that it is not out of place.

Concerning what Job, “escaped by the skin of my teeth,” it would seem the most obvious answer is that which he had yet experienced. Job had not yet died. “The only thing Job has escaped from is what he has not yet suffered, death” (Clines 452).

Verses 21-22

Job’s case had been made, his appeal to his friends for mercy shows the complete emptiness he felt. What else could be said? What else could he do? His plea for mercy shows that he had been left destitute, sad, and alone. His greatest pain above all else was what he believed to be the source of his calamities. He had lost his health and his friends and family, but in his mind it was God who had struck him, it was God who was persecuting him. Certainly Job is not the only person we find in the Bible who has been wrongly dealt with by friends and family. We can recall Cain killing his brother Abel (Gen. 4:8); Jacob tricking Isaac into receiving Esau’s blessing (Gen. 27); Joseph being sold into slavery by his brothers (Gen. 37:23-27); Delilah’s betrayal of Samson (Jud. 13:1-5; 16:4-21). Furthermore, Absalom murdered Ammon and then instigated a civil war, and was ultimately slain in battle (2 Sam. 13:32; 18:14); Hosea dealt with an adulterous wife (Hos. 3:1); Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus (Luke 22:48); and Jesus’ own brothers persecuted Him (John 7:1-5).

However, the biggest difference in all of these examples is that the victims do not believe that God had forsaken them and was their enemy. The exception is in the case of Christ which was necessary for the remission of sins (Matt. 27:46; Is. 53:10; Matt.16:21) However, Jesus never believed that God was His enemy (John 10:30). It was this belief that made the magnitude of all other calamities in Job’s life that much greater, that he believed he had been forsaken and persecuted by God. He was wrong of course, and soon he would know that with complete certainty.

Application for the Church Today

Job 19:13-22 leaves an impression upon the reader that Job has reached the lowest place he could possibly go. Certainly this section of Scripture does not fail to provide application for Christians living today. When the text is examined and contrasted in light of the New Testament the reader will find that there is an abundance of lessons that can be learned from this stage of Job's life.

It should not come as a surprise to us that at times members of our immediate families and even our brothers and sisters in Christ may do or say something that we don't like. After all Jesus said, "Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death" (Mark 13:12). In today's culture sometimes a person's faith comes under fire by friends and family. As the Hebrew writer recounts the words of our Lord, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." (Heb. 13:5). Certainly there are cases when a person has lost family or friends because of their relationship with the Lord. While this may be a painful truth faced by some, Jesus reminds us that we gain an unparalleled spiritual family, "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time" (Mark 10:29-30a). It must be remembered that while Job believed that God had abandoned him and was to blame for all he endured, he never himself abandoned God. More often we see the unfortunate occurrence where a person is mistreated by a family member or one of their brethren and it causes that person to leave the church. While this is truly a terrible thing, it does not give someone the right to turn their back on the Lord and His Church. We are still responsible for the wellbeing of our souls, and to justify leaving or walking away from the Church because we have been hurt by imperfect people is no excuse. In the midst of pain and suffering, sometimes we point a finger at God in blame rather than lean upon Him when He is always there for us.

After all, is not man who has forsaken God through the avenue of sin? God has never broken any promises (2 Pet. 3:9); He has

never lied (Titus 1:2); He has never done wrong by anyone (Jas. 1:13). Yet, we find that it is people who have forsaken God (Rom. 3:23); who are then separated from Him because they chose to be (Isa. 59:1-2); and that they will ultimately be lost forever unless they seek resolution (Rom. 6:23). Despite mankind forsaking God, he made it possible for us to come back, “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him” (Rom. 5:8-9). Even after we abandoned God, He was more than willing to take us back, but at a greatest cost the world has ever known (John 3:16).

God stood by Job through everything he endured until finally he appeared to Job in a whirlwind (Job 38:1). Following a series of questions posed by God, Job’s losses were restored and his life was blessed even greater than it had been before. In the same manner God stands by each and every one of us today through our trials, our pain, our happiness, good times, and bad times. God sees us through the perils of life so that we can one day say as the Apostle Paul, “There is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.” (2 Tim. 4:8).

Conclusion

The book of Job presents to its readers in Job 19:13-22 the magnitude of human suffering, grief, and illness with Job all the while believing that God was his enemy. It demonstrates some of the lowest points of the entire book, and outlines in detail the great loss that Job had experienced, while presenting readers today with a standard of patience and endurance that are not easily replicated. This section of Scripture demonstrates further that through everything Job had endured and lost, God was always with him as He is with His children today. Through God there is nothing that we cannot endure. Did Job serve God for nothing? No, he served God because he was a Godly man, he served God because He still deserved Job’s dedication. What a powerful lesson the book of Job teaches us today!

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Biographical Sketch

Jason Hoeflich was baptized into Christ on February 21, 2000. He is a 2008 graduate of the West Virginia School of Preaching. Upon graduation from preaching school he attended Freed-

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The Righteousness of God

Job 36:1-33

Earl D. Edwards

“George Bernard Shaw, the immoral and irreverent Irish poet [died 1950], once quipped that there was enough suffering on a London street on any given day to negate the existence of God” (Jackson 144). Shaw looked at suffering and arrogantly concluded that no God exists; not so with Job. He did have a problem with suffering but he did not question God’s existence. Rather, he questioned the way God was handling His creation, that is as Stephen Hooks words it, “God’s management of the world” (366). That is, Job was basically questioning God’s “righteousness”! That word, as it is generally used in society, refers to what is “morally right or justifiable” (Webster’s 1115). That is, simply put, Job was saying, “God, making me suffer like this is not fair. You are not playing by the rules of what is just or right!”

After Job’s three “friends” had critiqued and heavily blamed Job for his supposedly hidden sin, another man, a younger man named Elihu, is “aroused against Job” (32:2) and decides to give his evaluation of the situation (which he does in chapters 32-37). He is not convinced by the answers of the three friends (32:5), but he is even less convinced by Job’s responses “because he justified himself rather than God” (32:2). [All Scripture references are from NKJV unless otherwise noted.] In other words, Job was saying he was *right* in his dispute with God and God was, therefore, *wrong*!

Elihu strongly objects to Job’s charge against God by saying, “I will ascribe righteousness to my Maker” rather than to you, Job (36:3).

How should one evaluate the words of Elihu in this section of Job? He seems to claim inspiration in 36:3-4 (cf. Hooks 398). However, that is probably not a valid claim as God makes it plain that He is more on Job’s side than He is on the side of some of his critics (42:7-8). Further, it seems clear that Elihu does basically agree with the three friends on the doctrine of retribution: God *always* blesses

the righteous and makes the sinner suffer (cf. 34:11). However, he is also critical of the three friends (32:3, 12). Some have said he made no significant contribution to the discussion (Reyburn 589). However, Homer Hailey is more on target when he says, “Elihu appeared on the scene at a time of great confusion; the friends had failed, Job had said things that were untrue, expressing false ideas, and the working of God was greatly misunderstood. Elihu had a mission to fill” (275).

Hooks adds that at this point of great confusion young Elihu “rises to defend the just ways of God” (366). That is, he defends his Maker’s “righteousness” (36:3) showing that no one, including Job, can properly pin an “unfair” tag on the God of heaven! And while, as said, it is not the case to think of all that Elihu says as inspired, yet much of what he says about God in this chapter helps to “prepare the reader for the appearance of Yahweh” (Hooks 366) beginning in chapter 38. In fact, what Elihu says about God in this chapter is confirmed by God Himself in chapters 38-42 and elsewhere in Scripture.

So what does Elihu say here of “God’s righteousness”? What are its constituent elements? God –

“Despises No One” – v.5

Listen to verse 5: “Behold, God is mighty, but despises no one; He is mighty in strength of understanding.” In chapter 21, Job had raised the question as to “why the wicked live and become old, yes, mighty in power” (v.7) . . . while a righteous man, like Job, “dies in the bitterness of his soul” (21:25). As Hooks says, “Job may have in mind the ‘evil rich’ when he speaks of the man at ease and the ‘pious poor’ when he describes the man who dies in bitterness of soul” (272).

Here in chapter 36, Elihu seems to be responding to that lament of Job. He interprets Job as having basically implied that God “despises” or disrespects certain classes of people. Elihu categorically denies that. He says God “is not biased or prejudiced toward anyone” (Shackelford 419). Franz Delitzsch notes that the meaning of Elihu’s affirmation that God “despises no one” is that God, “. . . is exalted, without however looking down disdainfully

(*non despicit*) from His height, or more definitely: without setting Himself above the justice due to even the meanest of His creatures . . .” (278).

God created Adam and Eve (Gen. 2:7, 22) and He “made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth” (Acts 17:26). God made every human of every nation and language and culture and race. And “God so loved the world [not the globe, but its inhabitants] that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Note that is “whoever” believes—no one excluded. God “despises no one,” He shows no partiality. Notice how frequently such is stated in Scripture.

When Peter received the vision about the Gentiles he said, “In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him” (Acts 10:34-35).

Paul wrote that God gives “eternal life” to those who do “good,” and “indignation and wrath” to those who “obey unrighteousness” (Rom. 2:7-8) and then explains that God does that whether one is “Jew” or “Greek” (Rom. 2:9-10). He further explains, “For there is no partiality with God” (Rom. 2:11).

Paul also wrote to servants and masters at Ephesus, saying,

Servants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether *he is* a slave or free. And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven (Eph. 6:5-9a)

He then adds by way of explanation: “. . . and there is no partiality with Him” (Eph. 6:9b).

Paul also writes to the Colossians about how God treats His

creatures, saying, And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done . . . (Col. 3:23-25a) And then he adds, “. . . and there is no partiality” (Col. 3:25b).

Peter writes to brethren in what we call Asia Minor and says they should conduct themselves “in fear” here on the earth, and he reminds them that God is one “who without partiality judges according to each one’s work” (1 Pet. 1:17). The Greek used in most of these passages which is translated “partiality” is *prosōpolēmpsia*. That word is defined as

. . . *partiality*, the fault of one who when called on to requite or to give judgment has respect to the outward circumstances of men and not to their intrinsic merits, and so prefers, as the more worthy, one who is rich, high-born, or powerful, to another who is destitute of such gifts: Ro. ii. 11; Eph. vi. 9; Col. iii. 25. (Thayer 551)

God does *not* use partiality in His judging. He accepts all men who will come to Him in obedience. In fact, Paul reminds me that . . . “The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age” (Titus 2:11-12). Note it has appeared to “*all men*,” no one excluded. Indeed, our great God “despises no one.”

And what about us? Jesus says the Father is to be our model (Matt. 5:48). Do we accept all human beings as being of value or do we “despise some”? Several years ago a homeless “hippy type” young person, who was not very neat or clean, came into a church of Christ in a Missouri town and was immediately told by a male member that he should “clean up” before coming to service! Would that member have reacted the same way to a visiting well-dressed businessman whom he knew to be unethical in his dealings (full of “dead men’s bones” inside)? In either case, shouldn’t our *first* reaction be one of happiness that someone is at least minimally interested in learning about God? Is the negative reaction to the

“hippy type” because we haven’t learned to “despise no one”?

Indeed, God “despises no one.” This is one element of His “righteousness” as it is described in Job 36. Another element of God’s righteousness is seen in the fact that He generally “exalts” the “righteous.”

Generally “Exalts” the “Righteous” – v.7

Listen to Elihu in chapter 36, “He does not withdraw His eyes from the righteous; but they are on the throne with kings, for He has seated them forever, and they are exalted” (v.7).

Now first we need to define “righteous” as it is used here and elsewhere in Job. It does not indicate sinless perfection. Even Job admitted that he had sometimes sinned (13:26) and yet he described himself as being “upright” (23:7; cfr. 34:5). So how should one define it? Don Shackelford is probably on target when he says it means “those who are faithful to God, who trust in Him” (419).

So, God causes the righteous to be “exalted”; that is, as Delitsech says, “He causes them to sit upon the throne” (2:8). The thrones are many times not literal, but He does raise them up or bless them. Certainly that is *generally* the way God acts according to the teaching of the Bible in both testaments.

Joseph, a righteous lad, and then a righteous man, was badly mistreated. But God did later exalt him. Listen to what is said to him in Genesis.

Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Inasmuch as God has shown you all this, *there is* no one as discerning and wise as you. You shall be over my house, and all my people shall be ruled according to your word; only in regard to the throne will I be greater than you.” And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.” Then Pharaoh took his signet ring off his hand and put it on Joseph’s hand; and he clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. And he had him ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried out before him, “Bow the knee!” So he set him over all the land of Egypt. Pharaoh also said to Joseph, “I *am* Pharaoh, and without your consent

no man may lift his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.”
(41:39-44)

God *does* exalt the righteous.

As the Jews were about to come into the promised land of Canaan, God told them how He deals with men. He says,

“Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you today; and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside from the way which I command you today, to go after other gods which you have not known.” (Deut. 11:26-28)

He does bless (exalt) those who are righteous.

In the prayer of the righteous Hannah, she properly said of our Father,

He raises the poor from the dust *and* lifts the beggar from the ash heap, to set *them* among princes and make them inherit the throne of glory. For the pillars of the earth *are* the LORD’s, and He has set the world upon them. He will guard the feet of His saints, but the wicked shall be silent in darkness. For by strength no man shall prevail. (1 Sam. 2:8-9)

He does “lift” (exalt) the righteous.

In a psalm of David he assures us that God takes care of the righteous. He says,

Do not fret because of evildoers, nor be envious of the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness. Delight yourself also in the LORD, and He shall give you the desires of your heart. (37:1-4)

He does give the righteous his “desires,” exalting him.

In another psalm we are told that God “. . . raises the poor out of the dust, *and* lifts the needy out of the ash heap, that He may seat *him* with princes— with the princes of His people. He grants the barren woman a home, like a joyful mother of children” (113:7-9). Indeed, He does “raise” the righteous. He exalts such a person.

The inspired author of Proverbs tells us of the consequences of our choice of lifestyle. “He who sows iniquity will reap sorrow, And the rod of his anger will fail. He who has a generous eye will be blessed, For he gives of his bread to the poor” (Prov. 22:8-9). In God’s plan, only the righteous person is “blessed” or exalted.

And, yes, in the New Testament, too, the same teaching is repeated many times. We note only one. In Galatians Paul writes, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life” (Gal. 6:7-8). God, indeed, does exalt the righteous even to the point of giving him “everlasting life.” But, this is *only* the *general rule* about the way God operates.

What the “three friends,” and to some degree maybe Elihu, did not understand is that there are *exceptions* to the general rule of God’s exaltation of the righteous. As John Hartley says, God does not necessarily promise always to “exalt” the righteous immediately. Rather, He promises “in due time” (470) or eventually. Joseph suffered, even in prison, before he was exalted. The Jews were slaves in Egypt before they were blessed/exalted in Canaan. Hannah struggled as a barren woman before she was blessed with a child. David had to flee from a king who sought his life before he was crowned. Paul who wrote about reaping spiritually was stoned and left for dead before he tasted “triumph” (2 Cor. 2:14). In other words, again, there are *exceptions* to the righteous being exalted. Some suffer for long periods and are only *eventually exalted*. Actually, after a long period of suffering, Job himself turns out to be one of those who is exalted “in due time.” Remember that in the last chapter the book affirms, “Now the Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning” (42:12a).

But, there are also some *pure exceptions* to the exaltation of the righteous in which there seems to be absolutely *no exaltation*

of the righteous here in this life. And the Job story does seem to concentrate on exaltation/blessings here in this life. In 36:7, Elihu says of the righteous that God has put them on the “throne” and “seated them forever and they are exalted.” Hooks is probably right when he comments on this passage by saying,

It is tempting to assign the term *forever* . . . some kind of eschatological, beyond-the-grave meaning and see in these words of Elihu an Old Testament version of the later new Testament “eschatological solution” to the problem of injustice in the earthly life. Central to this theology is the belief that though justice may not be fully realized in this life, God will see to it that justice prevails in the life to come. This concept is briefly entertained in the Old Testament, though it is never fully developed (cf., e.g., Dan. 12:2). (399)

So, probably, the Job story is dealing only with exaltation here in this life. If that is true, there are some *pure exceptions* to the idea of the righteous *always* being exalted. *Abel* is one. As Genesis says, “Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose against Abel his brother and killed him” (4:8). Abel, though righteous, was not exalted in this life.

Naboth the Jezreelite, was a righteous man who refused to sell his vineyard to wicked King Ahab so the king and his wife hired two “scoundrels” to give false testimony and the Biblical text says, “. . . and the scoundrels witnessed against him, against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, ‘Naboth has blasphemed God and the king!’ Then they took him outside the city and stoned him with stones, so that he died” (1 Kings 21:13). Righteous Naboth was not exalted in this life.

In the New Testament we read of *James*, the apostle, who was a church leader when the church began to be harassed by wicked King Herod. Then, the Biblical text says of Herod, “Then he killed James the brother of John” (Acts 12:2). Righteous James was not exalted in this life. All of these are exceptions to the general rule which says *God exalts the righteous* and *defeats the wicked* in this life.

The three friends, and possibly to some degree Elihu, “accepted this principle as a universal rule. As a result, a general truth was turned into falsehood when no exceptions were allowed” (Shackelford 66).

However, it is *generally true* that *God exalts the righteous even in this life*. Once again, we note that Jesus said the Father is to be our model (Matt. 5:48). Therefore, we must ask ourselves, “Do we exalt, or lift up, the righteous in our relationships here on the earth?” We have already seen we are not to “despise” anyone. Every human has inherent worth and should be treated as worthy of our time and encouragement. However, that does not mean we should refuse to distinguish in some manner between the righteous and the wicked. Is it a matter of indifference who we Christians pick as close associates? It is not. Paul warned that “evil company corrupts good habits” (1 Cor. 15:33). In choosing persons to associate with (and date), I will do well to exalt/lift up the righteous. When it comes to selecting leaders for the church, is it a matter of indifference as to whether we select those who have had significant experience in the practice of righteousness? It is not. Paul said we are not to select a “novice” (1 Tim. 3:6). We should exalt (lift up as models) those who have practiced righteousness for a long period. In many areas we, too, should “exalt the righteous.” That is the second component element of the “righteousness of God.” But, there is a third component of His righteousness found in this text.

It Sometimes Includes “Affliction” Which Serves as “Instruction” for Righteous Men

Notice, please, verses 8 through 10 of our text which speaks of the “righteous” saying, “And if they are bound in fetters, held in the cords of affliction, then He tells them their work and their transgressions—that they have acted defiantly. He also opens their ear to instruction, and commands that they turn from iniquity.” Notice that verse 8 speaks of the righteous suffering “affliction” which is a part of God’s plan to turn them “from iniquity” (v.10) into which they have strayed. In fact, the “affliction” (v.8) serves as “instruction” for them (v.10). Hooks writes as follows about this passage (he uses the New International Version):

Here Elihu returns to a theme he has already addressed—that God disciplines the righteous through suffering (33:19-22). This concept was first introduced by Eliphaz in his opening speech, though he seems to apply it to Job in a strictly punitive sense (5:17). Elihu’s doctrine of God’s *correction* [NKJV: *instruction*] however, emphasizes its power to reveal flaws of character and to rescue even the “righteous” (v.7) from some potentially self-destructive attitude or behavior. The literal rendering of the Hebrew in verse 10a is “He (God) opens their ears to correction [instruction].” The Hebrew word for *correction* [instruction] (. . . mûsâr; “discipline,” v.10) should be understood in the sense of “warning” in this context as it is in 33:16. In other words, the “discipline” of suffering is used by God not just to correct an existing sin but also to “warn” of a potential one. (400-01)

Hooks is probably right in pointing up a difference between the three friends’ emphases on suffering as *punishment* for flagrant sin and Elihu’s emphasis on it being used as *correction/instruction* for a basically righteous person with some incorrect concepts that might lead him astray.

Hartley (in his comments on 33:13) also highlights a difference between Elihu and the three friends. He says,

The difference between Elihu and the friends is evident in this passage: he will argue that Job is wrong for his bold complaints against God, rather than for some undisclosed past sins. Elihu will, therefore, attempt to defend God’s ways so that Job will have a clearer picture of the true God. (442)

In a later comment, Hartley further explains,

In teaching Job about the disciplinary nature of suffering, Elihu hopes to open up to Job’s mind new ways of looking at his affliction. Instead of focusing on the human proneness to error as the comforters have done, Elihu stresses God’s persistent love and mercy toward his followers. God does

not let those who serve him go astray without any warnings of the danger they are facing nor does he allow them to hasten to the grave unaware. (449)

However, if the purpose of Job's affliction is to discipline or instruct him, one is led to wonder if such is evident in chapter 1 of the book. In that chapter, the purpose may seem to be solely the justification of the "upright" Job in the face of Satan's accusation (1:6-12). However, as Hooks points out, the suffering experienced by Job is, basically, the removal of God's blessings which Satan had said were the only motive for Job's obedience (1:9-10). Therefore, the suffering was, as Elihu says, a test of Job's motives. And so, Hooks is right in saying,

[T]his insight by Elihu has important ties to both the beginning and ending of the book of Job. The answer that the prologue gives to the question of why God allowed Job to suffer is essentially the same answer that Elihu gives. For the righteous, suffering is not punishment for sin but a test of piety. (403)

Further, other passages clearly teach that God uses "all things" to achieve His purpose. Paul writes that, ". . . we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28). That undoubtedly includes even *negative* things. In fact, according to 2 Corinthians, God used a "thorn in the flesh" (which Paul viewed as very negative) to keep Paul from being "exalted above measure" (2 Cor. 12:7-10). Therefore, Paul was *instructed through his "infirmities"* (afflictions) and so he cried out, "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor. 12:10).

So is there some parallel here with Job? It seems there may be. In addition to proving a point to Satan, it seems God may be using the whole situation to "test" Job's piety and help him to grow spiritually. Surely, that is why James says Job was "blessed" by enduring suffering (Jas. 5:11). In fact, when God allowed Satan to

take away his family and possessions and afflict him he became very confused. It evidently made him reflect on why men should serve God. As Hooks says, “By depriving the righteous of reward for doing good, it reveals just why it is they do good. Further, it forces the righteous to do good for goodness sake, to love God solely for who he is, whether or not it is rewarded” (403).

But, at first, his great confusion caused him to lash out and accuse God of being unfair or unjust. As Hailey says of those who are oppressed: “In their oppression God opens their ear to hear His message of deliverance; He seeks their deliverance, not their destruction” (313). And this opportunity for growth certainly helped in his eventual deliverance.

In fact, after many remonstrations, Job finally saw God for who He was and opened his ear to instruction. When he did, he repented “in dust and ashes” (42:6) and bowed in unconditional surrender before his Maker. God had used “affliction” to cause this righteous man to grow stronger.

Does God use “affliction” for our instruction today? The inspired writer of Hebrews says he does. Listen to his words,

If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. . . . Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. (Heb. 12:7-8, 11)

The word translated “chastening” in this passage is a form of *paideias* which is defined as,

. . . whatever in adults also cultivates the soul, esp. by correcting mistakes and curbing the passions; hence . . . instruction which aims at the increase of virtue: 2 Tim. iii. 16. According to biblical usage *chastisement*, *chastening*, (of the evils with which God visits men for their amendment):

Yes, it is true that God sometimes allows or even causes “evils” like Paul’s “thorn” to come upon us for our correction/instruction/amendment. Now it must be remembered that not *all* such “evils” are punishments from God according to Jesus (John 9:1-3). And God does not miraculously tell us today when they are and when they are not. Therefore, it is up to us to meditate on and pray about our tribulations to see what lessons we can learn from them.

What about you? Have you suffered “afflictions” which might be interpreted as His efforts to get your “ear” in order to give you “instruction”? Was it the loss of a job, the birth of a handicapped child, or even the death of a child or a spouse?

I once heard of a thirty-five-year-old Christian, in middle Tennessee, who in the 1940s was a family man and a very successful building contractor. However, as he got richer and richer he began neglecting both his family and the church to the point where his relationship with his wife was strained and his practice of Christianity almost non-existent. He then came down with tuberculosis. Since at that time a person with tuberculosis was quarantined, he had to be isolated for several months. That gave him time for reflection and prayer. In his meditation on his situation he decided that his illness was probably a God-sent “evil” in order to keep him from going further astray. He was probably correct. In fact, he repented and reworked his priorities and God granted him spiritual and physical healing. Martel Pace has well said that,

Christianity is virtually unique among the religions of the world in stating that suffering is not a sign of God’s anger. Most religions teach that one who pleases his deity will not suffer. In contrast, both the Old and the New Testaments teach that suffering purifies and sanctifies. (543)

Indeed, “God’s righteousness” does also sometimes use “affliction” to “instruct” the righteous.

Conclusion

Later in our text Elihu praises God by saying, “Who has assigned Him His way, or who has said, ‘You have done wrong’? Remember to magnify His work, of which men have sung” (36:23-24). No one can justifiably put an “unfair” tag on God! In fact, in His righteousness, He “despises no one.” He “generally exalts the righteous” and He does “sometime send afflictions” on the righteous. But these are sent for “instruction” so as to correct the person and help him be saved. Therefore, let no one be arrogant enough to say to God, “You have done wrong!” Instead, remember to “magnify His work, of which men have sung.” Indeed, let us say, and sing, with the psalmist,

Praise the Lord!

Praise the Lord from the heavens;

Praise Him in the heights!

Praise Him, all his angels;

Praise Him, all His hosts!

Praise Him, sun and moon;

Praise Him all you stars of light!

Praise Him, you heavens of heavens,

And you waters above the heavens!

Let them praise the name of the Lord! (148:1-5)

Amen!

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Job and Jesus

Job 30:9-10; Ps. 22:6-7; 69:8-11

Andy Robison

Job and Jesus: Type and Anti-Type

Job, the real historical (not mythological) character (Ezek. 14:14, 20), suffered excruciating loss unexpectedly (Job 1:2); Jesus suffered more loss of more luxury by selfless plan and eternal purpose (1 Pet. 1:20; Philip. 2:5-8). Job was overwhelmed with grief (6:1-2); Jesus was a man acquainted with sorrows, even carrying more than was due Him (Isa. 53:3-4). Job was falsely accused of sin bringing on his troubles (8:3-6; 11:6; 22:6-8); Jesus was accused of collaboration with and possession by the devil himself (Matt. 12:24; John 10:20). Job was accused of searching out Divine things too deep for his understanding (11:7-9); Jesus was accused of blasphemy for claiming rights only applicable to God (Mark 2:6). Job felt God had forsaken him (13:24); Jesus uttered the ultimate cry of despondence (Ps. 22:1; Matt. 27:46). Job cried out vehemently (16:18); so did Jesus (Heb. 5:7). Job felt justice was denied Him (19:7); it really was Jesus (Isa. 53:8; Acts 8:33). Job wanted his words recorded that fairer judgment might accord him (19:23-24); Jesus' words were recorded for the fair judgment of all mankind (Heb. 1:1-4; John 12:48; Rom. 2:16). Many characteristics of the Old Testament character were amplified in the One who spans the ages.

Further, many of Job's pre-Messianic wonderings were answered in the Incarnate One. Job sought a mediator (9:32-34); Jesus answered the call (1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 7:25; 1 John 2:1). Job wanted to present his case directly to God (23:3-7); Jesus provided the opportunity for such boldness (Heb. 4:14-16). Job had confidence in a Redeemer providing him an opportunity to see God (19:25-27); Jesus made the notion a reality (Gal. 3:13; 4:4-5; Titus 2:14; Rev. 5:9; 1 John 3:1-3). Job asked if a dead man could live again (14:14); Jesus answered (John 11:24-25; 1 Cor. 15:21-24).

Job declared trust in God even if God would kill him (13:15; cf. 1:20-21); Jesus begged deliverance from His cup, but acquiesced to

the Father's will (Matt. 26:36-46). Oh, unlike Job, He knew from eternity He would have to do so (Rev. 13:8; Eph. 1:4). Job maintained his integrity (27:5-6); Jesus questioned as to what evil it was that warranted violence toward Him (John 18:23). All of these parallels came in the course of Job's debate with his so-called friends. Then, finally came his masterful summary, with one of the most striking comparisons of the type, Job, to the anti-type, Jesus of Nazareth.

The Debased Station of Job with Men

In chapter twenty-nine, Job reminisced about days when he was respected for his exemplary righteousness (cf. 1:1). At that time, he felt God's blessing in counsel, children, and comfortable living (29:2-6). In those former days, he had received praise from the population—from the young men to the princes (29:7-10). He felt that he deserved these accolades, because, after all, he had demonstrated right and merciful living (29:12-17). Thereby, he was confident in his continued prosperity (29:18-20). He earned utmost respect from the community (29:21-25).

Those who formerly praised Job turned, on the occasion of his suffering, into mockers (30:1). Job had looked down on even the fathers of these rough young sons, disdaining even to put them with the dogs of his flock (30:1). Those whom Job formerly esteemed were of no profit to him (30:2). These men were suffering the punishments of famine common to those Old Testament countries who refused a knowledge of God (30:3-8; cf. Lev. 26:23-26; Ezek. 4:16; 5:16; 14:13). The people of some upright standing drove these men out of their presence, crying out after them as though they were thieves (30:5). They had not enough cultural standing to dwell in any sort of dignified setting in towns or rural villages (30:6). Their anguished cries would be heard from wild desert shrubbery, not from the niceties of urban landscaping (30:7). These men were outcasts from everyone in society, much as Nebuchadnezzar would be in fulfillment of his foreboding dream (Dan. 4:25). They were regarded as second (or further) generation "fools" and "vile men". They were "scourged from the land" (30:8). [All scripture references are from NKJV unless otherwise noted.] Yet, those men were the ones who turned the tables on Job. Job pitifully lamented,

And now I am their taunting song; Yes, I am their byword.
They abhor me, they keep far from me; They do not hesitate
to spit in my face (30:9-10).

Insults are bad enough when they come from respected sources, but their piercing power is augmented immeasurably when the hurlers have no respected station in the first place. This was Job's lot.

Taunting Song

A taunting song is a common phenomenon. Most cultures have some simple melody implying mocking, with which fits any number of doggerel lyrics lambasting the object of ridicule. One thinks of the child's two-measure motif full of minor thirds (difficult to reference in prose), "Na-na-na-na-na," being employed with any number of verbiage variations: "My dad's better than your dad," or "Johnny has a girlfriend." Hopefully, the reader gets the idea. The wicked, distasteful, disgusting outcasts of Job's day felt themselves still in a station to mock Job in song.

Byword

They made Job a byword. A byword is the common use of an event or place in a derogatory way. Less familiar to American society is this concept; but it was common to the cultures of the Bible. Sodom, due to its sin and punishment, became a label of comparison for the wickedness of any people (Isa. 1:9-10; 3:9; 13:19; Jer. 23:14; 49:18; 50:40; Lam. 4:6; Ezek. 16:46-56). A disobedient Israel would become "an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword" among the pagan nations where the Lord would punitively drive them in their various captivities (Deut. 28:37). Israel's disdain for the God who placed them in the Promised Land would cause them to be removed from the land, and Israel would become a "proverb and byword among all peoples" (1 Kings 9:7). Even the temple, where God had beneficently placed His name (1 Kings 9:3) would become an object of the Gentiles' scorn (2 Chron. 7:20). Indeed, nations around would look at Jerusalem's destruction with gleeful disdain (Ezek. 25:3; 26:2). God would, in turn, punish those peoples

for this, but the predicted promulgation of Jerusalem and the temple as a byword would be fulfilled.

Spitting

In Job's suffering, he, as an individual, had become a byword for even his pretended friends. Exercising the ever-present but false theory of direct retribution, they attributed Job's suffering to some hidden sins (4:7; 5:17-22; 8:2-4, 20). He was even accused of getting less than he deserved (11:4-6). In this passage (chapter 30), though, the grief is amplified. His friends at least ostensibly uttered their insults in attempts to garner his repentance. But now it was the vile people who made him a byword.

These foes, motivated by abhorrence, presumably out of a progression of his physical repugnance (2:7-8) presupposing his spiritual degradation, kept their comfortable distance from Job (30:10a). But if they ever came near enough, they did not hesitate to spit in his face (30:10b). "To spit at all in presence of another is thought in the East insulting; much more when done to mark 'abhorrence'" (Jamieson 71). One would think that most cultures understand such offensive behavior. Job viewed all this disdain as some sort of undeserved punishment: "But He has made me a byword of the people, And I have become one in whose face men spit" (17:6).

Job, Jesus, and the Undeserved Disdain of Men

Job was a righteous man receiving undeserved, disdainful treatment from lesser men. This statement applies immeasurably further in the case of Christ. Beyond righteousness, Jesus was a part of the holy Trinity in heaven (John 1:1-4; Col. 1:16-17). Such Divinity could not even ever be approached with sin (Ps. 5:4; Hab. 1:13). From eternity He dwelt in the luxury of "unapproachable light" (1 Tim. 6:16). As an integral part of Divinity (Col. 2:9), He would have enjoyed the praise of righteous and redeemed men throughout the ages (Ex. 15, 32; Judg. 5; 1 Sam. 2; Neh. 9; Psalms 8, 18, 48, 95, 96, 100 et al.). With the Father, He would not have just felt He deserved such praise, He really would have deserved it, for Deity is always holy and pure (Deut. 32:4; 2 Sam. 22:31; Deut.

7:9). While it is true that men, more often than not, lash out against God in sin, still, when praise is offered correctly to heaven, it is justly received. Jesus could have been confident in this continued luxury, had He not purposed to enter the misery-stricken world (cf. Job 14:1) of mankind. Giving up, then, honor, “He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him” (John 1:11). Such a passage as Romans 5:8, in this consideration, prompts even more sober reflection: “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” The Father and the Son displayed an enriching love to those much lesser than they (cf. Rom. 5:6-7). Thanks be to God for this, and for the revelation of it through the Holy Spirit (Eph. 3:5-6; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:20-21). The condescension of Christ is what makes salvation possible (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21).

He descended to those who would abuse Him mercilessly. Though the terms *byword* and *taunting song* may never be specifically used in reference to Christ, the Scriptures indicate that, in prophecy and fulfillment, Christ experienced the ridicule associated with the ideas.

In Prophecy

Many Psalms, the Bible student readily knows, are overtly Messianic in their implications. Psalm 22, beginning with the cry further immortalized at the cross—“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (1)—is one of those Davidic passages that foretell in detail the sufferings of the Christ.

Psalm 22 is a profound lament psalm that concludes as a triumphant psalm of praise for God’s deliverance. Although this psalm speaks of David’s own distress and the Lord’s deliverance of him, it also prophetically describes in remarkable detail Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection. The language David uses to describe his own predicament is prompted by the Holy Spirit. Thus it could span a thousand years to describe precisely the experiences of the Savior Jesus—both His excruciating death and victorious resurrection. (Radmacher)

Indeed, a few hundred years before crucifixion was even invented, the Holy Spirit here foretold Christ's piercing (16). An oblique reference to the integrity of His unbroken bones is in verse seventeen (cf. Psalm 34:20; John 19:33). The gambling for His garments is predicted in eighteen (cf. John 19:24). Hebrews 2:12 references Psalm 22:22 in declaring disciples' brotherhood with Christ.

One finds it no stretch of any imagination, then, that verses 6-8 of the Psalm herald the emotional humiliation of the Lord:

But I am a worm, and no man; A reproach of men, and despised by the people. All those who see Me ridicule Me; They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, "He trusted in the Lord, let Him rescue Him; Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!"

One unfamiliar with poetic hyperbole expressing the depths of human emotion would have trouble with this reference to the Christ as "a worm, and no man." Such an attribution was made to the human race by Bildad (Job 25:5). God uses the term to highlight His unwarranted favor toward unworthy Jacob (Israel) (Isa. 41:14). Spurgeon cites Joseph Roberts, "Among the Hindoos, when a man complains and abhors himself, he asks: 'What am I? A worm! A worm!'" (340). But, oh, the depths of human depravity are so ironically displayed in causing the Holy One of God, presumably, to feel so. Cautiously, one should note that no New Testament text refers to Christ's feeling like a worm. Nevertheless, He had become man (1 Tim. 2:5), and it would have been no stretch for Him to feel—in view of the treatment of Him by His contemporaries—no more valuable than a worm. Being infinitely more valuable, still, emotions could overwhelm the Son of Man (cf. Luke 22:44; Heb. 5:7).

Rulers of the Jews mocked the Son of God with blasphemous words hauntingly similar of the Psalm: "He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, 'I am the Son of

God” (Matt. 27:42-43; Mark 15:31-32; Luke 23:35-36). Perhaps more insultingly, people who were passing by with nothing better to do derided Him. Referencing Jesus’ enigmatic prediction that He would rebuild a temple in three days (John 2:19), they wagged their head, saying “You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross” (Matt. 27:39). Most disheartening may have been the criminals hanging at his sides. As Job’s societal outcasts scorned him, so “even the robbers who were crucified with Him reviled Him with the same thing” (Matt. 27:44; Mark 15:32).

Just like Job, Christ had the experience of prior public approval turning into mob injustice (Matt. 21:6-11; 27:15-25; Mark 15:13-14; John 19:6, 15). This Psalm sets forth how Christ’s “loud and persevering cry for deliverance (had) not yet had a hearing (ver. 2)” (Lange 167), thus bringing into sharper focus the depths of despair from which the opening cry (“My God, My God...”) had been uttered (Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34).

Psalm 69

The difference in Psalm 22 and 69 is herein well-observed:

Psalm 69, a psalm of lament, is more specifically a protest of innocence. This highly messianic psalm presents a remarkable description of the suffering of Jesus Christ. Whereas Ps. 22 describes Jesus’ physical sufferings, Ps. 69 focuses more on His emotional and spiritual suffering. (Radmacher)

In the Psalm, the pathos of poetry depicts the sufferer drowning in mire while simultaneously being overwhelmed with water (1-2). Verse three segues to the water of tears of continual crying. Before Jesus and after Job, Jeremiah wept profusely (Jer. 9:1-2) and had been relegated to a miry cistern (Jer. 38:5-6). Psalm 69:4 makes a bold declaration applicable to all three of those characters, and any number of God’s servants through the ages: “Those who hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head; they are mighty who would destroy me, being my enemies wrongfully....”

The cause for which Christ's disciples are hated is the same for which He, and prophets before Him were (John 15:18-19; Matt. 5:10-12; 1 John 3:1-2). While Psalm 69 has its differentiations from Christ (verse 5 declares the Psalmist's sins, but Christ was sinless (1 Pet. 2:22), verses 7-12 bear particular foreshadowing of the life of Christ. Christ, for God's sake (v. 7) bore reproach and suffered shame (cf. Isa. 50:6). He was a stranger to his brothers (v. 8; cf. Mark 3:31-35; John 7:5). The disciples remembered a quote from verse nine after Jesus' cleansing of the temple: "Zeal for Your house has eaten me up" (John 2:17). Christ was in a sort of chain of reproaches. Those who reproached God reproached Christ (9b). (A step further, the apostles would rejoice "that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name" [Acts 5:41].)

Then, verses eleven and twelve of the Psalm tie into the life of Christ and the complaint of Job more intricately. The Psalmist became a "byword" (11) and "a song of the drunkards" (12) in the same way in which Job had mourned (30:9). Jeremiah had also become a taunting song (Lam. 3:14).

The Humiliation of the Christ

All of these images—in Job and Psalms—point to the abject humiliation of the one suffering. Of such humiliation, Jesus is the ultimate example. Jesus suffered the shame of His disciples' desertion (Matt. 27:56; Mark 14:50-52). He endured the embarrassment of having a murderer released in His place (Matt. 27:15-26; Mark 15:6-14; Luke 23:17-23; John 18:39-40). Jesus suffered the brutal physical pain of a scourging (Matt. 27:26; Mark 15:15; John 19:1), which would have included the humiliation of public excoriation. "Under the Roman method, the culprit was stripped, stretched with cords or thongs on a frame and beaten with rods" (Smith 595). The exposure of holy flesh continued as Pilate's cheap-thrill-seeking soldiers stripped Him in the midst of the garrison to briefly cover Him with a scarlet robe and thus mock His claim to be king (Matt. 27:27-28; Mark 15:16). This was the second time for such ironic exhibitionism of robe-wearing. Herod's soldiers had already obtained the hearty belly-laugh at the expense of their Savior (Luke 23:8-12).

In Pilate's court then came the sardonic fitting of the crown of thorns, along with the reed for a scepter (Matt. 27:29; Mark 15:17). The reed was subsequently used for contemptuous strikes while the spitting began (Matt. 27:30; Mark 15:19).

Spitting, quite obviously, is a universal sign of scorn. At the forgiveness of Miriam for her rebellion against Moses, as her punitively imposed leprosy was cleansed, God still secluded her for a week, reasoning, "If her father had but spit in her face, would she not be shamed seven days?" (Num. 12:14). The man who would not take the wife of a deceased brother according to the Levirate law (Deut. 25:5-9; cf. Matt. 22:23-33) would have to endure the widowed sister-in-law publicly spitting in his face (Deut. 25:9). Not only in Pilate's house, but also, previously, in the high priest's residence, did Jesus endure this treatment (Matt. 26:67).

When Simon of Cyrene had carried Christ's cross to Golgotha, they, in fulfillment of Psalm 69:21, "gave Him sour wine mingled with gall to drink" (Matt. 27:34; cf. Mark 15:23). This apparent act of kindness was refused by Jesus, as He chose "to endure with full consciousness the sufferings appointed..." (Lane 564).

After all these hours of disgrace, then came the crucifixion. The prolonged pain of this execution was exacerbated by its inherent shame. Christ was receiving the punishment common to criminals who were being used as deterrent examples to the Roman populace. Being innocent, he "was numbered with the transgressors" (Isa. 53:12). In crucifixion, "Normally, the delinquent was stripped, and after having been scourged, his outstretched arms were nailed or tied with cords to the cross-beam..." (Lane 564).

Men were ordinarily crucified naked (Artemidorus II. 61). Jewish sensitivities, however, dictated that men ought not to be publicly executed completely naked, and men condemned to stoning were permitted a loin-cloth (M. *Sanhedrin* VI. 3). Whether the Romans were considerate of Jewish feelings in this matter is unknown (Lane 566).

Commenting on Mark 15, William Lane notes,

The height of the cross varied...A high cross seems to have been used when there was the desire to make the victim visible for as wide a radius as possible. That the cross upon which Jesus was crucified was higher than normal may be deduced from the fact that the soldier who offered him a drink with a sponge soaked in vinegar (sic) could not reach his mouth by hand, but had to extend it with a reed (verse 36). A high cross also gives point to the scornful challenge for Jesus to 'come down' (verse 32). (566-67).

Then, there was the irony of the sign placed above Jesus' head, "This is Jesus the King of the Jews" (Matt. 27:36; Mark 15:26; Luke 23:38; John 19:19). In Roman custom,

On the way to the execution site the delinquent wore or had carried before him a wooden board whitened with chalk on which letters were written in ink or burned in signifying his crime. After the execution this summary statement was fastened to the cross above the head of the crucified (cf. Juvenal, *Satires* VI. 230; Pliny the Younger, *Epistles* VI.x.3; IX. xix. 3; Suetonius, *Life of Caligula* 32; *Life of Domitian* 10). The notice attached to the cross on which the tortured body of Jesus hung bore, in black or red letters on the white ground, the inscription "King of the Jews." It declared that Jesus had been sentenced to death as politically subversive of the authority of imperial Rome (Lane 567-68).

This, of course, was a lie. The only authority Jesus was subverting was the devil's supposed such (cf. 2 Cor. 4:4). But shame knows no boundaries. The untruths hurled at Job were just the precursor to the sort of overall deception the Christ endured during His trials and slaying.

Conclusion

Job had become a taunting song and a byword. They felt he was an example of the principle of retribution. He had sinned, and deserved God's wrath. People who formerly adored him turned on

him when his suffering began. Some hid, and some spit in his face.

Jesus of Nazareth had massive followings up until He taught hard things (John 6:66). He had the crowds paving the way for His entrance to Jerusalem. What happened to get them to change their chants from “Hosanna” to “Crucify Him” in just a few short days (even hours?) is beyond human comprehension. Sure, the leaders stirred them up (Matt. 27:20; Mark 15:11), but how? What would convince them to turn on the One who “went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed by the devil” (Acts 10:38)?

It doesn't make sense. It shouldn't make sense. Don't try to make sense of it. But thank God for it. The suffering Christ endured—physical, emotional, social, and spiritual—carries the power to spare you and me from what we really deserve. Remembering that might make a difference in faithfulness, lest those “once enlightened... crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame” (Heb. 6:4-6).

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Biographical Sketch

Andy Robison is the director of the West Virginia School of Preaching. He has served as a minister for the Harrisville, WV church of Christ, the Hopewell church of Christ outside Parkersburg, WV, the Camden Avenue congregation in Parkersburg, the Oakhurst congregation in Farmington, WV, and the Pennsboro, WV church. He taught Bible and directed choruses at Jackson (TN) Christian School. Andy received his A.A. from Ohio Valley College (Parkersburg, WV) and his B.A. in Bible and Vocal Music from Harding University. He has received his teaching certification from Harding and done extensive graduate work with the Harding University Graduate School of Religion (Memphis, TN). Andy has written a number of songs and helped produce several CDs of a cappella singing to benefit West Virginia Christian Youth Camp, where he serves on the Board of Directors. He is the editor of the songbooks, *Teaching & Admonishing*, and *100 Songs to the Glory of God*. He manages the website www.churchofchristsongs.com, which contains many hymns he has written. He and his wife Marsha have two children, Hannah and Andrew.

A Penitent Heart

Job 42:1-6

Jefferson Sole

The Book of Job is a marvelous account of a righteous man with the endurance to cling to the Almighty God in the face of suffering. Satan, with God's permission, inflicted Job with physical loss for the purpose of demonstrating that even the most righteous men are motivated by selfishness (Job 1:8-12; 2:3-7). Satan believed that faith was a derivative of blessings, and that when blessings ceased so would Job's faith in God.

Unfortunately for Job, his wife and friends were unable to provide comfort in his time of need. To the contrary, they provided heartache as they attempted to provide reasons and solutions to his suffering. Job's wife offered a flawed solution to his suffering with this advice, "curse God and die" (Job 2:9). Job rejected her solution as the advice from a "foolish woman" and continued enduring (Job 2:10).

Eliphaz insisted that everyone is guilty of error, and that Job, though a pious man, must have unknowingly sinned and was being punished for his sin (Job 4:1-21). He then encouraged Job to repent in order to receive the bountiful blessings of God again (Job 5:1-27). In his second discourse (Job 15:1-35), Eliphaz established himself as a beacon of wisdom who was foolishly ignored by Job. Job's failure to submit to his theology proved, in his mind, that Job was a wicked man that had once been masked by blessings. Eliphaz believed God had finally removed the disguise, and Job's wickedness was being revealed in the form of suffering. He insisted that the wicked are punished. Job is being punished. Therefore, Job is wicked (Job 15:1-35). In Job 22:1-30, Eliphaz accused Job of committing specific sins and urged him to repent.

Bildad asserted that God never perverts justice; therefore the wicked will always be punished and the righteous will always be blessed in this life (Job 8:1-3). If Job wanted to prosper again, he must repent (Job 8:5-6). In his second speech (Job 18:1-21), Bildad

became annoyed by Job's refusal to accept his sage wisdom and was convinced it revealed Job's sin. If Job refused to repent, he could expect the same disastrous fate of the wicked that have gone on before him. In his final speech (Job 25:1-6), Bildad contended that no man is pure before God, and that Job's impurity will never allow him to have a trial before God.

In Zophar's first speech he is largely unsympathetic toward Job. He was angered that Job would claim innocence before God and questioned Job's wisdom (Job 11:1-4). In his second speech Zophar defended the notion that the wicked are always punished according to the measure of their wickedness (Job 20:1-5). In addition, he delivered a discourse on the terrible fate of the wicked which was obviously aimed toward Job (Job 20:6-29). In this discourse, he implied that Job had oppressed the poor (Job 20:19).

Elihu, in his first speech, defended his right to speak (Job 32:4-22). He was angered at Job for maintaining innocence and claiming to be more righteous than God (Job 32:2). He insisted that all men are inferior to God and therefore must accept His justice (Job 33:12). In Job 34:1-32 he defended the righteous rule of God in order to refute Job's claim that God does not always execute judgment on the unrighteous. He then called on Job to repent (Job 34:33-34). In his mind, there was no circumstance in which God would hear Job's case (Job 34:35-37). Elihu believed that Job's innocence was in direct conflict with God's judgment. Therefore he charged Job, who believed he was innocent, with believing he was more righteous than God (Job 35:1-16). In his fourth speech (Job 36:1-37:24) he insists that God uses suffering for disciplinary purposes, using nature when necessary, to punish the wicked.

Though some of what his friends said was true, their conclusions were flawed and provoked Job. At first, Job responded to his affliction with self-pity (Job 3:1-2), but over the span of several discussions with his "miserable comforters," his self-pity progressed into a desire to be vindicated. As part of the grieving process he searched for the source of his suffering and mistakenly blamed God (Job 6:4-9; 7:17-21). In his first response to Bildad, he pondered the idea of litigation with God, but acknowledged God's superiority as a hindrance in court (Job 9:1-2). He charged God, the plaintiff,

with failure to reveal the wrong-doings of Job, the defendant (Job 10:1-2). As his friend's advice became more irrational, he refused their "wisdom" and longed for a meeting, face to face, with God (Job 13:3-4, 13-16; 14:13-14). In Job chapter 16, Job blamed God for his suffering (11), but hoped for a witness in heaven that would defend him (19). As his friends continued to press him to repent of his sins, Job insisted they had no evidence of his sin (Job 19:1-5) and became confident that "his Redeemer liveth" and would provide vindication (19:25). In Job 21:7-34 he rejected the claim of his friends that the wicked are always punished in life. The purpose of this discourse was to prove that his suffering does not necessarily prove he has sinned. Job demonstrated confidence in chapters 23-24 when he openly longed for a meeting with God and expressed his confidence that God would give him a fair trial (23:6-17). As a final rebuttal to Bildad (Job 26-31), Job refused the counsel of Bildad (26:4), reiterated his innocence and righteousness (27:1-6), considered the punishment of the wicked (27:7-23), contemplated the power and wisdom of God (28:1-28), remembered the blessings God once provided (29:1-30:31), and longed for the day in which God would answer him (31:35-40). The climax has been reached, will God answer Job?

Job finally received his request and God answered him in Job chapters 38-41. Yet his answer must have been different from what Job had expected. In his first speech God does not reprove Job for any wrongdoing, but God does dismantle Job's conclusions about His character. Job had concluded that God was responsible for his suffering and was inactive his life. As a result, he questioned God's justice because of His perceived inaction. To reverse Job's misunderstanding, God began by asking Job to expound on the creation of the world, a topic that was impossible for Job to discuss. To further dismantle Job's belief in an inactive, unjust God, He questioned Job concerning the things created. Though Job could have known something about the things created, he was clearly outmatched by God, who knows everything about the things He created (Job 38-39:30). Job would not answer, because he could not answer (Job 40:1-5).

Just as God exercised His wisdom in the creation and care of the

world, God also exercised His wisdom in the lives of men (Job 40:6-14). If Job could not exercise dominion over the great beasts of the earth (Job 40:15-41:34), a task God easily accomplished, how could Job effectively question the Almighty God? Job is clearly inferior to God in wisdom and power, yet he must respond. Job had once eagerly waited for this moment, but how would he respond? With a penitent heart (Job 42:1-6).

Penitence of heart is an important concept taught in the Old and New Testament Scripture. In fact, Christ proclaimed that without repentance one cannot be saved (Luke 13:3). In the Book of Job, particularly Job 42:2-6, the process toward repentance is revealed.

A greater understanding and respect for the awesome attributes of God moves one toward penitence. On several occasions Job had properly acknowledged God's omnipotence and omniscience. In Job 9:3-4, he conceded that he could not contend with God, because "He is wise in heart and mighty in strength." Unfortunately, he applied his knowledge improperly. Instead of using the knowledge of the unlimited power and knowledge of God to comfort his soul, he allowed it to embitter his soul. Job became embittered because, from his perspective, an all-powerful and all-knowing God remained unnecessarily idle as he was enduring intense physical suffering and was being wrongly accused of sin (Job 10:1-3). However, in Job 42:2, Job made an important affirmation about God's nature when he responded, "I know that thou canst do every *thing*, and *that* no thought can be withholden from thee" (KJV). With these words, Job began to make a transition toward penitence.

What had Job come to understand after the Lord spoke in chapters 38-41 that he had failed to understand or acknowledge prior to His words? While it is difficult to know with certainty, it appears that Job finally realized that God's unlimited power and knowledge, the very attributes He used to create all things to perfection according to His purpose, also allowed Him to perfectly care for all things according to His purpose. In other words, God's omnipotence coincides perfectly with His omniscience to ensure His perfect plan is carried out. God does not have to "turn off" one to use the other. After God spoke it must have been obvious to Job that whatever power and knowledge he possessed was meager compared to God's.

God created and cared for all of creation with perfection (Job 38:4; 38:5-39:30). Job, as a part of God’s creation, would be cared for by an omnipotent and omniscient God. However, that care would be rendered according to His divine purpose.

Job learned a valuable lesson that many have either never learned or have quickly forgotten in times of calamity. An omnipotent and omniscient God is not obligated to use His power to fulfill the “righteous” purposes of men. In fact, in most instances it would be a flagrant misuse of power if He did, for man’s knowledge is limited and thus incomplete. Chaos would persist. Job’s moment of clarity came because he finally understood the omnipotence and omniscience of God in relation to His divine purpose. He now knew God was able to do (“canst do”) all (“every”) things and no plan (“thought”) of His could be cut off or made impossible (“withholden”).

In chapter 42:3, Job compared his attributes to the attributes of God with these words, “Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? Therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things to wonderful for me, which I knew not.” Understanding the nature of God will only move one toward repentance if they compare those attributes to their own. In other words, if Job thought his ability in power and knowledge was on par with God’s then he would not have felt compelled to repent. He would have viewed God as nothing more than “a god” and proceeded to criticize His divine plan. Instead, as all must do, Job compared his own power and knowledge to God’s and was found wanting. It was impossible that he was “right” and God was “wrong.” The only conclusion was that his prior conclusions about God’s actions or lack thereof were wrong. He had uttered words that he clearly did not understand—that were to extraordinary (“wonderful”) for him to understand.

The words of Job 42:3a are almost identical to the words God uttered to Job after Elihu’s final discourse. As part of his reflection on God’s response in chapters 38-41, Job applied the words of God to himself. He, like Elihu, had not shed light on the plan (“counsel”) of God, but had darkened (“hideth”) it out of ignorance. Job continued by repeating what the Lord had said in Job 38:3 and 40:7, “Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me” (Job 42:4). Job had been humbled by the barrage of

God's questions for which he had no answer. *Knowledge and respect for God's Word moves one toward penitence.* Job could have turned a deaf ear to God or become angry at His words, and he would have never repented. Instead, he allowed God's words to humble him into submission.

The words of God had such an effect, that Job continued, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee." It should not be construed that Job had literally seen God, for no man can gaze upon the holiness of God without severe consequences (John 1:18; 1 John 4:12). Instead, his words display the progression of his knowledge of the Almighty God. He knew and was faithful to God prior to his suffering (Job 1:8), but his faith was built upon the words of others. God answered Job in a whirlwind (Job 40:6), and as a product of intense suffering and the acceptance of God's Word, his knowledge of God had grown to the extent that it is now as if he had seen Him.

Job's deeper understanding of God prompted these words, "Wherefore I abhor myself..." (42:6a). Just as Job's improved knowledge of the omnipotence and omniscience of God in relation to His divine purpose caused Him to reflect upon his own intellectual shortcomings, his deeper faith caused him to reflect upon his moral shortcomings. *Knowledge and respect for the ugliness of sin moves one toward penitence.* The word "abhor" is translated "loathe" in Job 7:16 without any corresponding object. In like manner, the word "abhor" in Job 42:6 has no corresponding object, but many translations add the object "myself." Some believe "myself" is not the correct object to insert but think "my words" is a better choice. Whatever the case, Job considered his conduct and was disgusted with himself. Job had not committed the overt sins of the rich (22:2-11) or the hidden sins of the hypocrite (8:11-18) to earn severe punishment from God. It seems impossible to know with certainty whether Job is disgusted with a particular action during his suffering or if his response is triggered by the reality of being in the presence of God. Job's reaction is like unto Peter who proclaimed, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man; O Lord" (Luke 5:8) and Isaiah who declared, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips:

for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts” (Isaiah 6:5). Like these men, he was in the presence of Deity, and his sin was ever before him.

Job continued with these words, “...and repent in dust and ashes.” Job did not voice disgust with himself without a corresponding reversal of action. The word translated, “repent” means “to turn from a planned course of action and take up a new course...It is an affirmative action based on conviction” (Hartley 537). The same reversal of action is required in the New Testament. God expects more than “sorrow” from His followers; he expects sorrow that produces a change in conduct (2 Cor. 7:10; Matt. 3:7-8; Acts 3:19). Job had overstated his innocence, perhaps to the point of questioning God’s justice, and felt the need to repent. *Knowledge and respect for the remedy for sin moves one toward penitence.* The remedy for sin is a penitent heart, without it, one cannot be saved. As a demonstration of his grief, Job repented in dust in ashes. Earlier Job grieved in dust in ashes because of his physical loss (2:8); now, he grieves in dust in ashes because of his sin. The upright, servant of God found it necessary to absolve himself of every ounce of sin by way of repentance. Servants today must do the same. Hartley wrote, “Thus Job renounces all personal claims that could be construed to put himself above God, in humility he glorifies God” (537).

God never answered Job’s most pressing question, “why am I suffering?” After God reminded Job of His omnipotence and omniscience in relation to his divine purpose, it was no longer necessary. God was still Deity, and Job was still human. Instead of needing vindicated, Job needed to repent. *The first step toward penitence is knowledge and respect for the awesome attributes of God.* God reminded Job of His role as Creator and Sustainer of all things, and it was obvious that His plan could not be frustrated. Though Job, a righteous man, was suffering and the wicked seemed to prosper God was still in control. No one could alter His plan. Job heard the words of God and received them. *The second step toward penitence is knowledge and respect for God’s Word.* It was obvious to Job that he had imperfections in his life. Those imperfections could not remain in the presence of a perfect God. *The third step toward penitence is knowledge and respect for the ugliness of sin.*

Job was disgusted with himself, but that was not sufficient. His disgust translated into action. *The fourth step toward penitence is knowledge and respect for the remedy for sin.* Therefore, Job repented in dust in ashes.

A servant's heart is a penitent heart.

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Biographical Sketch

Jefferson Sole is privileged to be serving together with the Church of Christ at Hillview Terrace. He and his wife, Julia, have one son, Jefferson George William (G.W.).

I Know That My Redeemer Lives

Job 19:23-27

Dan Kessinger

If one were to analyze various passages from Job, to grade them according to the immediate impact on the reader, one would be compelled to rate Job 19:23-27 at or near the top of the list. Accordingly, verse 25 is often quoted, perhaps because the reference to the “Redeemer” sounds so familiar to the New Testament student. It has provided the inspiration for a number of well known hymns. Who is the redeemer? What bearing does he have on Job’s then miserable life, or on his defense against the accusations of his friends? Was Job speaking in temporal terms, or was he making a Messianic prediction? If this is the case, how much did he understand of the words he uttered? Should his reference to the last or latter day be interpreted to mean the “day” of incarnation, the resurrection of Jesus, or the day of the general resurrection?

What is stated here must be considered according to the overall context of Job, and to the current round of discussion. Job’s accusers seem to have become vexed at his (from their perspective) stubborn refusal to acknowledge whatever secret sin has brought all of these calamities to his life. On one issue, all four seemingly agree: these events were not the result of random chance, but surely must have come from God. While Job sees the hand of the Almighty in these events, he professes ignorance as to why he has been singled out for such misfortune.

At this point in the exchange, Job has shifted his focus away from his own relationship with God to beg for mercy and understanding from his friends. Having accused them of being miserable comforters in Chapter 16, he continues to call attention to his pitiable condition, both physical and emotional. Fallout from his troubles continue to haunt him, in the form of poor health, rejection of friends and family, and even the haunting specter of having his life saved “by the skin of his teeth (19:20). Today, Job would probably be said to be suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome. As he considers the role of

God in his plight, he is without answers. He sees himself as being “fenced,” that is, that God has taken away his options.

Under such dire and tempestuous circumstances, there is a tendency to search for an anchor, some foundation in chaos. Under extraordinary duress, God’s servants are faced with a choice to reject God because of His perceived unfairness, or to seek those aspects of His character that remain visible. Faith may encounter such a storm that its once full sails lie in useless tatters on a broken deck; those who choose to continue their commitment mourn the losses, but choose to focus on what remains and is certain. Even at such time, the believer may pray “I still believe in you, God.” The anchor remains. It appears that Job is speaking of things that transcend his temporal condition, no matter how overwhelming it had become for him.

Enduring Truth in the Midst of Suffering (23-25a)

With a poetic sense of contrast between the transient and the enduring, Job longs for a means to preserve his words in verse 23-24, “.... that my words were written...inscribed in a book... engraved on a rock...with an iron pen and lead, forever!” There was no local stenographer to record the spoken speeches between Job and his friends; and since the conversations are written in poetry, it is unlikely that these speeches were recorded verbatim. Was Job referring to all of his words written in this book? If so, he got his wish since we continue to read his words today! Some have thought that Job was unaware that his words would indeed be preserved, not on stone or iron, but in the pages of God’s Word. This point of view grossly misinterprets his plea for an enduring medium upon which to write.

Given his emphatic declaration, it is this writer’s opinion that Job was making reference to the truths he knows that are beyond question, a poetic reference to what he is about to utter. The importance of a message is often reflected to a degree in the medium on which it is preserved. For instance, God chose to record the decalogue on stone, evidently as a monument to His own sovereignty over man through law. In 2 Corinthians 3:7, Paul makes reference to the decalogue in wording that seems to remind mankind that God’s law was not the

result of a passing fancy, but was deliberately engraved in a medium that would resist the ravages of time. ““But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones, was glorious...”

Even today, we refer to transcendent principles as being “chiseled in stone,” that which cannot be altered on a whim. This principle has already been utilized a number of times in the speeches made by both Job and his friends, with accusations of uttering words that amounted to nothing more than a strong wind. Often this is the case with the spoken word, in spite of its admitted usefulness and power. Many tend to blurt out things that are not well thought out, or perhaps not entirely true. Because of this thoughtless tendency the Lord cautioned his disciples against indulging in idle words. Matthew 12:36 reads “But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment.” But even those who disregard the Lord’s warning are unlikely to write out what they unthinkingly say.

Regarding a more important and well thought out discourse, it is likely to be considered worthy of recording by writing, but what Job says encompasses more than just that. In his case, it seems that what he is about to utter is of such vital importance that he longs for it to be preserved for posterity. It seems not just that he regards them as unfailingly true; but in the context of his misery and uncertainty, he is focusing upon those things that can be known with certainty; they are his answer and his anchor.

It is interesting that Job’s accusers have expressed their absolute certainty regarding Job’s guilt. They have produced evidence that appears ironclad and water tight. Job has not just been convicted beyond a reasonable doubt, but they consider his to be an open and shut case. By contrast, Job himself has conceded that while he himself does not know why these things have happened to him; he has no alternative theory. But he does know something that is the foundation of his faith. With regard to the God he serves, he states “for I know” (verse 25).

Before we consider what Job knew, it is important to verify that he knew something. Job’s friends had claimed to know that Job was a secret sinner; Satan had claimed to know that Job would curse God if he were tormented; Job’s wife had claimed to know that Job’s life

was irretrievable; Job himself claimed ignorance as to the root of his personal misery. But in spite of all these things, Job still knew something, a knowledge he thought critical to his case.

The current generation may place a higher value on knowledge than any previous one, at least based on its claims. One may read statistics that suggest that the entire body of human knowledge has doubled every few years, and increased exponentially in only a few centuries. Nonetheless, our view of the nature of truth itself has suffered as has credibility in general since so many of those “truths” are later discredited. With this dizzying pace and contradictory information, it is little wonder that the claim “we cannot know anything for certain” resonates for so many. True knowledge is still important, and it is important to know that a man like Job, awash in a sea of uncertainty, could still say with absolute confidence “For I know.”

There are those who suffer in this matter because of a contradictory philosophies regarding knowledge. Concerning the Bible, they seem drawn to the things that seem mysterious and uncertain. They are drawn to and speculative regarding the secret things that belong to God (Deut. 29:29a) rather concentrating on those that have been revealed (Deut. 29:29b). Job has freely confessed that he is uncertain regarding his current circumstances or his immediate future. Though some have Job professing his confidence in a restoration of his health and temporal circumstances, it would appear that Job’s confidence in all such earthly blessings is now shattered. In a most unfortunate way, Job has learned that there is no such earthly security, thus he expresses his confidence in some wondrous things that may be known.

The Eternal Redeemer in the Midst of Suffering (Job 19:27)

At this point in the reading, there is sharp disagreement among interpreters. While all agree that Job’s longs for an eventual vindication, the nature of that vindication is open to question. Is Job anticipating that he will be proved righteous in the eyes of his friends? Is he longing for a restoration of his health? Or is Job identifying the Son of God as the ultimate redeemer of mankind, and that even if Job himself would live out his days in abject misery, that he would

still be proved faithful by the redeemer and his resurrection? Adam Clarke discussed the matter as follows, allowing that many able students had argued on either side of the issue

...By learned men and eminent critics the words have been understood very differently; some vehemently contending that they refer to the resurrection of the body, and the redemption of the human race by Jesus Christ; while others, with equal vehemence and show of argument, have contended that they refer only to Job's restoration to health, family comforts, and general prosperity, after the present trial should be ended.... (90)

Clarke goes on to correctly observe that the conclusion one reached must honor the principle of special Divine revelation (91). This principle is critical in our assessment of this text, not because an awareness of special revelation and prophecy rules out a temporal understanding of Job's confidence in the redeemer, but because failing to recognize such demands that Job's thinking was limited to the temporal. To phrase it another way, the Bible believer can allow for the possibility that Job is speaking of himself and his own future. To the skeptic or liberal, the opposite cannot be true. To him, Job could not be speaking prophetically of the coming of the redeemer, or of his resurrection, or of Job's own future resurrection from the grave. To concede such a thing is to concede that God was speaking things through Job that cannot be known by the unassisted human mind.

Clarke argues that either conclusion really implies special inspiration since first, a discussion of the general resurrection obviously demanded it and second, that Job's personal restoration was also so improbable that confidence in it too would require direct inspiration. He concludes that Job is not referring to his own restoration, since that information would shortly become apparent to observers. Thus, Job was uttering a great prophecy, a light in a dark place regarding the ultimate hope of all mankind (91-92).

"Redeemer" is a translation of the Hebrew word "*ga'al*," and is defined as one who buys back, especially as it pertains to the

relatives right to redeem sold land. Thus, the “*ga'al*” is also the next of kin or relative in general. It also refers to the role of relatives in avenging wrongdoing (Strong 25). If indeed Job is speaking prophetically of the coming of the great redeemer Jesus, then he may have anticipated one who is much more than just a master. He is a brother, a friend, a giver, and a judge. Whether or not Job intended to say all these things, or whether he even understood the full import of such a description is open to question, but to fail to apply the title “redeemer” here to the coming Christ seems short-sighted at best.

The name “Jesus” (savior) implies redemption from the slavery of sin and its consequences. Jesus considered His work to be that of redemption, and of calling those in need of it (Matt. 11:28-30). Jesus also assumed the role of redeemer in the sense of righting wrongs and wreaking vengeance on those who had harmed His family, just as the Old Testament next of kin was responsible for vengeance. Yet another synonym for “redeemer” is “deliverer.” Thus, Paul promised his readers that Jesus would avenge atrocities committed against them.

[S]ince it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Thess.1:6-8)

The word translated “stand” is also significant in that it describes not the act of standing, but more particularly refers to standing up or arising (Strong 102). This may be a general reference to God’s plan to raise up a redeemer/Messiah, but there may be a more specific significance to the standing up or raising up of a resurrected Messiah. Three other features of this statement arrest our attention and cause us to consider the resurrection of Jesus. First we notice that his standing is said to be in the latter or last day. Second, the “earth” here referenced is not so much a reference to the planet Earth, but to clay, soil, dirt, or most significantly, dust (Strong 90).

This redeemer, though he took on the form of dust creatures, was no servant to the fate of dust. Instead he arose above the dust into which his body descended. Third, Job connects his own specific future to the rising up of the redeemer.

Job had previously asked if a man once dead would live again (Job 14:14). If Job was expressing a question regarding the reality of the resurrection, then he certainly answered it with the description of a great redeemer who was also the conqueror of death. Of course, the same questions need to be answered in chapter 14, whether Job was speaking of his own situation or wondering about the fate of all mankind, or speaking rhetorically.

The significance of the risen redeemer can scarcely be overstated. Job's affirmation demonstrates that all theology prior to the Christ was incomplete without Him; both those who lived under the Law of Moses and those who lived under the Patriarchal Law were utterly dependant, not only on the coming of the Messiah, but also upon His death and resurrection. It demonstrates that the power of the redeemer was unique in that He would conquer death.

In verse 28, Job also expresses a confidence that he would see God. Since Job was evidently not discussing a second phenomenon, he must either have referred to the Father as redeemer, or is affirming that the redeemer (Jesus) is Deity. Though Job could be said to have comprehended the nature of the fleshly incarnation, and though he may well have wondered about all the implications of his own prophecy, it appears that the doctrine of the deity of Christ is to be found in this text as well. Revelation 1:18 reads "I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death."

Expectant Hope in the Midst of Suffering (Job 19:26-27)

Throughout the text, Job's observations have been quite personal. His own knowledge of truth is cited, as is his personal confidence in ultimately seeing the redeemer. In verses 26-27, Job identifies his personal stake in the redeemer's appearance. He affirms that not only will the redeemer arise, and be seen by Job's eyes, but also that Job will experience a renewal of the flesh as well.

Again, answering the question of the nature of Job's restoration

is important. Is Job only saying that he believes he will be restored from his current wasted physical condition? It seems unlikely since Job states that his body will be further destroyed and devastated. How could he suffer more physical trauma, if he had only escaped death by the “skin of his teeth” (verse 20). His current state of health is so poor that any further devastation would likely kill him. God did restore Job’s health, but Job clearly expects a complete destruction of the shell of his body left to him. While we recognize that Job did recover, eventually he did die and his flesh was utterly consumed, as all flesh must be. Job certainly was not ignorant of the fate of the human body.

Job seems to express a confidence in his own bodily resurrection, since he specifies that his vision of God would be in the flesh, that his own eyes would behold Him. Was this a new and novel idea to Job? Had it just been revealed to him? We cannot know for certain, but it does not seem as though it was new. Whether new or not, Job evidently placed much value in his faith in a bodily resurrection, also reminding the reader of the critical importance of that faith.

It is interesting that belief in the soul or the spiritual nature of mankind is not nearly so much of an obstacle to belief as is the bodily resurrection of the dead. Although many atheists affirm that death is a complete end of existence, often, even they find it difficult if not impossible to accept. The reluctance to embrace one’s eventual non-existence may be rooted in nothing more than a personal preference to continue somewhere in some fashion. Others may reason that it seems unlikely that a being so complicated, multi-faceted and self aware as a human being could have his entire existence wiped out merely by ceasing to breathe.

The notion of life after death is neither unusual nor unique to the Bible. World religions often concede that there must be something else, usually some greater fate than life on Earth, but that it might be inhabiting other fleshly bodies in reincarnation. This reasoning inevitable implies that there must also have been a previous existence, either in a fleshly form or in some unknown realm. The Bible doctrine affirmed by Job is that of a specific individual bodily resurrection to a permanent existence in harmony with a resurrected redeemer. Such an experience requires believing in a God who

can create something as marvelous as a human being who had no previous existence, but whose personhood will continue into the grave and out of it again. Job anticipated seeing God with his own eyes.

This general resurrection of mankind, according to Job, was neither a spontaneous nor random phenomenon, but was dependent on the power of the redeemer. According to Colossians 1:18, the redeemer Jesus was the firstborn from the dead. This is not a reference to time but to authority. The Old Testament “firstborn” was the titular head of the family, the main heir, and the distributor of the inheritance to all of the other family members. Jesus was the firstborn of the resurrection in the sense that the resurrection of all others is dependant upon his resurrection. Colossians 1:18 reads “And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.”

Was the information sufficient for Job to conclude that the redeemer would also be flesh, even as was Job? It is impossible to answer this, though Job might well have wondered over the paradox of a redeemer called God for whom death is possible, but who also overcomes it. It is reasonable to conclude that Job was capable of making the connection between the redeemer and the resurrection. How else could he state that he knew that he would see God in the flesh, other than by the power of a Deity? In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul connects the resurrection of Christ to the resurrection of mankind, arguing that if Christ were not resurrected, then neither should anyone or anything else be expected to live again. More than just illustrating that the resurrection is possible through the power of God, the resurrection of Christ provides for the resurrection of all others. 1 Corinthians 15:45 reads “And so it is written, ‘The first man Adam became a living being.’ The last Adam became a lifegiving spirit.”

Given Job’s current circumstances, perhaps it is understandable that he should concentrate his affection on a future restoration; God’s future is most precious to those who have the least for which to live on Earth. This is not to argue that Job had no previous hope of the bodily resurrection, but living through such a cursed era may

well have blessed Job with the wisdom of an enhanced perspective. In any case, those who are blessed in life have always been the least likely to seek out a future with God. Job states that he yearns for it.

Is such yearning only typical of those who are suffering? This is not necessarily so. Again, we find it reasonable to conclude that Job had previously hoped for that resurrection, and lived the righteous life because he believed in judgment and eternity. But we also strongly suspect that his terrible experiences served to re-ignite and strengthened his resolve to live for the resurrection.

The resurrection is valuable to all believers because of its eternal significance. In the case of one who has lived through Job-like experiences, he will inevitably find himself changed for the better or the worse. Some will find their trust in God cemented by trouble, and their hearts yearning for that new existence as Job did. Others will reject God because of the earthly trouble. Those who choose to trust God will find that their desire for the resurrection and eternity is far more meaningful than it ever was when times were good. It was that kind of trust that motivated Job in the midst of his sorrow to proclaim not only his trust in a coming blessedness, but also his intense desire for the culmination of his hope.

For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven...For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. (2 Cor. 5:1-2, 4)

It was hope that motivated Job to make this confident declaration of his glorious future, a future in which he expected to be blessed in a resurrection by a resurrected redeemer. This is the very definition of hope for all believers, none more so than in this great Christian era.

Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. For we

were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance. (Rom. 8:23-25)

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Biographical Sketch

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God's Matchless Questions

Job 38-41

Charles Pugh III

G. Campbell Morgan called Job 38-41 the “matchless part of the book” of Job (*Unfolding* 222). And it is “matchless” because of the matchless questions that compose these chapters. There are one hundred twenty-nine verses in these four chapters. Henry Morris said, “[W]e can count about seventy-seven questions” in the chapters (*Remarkable* 98). Swindoll concurs with this same number of questions (267). In his older work on Job, Wayne Jackson suggests these chapters contain “a series of more than seventy, rapid-fire questions” (*Book* 79). In more recent material, Jackson says there are “roughly sixty” questions (“Life’s” 144).

The significance of these four chapters rests ultimately, not in the number of questions recorded, but in the nature of these questions. C. S. Lewis once said that “half the questions we [humans] ask—half [of] our great theological and metaphysical problems” are “nonsense questions” (81). However, the questions asked by God in Job 38-41 are not “nonsense questions.” They are “scientific accuracy questions” (Pugh 6). Hailey is correct when he says, “These questions are of such a nature, and manifest an understanding of the universe so far above man’s knowledge and wisdom of the day, that they offer irrefutable evidence that God the Creator was the speaker” (*Commentary* 331).

Jackson well summarizes the continued relevancy and challenging nature of these questions:

... Jehovah asks the patriarch a series of questions about the mystery, power, and beneficence of the universe. The queries are designed to show how very little man knows about the things of God’s world. Though the language style is poetic, it is amazing how scientifically precise it is as we are able to compare our modern knowledge with the information of this portion of scripture. We are forced to say, however, that even

though our knowledge has increased tremendously since the days of Job, we are far from fathoming the great mysteries posed there. (*Book 126*)

I will address these four chapters (Job 38-41) with the following areas serving as the basis for my observations: (1) Contextual Considerations of the Questions, (2) Interrogational Summation of the Questions, and (3) Practical Application of the Questions.

Contextual Considerations of the Questions

Not only is it the case that the four chapters before us (Job 38-41) are about the crucial questions that God asked Job, but there is the sense in which all of this ancient Book of Job is set against the backdrop of great questions. The outstanding questions raised and answered in the Book of Job include the following:

1. How can God be both good and just while allowing a righteous man (such as Job) to suffer so terribly?
2. Is there such a thing as sincere, disinterested piety or is it the case that only when righteousness is profitable in a material sense that it is displayed (in which case, it is not righteousness but hypocrisy)?
3. Can one know that there is good reason for what happens in the world?
4. Would God be unrighteous if He allowed the righteous to suffer?
5. Is there any man who would remain faithful to God if he lost everything?
6. Is God to be arraigned before the bar of human reason?
7. Is all suffering the consequence of sin?

8. What is God's solution to this problem?

With words that compose no less than fifteen chapters, Job's friends had attempted to answer these questions. They failed. Just before the text states, "The words of Job are ended" (Job 31:40), Job had cried, "Oh, that I had one to hear me! . . . Oh, that the Almighty would answer me, that my Prosecutor had written a book!" (Job 31:35). Earlier Job had requested that God would call, and he (Job) would answer, or that he (Job) would speak, and God would answer (Job 13:22). "The Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said. . . . Now prepare yourself like a man: I will question you, and you shall answer Me" (Job 38:1, 3). God speaks. He answers, but He does not answer—He questions. Job will answer; But Job answers very little. Out of the total of one hundred twenty-nine verses in the four chapters (38-41) there are a mere two verses that contain all that Job says (Job 40:4-5). [Note: Job does respond a second time (42:1-6) after God has completed His interrogation. However, this was not to vindicate himself but to acknowledge God, repent, and submit to the Almighty.] Job's plea for God to speak is granted. But God's solution to the problem is not as Job (or anyone of us) might expect. What does happen is the revelation of God's "absolute awe-inspiring greatness and judicial grandeur" (Delitzsch 312) through a divine interrogation that entails "question after question, all reflecting [God's] role as the creator and sovereign Lord of the cosmos. And with question after question [H]e prods Job to reflect on his own limitations" (Hicks 173).

Interrogational Summation of the Questions

It is not possible to give a detailed consideration of each one of the hundred twenty-nine verses contained in the relevant chapters. Therefore, my methodology will be to provide a summation of the divine interrogation of Job by providing a basic representation of the questions asked by God.

The interrogation of Job by God can be divided into two basic sets of questions. The first set asked by God to Job is contained in Job 38:4-39:30 and involves (1) the inanimate creation (38:4-38) and (2) the animate creation (38:39-39:30). Henry Morris presents

an excellent summary of these two sets of questions:

. . . [E]ight verses deal with the early history of the earth, twenty-seven with the physical world as it functions today, and thirty-three verses with the nature and needs of the animals (not including the behemoth and the leviathan, which are treated in more detail . . . [in the second set of questions, chapters forty and forty-one]). All of these are a part of God's creation, giving clear testimony of his omniscience and omnipotence, his providential care [omnibenevolence] for all his creatures. . . . (*Remarkable* 108)

Inanimate Creation

Origins

The questions concerning the inanimate aspects of creation begin with the origin of all things (cf. Gen. 1:1; Job 38:4). This is why Smith says, “. . . [O]nly in this discourse of Jehovah . . . [w]ill one find so detailed a panorama of natural ways or so eloquent a portrayal of her mystery for man. ***It is an inspired commentary on the first chapter of Genesis***” (qtd. in Smith 345, emp. added).

The very first question God addressed to Job (Job 38:4) implies a fundamental truth concerning origins (i.e. the origin of the universe and humans). This crucial truth is that “since no human being was present to observe the origin of the universe, origin of first life and/or origin of new life forms, there is no possible way to scientifically examine or explain such events. They cannot be tested” (Sztanyo 3). Origin questions are philosophical and/or revelational in nature. God asked, “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth. . . . To what were its foundations fastened . . .?” (Job 38:4, 6). Job was not there at the beginning (nor was any other human). Therefore, to receive detailed answers to these kinds of questions one must have revelation from one who was there, and/or synthesize information from various disciplines to determine what occurred. However, such synthesis is not, strictly speaking, a function of natural science, but it is philosophy (cf. Thomas B. Warren, “Responses to Evolution.” *Sufficient Evidence*. 1.1 (2011): 15-28). In this first set of questions (38:4-38), Job is challenged concerning the origin of the Earth, the

stars; power, control, and depth of the sea; death, light, darkness, snow, hail, rain, ice, and even the constellations.

Oceans

Concerning the sea, God asked, “Have you entered the springs of the sea? Or have you walked in search of the depths?” (Job 38:16). “Depths” is translated “recesses of the deep” in the English Standard Version. Dubach and Taber say:

. . . The sea bottom is divided into three distinct areas: the continental shelf, the continental slope, and the ocean floor.

The continental shelf has numerous hills, ridges, terraces, and even canyons comparable to the Grand Canyon. The average width of the shelf is 30 miles, but it may extend several hundred miles from shore. . . .

. . . Many mountains under the sea are higher than Mt. Everest [29,000 ft.]. All oceans except the North Pacific are divided by an almost continuous system of mountains, the largest being the Mid-Atlantic Ridge. (23)

The depth of the sea is profound. The deepest known point in the oceans is 36,198 feet in the Mariana Trench in the western Pacific Ocean (Museum of Science). Although the science of oceanography confirms the reality of awesome canyons, recesses, or mountain ranges of the oceans, even yet our knowledge of the oceans is extremely limited. Printed in 1969, Dubach and Taber’s work published by the U. S. Naval Oceanographic Office is still accurate in its claim that no more than “five-percent of the world’s ocean floor has been charted” (99, cf. oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/exploration.html).

Snow

There are powerful questions posed by God concerning the elements of snow and rain respectively. “. . . The secrets of snow and hail, of the distribution of light and wind, of rain and lightning, dew and ice, are demanded of the man who had assumed to judge and censure the ways of God mainly because he could not comprehend

them. . .” (Smith 347). God asked Job: “Have you entered the treasury of snow, or have you seen the treasury of hail, which I have reserved for the time of trouble, for the day of battle and war?” (Job 38:22-23). The Bible contains twenty-five references to snow. Interestingly, the Book of Job, which may be the oldest book in the Bible, contains more references to snow, ice, and frost than any other biblical book. This is certainly significant in light of the fact that Job’s homeland was in what is now essentially a desert area. Morris wrote,

The snow is a treasure. . . . The winter’s snow pack in the mountains is often called “white gold,” because of its indispensable water storage capacity, released in the melting season each spring to provide life to teeming cities and irrigation in the desert for needed food supplies. The snow also aids in maintaining the planet’s chemical cycles by returning various elements in the nuclei of its flakes back from the ocean to the lands from which they were leached and transported by rivers to the ocean. When the snowpack becomes a glacier, it can greatly assist in the breakup of rocks to form fertile soils. (*Heavens* 215)

In his book, *The Wonder of the World*, Roy Abraham Varghese proposes a list of one hundred “wonders of the world.” He defines a wonder as “any phenomenon or hard fact that intrigues or awe-inspires” (397). The thirty-sixth wonder on Varghese’s list is *snowflakes*. He explains,

We’re captivated by the somber silence of snowfall, the majesty of snow-capped mountain peaks. But the microstructure of snow is no less fascinating than its macro-manifestations. Every snow crystal is hexagonal but within this basic six-sided shape there are endless intricate . . . combinations so that virtually every flake is unique. A collision of atmospheric dust particles and droplets of water gives us a spectacle that is as structurally ingenious as it is esthetically elegant! The three most striking things about

snow are its origin, its magnificence and its transience. What is the return on investment on such a colossal production? Is there some underlying beauty about reality that has to constantly manifest itself? (405)

Rain

God also interrogated Job concerning the rain:

Who has divided a channel for the overflowing water, or a path for the thunderbolt. To cause it to rain on a land where there is no one. A wilderness in which there is no man; To satisfy the desolate waste, And cause to spring forth the growth of tender grass? Has the rain a father? Or who has begotten the drops of dew? . . . Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, that an abundance of water may cover you? . . . Who can number the clouds by wisdom? Or who can pour out the bottles of heaven, when the dust hardens in clumps, and the clods cling together? (Job 38:25-28, 34-35, 37-38)

The existence of rain is a marvelous wonder manifesting “an arrangement which no chance could have produced” (Duncan 30). Paul affirmed that the rain is one of the details within the volume of General Revelation that implies the existence of the true God and His goodness. He said, “He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven . . .” (Acts 14:17).

. . . [I]t is a big assignment to water the earth and to keep on watering it day after day and year after year. Multiplied millions of tons of water must be lifted from the oceans, suspended in the atmosphere, blown over the dry land and then dropped as rain in such a manner that it will not injure the soil and vegetation. . . .

. . . [W]hen it's time to rain, electrical impulses flash through the atmosphere causing the moisture to gather into small drops which patter down upon the thirsty land in such a gentle way that there is no harm done. This is such a natural thing and happens so frequently that we fail to realize its

tremendous significance. . . .

Law after law and principle after principle are bound up in the complex structure of our rainfall, teaching us unmistakably over and over again of the good hand of our God in His gracious provisions for our needs! (Orr 24)

Space

In the set of questions concerning the inanimate creation (Job 38:4-38), God also took Job on a brief, but challenging journey into space. He asked: “Can you bind the cluster of the Pleiades, or loose the belt of Orion? Can you bring out Mazzaroth in its season? Or can you guide the Great Bear [Arcturus] with its claws? Do you know the ordinances of the heavens? Can you set their dominion over the [E]arth?” (Job 38:31-33). Biblical revelation challenges humans to give thought to the implications of the existence of the starry skies above (cf. Ps. 19:1ff). Not only did God create the stars, but He arranged them in star groupings (constellations) “for signs and seasons, and for days and years” (Gen. 1:14). The Book of Job contains more references to the constellations than are found in any other part of the Sacred Scriptures. The Pleiades is a cluster of hundreds of stars that appear in the Spring. Its “seven sisters” are the brightest members of the cluster (Steidl 133). Orion is a constellation of stars visible in late October and containing a star that is estimated to be 250 times larger than the diameter of the Sun. The awesomeness of this is realized when one considers the diameter of the Sun is approximately 865,000 miles, which makes the Sun 109 times larger than Earth. Approximately 1,300,000 Earths could fit inside the Sun (Enchanted Learning)! And one of the great stars in Orion is 250 times larger than the Sun’s diameter! Job was in way over his head as he was challenged by these profound questions. And, even yet today, in this age of great technology and scientific advancement, these questions continue to evidence their divine origin. In an old (1874) work on *The Astronomy of the Bible* the argument implied by God’s questions to Job is still seen to maintain its soundness in our contemporary world.

If we admit . . . that the Book of Job was composed in an

age of the world when all were ignorant of the true system of the universe, and if within its compass we should find a series of astronomical inquiries, professedly selected and put to overwhelm the human mind, in case these same inquiries, at this day and in the full blaze of science, and with all our knowledge of the system of nature, should be equally overwhelming, we should in reason acknowledge that they could not have been propounded by human ignorance, and must have proceeded, as is professed, from the mouth of Him who built the universe, and to whom all secrets were open as the face of day. (Mitchell 219-20)

Animate Creation

The first set of questions concludes with God's challenge to Job concerning the animate creation (Job 38:39-39:30). It is a study in Zoology (i.e. animal life). Man can learn from the animals great lessons concerning what life is all about. Earlier Job had said, "[A]sk the beasts, and they will teach you; And the birds of the air . . . will tell you . . . and the fish of the sea will explain to you" (Job 12:7-8). Job's words about the value of the animal world to teach life lessons now return to him. Warren addressed this great value when he wrote:

. . . [T]he existence of animals in the world affords God a medium of teaching various spiritual truths to man. This is done by statements in the Bible and by man's careful observation of and thought about animals. The Bible contains many references to animals of various kinds which make it clear that God expects man to learn profound moral and spiritual lessons from animals. (*Atheists* 65-66)

There are nearly 3,000 mentions of animals in the Bible with about 150 animal names referenced (Cansdale 11, 13). Morris observes that God's questions to Job in this section involve twelve animals and "all the other animals can be included in his expressed concern for these twelve representative animals" (*Remarkable* 107). The questions are designed to imply God's omniscience,

omnipotence, and omnibenevolence as over against Job's limitations in knowledge, power, and care.

God asks if Job "knows" (e.g. 39:1), but he also asks whether Job can manage this creation and care for it the way God does. Does Job hunt for the lion (38:39), feed the young ravens (38:41), give the wild donkey his home (39:6), use the wild ox in his service (39:9-12), care for the ostrich even though she has no sense (39:12-18), and give the horse his strength (39:19[-25]). God asks, "Does the hawk take flight by your wisdom" (39:26) or "does the eagle soar at your command?" (39:27). Through his power God manages his creation with wisdom and care. God's creation is not the playground of his power but the nursery of his care. The world is not out of control; God is managing it quite nicely. (Hicks 174)

The zoology exam administered by God to Job had two parts. The first part was completed (Job 38:39-39:30). Job failed part one! He could not handle a single question! And, in one sense, the most difficult questions about the animate creation are yet to come (Job 40:15-41:34) as God interrogates Job concerning the most powerful land and sea animals (i.e. Behemoth and Leviathan). Preceding the divine interrogation about these two awesome animate displays of God's creative power and knowledge, there is an interruption: The Lord says, "Shall the one who contends with the Almighty correct Him? He who rebukes God, let him answer it" (Job 40:2). Job asked for this whole process. He had challenged God: "Call and I will answer; Or let me speak, then You respond to me" (Job 13:22). God accepted Job's challenge—weak as it was—and, through the preceding first set of questions (Job 38:2-39:30), God had masterfully responded to the words Job had spoken without knowledge (Job 38:2).

God allowed Job to "catch his breath" (Jackson, "Life's" 145), but it is only a brief "calm" before the storm. He does ask, "Shall the one who contends with the Almighty correct Him? He who rebukes God, let him answer it" (Job 40:2). However, Job wants nothing to do with this and says, "Behold, I am vile; What shall I answer

You? I lay my hand over my mouth. Once I have spoken, but I will not answer; Yes, twice, but I will proceed no further” (Job 40:4-5). Job says that he is “vile” (Job 40:4). It means that he (Job) is a lightweight. He is saying that he is in “way over his head.” He knows that *he cannot compete* with God. He is “out of his league.” Additionally, Job says, “. . . What shall I answer You?” He knows that *he cannot confute* (refute) God. He had thought he could answer God (cf. Job 13:22), but, he now admits he knows better. Finally, Job says, “I lay my hand over my mouth.” *He will constrain his words* and say nothing. However, “silence” is not “trust” (Jackson, *Book* 84). God will continue the interrogation.

Final Questions

Before God unleashes His final interrogation of Job concerning the two greatest land and sea creatures (i.e. Behemoth and Leviathan), He asks Job four questions by way of introduction (Job 40:8-9).

1. Will you discredit my justice (41:8)?
2. Will you condemn Me in order to justify yourself (41:8)?
3. Do you have such power as God that enables you to dispense perfect justice (41:9)?
4. Do you have such a voice as God that enables you to speak and command the execution of judgment (41:9)? (cf. Hailey, *Commentary* 350)

If Job can do these things, then God will acknowledge that Job can take the exercise of moral justice into his own hands. If Job can adorn himself in the majesty, splendor, glory, and beauty of divine holiness, then God will admit and confess the reality of supernatural power possessed by this man (cf. Job 40:10-14). But Job has no answer! He cannot “play God” successfully! Warren sums up the utter failure of Job (and all humans) when it comes to man’s great inability to question God’s right of disposition of the entire creation of which He is the ultimate originator and sustainer:

. . . God makes it clear to Job (and to all other men who may read the book) that while man may properly exercise

his mind in the attempted solution to many questions, it is simply beyond man's ability and prerogative to question whether God's creative activity (including God's right of disposition of what He had created—including the eternal disposition of wicked men) is proper (right). . . .

God, in effect, says that man cannot fully explain even the *things* which he finds in the world. How, then, could he expect to be able to come into such knowledge as would enable him to question God's creative activities. . . . ("Living" 204)

Behemoth and Leviathan

In the final section of this awesome and overwhelming display of God's omnipotence, omniscience, and omnibenevolence, attention is directed to the two greatest animals of all. First, Behemoth. God says, "Look now at the behemoth, which I made along with you. . . . See now his strength . . . and his power. . . . He moves his tail like a cedar. . . . He is the first of the ways of God; Only He who made him can bring near his sword. . . ." (Job 40:15-17, 19). The word "behemoth" means "'the beast,' i.e. the beast *par excellence*" (Smith 348). It is the "plural form of *beast* . . . regarded as a plural of intensity meaning *great beast*" (Jackson, *Book* 85). The animal has been identified as an elephant by some, but the common identification has been a hippopotamus even though the textual description does not fit. Morris (*Remarkable* 113-14) and Jackson (*Book* 85-86) both make a good case for behemoth being "some form of dinosaur, such as the brontosaurus" (86). Jackson presents seven factors that make it likely that this is some form of dinosaur:

. . . (1) Dinosaurs are known to have survived the flood. In Rhodesia there are cave paintings of the ancient brontosaurus left by a race of tribesmen who lived about 1500 B.C. (2) "Behemoth" is thought by some scholars to be related to an Egyptian term, *pehemu* [ox of the water], but this is not the Egyptian term for the hippopotamus. (3) The hippo has a short, slim tail, which hardly fits the description, "he moves his tail like a cedar" (17). The brontosaurus has a massive, long tail. (4) His description as "chief [largest] of

the works of God” (19) more nearly fits the brontosaurus (30 tons) than the hippopotamus (4 tons). (5) Behemoth dare not be approached with the sword (19b), yet the Egyptian monuments frequently picture single hunters attacking the hippo with a spear. (6) The vegetation of whole mountains is said to supply behemoth’s food (20); the hippo normally eats about 200 pounds of food daily and stays near the water. (7) No man was able to capture behemoth (24), but representations of the capture of the hippopotamus are common in Egyptian art. (86)

The second monstrous animal God uses in His final interrogation of Job is Leviathan. This animal appears to have lived at sea (Job 41:31-33). Some insist that Leviathan was a crocodile. Others say it is a whale. However, neither really fits the description provided in this powerful excursus. In the following, Morris makes the case for Leviathan being some kind of now-extinct dinosaur:

Canst thou fill his skin with barbed irons? Or his head with fish spears? . . . Behold, the hope of him is in vain: shall not one be cast down even at the sight of him? None is so fierce that dare stir him up: . . . the sword of him that layeth at him cannot hold” (Job 41:7, 9, 10, 26). These and other verses indicate that the leviathan was impregnable to human efforts to capture or slay him. Yet zoos are full of crocodiles, and crocodiles have been hunted so successfully that they are often considered an endangered species. The same applies to whales.

And what about the following description? “By his sneezings a light doth shine, and his eyes are like the eyelids of the morning. Out of his mouth go burning lamps, and sparks of fire leap out. Out of his nostrils goeth smoke, as out of a seething pot or caldron. His breath kindleth coals, and a flame goeth out of his mouth. (Job 41:18-21).

This is surely not a crocodile! To the possible objection that not even dinosaurs breathed fire, we could answer that no one *knows* what dinosaurs could do.

Dragons of various kinds were capable of breathing out fire—at least according to traditions from all parts of the world. Certain insects can, in effect, give out light or fire (e.g., the bombardier beetle and the firefly), as can various luminescent fish. Perhaps more to the point, dinosaur fossils have been excavated that show a strange protuberance, with internal cavity, on the top of the head. It is conceivable that this could have served as a sort of mixing chamber for combustible gases that would ignite when exhaled into the outside oxygen. (*Remarkable* 118)

“So God created great sea creatures, and every living thing that moves, with which the waters abounded, according to their kind. . .” (Gen. 1:21). The “great sea creatures” are “great sea monsters” (ASV; NASV) or “sea monsters” (McCord 454). Dubach and Taber ask:

Are there really sea monsters? Although we discount the fabled sea monsters, such as the kraken which could swallow vessels whole, we have not yet explored the ocean thoroughly enough to say with absolute certainty that there are no monsters in the deep.

Scientific observations and records note that giant squids with tentacles 40 feet long live at 1,500 feet and that sizable objects have been detected by explosive echo sounding at greater depths.

Oarfish 40 to 50 feet long also have been observed by scientists. Either the oarfish or the giant squid with its long tentacles may have given rise to the sea serpent stories told by sailors of old.

In recent years, Danish scientists have studied large eel larvae that would grow 90 feet if their growth rate is the same as eels of other species. (90)

The Psalmist had some awareness of this monstrous ocean creature when he wrote, “Yet God my King is from of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth. You divided the sea by Your might; [Y]ou broke the heads of the sea monsters on the waters.

You crushed the head of Leviathan . . .” (Ps. 74:12-14, ESV). When the Psalmist affirmed life’s great acclamation (God), he included Leviathan as evidence of God’s greatness, honor, and majesty.

O Lord, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all. The earth is full of Your possessions—This great and wide sea, in which are innumerable teeming things, living things both small and great. There the ships sail about; There is that Leviathan which You have made to play there. (Ps. 104:24-26)

Practical Application of the Questions

As set forth earlier, the Book of Job raises and answers a number of crucial questions. Some of these questions are explicitly stated while others are implied in the chapters considered in this essay (38-41). From these questions great lessons are learned. What are some of these lessons, and how do they apply to one’s life today? For one living in the 21st century to study the Book of Job (or any other book in the Bible) and fail to inquire concerning how the information in the book applies to his life would be a serious mistake. One may study for many years this conversation God had with Job and never exhaust the depth of truth contained therein. It likely is the case that its application is inexhaustible. However, consider a few basic principles of application implied from the report of this marvelous exchange between God and Job.

General Revelation Is Valuable

Undergirding the information revealed in these chapters is the implication of the value of the revelation of God in the creation—i.e. the universe, the world, and man. Although it is insufficient to meet all of man’s spiritual needs while he lives on Earth, the general revelation of God, when properly handled, proves the existence of God and from it one can know at least some things concerning the nature of God (cf. Ps. 19:1-6; Ps. 139:14; Pro. 20:12; Acts 14:17; Rom. 1:20; Heb. 3:4).

Although a man (like Job) may suffer with great intensity, such does not remove the proof in creation one finds for the existence

of God. Former atheist, Antony Flew, following his acceptance of theism, wrote:

Certainly, the existence of evil and suffering must be faced. However, philosophically speaking, that is a separate issue from the question of God's existence. From the existence of nature, we arrive at the ground of [God's] existence. Nature may have its imperfections, but this says nothing as to whether it had an ultimate Source. (156) [Note: As Thomas B. Warren has shown in his book, *Have Atheists Proved There Is No God?*, the existence of evil, itself, implies the existence of God. If real, objective evil exists, then God exists.]

God Cares And Controls

Although there are numerous questions that no man (including Job) can answer, the very unanswerable questions God asked Job, themselves, imply at least some things about God one can know as he suffers. These divine questions evidence the omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, and omnibenevolence of God. The marvelous workings of God in the inanimate and animate creation imply something great that undergirds our faith, even when we may be suffering to great degrees. Warren explained,

. . . [I]n the counsel of the all-wise, all-powerful, all-loving God lies a reason for life's difficulties, and in this truth we can rest our faith. Men may not know all about a particular incident of suffering or affliction, but they *can* know that this world is one in which "all things work together for good to them that love God . . ." (Rom. 8:28). We can know that if God is concerned about trees and animals, then we can also know that God is concerned for man. If God can control the universe around us, then He certainly can control (direct) the lives of men. ("Living" 205)

Trust Is The Priority

Job had asked for an explanation of why he was suffering (cf.

Job 13:22; Job 31:35). However, what he received was not the detailed answer he desired, but more questions that implied the answer he needed. Morgan observes that God made “no reference . . . to the sufferings of Job, no explanation was offered of anything that had transpired . . .” (*Answers* 102-03). “God is less interested in answering our questions than in strengthening our faith. . . . God is under no obligation to explain anything he causes or allows to come into our lives, but . . . calls us to trust him . . .” (Blanchard 540-41).

We (humans) must not know all the specific details of our lives, but we must trust God, because of what we learn in His creation and in His word. It is not that we cannot know anything. ***God does not call us to a blind trust.*** We can (and must) know that (1) God is and (2) He can be trusted. From evidence such as that manifested in God’s questions to Job, man can know that there is good reason for what happens in the world. If one knows God, it must be such that he also knows this is the case. However, this does not mean a man can know all the details of his own situation. We can (and should) trust God when we cannot see “why” something has happened. We trust God because of “the very evidence of purpose on the face of the universe” (Hailey, *Comments* 347).

The More Obvious Reason

Job had sufficient evidence, in the form of the marvelous questions God addressed to him, to cause him to lovingly submit to God in deep trust (cf. Job 42:1-6). He had special revelation from God in addition to the general revelation available in creation (cf. Job 23:12). If it was the case that Job could (and should) trust God with a more limited revelation than is available to those of us who live today, then it is much more obvious that those of us living today with access to the complete revelation of God through the person and work of Jesus Christ, can (and must) trust God no matter what the details of life are for us. Peter wrote, “[T]hrough now for a little while . . . you have been grieved by various trials . . . you . . . through [Jesus Christ] believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God” (1 Pet. 1:6, 21). We can know that “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also

freely give us all things?” (Rom. 8:32).

Conclusion

Fitting for us as we conclude this look at these great chapters (Job 38-41) is Hailey’s eloquent and insightful summation that includes the following:

Jehovah spoke from the whirlwind in questions to Job, bringing the inanimate and animate world before him that he might behold the difference between God’s greatness and man’s smallness. Jehovah’s purpose was that Job might realize his arrogance in speaking about the Lord as he had, and his impudence in demanding that the Lord answer him.

Another point that stands out in Jehovah’s speeches is that in the creation there was expressed and demonstrated an infinite wisdom, knowledge, and power, and that the design of purpose was stamped upon the entire creation. Seeing that in the creation of all things God was directed by an infinite wisdom, then by that wisdom He can use the adversities of life to discipline and refine man.

We may ponder the question of how God manages the affairs of His universe, but it is not our’s to question His ability and the fact that He does. The knowledge, wisdom, and power to control and direct the **kosmos** is beyond our power to understand. It is not in man’s ability to comprehend the greatness of God nor to grasp the magnitude of His operation. We must bow in reverence before such a One and worship in adoration, saying, “He hath done all things well.” (*Commentary* 372-73)

In effect, God said if man in general (and Job in particular) could not fully explain and comprehend the things of God’s awesome creation of the universe, the world, and man, then it should not be thought strange that suffering also has its mysteries to humans. However, this much is sure—God, who is infinite in understanding and power, is in control and will do right! “Great is our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding is infinite” (Ps. 147:5). “Let all

the Earth fear the Lord; Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him” (Ps. 33:8).

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Biographical Sketch

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When Life Isn't What It Used to Be

Job 29:1-25

Emanuel Daugherty

Job is one whose story is familiar to most Bible students. His story begins in chapter one and verse one with these words: "There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil." Note that it begins: "There was a man..." this is not a fairytale that begins with "once upon a time." Critics have assailed the story of Job, saying that he was fictitious and the book is a fictional story presenting the ideal of how one should suffer. But one must accept the first four words: "There was a man;" a real flesh and blood man who experienced family, wealth, honor and esteem of all who knew him. But he lost it all; his family, his wealth, his health, his honor, prestige, and position suddenly and unexpectedly. From the context of the book, Job was a man who lived in the Patriarchal Age sometime between the Flood and the call of Abraham. Determining from his age, Job lived in the early history of the world when men lived many years. For example, Noah lived 950 years; (Gen. 9:29). Abraham lived to be 175 years old (Gen. 25:7). Job, according to chapter forty-two, lived after his ordeal of suffering 140 years; he would have been a man already well advanced in years before all this experience began. The book concludes: "And after this Job lived 140 years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, four generations; and Job died, an old man, and full of days" (Job 42:16, 17). Thus we may conservatively conclude that Job was at least double 140 years old at the end of his days.

Job is mentioned in other Bible books. He is cited in the book of James for his patience under great affliction (5:11). The Prophet Ezekiel holds up Job as an example of righteousness. "Even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness," says the Lord GOD (Ezek. 14:14). "Even though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, as I live," says the Lord GOD, "they would deliver neither son nor daughter;

they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness” (Ezek. 14:20). These passages from Ezekiel effectively substantiate the Biblical doctrine that all persons must answer for their own, individual, personal soul. Each soul must appear before the judgment seat of Christ to give account for his own personal sins (2 Cor. 5:10). Some seem to think that they can get to heaven riding on the coattails of their righteous fathers or mothers. But Ezekiel tells us that is not the case. Rather, each person may “deliver their own souls.” The doctrines of Calvinistic Protestantism and Augustinian Catholicism teach the hideous doctrine that babies are born in sin, totally depraved, and that they inherited sin from Adam. One of their preachers said that “there will be babies in hell not a span long” (Sam Morris). This grossly false doctrine is refuted by this passage from Ezekiel, “They shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness.” Ezekiel further said, “The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself” (18:20).

One author states his thought that chapter twenty-nine is a “mini-autobiography” of Job’s former life (Cotham 293). Another likens the final three chapters of Job’s last speech as “a concluding summary of his case, as if he were in court. He reviewed the past blessings (chap.29)...he bemoaned his present miseries (chap. 30)... and he pronounced an oath of innocence (chap. 31)” (Zuck 127). There are many great lessons of life to be found in the book of Job. My task is to give an exposition of chapter twenty-nine: “When Life Isn’t What It Used to Be.”

Job Longed For the Good Old Days

Chapter 29 begins with the words: “Job further continued his discourse,” suggesting that after speaking, Job pauses to allow Zophar to enter again into the discussion. Apparently, when Zophar has nothing more to say, Job continues presenting his case (Harley 387).

As we begin our study, we find that Job has perhaps become accustomed to the pitiable condition in which he finds himself and

he is reminiscing of better times. Solomon warns of the futility of looking back. “Do not say, ‘Why were the former days better than these?’ for you do not inquire wisely concerning this” (Eccl. 7:10). But reminiscing is featured in this chapter. Job is looking back to the time of health and prosperity he once enjoyed when he found favor in the eyes of God. Reminiscences and nostalgia are the privilege of length of years and experiences good and bad that come to the life of every man. One finds himself longing for “the good ole days.” So, we see, Job in this chapter wistfully looking back when life was better. By this time in the account of Job’s life, months have past; one would think much more time had gone by! He perhaps wonders incredulously, “Have all these calamities came upon me in such a short passing of time?” Job had experienced a lifetime of trouble in a few short months. Earlier he had expressed, “For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me. I was not in safety, neither had I rest, neither was I quiet; yet trouble came” (Job 3:25-26).

But we must not think that this longing of past blessings and favor of God are simply nostalgia. This is Job’s way of presenting the case for his innocence. “In a grateful manner Job acknowledges that God, not his own wisdom and shrewdness, had been the source of his wealth. Job never let his pride lead him to make that claim that he had been the genius behind his success” (Hartley 388).

Wave after wave of trouble has come over him. “Job has no pause between the waves of his affliction, no time to recover from one before another overwhelms him” (Davidson 24). Davidson goes on to point out that “if he but fears a fear,” it is immediately upon him. The intensity of Job’s condition is emphasized by the words of Strauss: “Surrounded by trouble! Drowned by trouble! Agitation keeps coming!” with no let up or relief (33). The late and lamented student of God’s Word, W. T. Hamilton observed, “Surely no one ever expressed a desire for the good old days with more emotion than Job did. And no one ever had a right to long for the past more than he did, because no one ever had a sharper contrast between ‘then and now’ than he” (80).

How pathetic are the words of Job as he speaks of his “golden prime” (Davidson 24), the prime of life, the time “when one’s life is

most productive” (Hailey 250)? Job reminisces of his former good times when God preserved him, watched over him, when the eye of the Almighty was upon him for good, to bless and keep him. Divine light, the light of God, Job describes as, “His candle shining upon my head” guiding and directing him, enabling him to find his way in the dark times of his life. But things have changed, at present, it is a “time of great crisis, he is living in darkness and he looks back to the day when the presence of God was real to him, “when the Almighty was yet with me” (Howard 72).

He recalls “As I was in the days of my youth” [lit. my days of autumn, *ASV* footnote]. Job is not speaking of his age and time of life, but more referring to when his labors were most productive; the prime of life, the time when he would enjoy to the full the abundance of his labors.

Surely it was with tear-filled eyes and a sinking heart that Job remembered his family. In one sentence and, one can imagine, with a great sob, he says, “when my children were about me.” Now his children, all ten of them, are gone, swept away as if they were but dust in the wind. His wife has forsaken him. His friends he describes as “physicians of no value” (13:4), and “miserable comforters” (16:2). Job is truly alone in the world, and he believes that even God has abandoned him.

He remembers the prosperity he once enjoyed and speaks of the time “When I washed my steps with butter, and the rock poured out rivers of oil.” These are metaphors indicating the fullness and plenty of his prosperity. “The rock” from which the oil came was either the terraced rocky soil where the trees grew or the stone olive press by which the oil was extracted and from which it flowed (Hailey 250). “Olive oil was a vital product for the ancients. They used it for cooking, for fuel in their lamps, and as an ointment for the body” (Hartley 389). Now Job sits on an ash heap scraping his sores with a broken piece of pottery (2:8), with no oil to mollify his wounds. He later describes his wretchedness as that of an outcast from all classes of society (see chapter 19). It is no wonder that Job longs for the days that are past, and wishes them to return!

The Scriptures emphasize to the Christian that suffering and difficulties are a natural part of life here below. Jesus, in the

Beatitudes, describes suffering from trials and tribulations that come upon us as something to be expected and accepted and pronounces a blessing upon the sufferer (Matt. 5:10-12). In agreement with Jesus, Paul states, “Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12); also see Peter and James (1 Pet. 1:6-9; Jas. 1:2-4, 12).

Job Remembered His Lost Position of Leadership (7-10)

In his reminiscing, Job thinks of his position of prominence among his peers. He was in a position of high esteem; “Job had the respect of all classes of people” (Hailey 250). “The city gate was the central meeting place for the distribution of administrative justice” (Strauss 285). Job would have possessed great areas of land due to his vast flocks and herds of various animals and would not have lived in a city; his lands would have adjoined it. Gill makes these comments about those elders and wise men of the Old Testament who sat at the gates of the cities: “Wisdom is said to utter her voice in the streets, in the opening of the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors, (Prov. 1:20); but Job here speaks of himself as a civil magistrate, as a judge upon the bench, who had a seat or throne erected for him to sit upon, while he was hearing and trying causes; and this was set up in the street under the open air, before the gate of the city, where the whole city might be convened together, and hear and see justice done to their neighbors...” (John Gill). Under the Law of Moses when parents had a disobedient son they were to “bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place” for their corrective judgment (Deut. 21:19). In the Book of Ruth, people of the city of Bethlehem gathered at the city gate with the elders of the city, to witness the legality of Boaz’s acquiring of the property of Elimelech which included Ruth and Naomi (Ruth 4:8-11). Job was such a man as this who was responsible for settling legal affairs and dispensing justice. This is an indication of Job’s wisdom, justice and fairness to be accorded such an honor to judge others and help them to solve their problems and personal business.

The reaction of the people of Job’s city when he appeared among them was one of great honor and respect. “The young men saw me

and hid themselves...” (8a). Young men have a tendency to speak their mind and tell all they know, even when they have little to offer. Perhaps they had fallen under the glare and sharp tongue of Job in times past. On the other hand, Job remembers with what great respect he was treated by the older men, “...and the aged rose and stood...” (8b). These men, wise and held in great esteem of their own merit, nonetheless, rose up and honored him who was greater in presence and prestige. “Those who expected honor from others gave honor to him,” remarks the great expositor Matthew Henry. Even those of royal rank and nobility give place to Job. “The princes refrained from talking, and put their hand on their mouth; the voice of the nobles was hushed, and their tongue stuck to the roof of their mouth” (9, 10). In the presence of such a great personage as Job they had no comments to offer, no words to say. Of the princes and nobles, Matthew Henry says of them: “Those that suspected their own judgment were satisfied in his, and admired with what dexterity he split the hair and untied the knots which puzzled them and which they knew not what to make of. When the princes and nobles wrangled among themselves all agreed to refer the matters in dispute to Job and to abide by his judgment” (Henry, e-Sword).

Examples of Job’s Judgments in Benevolence and Justice

Job’s benevolent heart and sense of justice for the poor are the grounds of this universal respect of him. Job was concerned about the orphans, widows, and the poor (12, 13, 15, 16). In the New Testament, James holds up the care of the fatherless and widows and a sinless life as the epitome of pure religion (Jas. 1:27). Job said, “Because I delivered the poor that cried” This is spoken of himself as a magistrate or judge for the whole description relates to that. The meaning is that when the poor man, who had no means of employing counsel, brought his cause before him, he heard him and delivered him from the grasp of the oppressor. The poor and down trodden never made an appeal to him in vain. Solomon observed, “Whosoever stops his ears at the cry of the poor, will also cry himself and not be heard” (Prov. 21:13). “He who mocks the poor reproaches his Maker” (Prov. 17:5).

The grand patriarch “clothed himself with righteousness.”

Righteousness was so much a part of Job that justice and fairness wrapped around him as a robe and a turban—righteousness and justice were his robes as judge. Oh, how the world needs judges like Job!

The Scripture claims for Job that he “retrieved the perishing out of the jaw’s of death” (17). In commenting on the phrase, Hartley maintains that Job “went even further in his protection of the poor and needy, he sought to break the power of the oppressors. He wanted both to deprive these scoundrels of their spoil and to put them out of commission. The cruel harshness with which these charlatans afflicted the unfortunate is captured in the word ‘fangs’ [teeth of the wicked]. [T]hey acted like fierce animals, ravaging their weak prey” (292). The law, the psalms, the prophets, and the Gospel, all spoke of the need of protection of the weak and poor. The righteous and godly people of Israel were to see that evil men would not take advantage of the less fortunate.

The prophet Micah describes the scheming, conniving, unscrupulous judges and overseers of the people of his day.

Woe to those who devise iniquity, and work out evil on their beds! At morning light they practice it, because it is in the power of their hand. They covet fields and take them by violence, Also houses, and seize them. So they oppress a man and his house, a man and his inheritance (Mic. 2:1-2). Now hear this, you heads of the house of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel, Who abhor justice And pervert all equity, Who build up Zion with bloodshed And Jerusalem with iniquity: Her heads judge for a bribe, Her priests teach for pay, And her prophets divine for money. Yet they lean on the LORD, and say, “Is not the LORD among us? No harm can come upon us. (3:9-11)

God’s Word is very clear about the Lord’s concern for the poor and less fortunate of this world.

“You shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether one of your brethren or one of the aliens who

is in your land within your gates” (Deut. 24:14).

“The poor also, and him who has no helper. He will spare the poor and needy, and will save the souls of the needy” (Ps. 72:12-13)

“Learn to do good; seek justice, rebuke the oppressor; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow” (Isa. 1:17).

“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:10).

Jesus covered the whole gamut of thought on benevolence and concern for others when He said, “Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets” (Matt. 7:12).

Because of his industrious pursuit of justice and the favor of God, Job was confident that God would reward him with long life: “I shall die in my nest and multiply my days as the sand,” thought Job (18). Job was pleased that he enjoyed constant refreshing of plenty from the hand of the Lord which he described as a tree whose roots spread out to the water, and the morning dew covering his branches (19). Job is here comparing himself to a stalwart tree, a figure often used in Scripture of men of worth and stature.

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper. (Ps. 1:1-3; cp., Jer. 17:7-8)

Of Job, Hartley says, He “believed confidently that he could weather any adversity” (393).

Verse 20 expresses Job’s belief that his strength and vigor would

be with him for many years to come. “My glory [high respect and standing among his peers] is fresh within me, and my bow [symbol of strength and power] is renewed in my hand.” Jackson observes that “Due to his efforts in personal righteousness, Job had anticipated living a long, happy life with blessings abounding” (63). But how soon the ‘glory’ of his friends turned to hatefulness and resentment! How quickly the ‘bow’ of strength is turned to weakness and frailty!

Many have found that the “good things” of life are not forever. The glory, strength and power of youth are dissipated by aging, failing health, and the misfortunes that come from day to day.

Job Was a Man to Whom Others Listened (21-23)

In these verses, Job returns to recounting the respect and honor accorded him in by gone days.

When Job gave counsel and advice to others, it was well thought out. They listened; they had nothing more to add to it, apparently, because they were helped by what was said. “Job remembers how men had sought his counsel and had received it even as they would a refreshing rain,” says Jackson (63). Those of Job’s community drank wisdom from the counsel of Job as the parched ground absorbed the spring rains. “The latter rain came in April-May; this was essential for the maturing of crops, since the hot, dry season followed. In like manner the people waited with ‘open mouth’ for Job’s words of wisdom and understanding that lead to a fruitful life of peace and tranquility” (Hailey 254).

Elders need to be men to whom others will listen. One is not a leader at all if others will not listen to him! When you speak do others listen, or are you ignored?

Job’s words gave confidence to the weak and fainthearted (24). “His advice to others, as to direction of life, had been authoritatively received, and he had comforted those in mourning (25) – and how he longed for a measure of the same in his calamity! So were the glorious days of the patriarch’s past” (Jackson 63).

Job says of those to whom he gave counsel, “If I mocked at them, they did not believe it, [I smiled on them when they had no confidence, ASV, ESV] and the light of my countenance they did not cast down” (24). “Job, with his broader insight and more capable

counsel, smiled on those who were perplexed and despondent; what seemed insurmountable difficulty or threatened disaster to them, seemed to him a thing easy to overcome and nothing to create alarm” (Davidson 206). Hailey gives this thought: “When those defended by Job were despondent, a smile from him gave them confidence. Whatever the situation, Job maintained a hopeful and cheerful disposition and outlook; he refused to be cast down (254). Such a disposition may be that of every leader of men who puts his trust in God and clothes himself with righteousness.

Job continues saying, “I chose the way for them, and sat as chief; so I dwelt as a king in the army, as one who comforts mourners” (25). Since Job inspired such confidence in his fellows, he could “choose their path,” i.e., turn them in the right direction, set their course in life. Hailey sums up chapter 29 with these words: Job “served his fellow men in three capacities: 1) he sat among them as ‘chief,’ a leader who could properly direct them in the way of wisdom; 2) he dwelt as ‘a king in the army’ - not that he was king, but as one who directed the campaigns of life - a leader and counselor; 3) he was among them as a comforter, one who provided solace to the mourner, Job as an honorable and honored man who enjoyed prestige and honor, a notable achievement” (254).

Those who would be leaders in the church are to be encouragers. “Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are fearful-hearted, be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God; He will come and save you.” (Isa. 35:3-4). The writer of Hebrews instructs us saying, “Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed” (Heb. 12:12-13).

Job Was a Man of Faith

Though he did not know the why or how of all the suffering he endured, Job trusted in God to see him through.

Faith (trust) is sorely needed in our time; we need faith like that of Job. One cannot endure hardships without faith in God, his Son, and the Gospel. Faith in God means that we believe everything the

Bible says about Him to be true. He is the Creator, who spoke the world into existence, His Character—Holy, Just, Loving, Benevolent, all Powerful all Knowing, all Wise, all Good. He loved us so much that He sent His only begotten Son to save us. Faith in Christ means that we believe him to be the Author and Finisher of our faith. He is God incarnate—Deity come to earth in the flesh. He was born of a virgin, lived in poverty and obscurity until age 30. He came to reveal the Father, gave miracles as evidence to believe, taught about His church, the kingdom, was betrayed by wicked men, crucified, buried, resurrected, and ascended where He sits on the throne reigning as King of kings and Lord of lords. Faith in the Gospel means that we believe it to be as it is in truth the word of God, infallible, inerrant, inspired, all sufficient, revealing the will of the Lord to all mankind. It contains promises and blessings, warnings, threats and judgments. It has commandments to be obeyed, warnings to heed. It is to be believed, obeyed, and lived to be saved.

Let us have the patience, faith, and integrity of Job!

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Biographical Sketch

Emanuel Daugherty is a native of Barbour County, WV and is married to the former Judith Null. They have 4 children and 8 grandchildren and a great-grandchild. He graduated from Getwell Road School of Preaching (Memphis School of Preaching) and Alabama Christian School of Religion (Amridge University). He has preached at Alkire Road in Grove City, OH, Dewey Avenue in St Marys, WV and served as Director of West Virginia School of Preaching. Presently Emanuel is preaching for the Salem church in Glen Easton, WV and continues at WVSOP, where he teaches Minor Prophets, Isaiah, Daniel, Premillennialism, 2 Corinthians, and James.

False Apologists

Job 21:34

Steve Higginbotham

From the very beginning of time until now, mankind has had to face the challenge of sifting through and sorting out competing voices offering advice, instruction, and direction. In the Garden of Eden, Eve had to make a decision to believe God who said, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Gen. 2:16-17) or believe the Serpent who said, “You will not surely die” (Gen. 3:4). [All Scripture references are from the NKJV unless otherwise noted.]

From the time of that original conflict until now, mankind continues to be confronted with dissenting voices. Thus, John warned, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). Likewise, Peter warned, “there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction (2 Pet. 2:1).

There are several topical lessons that can be explored in the Old Testament book of Job. One could examine the patience of Job, the problem of evil and suffering, the providence of God, and a host of other biblical themes that are exemplified or illustrated in this book. However, this lesson is intended to address the danger of being, and giving heed to, “false apologists.”

In the book of Job, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, Job’s three friends, attempt to speak truth. They attempt to expose evil. They attempt to represent God, and they fail miserably on all three counts. Let us examine several factors which caused Job’s friends to be “false apologists.”

They Affirmed What They Did Not Know

Job's friends had concluded that the reason for suffering was due to sin. By way of explanation for Job's suffering, Eliphaz stated, "The wicked man writhes with pain all his days..." (Job 15:20). In other words, he was affirming as factual what he did not know to be true. While it is true that some wicked people suffer in this life for their wrong-doings, not all suffering is a consequence of sin.

Did Job's friends know the reason for his suffering? On the contrary, they should have known that Job was not suffering because of his sins, but in spite of his righteousness. Sin is not the only cause for suffering in this fallen world. There is such a thing as "chance." How do I know? Jesus said so. In telling the parable of the "Good Samaritan," Jesus said, "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a certain priest came down that road..." (Luke 10:30-31). Some bad things happen in life simply because people are in the wrong place at the wrong time.

While it is true that God can and does discipline his children (Heb. 12:3-11), it is also the case that some things just happen due to chance. Jesus once asked the rhetorical question, "There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answered and said to them, 'Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, no...'" (Luke 13:1-3). So one can see that divine discipline exists, but "chance" also exists.

How does one know the difference? I don't know that we can without revelation. That is precisely why I believe we need to be careful to avoid laying blame at the feet of God for any and all tragedies. Job's friends were presumptuous for affirming what they did not know. Let's make sure we are not like them in this regard. "If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God..." (1 Pet. 4:11).

They Taught the Traditions of Men

Not only did Job's friends attribute his suffering to causes they couldn't possibly know for certain, they also had the mistaken notion that suffering was the result of sin. As they believed, "good people

prosper, and bad people suffer.”

However, the Psalmist said, “Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him; Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass” (Ps. 37:7). On the contrary, the Bible affirms that sometimes it is the wicked who prosper, while the righteous suffer.

So where does such a belief arise? Where does the notion come from that states suffering is always the result of sin? The answer is simply the tradition of man.

God affirmed that Job was a righteous man (Job 1:8). In fact, the reason that he suffered was not because he was unrighteous, but because he was righteous. His righteousness made him a target for Satan, and Satan did what he could in an attempt to destroy his faith, but he was unsuccessful.

Several years ago, an older Christian gentleman shared with me what he described as one of the greatest challenges to his Christianity. He said that shortly after he had learned the truth and was baptized into Christ, he became physically ill. In fact, for the next two years following his baptism, he had to undergo no less than a dozen surgeries. While he was recovering from one of his surgeries, a fellow Christian came to visit him in the hospital. He said the fellow Christian pulled a chair next to his bed and told him that he needed to come clean and confess his hidden sins for which the Lord was punishing him. The man telling me this story said he was so discouraged by this comment that it almost became a stumbling block to his faith.

Surely, if one learns anything from the book of Job, he learns that not all suffering is the direct result of sin. Yet this false notion won't go away. The disciples of Jesus thought that suffering was the result of sin. Remember, they asked Jesus, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” (John 9:2). To which Jesus replied, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned” (John 9:2).

In spite of this clear teaching, men continue to place blame on people when they suffer from catastrophes. Tsunamis, earthquakes, tornados, hurricanes, and blizzards are frequently assigned to being “the judgment of God upon sinners.” First of all, the Bible affirms that righteous people sometimes suffer, and another matter to take

into consideration is that there is such a thing as “chance.”

Job’s friends were wrong because they affirmed what they did not know; namely, that Job’s suffering was a divine judgment because of Job’s sins.

They Misrepresented God

Speaking for God should not be taken lightly. Because eternity hangs in the balance, one does not want to be guilty of misrepresenting God. James, the brother of Jesus, warned, “My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment” (Jas. 3:1). This is precisely what Job’s friends did. Zophar said to Job, “But oh, that God would speak, and open His lips against you, that He would show you the secrets of wisdom! For they would double your prudence. Know therefore that God exacts from you less than your iniquity deserves” (Job 11:5-6). In other words, Zophar was saying, “I sure wish God were here to tell you himself. Then you’d see that I’m right and you’re wrong.”

However, the book of Job teaches us that it was Job who was right and Zophar who was wrong. So Zophar, in his attempt to represent God, has completely misrepresented God. He’s tried to make Job believe that God was angry with him and disciplining him as a result. However, this wasn’t the case at all. God wasn’t angry with Job. Quite the contrary, He was very proud of Job.

It’s a serious thing to misrepresent God. When we teach that God is pleased with that which displeases Him and when we teach that God is displeased when He is not, we pervert the character of God. And yet, false apologists will do both.

How frequently do we hear messages from the secular world, as well as the religious world, telling us that the practice of homosexuality is not a sin? Have you recently heard anyone say that God is pleased with instrumental music in worship, remarriage following a divorce not caused by fornication, women leadership in the worship assembly, abortion, immodest dress, indecent behavior, social drinking, etc.?

At the same time, we can hear voices contend that God is angry when we assist the fatherless in a certain way, cooperate in mission work a certain way, assist non-saints with benevolent needs in a

certain way, as well as certain ways in which we meet for worship services.

Isaiah, the prophet, described what Job's friends were doing to him, and what we frequently must contend with today when he said, "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter" (Isa. 5:20).

In their attempt to defend God, Job's friends were actually misrepresenting God.

They Misrepresented Job

Try to imagine how terribly frustrating and hurtful it must have been for Job to listen to his friends slander him! Eliphaz accused Job of dishonesty (Job 22:6), not feeding the hungry (Job 22:7), and depriving widows and the fatherless (Job 22:9). These were pretty strong words, but none of them were true. Without a doubt, Job was at the lowest point of his life. He was so distraught he actually wished he was dead (Job 3). Imagine being in that condition, then having to listen while others misrepresented you. Job, truly, was a man of God!

If we wish to speak for God, we must learn to be fair with people. To do so requires honesty and humility. In the case with Job, Job's friends misrepresented him by stating he was sinful when he was not. The flip side of that misrepresentation is also just as wrong, and possibly even more dangerous. It's also wrong to misrepresent a person by telling them they are in a right relationship with God when they are not. Such misrepresentations occur frequently.

When people are made to feel saved when in reality they are lost, those individuals are being wronged. I know that such misrepresentations aren't considered misrepresentations and they are done under what they think is the "banner of love," but obedience to a false gospel only gives one false hope and false security.

Job's Response to His Friends

As disappointed as one may be in the way that Job's friends treated him, one cannot help but be all the more impressed by the way Job treated his friends. After listening to Job and his friends go

back and forth for several chapters with their elementary insight and flawed reasoning, God decided to be heard. He was clearly angry with Job's friends, so he said,

And so it was, after the LORD had spoken these words to Job, that the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, 'My wrath is aroused against you and your two friends, for you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has. Now therefore, take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, go to My servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and My servant Job shall pray for you. For I will accept him, lest I deal with you according to your folly; because you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has.' So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went and did as the LORD commanded them; for the LORD had accepted Job. (Job 42:7-9)

Imagine how hurt, disappointed, and angry Job must have been with his "so-called" friends. After losing all his possessions, his family, and his health, he then had to sit and listen to his friends impugn his character. However, now that God has interjected Himself in the dispute, and settled the matter, Job is asked to pray for his friends. I can only imagine how difficult that must have been for him to do. Many could not have mustered the moral virtue to do so. They'd be too hurt, and would be needing time to brood and stew over what had taken place. But not so with Job! The man who had been falsely accused as being a sinner of the worst kind, is the man who is now going to God in prayer, making intercession on behalf of his accusers.

Those who truly wish to speak for God and defend His Word need to possess the love of Job. God doesn't need hirelings who stand in the pulpit week after week to proclaim His message, for we know what happens to hirelings when opposition arises. No, God needs men who supremely love people, God's Word, and God, Himself. May God help us to learn from Job and his three friends that we might be better representatives for God.

Biographical Sketch

Steve Higginbotham is a native of West Virginia, being born in Weirton, WV and raised in Chester, WV. He is a 1984 graduate of Freed-Hardeman College. He is married to his wife, Kim (Pierce) and together they have four children, Kelli, Michael, Matthew, and Anne Marie. Steve has been preaching since 1984 and is currently preaching for the Karns church of Christ in Knoxville, TN. Steve also serves as one of the instructors at the Southeast Institute of Biblical Studies and is one of the editors for *Think Magazine*. Steve also tries to utilize technology by writing a weekly email called “MercEmail,” producing a daily podcast called “Equipped Today,” and by having an app for Apple and Android called “iDevotions.”

The Power of God

Job 37:1-24

Earl D. Edwards

In the Fall of 2012, a storm blew into our town of Henderson, TN, with thunder and lightning and fierce winds of 70 to 80 miles per hour taking down a 70-foot tall tree and throwing it across our driveway, taking out our power lines and barely missing our house. Is the source of such power “Mother Nature,” as we many times say, or is it “Father God”?

Elihu says that when he hears the “lightning” and the “thunder” of the “rising storm,” his heart “trembles, and leaps from its place” (Job 36:32–37). [All Scripture references are from NKJV unless otherwise noted.] As David Stewart says,

Elihu portrayed the Lord as God of the storm. He is the One who is responsible for spreading out the clouds and sending the rains. He lights up the skies with impressive bolts of lightning and shakes the earth with rumblings of thunder. He uses the storm to render judgment on the people He has created. His gentle rains are a blessing because they facilitate the growth of crops, providing an abundance of food. His fierce lightning is a curse, striking its very target. Elihu’s portrayal of God’s control over the weather is in agreement with what we learn from the rest of the Old Testament (for example, Ps. 29:77). (Shackelford 427)

Elihu uses God’s control of the storm and the weather in general to show God’s great power. He also mentions His power in Job 36:22 saying He is “exalted by His power.” Don Shackelford, in his commenting on that verse says, “In God’s exalted position as Creator and Sustainer of the universe no one can compare with Him. The word translated power . . . (*koach*) is a favorite of the author of [this section of] Job” (423).

Later Elihu lauds the God of heaven saying, “He is excellent in power” (Job 37:23). As Stephen Hooks comments, Elihu here picks “. . . up on a theme he had explored earlier (cf., e.g., 36:5, 22) Elihu insists that God’s power puts him in a class far above humankind” (416). In fact, back in chapter 36 Elihu said that “God is mighty (. . . *kabbir*)” (v.5). Then later in chapter 36 he says, “God is exalted by his power” (v.22). As John E. Hartley says, he is so powerful that “no one could make him change his course of action by a threat such as Job’s threat of taking him to court” (474). In fact, as Hooks says, Elihu exalts Jehovah’s great power for a purpose: “. . . to convince Job to abandon his case against God and to humbly submit to God’s *sovereign* rule of his life. The specific purpose of this section is to remind Job of just who it is that he is impugning and daring to challenge” (407; emphasis mine--EDE).

Please note that Hooks mentions that Jehovah should have “sovereign rule” of Job’s life. How should we define sovereignty? It is closely related to the term “power” found in our title. Though the word “sovereignty” is not found in some translations of the Bible, the concept is in all translations. The New American Standard translation describes the Father as “Sovereign” in 1 Timothy 6:15; but the Greek word used there (*dunástēs*; from which we get “dynamite”) does not in and of itself (without contextual modification) mean the ULTIMATE authority (Thayer 160). This is clear from the fact that the same word describes the Ethiopian eunuch and others with limited power (Acts 8:27; Luke 1:52; etc.). However, here in 1 Timothy 6:15, there is “contextual modification.” Note the *mónos* which precedes the word *dunástēs*. W. Robertson Nicoll is correct in saying, “The choice of the phrase *mónos dunástēs* here was perhaps suggested by the thought of his absolute and irresponsible power. . .” (148).

And please note that “irresponsible” does not mean God throws His power around in an irresponsible manner. It means instead, that there is no one above God to whom He must be responsible or give account. In fact, Webster defines the term “sovereignty” as “super POWER, especially over a body politic” and then adds “and freedom from external control” (1129; emphasis mine—EDE). A sovereign is, indeed, one who REIGNS like a king. He is the “supreme”

power or authority. There is no one above him. Therefore, he enjoys “freedom from external control.” No one can tell him what he must do. All authority or power lies within his own person. He is not just a high authority, he is the MOST HIGH. In fact, it will not escape the Bible student that God is frequently described in just that manner. David says, “I will praise the Lord according to His righteousness and will sing praise to the name of the Lord Most High” (Ps. 7:17). In fact, in at least thirty other passages in the Old Testament He is so described, as well as in one passage in the New Testament (Acts 7:48). Indeed, He is not just a high authority, He is the MOST HIGH authority in the universe. He has all power.

His Power or Sovereignty as Seen in Scripture

In the first verse of the Bible we see that “God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1) and if He created the universe He can, obviously, control it if He so desires.

In the words of David, “Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, the power and the glory, the victory and the majesty; for all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and You are exalted as head over all” (1 Chron. 29:11).

In the words of the psalmist, as he contrasts the true God with idols, he says “But our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases” (Ps. 115:3).

In another place God declares of Himself, “Behold all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine; the soul who sins will die” (Ezek. 18:4). And not only do humans belong to Him, the beasts of the field are His also. Elsewhere God says, “For every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills” (Ps. 50:10). Everything belongs to Him and is controlled by Him.

After a period of being humbled by God and looking and acting like a beast, Nebuchadnezzar learned about the true God and praised Him: “For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, ‘What have You done?’” (Dan. 4:34b-35). That is, God is so powerful that He does what He

wills or wishes and no one is above Him so as to ask Him questions by which he would hold Him accountable – He is sovereign, all powerful.

As Paul discusses how Christians have “obtained an inheritance” he says that such has come about “according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will” (Eph. 1:11). That is, we have obtained such a wonderful inheritance because God desired it so, it was “according” to His purpose and what He wants He gets, because He is sovereign, all powerful, in the universe.

The same Paul speaks of the “appearing” or second coming of Christ and then he says God the Father will bring it about “. . . in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen” (1 Tim. 6:15-16).

As noted earlier, just the word “potentate” (“sovereign”—NASV) used here to describe God would not by itself indicate sovereignty in the ULTIMATE sense. However, note again please, that God is the “ONLY Sovereign” (emphasis mine – E.D.E.). Likewise, He is not just a King but the “King of kings” and also the “Lord of lords.” Thus, A. M. Stibbs is on target when he says, “Verses 15 and 16 provide a significant description of God. In His absolute bliss and unending life He is completely self-contained. Such things belong wholly to Him, and to Him alone. He is thus the exclusive Lord of all else. So to Him should all honour be rendered and all power ascribed” (1073).

Indeed, He is over all men and all things in the universe. As John M. Stoll states, God’s sovereignty extends to “four areas”:

- 1) “the physical universe” (see Ps. 103:19; 104:4; etc., etc.)
- 2) “the animal kingdom” (see Job 12:10; Ps. 147:9; etc., etc.)
- 3) “the nations of the world” (see Job 12:23; Ps. 22:28; etc., etc.)
- 4) “all individuals” (see Jer. 1:5; Prov. 21:1; etc., etc.)

Behold, what power our God possesses!

And then comes the climactic passage of those which ascribe power or sovereignty to our God. In the final book of the Bible, John sees Him on His throne with the twenty-four elders and the “four living creatures” around Him worshipping Him and they say, “You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created” (Rev. 4:11).

No wonder John saw coming from the throne “lightnings, thunderings, and voices. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne” (Rev. 4:5)! No wonder, indeed, this is the Sovereign God of the entire universe.

God Overrules in Men’s Affairs and Yet He Allows Man Freedom

As noted a bit earlier, God’s control begins with the physical universe as a whole and extends to the smallest details of each animal, fowl and human individual. He even knows about (and controls where necessary) “the very hairs” of our heads (Matt. 10:30). In fact, as Paul said “in Him [God] we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also His offspring’” (Acts 17:28).

So, we belong to Him and He has a right (and the power) to force our complete obedience. However, God has never forced His will against an individual man’s will. He told Adam and Eve not to eat of a given tree but He allowed them to choose otherwise. He made it plain that He desired animal sacrifices but He allowed Cain to make a different choice. His “Spirit” strove with the evil men of Noah’s day (Gen. 6:3), but He did not force them to obey. And here in the book of Job, He allows Job to express his doubts over and over even to say to God “leave me alone” (10:20) without using reprisal or constriction. Indeed, God allows man to choose between good and evil. He does not make him a puppet.

In fact, that choice of free will has belonged to man in every age and continues to be ours today in the Christian era. In the first book of the New Testament, we find Jesus came to establish His kingdom and He said, “Come to Me all you who labor and are heavy

laden and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28); but it was left to the individual to make the choice to “come” (or refuse to do so). In the very last book of the New Testament we read, “And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ And let him who thirsts come. *Whoever desires*, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev. 22:17; emphasis mine—E.D.E.). It is clear that God allows man to do what he wishes.

On the other hand, it is also clear that He overrules in a manner that allows Him to use even man’s rebellious acts in such a way as to accomplish His own will, not in the rebellious person but, yes, in the overall scheme of things. In Genesis, we read of how Joseph’s brethren, because of their jealousy, had considered killing him; but finally sold him into captivity and then lied to their father about him being killed. Clearly, sin was piled upon sin in their lives. And yet, God caused Joseph to become second to Pharaoh in Egypt so that much later he helped deliver his family from a terrible “famine.” When Joseph revealed to those brothers that he was the one they had sold into bondage, they feared greatly that he would punish them. But Joseph said, “But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive” (Gen. 50:20). God had taken their evil deeds and used them in a way which blessed them and their families. As Enrico Galbiati says,

Not only does Joseph not want to dig up the past, but he even denies himself the right to be offended. He thinks that if God had brought such great good from the fault of his brethren, he can’t oppose the design of God by demanding compensation for that which Providence had already compensated in a splendid manner. (148)

Indeed, without forcing any individual to do things against his will, God brings good from evil in the overall scheme of things.

The same doctrine is taught in the New Testament. In Romans 8:28 Paul writes, “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (NASV).

In the first place, note that the New American Standard (along with the RSV and the NIV and others) does, against the King James and the New King James, include the words “God causes” before the words “all things.” This is done because several Greek manuscripts do include those words including three of the most significant ones (cf. Aland, et al. 551). And aside from the manuscripts, the context demands the idea of God causing such.

So, please note that God has a plan to bless those “who love” Him (Christians) and He “causes all things,” both good and bad, to work so as to help implement that plan. For example, He takes even “various trials” (obviously negative things from the human standpoint) and uses them to produce “patience” (Jas 1:3) which is positive. In fact, in James 1:4 we read: “And let patience have its perfect work, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.” As J. W. McGarvey says, “We know (partly by experience, but primarily by revelation) that all these present ills, hardships, adversities, afflictions, etc., are so overruled of God as to be made to combine to produce the permanent and eternal advantage and welfare of those who love God . . .” (365-66).

In still another New Testament passage, Peter tells us more about God’s plan for saving men. Listen to him as he discusses with the Jews about why Jesus died on the cross, he says, “Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death” (Acts 2:23).

It should be noted that though those who nailed Him to the cross “meant evil” yet God “meant it for good” (cf. Gen. 50:20). God had a plan and He took even the evil deeds of those who rebelled against God and bent them in a direction that brought good out of this wicked deed because it was according to God’s “foreknowledge.”

God is so powerful that He overrules in the affairs of man and yet He allows man his freedom to choose.

God’s Sovereignty is Always Exercised in Harmony with His Divine Nature

Again we note that God is the Almighty or omnipotent One. He has all power at His disposition. Among the things John heard in

heaven was a voice that said, “Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!’ And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, ‘Alleluia! For the Lord God *Omnipotent* reigns!’” (Rev. 19:5-6; emphasis mine—E.D.E.) He is, indeed, “omnipotent.” He has all power at His disposition. But, how does He use that power? Many men with great power abuse it like King Ahab of Israel did when he wanted the vineyard of a poor and powerless man named Naboth. At the instigation of his wife, Jezebel, Ahab used lies to discredit Naboth so he could have him stoned and take his vineyard (1 Kings 21). Is the Omnipotent God like men who abuse their power?

In Numbers 23:19, we read that even the wicked Balaam knew that, “God *is* not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?” Even Balaam knew that God DOES NOT EVER LIE – He is always truthful. You can count on what He says. He does only good.

In another circumstance, Samuel told King Saul that God, because of Saul’s disobedience in the matter of Agag, had rejected him as king. On that occasion, Saul begged Samuel to “return with” him (accept him back as king) and Samuel said, “. . . [T]he strength of Israel (=God—E.D.E.) will NOT LIE NOR RELENT; For He is not a man, that He should relent” (1 Sam. 15:29; emphasis mine—E.D.E.).

God does not lie. He never tells an untruth. In fact, His very word is truth (John. 17:17). Further, the writer of Hebrews says that it “is impossible for God to lie” (Heb. 6:18a). But notice that Samuel also says that God DOES NOT “RELENT” or CHANGE HIS MIND. But, in light of this statement, how does one harmonize certain passages that seem to say the opposite?

In fact, in the same chapter which contains the account of God rejecting Saul (1 Sam. 15), there are *apparently* contradictory statements. At verse 11, God is quoted as saying, “I greatly regret that I set up Saul as king.” (The King James version reads: “It repenteth me that I have made Saul king.”) Then in verse 29 is the statement quoted earlier to the effect that God does not “relent”

(KJV="repent"). Keeping in mind that "repent" means "to change one's mind" these two verses (and other similar ones) seem to contradict the idea of God's never changing His mind! Is there a plausible solution?

Where God says "I greatly regret that I set up Saul as king" (KJV="it repenteth me"), it needs to be understood that we are dealing with non-literal language. Surely the author himself (even if he were not inspired) would not have quoted God as making two contradictory statements that the author understood as being contradictory in the same chapter! Surely we are to understand the regrets/repentance of God in verse 11 to be figurative. E. W. Bullinger, in his massive book on the subject of figures of speech in the Bible, lists many types of "anthropomorphisms" (literally: "man forms") which are used in describing God. In fact, he says "Human affections and feelings are attributed to God: NOT THAT HE HAS SUCH FEELINGS; but, in infinite condescension, He is thus spoken of in order TO ENABLE US TO COMPREHEND HIM" (882; emphasis mine—E.D.E.). In fact, he shows how God is said to have a face (Ps. 34:16, and many others) and eyes (Ps. 11:4, et al.), ears (Ps. 40:5, et al.), nostrils (Ex. 15:8, et al.), lips (Job 11:5, et al.), and a heart (Gen. 6:6, et al.). Likewise, He is said to experience rejoicing (Isa. 52:5, et al.), sorrow or grief (Judg. 10:16, et al.), and repentance (Gen. 6:6, et al.). In fact, Bullinger lists over ten pages (874 and following) of such figures with literally hundreds of Biblical passages where they occur. One of those figures used is where "repentance is attributed to God"; but he explains it is "NOT THAT HE HAS SUCH FEELINGS." He uses this figure to "ENABLE US TO COMPREHEND HIM" (882; emphasis mine—E.D.E.). Just like God doesn't have literal eyes, ears and nostrils (John 4:24; Luke 24:39); He doesn't literally "repent." It is not that man at the time of the flood, or King Saul many years later, blindsided God and did something God didn't foresee . . . ! God is all-knowing. Regarding those who disobeyed in Noah's time, it is obvious He knew that many men would disobey and need a saviour, in that age as well as in others, else how could Paul later say that God "chose us in Him [Christ] before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4)? God knew man would disobey and need a saviour. Thus, He planned to give Christ "before the foundation of

the world.”

Now, coming back to the statements about God in 1 Samuel 15: the statement in verse 11 about God REGRETTING is obviously a figure – His feelings being described as if He were human, while the one in verse 29 about God NOT CHANGING HIS MIND is obviously the literal one. In fact, this fits with many other clearly literal statements like those made by Joshua about God’s dealing with the Israelites:

And you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one thing has failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spoke concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one word of them has failed. Therefore it shall come to pass, that as all the good things have come upon you which the Lord your God promised you, so the Lord will bring upon you all harmful things, until He has destroyed you from this good land which the Lord your God has given you. (Josh. 23:14-15)

Indeed, as Paul says, “He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it” (1 Thess. 5:24). Elsewhere Paul says, “If we are faithless, He [God] remains faithful, He cannot deny Himself” (2 Tim. 2:13). God, by His very nature, is faithful, so much so that His very Word is “truth” (John 17:17) and He will not renounce being who He is. He is the Most High, the loving and caring and faithful God of heaven and His power, His sovereignty, is always exercised in harmony with His divine nature.

Conclusion

As Stewart wrote,

God’s majestic power is captured through Elihu’s description of a storm in Job 37:1-13. His voice is described as rumbling thunder that reverberates through the heavens and shakes the earth. The thunder, accompanied by flashes of lightning, causes a person’s heart to leap in his chest (37:1-5). We have all had the experience of being startled by a thunderstorm.

While it can be frightening, the storm is awe-inspiring and stirs our hearts to worship God. As we witness His majestic power in the thunder, lightning, rain, and wind, we cannot help but praise Him.

The power of God's voice is evident in the fact that the snow and the rain are directed by His word (37:6-12). An amazing characteristic of God that distinguishes Him from His creation is His ability simply to speak and cause things to happen. This is seen in the account of creation where the text repeatedly states, "Then God said . . ." and it happened (Gen. 1). Hebrews reminds us that "the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible" (Heb. 11:3). There is more power in one word from God than all of the human strength of the earth combined. He is indeed omnipotent! (Shackelford 436-37)

He is, indeed, powerful. Let all the earth praise Him!

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Unless otherwise noted, Scripture taken from the New King James Version.

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The Patience of Job

James 5:11

Frank Higginbotham

The book of Job gives us the account of the life and trials of a man named Job. Thomas B. Warren gives us a brief outline of the book (199).

- I. Prologue: Job before the suffering (1:1-5).**
- II. Questions asked by various persons (1:6-42:6).**
- III. Epilogue: Job after the suffering (42:7-17).**

Our first look at the man is a great picture of a man of integrity who trusted very strongly in his Maker. Job had been richly blessed in many ways.

And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters. His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east. And his sons went and feasted in their houses, every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them. (Job 1:2-4)

His great wealth was not the source of his greatness. He was a God-fearing man who lived to please his God.

No one in the Bible is portrayed as sinless or faultless (except Jesus the only begotten Son of God, Heb.4:15; 7:6; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Peter 2:22, but three times Job is declared to be blameless and upright (1:1,8; 2:3). To follow his example would be certainly desirable, for the things written aforetime were written for our learning (Rom.15:4). (Robinson 74)

Thomas B. Warren also commented on the quality of the life of Job in this way:

Job was a very pious, God-fearing man---one who lived in obedience to God. In fact, in speaking to Satan, God Himself said of Job that ‘there is none like him in all the earth.’ The Bible say of Job that he was “a perfect and an upright man, one that feared God, and escheweth (turned away from) evil (1:1, 8). (200)

The Bible next gives us a picture of disaster that would certainly try the patience of any man. Job lost his possessions, his family and his health. At this point many would just give up and charge God foolishly. This was not the character of this man.

Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, And said, Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly. (Job 1:20-22)

We are next introduced to the friends of Job. While they hoped to comfort this good man in his hard times, they ended up bringing more misery his way.

His friends, who turned out not to be friends at all and are described as “forgers of lies...physicians of no value” (13:4), began a series of speeches. Each one speaks three times except Zophar who speaks twice. They at first are sympathetic but soon become very critical of Job and his condition when he maintains he has not sinned. To each one Job responds but they refuse to acknowledge the truthfulness of his words. All they “know” is that suffering comes as a result of sin. Therefore, since Job is suffering, he has sinned and needs to repent! But they were wrong. (Robinson 74)

The reasoning of his friends seemed to carry the view that suffering is a result of sin and since Job was suffering, he must be guilty of some sin. Their call was for him to repent. Job maintained that he was not guilty and thus did not need to call upon God for forgiveness.

In these speeches all three of the men imply the same basic argument: (a) If God does not allow a righteous (faithful) man to suffer, if any man suffers then he is not a righteous man; (b) God does not allow a righteous man to suffer; therefore (c) since Job is suffering, he is not a righteous man (and, thus needs to repent). (Warren 202)

The final picture of Job is one of happiness and joy in serving God faithfully. Job even had to learn a lesson about questioning the judgments and decisions of his heavenly Father. God in His great wisdom is far above the questioning of mere men. We need to remember the great truth that is declared by Isaiah. “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isa. 55:8 -9). The final days of Job were filled with blessings from the Lord. “So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses. He had also seven sons and three daughters” (Job 42:12-13).

With all of the good qualities of the life of this great man, the Holy Spirit choose one that still stands out in our minds in regard to Job. The average man if questioned about the character of Job would speak of his patience.

Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door. Take, my brethren, the prophets,

who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy. (Jas. 5:7-11)

There are many examples in the life of Job that called upon him to stand by patiently and to endure the trials that life afforded him.

It takes patience to endure wrong. The innocent have always suffered because of the evil of others. Jesus the Christ provides the perfect example of it. David said, "I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me" (Psalms 39:1). Patience is commended in Ecclesiastes 7:8-9: "Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof: and the patient spirit is better than the proud in spirit. Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools." "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass" (Psalms 37:7). (Robinson 84-85)

Patience is defined in this way, "bearing or enduring pain, troubles, etc. without complaining or losing self control, refusing to be provoked or angered, as by an insult; forbearing, tolerant." These definitions are offered by Webster on page 1055 of *Webster's New World Dictionary*. In view of what we read in the book of Job it is not hard to see why we are reminded of the patience of Job. We need to carefully take note of some examples of the outstanding reaction of Job to the events that surrounded him. The patience in the life of Job is seen in the way he reacted to the events in his life over which he had no control. The Lord promised to be with His children in all of the hard places in life but He did not promise that there would be no hard places. In referring to the temptations Paul gave this assurance. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that

ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13). Sometimes bad things happen to us because we have done wrong things, but there are also times that we have no control over what happens. If we have done wrong, we should expect to suffer the consequence of our deeds. This is clearly seen in the writing of Peter to the saints in first Peter.

But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men’s matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. (4:15-16)

When a murderer suffers for taking the life of another, he should not be surprised. When a thief is placed in jail for his action, he should have expected this. When we get our nose in other people’s business, we are bound to suffer. Yet, Peter addresses the possibility that we might suffer for the good deeds we do. It is totally unfair to suffer when we have done the right thing. Yet, not all of life is fair. Jesus taught this in Matthew five.

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you. (10-12)

Notice that Jesus included the word ‘falsely’ in this statement. If the accusation is true, we deserve the consequence of our action. Since we know that some things in life happen to us over which we have no control, the real thing we should be concerned with is how we react to these injustices. Job was patient. He did not charge God foolishly. Rather than acting in an unreasonable way, we need to just accept things as they are and continue to do the right thing.

Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they

reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? (Matt. 6:26-30)

If God does care for the birds of the air, should we not realize that much more He will care for His children? We cannot control how tall we are able to grow, nor can we control all of the actions of people around us. We must learn patience in accepting things we cannot change. Job, our great example of patience, knew that he could not control everything but he trusted God to help him endure the obstacles of life. Life goes better for us when we realize that there are some conditions over which we have no control.

Job demonstrated his patience as he dealt with friends who had no idea what he was going through. The intention of his friends was certainly good. They sought to help Job. They could see a good friend in distress and set out to find what needed to be done to rectify the situation. Of all of the conclusions they might have reached, they came up with this one. Job was obviously going through great suffering. Godly people should not have to suffer in this way and therefore Job must not fit the description of a godly person. They called on their dear friend to repent of whatever sin was causing him to suffer in this way.

The friends (after Job cried out in pain wishing that he had never been born and then that he could die, having been born (3:1-23) gave three rounds of speeches, with Job giving reply to each speech. Eliphaz spoke first, likely being the oldest, followed by Bildad and Zophar. Their thesis was this: all suffering comes as punishment for sin. Job is suffering. Therefore, Job is a sinner. Of course, this was still another

trial of Job—falsely accused by even those who claim to be his friends. How many have been the times that a person is treated “well” and “gloated over” by a “friend,” but if he crosses him or disagrees with his pet hobby, he becomes counted immediately as an enemy and comes under the supposed friend’s vicious attacks! Satan uses just such people, as he did Job’s friends. They were “forgers of lies” (13:4). (Cates 151-52)

How discouraging it must have been for Job to have this added burden heaped upon him. He would expect mercy and understanding to come his way but his friends just added to his troubles. It seems that it is much easier for us to examine the lives of others than for us to look at our own problems. Jesus reminded us of this problem in His teaching in the Sermon on the Mount.

Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye. Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye. (Matt. 7:1-5)

We may be far more comfortable in examining our brother than we would be in looking at our own faults but it is far more profitable for us to be aware of our own shortcomings. “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates” (2 Cor. 13:5-6). Job’s friends only added to his misery. It needs to also be remembered that not all suffering is without purpose. Sometimes our lives are strengthened by properly enduring suffering. One great passage that makes this very real for us is found in the letter Paul wrote to the church at Rome. “And we know that all things work

together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8:28). The promise does not say that all that happens to Christians will be good. It does however, promise that God can and will use these things for our good. When illness or the loss of a loved one occurs, we wonder how any good thing could possibly come from this but because of our trust in God we believe that God can work things for our good.

The Psalmist declared, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted: that I might learn thy statutes” (Ps. 119:71). The Psalmist further said, “Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word” (Ps. 119:67). Suffering can lead to one’s turning from a life of sin to a life of loving submission to God. Just as earthly fathers chasten their children because they love them, so God chastens those whom he loves (Heb. 12:5-13; 2 Cor. 12:7-9). All children of God should know that since human fathers (who have been guilty of sin—“if ye then, being evil...” (Mt.7:11) know how to give good gifts unto their children, they can be certain that God, their heavenly Father, will bless (much more abundantly) those that ask Him! “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding...” (Prov.3:5). (Warren 208-09)

The patience of Job is seen in the way he reacted to the criticism of those who claimed to be his friends.

We also can see his patience in the betrayal of his companion. When suffering was at its height a person would think that surely his wife would have understanding for his situation. She would show love when all others failed him. How did she react?

So went Satan forth from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown. And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal; and he sat down among the ashes. Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die. But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish

women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips. (Job 2:7-10)

With many people, the discouragement of a wife would have been enough to cause them to give up. The marriage relationship is based on love. That love involves a commitment for life that should not be entered into without careful consideration. Paul gives a description of the marriage bond and compares it to the relationship between Christ and His church. The bride of Christ.

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband. (Eph. 5:22-33)

How could a wife react to the misery of her husband in this way? Yet in this, Job did not behave in an improper way. His reaction was one of complete trust in God. He knew that God would not forsake him. Job did not sin with his lips (Job 2:10). His patience is seen in his reaction to this trying moment in his life.

Job's patience was tried as he struggled to understand the plan of God. God was eventually going to give him blessings beyond his imagination. It is hard to look beyond the reality of today and to see the overall plan of God. There must have been times in the life of Joseph that he questioned in his own mind how God was going to work things out for him. He was sold by his brothers, placed in prison, lied on by his masters wife and still God was bringing him to a place of greater service. We have trouble seeing God's providence when it is occurring. We might be able to see it after it occurs but to see it as it occurs is another thing. Another example of this is in the life of Queen Esther. When her people were endangered, she was called on to risk her life by approaching the King. She is reminded by Mordecai that perhaps God had raised her up for this very purpose. "For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Esth. 4:14). Job's patience helped him to deal with circumstances that were greatly unfavorable. He did not charge God foolishly but continued to trust in God. We do not have to know the end results of our lives to patiently accept whatever God has planned for us. Abraham did not know where he was going when he left his homeland but he did know that his trust in God would not be betrayed. "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went" (Heb. 11:8).

We are amazed at the patience of Job. We are called upon by an inspired writer of the Bible to remember his patience. The examples given in the Word of God, if followed, will enrich our lives.

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus. (Rom. 15:4-5)

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Biographical Sketch

Frank Higginbotham was born in New Martinsville, WV, February 21, 1933. He is the son of Mr. & Mrs. A. G. (Bus) Higginbotham. He was graduated from Magnolia High School in New Martinsville and from Florida Christian College in Tampa, FL. First located work was with the Columbia Street Church of Christ in Fairmont, WV. From there he worked with the church in Wellsburg and the West Street church in Weirton, WV. In 1964 he moved to the Virginia Avenue Church of Christ in Chester, WV and is currently in his 49th year with this congregation. Frank has done radio and TV preaching and has been preaching for 61 years. He was speaker for 'Bible Meditations' until September of 2012. This 15-minute program was produced five days a week and was on the air since 1949. He preaches on various lecture programs and conducts 5 to 6 meetings a year. Frank is married to Rose Marie (King) Higginbotham and they are the parents of three children. Donna (passed away in 1965), Janie Gallagher, who is married to Brent Gallagher (the preacher for the Oakwood Road Church of Christ in Fairmont) and Steve, who is the preacher for the Karns Church Of Christ, Knoxville, TN. The Higginbothams have seven grandchildren and four great grandchildren.

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