

# (Through the Bible) Job 11-20

by Chuck Smith

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of trusting in God's sovereignty and love, even when we don't understand His ways, and highlights the limitations of human knowledge in comprehending God.*

**Duration:** 1:26:48

**Topics:** "Suffering And Sovereignty", "Gods Loving Nature"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker expresses his confusion and lack of understanding about the suffering and sorrow in the world, including personal tragedies like the death of his brother and father in a plane crash. However, he emphasizes the importance of having foundational truths to stand upon, particularly the knowledge that God loves him. The speaker then references the book of Job, highlighting how nature testifies to God's sovereignty and power over all things. He concludes by reminding the audience that God's purpose and work cannot be withstood, and that there is a judgment to come.

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## Transcript

Shall we turn to the 11th chapter of the book of Job? And in chapter 11, we hear from Job's third friend, Ozophar. And he gets his two cents worth in. Now, for you that weren't here last Sunday night, we remember that the sons of God were presenting themselves to God and Satan came with them.

And God did a little bragging on His servant Job and Satan said, Yes, but you've so prospered him. Job or anybody for that matter would serve you if they were blessed as much as Job is. And you've put a hedge around the fellow.

I can't get to him. Take away the hedge. Let me take away his possessions.

He'll curse you to your face. And so the Lord said, All right, you can take away his possessions, but you leave him alone. And so Satan operating within the limitations that God placed upon him.

And Satan stripped Job of all of his possessions, his children even. And when Job received the word finally that his children were wiped out, he fell on his face. He said, Naked, I came into the world.

Naked, I'm going out. The Lord has given. The Lord has taken away.

Blessed be the name of the Lord. And on all of these things, Job did not curse God nor did he charge God foolishly. So it came to pass in another day that the sons of God were presenting themselves to God.

And Satan also came with him. And God said to Satan, Where have you been? He said, Oh, going around the earth. The Lord said, Have you considered my servant Job? Good man.

He's upright. He's perfect. He loves good.

He hates evil. And in spite of all of what you've done, you were wrong about him. He didn't curse me.

And so Satan offered really a second suggestion concerning Job in which he expressed really what the psychologists tell us are the basic instincts of man. And that is self-preservation. Skin for skin.

Yea, all that a man has will he give for his skin. Will he give for his life. You see, you haven't let me touch him.

Let me hit him. Let me get at him. And he'll curse you to your face.

So God said, Alright, do what you want, but don't take his life. Spare his life. So Job was afflicted with these horrible boils from the head to the toe.

Running, putrid sores. Painful. He lay out in the dust, in the ashes.

As the sores would dry, they would just form clods on his body. He'd take a piece of broken clay and just scrape himself. Absolutely miserable condition.

His wife looked at him one day and said, Honey, why don't you get it over with? Why don't you just curse God and die? Job said, We've received good from God. Shall we not also receive evil? There were three men from the east, reputed wise men who knew Job, because Job was the greatest man in all of the east because of the abundance of his possessions prior to his being stripped. And they came to commensurate with him in his misery.

And they sat there in silence for seven days as they saw the misery of their friend. And after seven days, Job opened up his mouth and cursed the day that he was born. Cursed the fact that he was alive.

Cried out for death. And his friends began to more or less rebuke him. They began to suggest and intimate that no one could suffer this much unless he was some kind of a horrible sinner.

That though he appeared outwardly to be a good man, yet he must be hiding some dreadful sin or seeking to hide it, but God wouldn't let him hide it. And this surely is punishment from God for the evil that he has done. Now, we know better than that because we had the first two chapters where we got the insight to what was happening.

So we know how wrong is the evaluation of man concerning the situation. It's interesting how that we so often think that we know all the answers. And this is sort of Zophar's position.

You know, he really knows just what it's all about. He knows all about God. And he's a religious dogmatist.

And he now makes his speech as we get into chapter 11 and rebukes Job. And again, the innuendos of evil and so forth in Job. So, these are the discourses.

The friends will speak and then Job will answer them. And then the next friend will speak up and try to put Job down and Job will answer him. And the conversation is going back and forth between Job and his friends.

A friend will speak and Job responds. And this is the way the book of Job moves. Then answered Zophar, the Namethite, and said, Should not the multitude of words be answered? Should a man full of talk be justified? Job, you think that you can just justify yourself with your mouth? A man who says all of the things you're saying, should you just let it go? Should your lies make men hold their peace? Now you see, he's accusing him of being a liar.

And when you mock, shall no man make thee ashamed? For you have said, My doctrine is pure and I am clean in thine eyes. But oh, that God would speak and open His lips against thee. Well, first chapter, God did speak.

God said to Satan, Have you considered My servant Job? An upright man. He loves good. He hates evil.

You see, God had spoken and given His evaluation of Job. Now, this friend Zophar said, Oh, if God would only speak, you know. Tell us what He knows about you.

He would show thee the secrets of wisdom that they are double to that which is. Know ye therefore that God exacteth thee, exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserves. Job, you haven't, listen, if God would really lay it on you, for all you've got coming, it'd be worse than what you've got now.

Isn't that a great way to comfort a friend who's really hurting? No wonder Job cried out, miserable comforters are all of you, you know. What a way to comfort a man. Hey, man, you've got it easy.

If God would really lay it on you like you've got coming to you, you'd be in much worse shape than this. And so, an interesting question though. He said, can you by searching find out God? Can you find out the Almighty unto perfection? And the answer is really no.

Man, through an intellectual quest, cannot find out God. You will never understand God completely. Now, one of our problems is that we are always seeking to understand God.

We are always asking, God, why, Lord, did you allow this? Why, God, has this happened to me? Why, Lord, am I in this condition? We're trying to understand God. But I have found that wise can be a cesspool. You can drown in it.

Why did God? The answer is we don't know the wise of God. God does many things that I do not understand. I don't understand why a child is born blind.

I don't understand why someone is crippled for life. I don't understand why children starve to death. There are a lot of things that I don't understand.

I don't understand why we have to suffer. I don't understand why we experience sorrow. I don't understand why my brother and father were killed in a plane crash.

A lot of things I don't understand. That is why it is important that you have certain foundational truths upon which you stand. You see, there are certain things that I know.

They are foundational truths. They are underneath. I rest upon these.

I stand upon these. I know this, that God loves me. In spite of what happens, I know God loves me.

In spite of what I might experience, I know God loves me. What tragedy might befall me in my path of life, I know that God loves me. And it's important that you know this.

It's important that you have this as an undergirding foundational truth. Because when you don't understand what's happening, you've got to fall back on what you do understand and I do understand God loves me. I do understand that God is far wiser than I am and He can see much more than I can see.

I do know that my vision is very limited. I know that the spectrum that I can see is very small. I know that God has a much broader vision than I have.

He can see the end from the beginning. Not only is His vision much broader than mine, but His wisdom is much expanded from mine. And though I do not understand, thank God I no longer have to understand all of the things that have happened to me.

As long as I understand that God loves me and my life is in His hand, and that He is working in me according to love and His wisdom, doing what is best for me as He knows what is best, I by faith rest there. Lord, You know what's best for me. Lord, You love me.

Lord, You're in control of my life. So, whatever. I don't understand why God allowed His own Son to suffer on the cross in order to redeem such as me.

There are a lot of things about God that I don't understand. But it isn't necessary or important that I do understand them. It is only necessary that I commit my life completely to God, come what may.

Now, if you only commit yourself as far as you understand, if you're only because I am blessed, I'm prospered and all, and therefore I love God and serve God because I'm prospered so much by God, then what are you going to do in the day of adversity? Should you be stripped of that which you have? What can you do then? But if you've learned to trust in God completely and commit to God completely your life, then you can handle the things that come along your path. So, who by searching can find out God? No one. You can't.

This is one of the problems man has run up against. He's sought to intellectually search for God and understand God. But God is a spirit.

And they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. No matter how much you may search for God intellectually, there always comes that point where you've got to leave the area of reason and take the step of faith to touch Him. Now, my intellect can tell me an awful lot about God.

My intellect surely brings me to the consciousness and the awareness that God exists. I'm not so stupid as to think this whole thing could have come about through spontaneous generation or just fortunate accidents. All of the life forms, the variables of the life forms, witness to me of the wisdom of the Divine Creator.

I love nature. I love to study nature. I love the quirks of nature.

I love to study the little fish down in Panama that shoots water at the bugs that are on the twigs. Quite accurate. Hits them with a blob of water.

They fall and then he swims up and grabs them. Now, how long did it take for that little fish to develop the capacity to spit that little bit of water and to develop the accuracy? How did he survive before he learned

how to do it? Things like that fascinate me. Surely there is a Creator.

Surely there is an original cause. My intellect can carry me a long way, but there comes the place where I have to, ultimately, to really reach God, leave the realm of the intellect and take the step of faith. Alright, God, I believe.

I trust. I commit. The step of faith.

I'll never understand God completely. God said I won't. He said my ways are not your ways.

My ways are beyond your finding out. So, who can understand God perfectly? It is as high as heaven. What can you do? Deeper than hell.

What can you know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth. It's broader than the sea. If God decides to cut off or shut up or gather together, who can hinder God? Who can stop the purposes of God? For he knoweth vain men, he seeth wickedness, he also will he not then consider it? For vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass is cold.

If you prepare your heart and stretch out your hands towards him, if iniquity be in your hand, put it far away, let not wickedness dwell in your tent. So, he's now turning to Job and saying, look, you know, if you prepare your heart and stretch out your hand to God, make sure you don't have any wickedness in your hands and let your tabernacles be clean. For then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot, yea, thou shalt be steadfast and shall not fear, because thou shalt forget thy misery and remember it as the waters that pass away.

And thine age shall be clearer than the noonday and shine forth and 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 will make thee afraid, yea, many shall make suit unto thee or shall come to thee and do obeisance.

But the eyes of the wicked shall fail and they shall not escape and their hope shall be as the giving up of the ghost. So, Job answered him and said, no doubt, but you are the people and wisdom is going to die with you. He's about had it with these guys who think that they know all the answers and they're really not ministering or reaching Him at all.

Now, it's very frustrating to try to explain yourself to people and have people in a mindset where they are determined, they know all the answers about you and yet they don't understand it at all. Oh, how frustrating that is. To talk with people who are of that mind bent.

Oh, yes, I understand completely what's going on. Hey man, you don't understand a thing. And all of these words of wisdom.

Well, yes, you are the people. Wisdom is going to die with you. But I have understanding as well as you.

I'm not inferior to you. Who doesn't know these things you're talking about? And I know all of these things. You're not teaching me anything new.

I am as one who is mocked of his neighbor who calls upon God and he answers him, the just upright man is laughed to scorn. You guys are mocking me. You're laughing me to scorn.

He that is ready to slip with his feet is as a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease. You guys have it easy. Alright, so you can despise me because I'm about ready to slip in the pit.

Just because you're at ease, you can say these things. But if the things were reversed, you wouldn't find these words so easy on your lips. Now, Job points out a fallacy of their whole arguments because their arguments have been predicated upon surely if you are righteous, you're going to be blessed of God.

And that the blessings of God are more or less proof of your righteousness. Or the plague that you experience is the proof of your sinfulness. So you've got the converse.

If a man is plagued because he is sinful, then he would be blessed because he is righteous. And so Job now points the fallacy of their whole argument. Here it is.

The tents of the robbers prosper and they who provoke God are secure into whose hand God bringeth abundantly. So, you tell me that, you know, it's because I'm so wicked that I've lost everything. But look, the tents of the robbers prosper.

But ask now the beast and they'll teach you. Fowls of the air, they will tell thee. Speak to the earth, it'll teach you.

The fish of the sea shall declare it unto you. Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this, in whose hand is the soul of every living thing and the breath of all mankind. He said, nature will testify that God has wrought all of these things because the soul of every living thing is in the hand of God and the breath of all mankind.

Did you realize how totally you are dependent upon God for the sustaining of your life? There is a weird disease that some people have or it's a weird something, malfunction of their body. They have to think to breathe. Wouldn't that be horrible to have to think to breathe? But they don't breathe in a reflex way, but they have to actually think to breathe and they almost die when they go to sleep.

In fact, when they go to sleep, they quit breathing and then they wake up for a few seconds and think, oh, I better breathe. They take a breath and then they drop back to sleep again and they followed their sleep patterns on. It must be miserable to have to think to breathe.

I'm glad I don't have to think to breathe. It's just automatic. But the Bible teaches that your breath is in the hand of God.

You remember when Belshazzar was having his great feast for a thousand of his lords and the handwriting came on the wall and he began to shake and they called for the wise men and the counselors. None of them could tell him what the writing said, miny, miny, tekem, yefarsin. And so finally the queen said, during the time of your grandfather's reign, there was a man of great wisdom who was one of the counselors to your grandfather.

He's of the Hebrews who were brought here in the captivity. And so they ordered Daniel to come into the room. And here Daniel saw the whole scene of debauchery, drunkenness.

The golden vessels that had been in the temple that had been sanctified for the service of the house of God. And they were drinking their wine out of them and praising the gods of gold and silver. And so Daniel began, this old stately, beautiful man of God began to rebuke that pagan king Belshazzar.

And he said, God has brought you into the kingdom and given you glory and honor and power and you've ruled over the great kingdom of Babylon that God had given to your grandfather Nebuchadnezzar established in him but is given into your hands. And yet you did not regard God but you've exalted the gods of gold and silver and the God in whose hand your very breath is. You've not glorified.

These people realize how totally dependent man is upon God for his very existence. Paul said concerning God, in him we live, we move, we have our being. We're dependent upon God, our very breath.

And yet, with that very breath, how many times we're cursing God. God gives us the very breath that we use to curse him. It's unreal.

Do not the ear try words and the mouth taste his meat? With the ancient is wisdom and in the length of days understanding. With him is wisdom and strength. He hath counsel and understanding.

Behold, he breaks down and it cannot be built again. He shuts up a man and there can be no opening. Behold, he withholdeth the waters and they dry up.

Also he sends them out and they overturn the earth. With him is strength and wisdom. The deceived and the deceiver are his.

He leadeth counselors away spoiled. He makes the judges fools. He looses the bonds of kings and girds their loins with a girdle.

He leadeth princes away spoiled and overthrows the mighty. He removes away the speech of the trustee and takes away the understanding of the aged. He pours contempt upon the princes and weakens the strength of the mighty.

He discovers deep things out of the darkness. He brings out the light of the shadow of death. He increases the nations and destroys them.

He enlarges the nations and straightens them again. He takes away the heart of the chief of the people of the earth and causes them to wander in a wilderness where there is no way. They grope in the dark without light.

He makes them to stagger a drunken man. God is sovereign. He rules over all.

Man's soul, man's breath is in his hand. And who can withstand God? Who can withstand the purpose or the work of God? Lo, my eye has seen all of this. My ear has heard and understood.

Now what you know, the same I also know. I'm not inferior to you. Surely I would speak to the Almighty and I would desire to reason with God.

Tell me to stretch out my hands to God? I'd love to. I'd love to reason with God. But you guys, you're a bunch of forgers of lies.

You are physicians of no value. Oh, that you would all together hold your peace. And it should be to your wisdom.

If you'd just keep silent, then people would think you're smart maybe. Better to keep your mouth shut and let people think you're a fool than open it and remove all their doubts. Hear now my reasoning and

hearken to the pleading of my lips.

Will you speak wickedly for God and talk deceitfully for Him? Ooh, how many times this is being done even today. People speaking wickedly for God. In other words, they're speaking supposedly for God, but what they are saying is off the wall.

God said, I have wounded that prophet that saith thus saith the Lord, but I have not spoken. And there's a lot of that going on today. People speaking supposedly in the name of God and speaking for God when God hasn't spoken.

In James we are told, Be not many teachers, knowing that you will receive the greater condemnation. You see, as I stand here before you tonight, I stand here as God's representative. As I speak of God and for God, I must be careful that I speak the truth about God lest you get a false concept of God and then I'm responsible because you've got a false idea or false concept concerning God.

Now, there are some people who are supposedly representing God, but they are falsely representing God because if you listen to them, you'll think that God is broke and He's going out of business tomorrow unless you respond immediately today. God is constantly on the verge of bankruptcy and His program is going to fail. This great plan of God is about to go under and God can't take care of Himself and He's depending on you to bail Him out with your offering of \$25 immediately.

Speaking deceitfully for God, my son... My son wants to understand, you know, a little bit about the radio ministries because he's in charge of the Word for Today ministry and our radio outreach ministry. He has written in to a lot of the radio ministries in order to find out what literature they send out and things of this nature. And he addresses, or he writes in, in the name of Benny Smith and gives, of course, our address.

And so we're always getting these letters for Benny Smith. Well, that's not so bad. Except that we get letters that read like this.

Dear Benny, the Lord has laid you on my heart today and I've been spending time fasting and praying for you because the Lord has revealed that you're going through a special problem at this time. Now, that's speaking deceitfully for the Lord because Benny Smith doesn't exist. Now, please write and tell me your problem and enclose a special offering for my ministry, you know.

Even these men who tell you how to be prosperous and tell you if you only believed you could have great prosperity wrote Benny a letter this week. And if he'll just respond with a \$25 offering at this time, God's work can be greatly expanded and this glorious truth of prosperity can be heard by many more people. It just doesn't add up.

Speaking deceitfully for God. Oh, how I would hate to be in that position. And so Job rebukes them because they had been speaking deceitfully for God.

Will you accept His person? Will you contend for God? Will you fight for God? God doesn't need you to fight for Him. God doesn't need you to defend Him. Perfectly capable of defending Himself.

It is good that He should search you out. For as one man mocketh another, do you so mock Him? He will surely reprove you if you do secretly accept persons. Shall not His excellency make you afraid and His dread fall upon you? Now, a little further down the line, God finally does speak.

We get to chapter 38. And when He does speak, He does exactly what Job said. He reproves these counselors.

I mean, God really lays one on them for all of the things that they have been saying to Job. And God finally says, you asked Job to pray for you or you're in big, big trouble. And so Job says, God's going to reprove you, man.

You're speaking all these things for God. Now, Job, here gives some of the ancient Proverbs with verse 12. Your remembrances are like unto ashes, your bodies to bodies of clay.

Hold your peace. Let me alone that I may speak, and let it come on me what will. Wherefore do I take my flesh and my teeth and put my life in mine hand, though He slay me? Yet will I trust in Him, but I will maintain my own ways before Him.

He also shall be my salvation, for a hypocrite shall not come before Him. Oh, this is to me a depth of faith. Here's the guy, he's in as bad a shape as anybody could ever be.

I mean, you think you've had it bad. You think you've gone through some rough times. Job had it worse than any man could ever have it, and yet in this place he says, hey, even though He slays me, I'm going to serve Him.

Now, how deep is your commitment to God? A lot of people, a lot of things going well, you bet I serve Him. Things start to turn a bit, and you get a little vacillating. Job is in the pit, and he says, though He slay me, that's real commitment, and that's the kind of commitment we need.

No matter what happens, I'm going to serve God. Though I be stripped, though I be emptied, I'm still going to serve God. I'm going to trust God.

That's the kind of trust that we need to have. Because when you have that kind of trust, then you have rest in your life. It's in God's hands, and you can rest.

Otherwise, things are going to upset you. They're going to get you all disturbed. But if you have that kind of confidence that my life is in God's hands, and even though He slays me, I'll trust Him, then you can't be shaken.

Then Job said, He also shall be my salvation. He's going to deliver me. Hear diligently my speech.

Behold, now I have ordered my cause. I know that I shall be justified. Who is He that will plead with me? For now if I hold my tongue, I'll die.

Only do not two things unto me, then I will not hide myself from thee. Withdraw thine hand far from me, and let not thy dread make me afraid. Just get out of here and don't terrify me with your fears.

Then call thou, and I will answer. Or let me speak, and I will answer. And answer thou me.

How many are my iniquities and sins? Make me to know my transgressions and sins. You say I'm such a horrible sinner and all. How many? Show them to me.

Reveal them to me. I went through a long period of my own Christian experience when I was trying to be righteous enough to be accepted and approved by God. I was desiring to receive what was termed the

baptism of the Holy Spirit.

And well-meaning evangelists and all would say, but God will not fill an unclean vessel. You've got to clean up your act if you're going to be filled with the Spirit of God because He is a Holy Spirit and He won't enter an unholy vessel. So, I was doing my best to clean up my act.

As I was asking God to fill me with the Holy Spirit, of course, I would confess all my sins. And I heard people say, when I took my cigarettes out and laid them on the altar and said, God, there they are, you know, I'm through. Then God filled me with the Holy Spirit.

When I told God I'll never take another drink, then God filled me with the Holy Spirit. When I said, God, I'll go to China, then God filled me with the Holy Spirit. Well, my problem was I never did smoke.

So, I couldn't lay my cigarettes down. Nor did I ever drink. So, I couldn't give up booze.

And I told God I'd go to China. And I actually would confess everything that I could think of that I did wrong. And ask God's forgiveness.

And made all kinds of promises. Of, you know, I'll do better. I'll pray more.

I'll read more. I'll study more. But still I didn't receive.

Now, it really troubled me because I had a buddy who did receive. And I knew he was smoking cigarettes. And that was not fair.

Because I was much more righteous than he was. And he actually went to shows too. And I didn't do that.

I was so much more righteous than he was, I couldn't understand how in the world he would receive the blessing of the Holy Spirit on his life. And I didn't. And I had a difficult time.

And I would pray, God, show me, show me what's wrong. Show me my sin. And here's Job with his friends.

Hey, you're a horrible sinner, man. This wouldn't happen to you unless you were really a ranked sinner. And Job says, alright, just show them to me.

Show me where I'm... You know, you say I'm a sinner, then point them out. Help me out. Point them out to me.

They say, well, they're secret, Job. You know, you're hiding them. We can't see them, but they're surely there.

And then Job said, why do you hide your face? Now, you have to realize that this is Oriental culture. Culture of the Mideast. And you have to actually go over there and watch these people in their arguments to really appreciate this fully.

I mean, they don't just say things to each other. They're always yelling at each other. It's interesting, you see people talking and you think surely there's going to be a fist fight any minute now.

Because they're just standing there yelling. I think even the language sounds vicious, you know. You don't understand what they're saying, but they're just standing there yelling, but they not only yell, they shake

their heads, they shake their hands, and they're just all full of gestures and gyrations.

And so, this is the way these things are going on with Job. And so, when Job gets to this point, he says, just show me my... And so, Job says, why are you hiding your face? A little later on, he'll speak of other gestures that are being demonstrated. So, to get a full mental picture, you've got to see this thing with a bunch of actions and yelling and all.

They're not just talking to each other, they're yelling at each other. These accusations and all. And this is really a lively interchange that is going on here full of all kinds of... Covering their mouth.

A little word down... And Job speaks of these actions, these phony actions. Oh no! And all of this. So, here Job said, why are you hiding your face? Why do you hold me for your enemy? Will you break a leaf that is driven to and fro? Will you pursue the dry stubble? For you write bitter things against me and you make me to possess the iniquities of my youth.

You put my feet also in the stocks and look narrowly unto all my past. And you set a print upon the heels of my feet. As he as a rotten thing consumeth as a garment that is a moth eaten.

Man that is born of a woman is of a few days. He's full of trouble. He comes forth like a flower and is cut down.

He flees also as a shadow or the shadow on the sundial and continues not. Oh, what a pessimistic kind of view of life. Man that is born of a woman is of a few days and full of trouble.

Cheer up. It'll soon be over. You're a few days, but it's full of trouble.

Like a flower, you blossom out, but then you're cut down. Like the declining shadow on the sundial, you're soon off into oblivion. You cease to exist.

And do you open your eyes upon such a one and bring me into judgment with thee? Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one. Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee. Thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass.

Turn from him that he may rest till he shall accomplish as a hireling his day. Job is really here sort of speaking to God now. For there is hope of a tree if it is cut down that will sprout again as a tender branch.

Thereof it will not cease. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth and the stalk thereof die in the ground, yet through the scent of water it will bud and bring forth boughs like a plant. Now, Job says, there is no hope for man.

He's cut down and that's it. That's the end. Now, even for a tree, there's hope if you cut a tree off.

It may spring up again out of the trunk or out of the roots. There's hope for a tree. That it might bud forth again even if it's cut down.

But for man, there's no hope. You cease to exist. You're cut off and that's it.

But man dies and wastes away. Yea, man gives up the ghost and where is he? As the waters fail from the sea and the flood decays and dries up, so man lies down and rises not till the heavens be no more. They shall not awake nor be raised out of their sleep.

Oh, that You would hide me in the grave. That You would keep me secret until Thy wrath be passed. That You would appoint me a set time and remember me.

Oh, Job said that it was just all over. That I would go into that oblivion. Now, again, we must remember that Job is speaking not divinely inspired truths.

The things that Job are saying about death cannot be taken for doctrinal truth. This is Job talking. This is Job talking out of his own limited knowledge and understanding.

This is Job expressing his own ideas of what death is. Not what God's truth is about death, but what his own ideas are about death. And the Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh-day Adventists and others, have made a tragic mistake in turning to the book of Job for their proof text for the soul sleep doctrines.

In the 38th chapter, when God comes on the scene and God begins to question Job, the first thing that God says is, Who is this who darkeneth with words of counsel without wisdom or without knowledge? All you guys talking all these things and you don't know what you're talking about. Then God said to Job, Okay, gird yourself up. I'll ask you a few questions.

You think you've got the answers? Let me ask you a few questions. Number one, Have you been beyond the gates of death? You know what's there? You've been talking about death. Oh, death, come.

Hide me in oblivion and all. There I'll know nothing. There everything is silent.

Hey, have you been there? Do you know what's going on there? And God rebuked him for the statements that he was making concerning death because he didn't know anything about it. And thus, it is absolutely wrong to go to the book of Job to find Scripture-proof text for soul sleep. Job then in verse 14 cried out, If a man dies, does he go on living? Now, this is one of the basic questions that lies deep underneath a lot of crud in all of our lives.

When you get right down to basic issues, when you get right down to the bottom line, what are the really important things? Surely, it isn't what you take in your lunch pail for lunch tomorrow or what shoes shall you wear or what suit shall you wear to work. The really important things are questions like Job is asking now. And these are the questions that are deep down in every man and when someone who is close to you dies, it becomes very important to you.

If a man dies, does he go on living? Or is death the end? Is death the final chapter? Is the book closed and is it all over when a man dies? Is that the end? Or does he go on living? Is there a dimension or sphere where life continues? Is there a continuation of life after death? Jesus answered this question of Job. Up until the time of Jesus, there was no adequate answer. It was just a burning question.

But Jesus said, I am the resurrection and the life and he that believeth on Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And he who lives and believes in Me shall never die. If a man dies, does he go on living? Jesus said, absolutely yes.

If he lives and believes in Me, he'll never die. He goes on living. It's in another sphere, it's in another dimension, but life continues.

Life does not end. You experience a metamorphosis. You move out of your tent, this earthly tent, your body, and you move into the building of God not made with hands, that is eternal in the heavens.

For as long as we are at home in this body, living in this body, we are absent from the Lord. But He said, I would choose rather to be absent from this body and to be present with the Lord. We know that when the earthly tent, our body is dissolved, we have a building of God not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

So we who are in this body do often groan, earnestly desiring to be freed, not to be an unembodied spirit, but to be clothed upon with a body which is from heaven. So, if a man dies, yes, he does go on living in a new form, a new body. They're in the presence of God.

All the days of my appointed time, Job said, will I wait till the change comes. A little glimmer of hope in a question, but then he goes right back into despair. Thou shall call, I will answer thee, thou will have a desire to work of thy hands, for now thou numberest my steps, dost thou not watch over my sin? My transgression is sealed up in a bag, they sew up my iniquity.

And surely the mountain falling cometh to nothing, and the rock is removed out of its place. The waters wear down the stones, and they wash away the things which grew out of the dust of the earth, and you destroy the hope of man. You prevail forever against him, and he passes.

You change his countenance and send him away. His sons come to honor and he doesn't even know it. They are brought low, but he perceives not of them.

But his flesh upon him shall have pain, and his soul within him shall mourn. Now at this point, Eliphaz, who was the first friend of Job's to speak, speaks for the second time. And he claims that he is older than Job, more experienced than Job, and thus Job ought to listen to him.

Then answered Eliphaz and said, Should a wise man utter vain knowledge and fill his belly with the east wind? Job, you're just a big bag of wind, man. Should he reason with unprofitable talk or with speeches whereof he can do no good? Yea, you cast off fear and restrain prayer before God. For your mouth utters your iniquity, and you choose the tongue of the crafty.

Your own mouth condemns you, not I. Yea, your own lips are testifying against you. Are you the first man that was ever born or were you made before the hills? Have you heard the secret of God? Do you restrain wisdom to yourself? What do you know that we don't know? What do you understand which is not in us? With us is the gray-headed and the very aged man, much older than your father. Are the consolations of God small with thee? Is there any secret thing with thee? Are the consolations... In other words, we've been giving you God's advice, man.

Is it just nothing to you? Oh, hell. Why does your heart carry thee away? What are your eyes winking at? Job, what sin are you just sort of closing your eyes to? That you turn your spirit against God and let such words go out of your mouth. What is man that he should be clean, and he which is born of a woman that he should be righteous? Behold, God puts no trust in His saints.

Yea, the heavens are not clean in His sight. How much more abominable and filthy is man who drinks iniquity like water. I will show you, hear me, that which I have seen, and I will declare, which wise men have told from their fathers and not hid it.

Okay, here are the traditions now. These are the truths that are passed down from the fathers to their sons and all. Unto whom alone the earth was given, and no stranger passed among them.

The wicked man travaileth with pain all his days, and the number of years is hidden to the oppressor. A dreadful sound is in his ears. In prosperity the destroyer shall come upon him.

So a man who experiences pain is surely wicked. A man who has been wiped out is a man who is guilty of sin. He believes not that he shall return out of the darkness he has waited for of the sword.

He wanders abroad for bread saying, Where is it? And he knows the day of the darkness is ready at his hand. Trouble and anguish shall make him afraid, and they shall prevail against him as a king that is ready to battle. For he stretched out his hand against God, and he strengthened himself against the Almighty.

He runs upon him even on his neck and the thick bosses of his bucklers because he covers his face with fatness and makes the calypse of fat on his flanks. And he dwells in desolate cities and houses which no man inhabits, which are ready to become heaps. He shall not be rich, neither will his substance continue, neither shall he prolong the perfection thereof upon the earth.

He shall not depart out of the darkness, and the flame shall dry up his branches. By the breath of his mouth shall he go away. Let not him that is deceived trust in vanity, for vanity shall be his recompense.

Job, you're deceiving yourself. You're trusting in emptiness and emptiness will be the result, your reward. It shall be accomplished before his time.

His branch shall not be green. He shall shake off his unripe grape as the vine and cast off his flower as the olive. For the congregation of the hypocrite shall be desolate and fire shall consume the tabernacles of bribery.

They conceive mischief and bring forth emptiness and their belly prepares deceit. So, all of these things in a sense are accusations against Job. Job, you've been deceitful.

Job, you've been lying. Job, you're a hypocrite. Job, you're wicked.

And these things are all happening to you because of your own iniquity. So, Job answered and said, I have heard many such things. Miserable comforters are you all.

Shall empty words... Now, he'd been talking about vanity. But he said, shall empty words have an end? Or what emboldens you that you answer? I could also speak as you do if you were in my place. I could heap up words against you and shake my head at you.

So, here now, visualize it when they're talking. They're just shaking their head and they do that. They just shake their head and yell at each other.

And he said, hey, if I were in your place and you were in my place, I could yell at you and shake my head at you too. You know what I mean? It's nothing to that. I could do it.

But I would rather to strengthen you with my mouth and the moving of my lips should assuage your grief. Though I speak, my grief is not assuaged. And though I forbear, what am I eased? If I'm quiet and you tell me to be quiet, I ought to be quiet.

What good would it do? You guys will mouth off. But now He hath made me weary. You have made me desolate, all my company.

And you have filled me with wrinkles which is a witness against me and my leanness rising up in me bears witness to my face. He tears me in His wrath who hates me. He gnashes upon me with His teeth.

My enemy sharpeneth his eyes upon me. So here they're talking to their teeth at Him. And they're looking, you know, sharpening their eyes, squinting as they're looking at Him and yelling in His face.

And oh man, what a sight this must have been. They have gaped upon me with their mouth. They have smitten me upon the cheek reproachfully.

They have gathered themselves together against me. God hath delivered me into the ungodly and turned me over into the hands of the wicked. I was at ease until you came.

But He also has taken me by my neck and shaken me to pieces and set me up for His mark. Now He's referring to God again. His archers come past me round about.

He cleaves my reins asunder. He cuts me in two. He does not spare.

He pours out my gall upon the ground. He breaks me with a branch upon branch. He runs upon me like a giant.

I have sewed sackcloth upon my skin and defiled my horn in the dust. My face is foul with weeping and my eyelids is the shadow of death. Not only for any injustice in my hands, also my prayer is pure.

O earth, cover not thou my blood and let my cry have no place. Also now behold, my witness is in heaven and my record is on high. God is my witness is what He is saying.

My record is on high. God has the records. My witness is there in heaven.

I'm not going to try and justify myself before you guys. Think what you will of me. God knows the truth.

It's comforting when we are misunderstood by others. Totally misunderstood sometimes. Our motivations are misread by others.

Many times we are accused of things of which we are not at all guilty. Someone has totally misread our thought, our ideas, our motivations. They've imputed wicked, evil motivations to us when they weren't there.

But my witness is in heaven. God knows the truth about me. And that's to me a comfort that God keeps the books.

He knows the truth. He knows what's in my heart. He keeps the records.

My friends scorn me, but my eye pours out tears unto God. Oh, that one might plead for a man with God. As a man pleads for his neighbor.

Oh, that you would intercede for me. That you pray for me. I wonder why they hadn't thought of that.

Their friend's in trouble. Why didn't they come and pray, intercede for the guy? As one intercedes for his friends. Instead of just heaping all kinds of abuse upon him.

When a few years are come, I'm going to go the way from which I shall not return. My breath is corrupt. My days are extinct.

The grave is ready for me. Are there not mockers with me? Doth not my eye continue in their provocation? Lay down now. Put me in surety with thee.

Who is he that will strike hands with me? Who will be my friend? For you have hid your heart from understanding. Therefore, shalt thou exalt. Thou shalt not exalt them.

He that speaketh flattery to his friends, even the eyes of his children shall fail. He hath made me also a byword of the people. And aforetime I was a tablet.

Before I was actually a song to them. Now I'm a curse. My eye also is dimmed by reason of sorrow.

And all my members are as a shadow. So upright men shall be astonished at this. And the innocent shall stir up himself against the hypocrite.

The righteous also shall hold on his way. And he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger. But as for you all, do you return and come now? For I cannot find one man, one wise man among you.

My days are past. My purposes are broken off. Even the thoughts of my heart, they change the night into day.

The light is short because of darkness. If I wait, the grave is my house. I have made my bed in darkness.

I have said to the corruption, you're my father. To the worm, you're my mother and my sister. And where is now my hope? As for my hope, who shall see it? They shall go down to the bars of the pit when our rest together is in the dust.

I mean, this is really a dirge of the lowest degree I've had, you know. I'm just waiting for the grave. It's my house.

I've made my bed in darkness. I've said to the corruption, hey corruption, you're my dad. To the worms, you're my mother.

Eat me up, you know. Waiting for the maggots, you know, to come along and destroy me and then I'll be at rest. Then answered Bildad.

So, this is Bildad's second discourse with him. How long will it be before you make an end of words? Just make the mark and afterwards, we will speak. Why do you count us like beasts and we are vile in your sight? You tear yourself in your anger.

Shall the earth be forsaken for thee? Shall the rock be removed out of its place? Yes, the light of the wicked will be put out and the spark of his fire will not shine. Job, your light's going to be put out, man. Because you're wicked.

The sparks will not shine. The light shall be dark in his tent and his candles shall be put out with him. The steps of his strength shall be straightened and his own counsel will cast him down.

For he is cast into a net by his own feet. He walks upon a snare. The bear trap will take him by the heel and the robbers shall prevail against him.

The snare is laid for him in the ground and the trap for him in the way. Terror shall make him afraid on every side and shall drive him to his feet. His strength shall be hunger-bitten and destruction shall be ready at his side.

And it shall devour the strength of his skin. Even the firstborn of death shall devour his strength. His confidence shall be rooted out of the tabernacle and he shall bring him into the king of terrors.

It shall dwell in his tent because it is none of his. His brimstone shall be scattered upon his house. His roots shall be dried up from beneath and above his branch will be cut off.

His remembrance shall perish from the earth and he shall have no name in the street. He shall be driven from light into darkness and chased out of the world. He shall neither have son nor nephew among his people nor any remaining in his dwelling.

They that come after him will be astonished at his day and they that went before him will be frightened. Surely, such are the dwellings of the wicked and this is the place of him that knoweth not God. Ooh, man did he lay it on Job.

Job, this is what is going to happen to you. You know, all of the terrors and all of the fears and all of the destruction and the devouring of your strength and the death of your firstborn. Your confidence be taken away.

Brimstone be poured out upon you. Your roots dried up from beneath. You're cut off from above.

Man, they're going to get you coming and going, man. No way out. Then Job answered and said, how long will you vex my soul and break me in pieces with your words? These ten times you've reproached me and you're not ashamed that you have made yourself like a stranger to me.

And be it indeed that I have erred, my error remaineth with myself. If indeed you will magnify yourselves against me and plead against me my reproach, know now that God hath overthrown me and compassed me in His net. Now, this is the thing that upsets him that he is blaming God for the calamities.

This is the thing that really ires his friends, but Job repeats it. Look, I don't care what you say, fellas. God has overthrown me.

Now, God allowed Job to be overthrown, so Job doesn't understand it fully himself. Behold, I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard. I cry aloud, but there's no judgment.

He's fenced up my way I cannot pass. He has set darkness in my path. He stripped me of my glory and taken the crown from my head.

He has destroyed me on every side and I am gone and my hope hath He removed like a tree. He hath also kindled His wrath against me. He counts me unto Him as one of His enemies.

His troops have come together and raised up their way against me and encamped round about my tent. He has put my brothers far from me. My acquaintances are estranged from me.

My kinsfolk, my family have failed and my familiar or close friends have forgotten me. They that dwell in my house and my maids count me as a stranger. I am an alien in their sight.

I call to my servant and he doesn't even answer me. I beg with him with my mouth. My breath is strange to my wife, though I begged her for the children's sake of my own body.

Yea, the young children despise me. I arose and they spake against me. All my inward friends abhor me and they whom I have loved have turned against me.

My bone cleaves to my skin and to my flesh and I'm only living by the skin of my teeth. Have pity on me. Have pity on me, O ye my friends, for the hand of God hath touched me while you persecute me as God and are not satisfied with my flesh.

So Job is... Oh man, you talk about misery and you talk about everything going against you. Everybody turning against you. My servants, they won't even listen to me.

I call them and they won't even answer. I beg them to come and help me. And they're my servants, but they won't even listen.

My wife, the one who bore my children, she's turned against me. I beg her and she doesn't even listen. My friends, my close friends, they've all turned.

Here I am all alone. Nobody understands me. You ever thought that? Nobody understands.

Boy, Job was really in the pit. Now, you can't get any lower than this. There's no way.

I don't care how bad you've had it. You can't get any lower than Job was. I mean, he is at the bottom.

But so many times, it is when we get to the bottom that we look up. And Job can't go any lower than the cry that he has just made. I mean, this is it.

This is bottoming out. And at this point of total despair, hopelessness, God has turned against me. My family's turned against me.

My friends have turned against me. My children or my nephews have turned against me. The little kids hate me.

Nobody loves me. I haven't a friend in the world left. Yet, Job said, Oh, that my words were now written.

Oh, that they were printed in a book. Well, Job, they are. That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock forever.

Oh, that I could carve these words in the rock. What words? I know that my Redeemer liveth and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin the worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself and my eyes shall behold and not another, though my reins be consumed within me.

Out of the midst of the darkest despair, this cry of glorious victory, I know. You see, I don't know much at this point. I don't understand anything at this point.

But I do know this, the foundation upon which I stand. My Redeemer liveth. Now, remember that Job is one of the oldest books in the Bible.

Job perhaps lived about the time of Abraham. At this point, they had not had the prophets to testify to the people of the coming Messiah, the Deliverer. Job's revelation was very limited, but yet he knew that his Redeemer lived.

He believed in the Messiah. And in the latter days, He's going to stand upon the earth. And though the worms and all eat this body, yet I'm going to see Him.

I'm going to see Him for myself. What a glorious hope. And this is the sustaining hope.

Though I may not understand a lot of things, I know this. My Redeemer lives. Someday He's going to come again and establish His kingdom upon the earth and I'm going to see Him.

Peter said, Whom have ye not seen, yet ye love. And even though you do not see Him now, still we rejoice with a joy unspeakable and full of glory. I'm glad for the knowledge and the assurance that my Redeemer lives.

Now, Job has the capacity of coming out with these bright things and then jumping right back down in the pit. But ye should say, Why persecute we Him, seeing the root of the matter is found in me? Be ye afraid of the sword, for wrath bringeth the punishment of the sword, that ye may know there is a judgment. So, Zophar, the third of the speakers, gives his second discourse.

And again, he was the guy that was dealing with traditions earlier and with wisdom and all. So, he said to Job, Therefore do my thoughts cause me to answer, and for this I make haste. In other words, I want to be quick to answer you on this.

I have heard the check of my reproach, and the spirit of my understanding causes me to answer. Don't you know this of old, since man was placed on the earth, that the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite is for a moment? He won't get off the same tune. Job, you're wicked.

Job, you're a hypocrite. Though His excellency mount up to heavens, and the head reach into the clouds, yet He shall perish forever like His own dung. For they which have seen Him shall say, Where is He? He shall fly away as a dream, and shall not be found.

Yea, He shall be chased away as a vision of the night. And the eye also which saw Him shall see Him no more, neither shall His place any more behold Him. His children shall seek to please the poor, His hands shall restore their goods.

His bones are full of the sins of His youth, and He shall lie down with Him in the dust. Though wickedness be sweet in His mouth, and though He hide it under His tongue, though He spare it and forsake it not, but keep it still within His mouth, yet His meat in His bowels is turned. It is the gall of asp within Him.

He has swallowed down riches, and He shall vomit them up again. God shall cast them out of His belly. He shall suck the poison of asp, and the viper's tongue shall slay Him.

He shall not see the rivers, the floods, the brooks of honey and butter. That which He labored for shall He restore, and shall not swallow it down. According to His substance shall be the restitution, and He shall not rejoice therein.

Here's what Zophar is suggesting that Job's evil was. Because he has oppressed and has forsaken the poor, because he has violently taken away a house that he did not build, you've repossessed a house,

Job, and you've taken away and oppressed the poor people. These are suggestions of Job's wickedness.

Surely He shall not feel quietness in His belly. He shall not save of that which He desired. There shall none of His meat be left.

Therefore, shall no man look for His goods. In the fullness of His sufficiency, He shall be in straits. Every hand of the wicked shall come upon Him.

When He is about to fill His belly, God will cast the fury of His wrath upon Him and shall rain it upon Him while He is eating. He shall flee from the iron weapon, and the bow of steel shall strike Him through. It is drawn and comes out of the body.

Yea, the glittering sword cometh out of His gall. Terrors are upon Him. All darkness shall be hid in His secret places.

A fire not blown shall consume Him, and it shall go ill with Him that is left of His tent. The heavens shall reveal His iniquity. The earth shall rise up against Him.

The increase of His house shall depart, and His goods shall flow away in the day of His wrath. This is the portion of a wicked man from God, and the heritage appointed unto him by God. Who? These guys just keep coming on with Job, insisting that he is wicked, that he is a hypocrite.

They have the one tune. They can't get off of it. And all of your problems are because you are so sinful and so wicked.

Now, you say, but oh, why does the Lord labor this so much? Because there are people that are still that stupid today. That if you get in trouble, they'll come around and say, well, brother, why don't you repent? You know, so you can be prosperous. Why don't you forsake your sin? Because surely if you're good, God is going to prosper you.

And if you're evil, you're going to be cut off. But that is not so. Righteous people suffer.

Evil people prosper. Righteous people prosper. Evil people suffer.

We don't know. We don't know why righteous people oft times suffer. We don't know.

It is wrong to assume things about a person because he's suffering. It's wrong to assume that a person doesn't have the faith and thus he is sick. It is wrong to assume that if you just had enough faith, you would never be sick because it just isn't so.

And God allows this point to be pressed over and over from several different directions to show the folly of seeking with our human wisdom and understanding to try to find out the ways and the reasons and the whys of God. We don't know them. The question of the Book of Job is, why do godly people suffer? The question is not really answered.

But what we are brought to is the assurance and the understanding that God does rule over our lives. And thus I don't have to understand the why. All I have to understand is the fact that God is in control and I rest there.

God controls the affairs of my life. Shall we pray? Father, help us that we will not be guilty of speaking deceitfully for you, thinking that we understand more than we do the causes, the reasons, the whys, the particular things that happen to certain people. Help us, Father, that we will be intercessors.

And if a brother be overtaken in a fault, may we restore him in a spirit of weakness. If a brother is down, may we seek to lift him up. May we stretch out our hand of love and understanding to those that have fallen.

Give us a heart like yours, Lord. A heart of compassion for the oppressed and for the needy. In Jesus' name.

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