

(Through the Bible) Job 21-30

by Chuck Smith

In this sermon, Chuck Smith explores Job's struggle with the prosperity of the wicked and the suffering of the righteous, emphasizing the need for a broader, eternal perspective.

Duration: 1:19:38

Scripture: Job 21:23-26, Job 26:14, Job 27:2-6, Matthew 19:24, Luke 18:13, John 14:6, James 5:1-3

Topics: "Suffering And Faith", "Gods Goodness"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the psalmist's lamentation of his tragic condition and the bitterness he experiences. The psalmist questions why the wicked prosper while the righteous suffer. The speaker emphasizes the importance of holding onto foundational truths, such as the goodness of God, even when faced with difficult circumstances. Ultimately, the psalmist finds solace and understanding in the sanctuary of the Lord, where he sees the end result and gains perspective on the disparities of life.

Transcript

This time shall we turn to the book of Job chapter 21. Zophar has just concluded in chapter 20 his second speech in which again he sort of just gives some of the traditions and quotes some of the proverbs that are common. And sort of reiterating some of his accusations against Job.

Knowest not this of old, since man was placed on the earth. You see, don't you know that man has known this forever, going back to some of the old proverbs and so forth, that the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment. This is just some of the old proverbs, the triumphing of the wicked is short, the joy of the hypocrite is for a moment.

And then the the inuations there is that Job actually is a wicked man, and that he is a hypocrite. And then he makes accusations against Job in verse 19 because he was oppressed and forsaken the poor, because he has violently taken away a house which he builded not. In other words, he made a foreclosure against some poor people.

And so concluding in verse 29, this is the portion of a wicked man from God, and the heritage appointed unto him from God. That is the calamity and the destruction that will come upon him for doing these wicked things. So Job answered and said, Hear diligently my speech, and let this be your consolations, and allow me that I may speak, and after I have spoken, just mock on.

Job has just really had it with these guys, and he's not really very kind in his remarks to them anymore. But I can sort of understand Job's position. They just, he's looking for sympathy, he's looking for understanding.

He doesn't have it. They just, they are convinced in their mind that Job is a wicked and godly man. Though they can't point it out to him, though he's challenged them to point out my wickedness, they can't do it.

Yet they're convinced of this fact. Job cannot convince them otherwise. And so, let me speak, and then after I've spoken, go ahead and mock on.

As for me, my complaint to man is my complaint to man. If it were so, why should not my spirit be troubled? Go ahead, mark me, be astonished, put your hand over your mouth. Even when I remember, I am afraid, and trembling takes hold on my flesh.

Now, Job shows the fallacy of the whole arguments that they're putting against him, because the arguments are this, that the righteous prosper. If you're really a righteous man, you'll be prosperous. That it just follows.

And that if you are wicked, then calamity is sure to come. Thus, any calamity that comes into your life is a sure sign of wickedness. And any prosperity is a sure sign of righteousness.

This is the basic fallacious philosophy. Now, in the New Testament, we find this same philosophy is spoken against, as those who think that godliness is a way to gain, or it's a way to prosperity. That is spoken of in the New Testament.

It says from such turn away. Those that say that living a godly life is a way to be prosperous. So, Job is putting down their whole philosophy by just pointing out basic facts.

And it is this. Why do the wicked live, become old, yea, they are mighty in power. Their seed is established in their sight with them and their offspring before their eyes.

Their houses are safe from fear. Neither is the rod of God upon them. Their bull gendereth and faileth not.

Their cow calves and cast not her calf. They send forth their little ones like a flock. Their children dance.

They take the timbrel, the harp, rejoice at the sound of the organ. They spend their days in wealth and in a moment go down to the grave. In other words, they don't have a prolonged suffering at the time of death.

They live, their children are happy, their children are in the dances and so forth. They are wicked. They seem to be prosperous and then they die suddenly, rather than having a long suffering, lingering kind of a death.

Therefore, they say unto God, depart from us. We don't desire the knowledge of your ways. What is the almighty that we should serve him? And what profit should we have if we pray unto him? In other words, they scorn God.

They shun God. They say, hey, why should I serve God? Look, I'm happy. I've got everything I want.

Why do I need God? You know, God can take a walk as far as I'm concerned. I don't need him. I'm doing fine.

And so this is, this is, Joel pointed out, this is the way the wicked are. Now you say the wicked are cut down, the wicked are cursed, the wicked, you know, are cut off and all. But wait a minute.

That's not my observation. Wicked people oftentimes prosper, prosper abundantly. In fact, in the 73rd Psalm, this was a, a situation that almost caused the psalmist to stumble.

If you want to turn for a moment to Psalm 73, you'll see that the psalmist was observing much the same things as Job here concerning the wicked as he declares, truly God is good unto Israel and all those that are of a clean heart. In other words, he starts out with a basic foundational truth. I know this, God is good.

I know that. It's important that you know that. It's important that you have certain foundational truths upon which you stand, upon which you can fall back, because you're not going to always understand why certain things have happened to you.

You're not going to understand that. So whenever you come up against something you don't understand, you must fall back on what you do understand, certain foundational truths. And this is one, God is good.

I know that, but the psalmist said, I know God is good, but as for me, my feet were almost gone. My steps had well nigh slept. I was envious of the foolish when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

For there are no bands in their death, much the same thing. They don't, they don't go through prolonged periods of suffering before they die. They, they seem to die quickly without a lot of suffering.

Their strength is firm. They're not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men. Therefore, pride compasses them about as a chain.

Violence covers them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness. They have more than their heart could wish.

They are corrupt. They speak wickedly. Concerning oppression, they speak loftily.

They set their mouth against the heavens. Their tongue walks through the earth. Therefore, his people return hither and the waters of a full cup are wrung out to them.

And they say, how does God know? And is their knowledge in the most high? Behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the world. They increase in riches. Now you see the psalmist observing much the same as Job, that wicked people oftentimes prosper.

In fact, sometimes they prosper abundantly. Job said their children grow up before them. They don't have any trouble.

Their bulls gender. Their cows, you know, cast their calves. And they don't die.

They're prospered. They're blessed. And they're cursing God.

They say, why do I need God? I don't need God. I'm happy. I'm satisfied.

And the psalmist is observing much the same thing. And he said, it almost wiped me out. It almost caused me to trip up when I saw this.

It drew him to false conclusions. He said, I've cleansed my heart in vain. I've washed my hands in innocency for all the time.

I'm plagued. I'm chastened. It doesn't pay to try and serve God.

The wicked have it so good. And here I'm trying to do what's right. And I'm in trouble all the time.

I'm plagued. Everything's going wrong. You know, I can't pay my bills and all.

And it doesn't pay to serve God. It is really sort of the suggestion here. When I thought to know this, he said it was too painful for me until I went into the sanctuary of the Lord.

And then I saw their end. You see, our problem is that our vision oftentimes is too narrow. We see only that which is seen and it'll cause you to trip up.

I can't understand the disparities of life. I don't understand why wicked people oftentimes prosper and why godly people oftentimes suffer. There are disparities that I don't understand.

I know that God is good. I know that God is righteous. I know that God is fair, but I don't know why good godly people have to suffer.

I don't know why ungodly people who really curse God, want nothing to do with God, are so oftentimes very prosperous, seemingly always in excellent health, never seeming to have problems. Until I went into the sanctuary of the Lord, I was almost wiped out. It almost caused my foot to slip.

I was almost gone. What did he discover in the sanctuary of the Lord? He discovered then the end result. Then I saw their end.

You see, I see now out beyond. I see the eternity and the long-term view. And when I look out beyond just today and tomorrow and I look into eternity and I see the end of the wicked, then I am no longer envious of the wicked.

How could I be envious of the wicked who are cast into hell? Surely you have set them in slippery places, the psalmist said. They shall go down in a moment. So I can't be envious of them any longer when I see the end result.

Now this is what coming into the sanctuary of God should always be a broadening experience for you. Because we do get battered about many times in our worldly relationships, on the job and school and so forth. And we come in dragging Sunday morning, battered and bruised by the contact with that alien world out there.

Because actually we are strangers and pilgrims here. We're living in an alien world. It's alien to God, alienated from God.

And if you're living a life in fellowship with God, you find yourself in an alien world. And we come into the sanctuary of God, but it should always be a place where God broadens our whole perspective. And I begin to measure things not by, oh what a rough week, but I begin to measure things by eternity.

It won't be long. Life is so short. I'll soon be with him in the glories of his kingdom.

Oh, how fortunate I am to know him. How fortunate I am that he loves me and he has chosen me as his child. And I'm going to dwell with him forever and ever.

You see, you get the long-term, you get, you get released from this narrow little perspective that so often develops in the world and the broadened perspective as we come into the sanctuary of God. So Job now is talking from the narrow perspective. We often do this when we're hurting, when we're suffering.

He's looking at the wicked like the psalmist did, and he sees their prosperity and it's completely putting down the arguments of his friends. He is putting them down. They are not true.

The things that they are saying are not true. The hypocrite isn't cut off. The wicked aren't cast aside.

They oftentimes are very prosperous indeed and seem to have no problem at all. And this is what Job is pointing out as he shows the fallacy of the arguments that these men are giving to him. Now, Job begins to look down the road.

Verse 17, how oft is the candle of the wicked put out? How oft cometh their destruction upon them? God distributeth sorrows in his anger. They are as stubble before the wind, as chaff that the storm carries away. I wonder if when David wrote the first Psalm, he was not acquainted with the book of Job.

Remember he said concerning the wicked are not so, but as the chaff which the wind driveth away. And here he's borrowing actually this phrase out of Job. David was probably very familiar with this book.

God lays up his iniquity for his children. He rewards him and he shall know it. His eyes shall see his destruction.

He shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty. Now, Job said, are you going to teach God knowledge, seeing he judges those that are high? One dies in his full strength, being holy at ease and quiet. His breasts are full of milk.

His bones are moistened with marrow. Another dies in the bitterness of his soul and never eats with pleasure. Now, why the difference? We don't know.

Why is it that some men die in fullness and some die in poverty? Some die in pain and sorrow. Some are cut off quickly. Why does that happen? They shall lie down alike in the dust.

The worm shall cover them. Behold, I know your thoughts and devices, which you wrongfully imagine against me. For you say, where is the house of the prince and where are the dwelling places of the wicked? Have you not asked them that go by the way and do you not know their tokens? He said, you learned your philosophy from, from, uh, wayfarers, from strangers, from people in the streets that the wicked is reserved to the day of destruction.

They shall be brought forth to the day of wrath. In other words, God will judge them. That is true, but not necessarily in this life, who shall declare his way to his face and who shall repay him for what he has done yet.

Shall he be brought to the grave? He shall remain in his tomb. The clods of the Valley shall be sweet unto him. And every man shall draw after him as there are innumerable before him.

How then do you comfort me in vain seeing in your answers? There's an inconsistency. How can you comfort me with these kinds of arguments when they're not really consistent, when they're not really logical, when they don't stand up to, to reality. So Eliphaz takes up the argument now and the same old story.

Uh, he accuses Job of being wicked and he actually makes many bad accusations. He said, can a man be profitable unto God as he that is wise may be profitable to himself? Is there any pleasure to the Almighty that you are righteous or is it any gain to him that you make your ways perfect? Will he reprove thee for the fear of thee or will he enter into thee with judgment? In other words, Job, do you think that you're adding anything to God? Is it anything to God? If you're good, if you justify yourself, there's no gain to God. But is not thy wickedness great and your iniquities infinite? For you have taken a pledge from the brother for nothing.

You've stripped the naked of their clothing. You have not given water to the weary to drink and you have withheld bread from the hungry. But as for the mighty man, he had the earth and the honorable man dwelt in it.

Thou has sent widows away empty and the arms of the fatherless have been broken. So these are accusations now that he is making against Job. They're not proved.

He is assuming these things now, but there is absolutely no proof to them at all. And Job doesn't answer them immediately, but in a couple of chapters, Job will answer these accusations. When we get to chapter 29, he answers the accusations that are made against him or chapter 30.

But it's interesting how that hospitality was considered really a, well, not to be hospitable was actually a great wickedness. In other words, if you didn't give a cup of water, if you didn't give bread, if you didn't seek to help the poor, the widowed, the widows, the fatherless and all, then that was considered a great wickedness. I think that one of the tragic things about our culture today is that we are so much into ourselves that we really aren't even aware of the needs of those around us.

I have great difficulty with people who can spend lavish amounts of money for their own luxuries and their own pleasure, but do not take any concern or any care for the poor. They think nothing at all of spending fabulous sums to adorn their own bodies. And yet if someone comes up who is really destitute, they're annoyed.

Go away, go ask someone else. It was considered a great wickedness in the time of the Bible, and I think that it is still a great wickedness. I do not believe that we can justify a luxurious lifestyle for ourselves when people are hurting, when people are hungry, when people are in great need.

I think that we need to become more sensitive to the needs of others around us. There is a movement in England of what they are calling communal type living. I do not agree with it because I think that they're exerting too much pressure, but they are encouraging the people who have, say, a \$15,000 car to sell it and to buy a \$2,000 car and give the \$13,000 to the poor.

If you're living in a \$50,000 house and you only need a \$20,000 house, sell your house and give the remainder to the poor. And it is quite a movement in England right now. John Stott is involved in this or was at least a while back.

I don't know if they still are or not. But as I say, I don't necessarily agree with it, but yet I do feel very strongly that if God has blessed us, it isn't that we would use the financial blessings to heap up unto ourselves gold and silver while others are around us in real need, hungering and hurting. James said, Go to now, ye rich, weep and howl for the miseries that have come upon you, because you've laid up your gold and silver for the last days, but it's going to corrupt.

It's going to be rotten. And the labor that you have defrauded is crying out for his pay and all. Jesus said how hard it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Easier for a camel to go through an eye of a needle than a rich man. Why? Because they that are rich fall into different, many different temptations, which damn men's souls. If God has blessed us, it is that we might use those blessings of God to share with others that are in need.

And if we close up our hearts, if we close up ourselves to the needy world around us, to the needy brothers and sisters in Christ, while we are just spending foolishly for ourselves in luxuries that really are just nothing, then surely God will judge us. They're accusing Job of these kind of things. As far as they are concerned, they are horrible accusations, declaring the wickedness of Job.

And because you have done these things, he declares, verse 10, snares around about you. Sudden fear troubles you. Darkness that you cannot see.

Waters are covering you. Is not God in the height of heaven? And behold, the height of the stars, how high they are. And you say, how does God know? How can he judge through the dark cloud? He is now falsely accusing Job.

He's saying, Job, you're saying, how can God see you when it's a cloudy day? You know, God's up there in heaven. He can't see through the clouds. Job didn't say that, but this guy is just really laying one on Job.

You say that thick clouds are a covering, and he can't see through them, and he walks in the circuit of heaven. Have you marked the old way which wicked men have trodden, which were cut down out of time, whose foundation was overflowed with a flood, which said unto God, depart from us, and what can the almighty do for them? Yet he filled their houses with good things, but the counsel of the wicked is far from me. The righteous see it and are glad.

The innocent laugh them to scorn, whereas our substance is not cut down, but the remnant of them the fire consumes. Now, Job, acquaint yourself with God and be at peace. Thereby good shall come unto you.

Receive, I pray thee, the law from his mouth, and lay up his words in your heart. So his advice to Job is just get right, find God, Job. Just find God and be at peace.

Listen to his words. Follow him. And then thou shalt lay up gold as the dust of the gold of Ophir, as the stones of brooks.

Yea, the almighty shall be your defense, and you will have plenty of silver. For then shall you have the delighted in the almighty, and shall be lifted up, and you'll lift up your face unto God. Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him, and he will hear you, and you shall pay your vows.

And so Job answers him, and he said, Every day is my complaint bitter. My stroke is heavier than my groaning. Really, what's happened to me is even worse than I'm complaining.

I'm not even really complaining a full measure for what I'm really feeling. But all that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his throne. You tell me to find God and be at peace, but I only knew where I could find him.

Deep within the heart of every man there's a desire for God. There's a search for God. There's a quest for God.

Dr. Henry Drummond in his book, *Natural and Supernatural*, said there is within the very protoplasm of man those little tentacles that are reaching up for Father God. Oh, that I knew where I might find him is the cry on so many hearts. People who are seeking and searching for God.

But so many times in our search for God, we're searching in the wrong places. Even as Job here in verse 8 and 9 says, I go before me. I go forward.

He's not there. Backward. I cannot perceive him.

On the left hand where he's working, I cannot behold him. He hides himself on the right hand that I cannot see him. Oh, that I wish I could find God.

He says in verse 6, he wouldn't plead against me like you guys are. He would help me. He would strengthen me if I could just find him.

I know that. But I look all around. I go forward.

I go backward. Go to the right and left. I know he's there, but I can't see him.

I can't perceive him. I don't behold him. I can't find God.

He's looking in the material things, seeking to find God in a material form. You will never discover God or find God in the material forms. God is a spirit.

They that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. And God is seeking such to worship him. Eliphaz earlier had said to Job, who by searching can find out God to perfection? You can.

God does not exist at the end of an intellectual quest. It is interesting that so many people seek to apprehend God intellectually, and it becomes a real stumbling block. But if you had to be some intellectual genius in order to find God, look at how many of us poor people would be eliminated.

But because God loves all men, even a child can discover him. While these brilliant professors and intellects go on saying, well, I'm an agnostic, a little child walks in the consciousness of God, singing of him, talking of him. And out of the mouth of babes and sucklings, God has perfected praise.

As Jesus took a child and sent him in the midst of them and said, unless you become as a little child, you can't enter the kingdom of heaven. That's a put down to our intellects. We like to think that through our intellect, we can solve all problems.

We can't. The enigma of God can never be solved through the intellect of man. God is discovered in the heart of a child, in the area of faith, but it's spiritual dimension.

You've got to leave the material and take the step of faith into the spiritual dimension to really apprehend God. And in the understanding of God, your intellect has very little value because God wants all men to

understand him. So he puts it down to our level where we can understand and know him and walk with him, how beautiful it is.

So Job's cry, oh, that I knew where I might find him. But I look all around, Job, look up, look up. Why is it that we're always looking around for God rather than looking up for God? It's because man has always sought to bring God down to his own level.

They call or they have what they call the anthropomorphic concept of God, that is viewing God as a man. And this is extremely common because most of the time a man's God is really a projection of himself. Now, you didn't know that you are as much in love with yourself as you really are.

You hear a person say, oh, I hate myself. That's never true. They're just trying to draw attention to themselves.

I'm so terrible, I'm so awful. They just want to say, oh, no, you're not. You're wonderful.

But we are very, very much in love with ourselves. You've heard the saying that the longer people live together, the more they look alike. You know what the psychologist's answer to that is? Actually, you're so much in love with yourself that when you are picking a mate, you usually find someone who looks like you and you marry them.

And that's why the saying, oh, they've been living together so long they even look alike. You know, well, you just have foresight back a ways and you pick someone that look like you. If we would take a wide angle photo of the congregation here tonight as you're sitting here and we'd have the thing blown up and put on the screen up here, who's the first one you would look for? Now, man then projects himself to immensity.

This is what I would be if I were God. This is what I would do if I were God. This is where I would live if I were God.

This is how I would respond if I were God. And so his God becomes a projection of himself. He projects himself to sort of immensity and then he worships that.

A projection of himself. I oftentimes have people say, I don't know why God allowed this to happen to me. What they're saying is, if I were God, I surely wouldn't have made this mistake.

If I were running things, I could have done it much wiser than that. I would have had a better plan if only I were governing the universe. What a different world this would be.

Well, that has to be the height of something. Oh, that I knew where I might find him. Not in the intellect, not in, not through the intellectual quest, not through the enlargement of yourself.

God is found in Jesus Christ. He that hath seen me, Jesus said, hath seen the Father. I am the way, the truth, the life.

No man comes to the Father but by me. Oh, that I knew where I might find him. Jesus said, come unto me.

And those who do have found God. From the college professor. We all have to come the same way.

Setting aside our own intellectual genius and kneeling at the cross and saying, oh Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner. And I find God. Now, Job, after speaking, I cannot find him.

Here, Job is capable of coming out with those classic statements. In the midst of his depression and, and agony and all, he just comes out with these jewels and then he jumps right back into the pit. It's like he comes out on the mountain for a moment and just bursts forth in glory and then jumps right back down in the hole.

And so all of a sudden he comes out on the mountain. He said, but he knoweth the way that I take. I can't find him.

I can't see him, but he knows the way that I take. And when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. Deep down underneath, there is a strong faith that is keeping this man.

Now he's having great difficulties because he can't understand his problem. But down underneath, the faith is rooted. The guy is unshakeable because down deep, deep, deep inside, there are certain basic things.

I know that God knows the way that I take. And when he has tried me, I'm going to come forth like gold. God has a purpose.

I'm going to come out of it. I'm going to come out of it purified. Perhaps Peter was thinking of Job when he wrote, Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trials which are to try you as though some strange thing has happened unto you.

Knowing that the trial of your faith is more precious than gold, though it perisheth when it is tried in the fire. Peter speaks of the refining process of God whereby the impurities are removed. And so Job is looking at all of this as really just a work of the removal of the impurities.

And when I come forth, I'm going to be like gold. I'm going to be refined by this process of God in my life. My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and I've not declined.

Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips. I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food. Now, this is interesting because it indicates that, number one, way back at this time, there was the written word of God.

Even in the time of Job, who was perhaps a contemporary to Moses, or lived earlier, maybe. But even at that time, they had words that were esteemed to be the word of God. I esteemed his word more than my necessary food.

How much value do you put on the word of God? You see, there is the natural man, there is the spiritual man. Those that are born again are both. And that's where the rub comes in.

The spirit is lusting against the flesh, the flesh against the spirit. These two are contrary. A warfare going on.

Now, I see to it that my natural man is fed regularly and fed well. Now, I will admit, I do put some junk in him. But basically, I seek to watch my diet.

That is not diet in the sense, that is the food that I eat. I don't limit it, but I just watch it. I like the whole grain breads.

I like a balanced meal, things of this nature. I want to make sure that I put the proper fuel in this system so that it'll keep running well. Now, though I am extremely careful of how I feed my natural man, it's amazing how careless I am in feeding the spiritual man.

And it's amazing how much junk food people cram down the spiritual man. Diets that really cannot be healthy, bring spiritual anemia. But not Job.

He said, I consider thy word more than my necessary food. It's more important for me to feed on the word of God than it is to feed on steak and potatoes. It would be important if each of us had that same attitude towards the spiritual food in the spiritual man, that we would be interested in feeding the spiritual man.

Now, there's only one thing that really feeds the spiritual man, and that is this word of God. This is food to the spiritual man. You need to feed on it.

Job said, I've esteemed your word more than my necessary food. But now he jumps back down into his despair. But he is in one mind who can turn him.

What his soul desires that he does, for he performs the thing that is appointed for me and many such things are with him. Therefore, I'm troubled at his presence. When I consider these things, I'm afraid of him.

For God has made my heart soft and the Almighty troubles me because I was not cut off before the darkness. Neither hath he covered the darkness from my face. Now, why seeing the times are not hidden from the Almighty? Do they that know him not see his days? Some now you've accused me of these things, but there are some that remove the landmarks and violently take away another man's flocks.

And they drive away the ass of the fatherless. They take the widow's ox for a pledge. They turn the needy out of the way.

The poor of the earth, they hide themselves together. Behold, as the wild asses in the desert, they go forth to their work, rising betimes for a prey. The wilderness yields food for them and for their children.

They reap every one is corn in the field and they gather the vintage of the wicked. They cause the naked to lodge without clothing. They have no covering for the cold.

They are wet with the showers of the mountains and embrace the rock for the want of a shelter. They pluck the fatherless from the breast. They take a pledge for the of the poor.

They cause him to go naked without clothing and they take away the sheep from the hungry, which make oil within their walls and tread their wine presses and and they suffer thirst. They allow others to go thirsty. Men groan from out of the city and the soul of the wounded cries out.

Yet God lays not folly to them. They're doing these horrible things, but they are those that rebel against the light and they know not the ways thereof nor abide in the paths thereof. The murderer rising with the light kills the poor and the needy in the night is as a thief.

The eye also the adulterer waits for twilight saying no one will see me and he disguises his face and in the dark they dig through houses which they have marked in the daytime and they know not the light for the morning is to them even as the shadow of death. If one knows them, they are in terrors of the shadow of the death. They do all their dirty work at night.

They won't go out in the daytime. It's fearful for them to go out in the light. As Jesus said, men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil.

He is swift as the waters. Their portion is cursed in the earth. He beholds not the way of the vineyards, drought and heat consume the snow waters.

So does the grave. Those which have sinned, the womb shall forget him and the worm shall feed sweetly on him as your body is decaying there in the ground. He shall be no more remembered.

The wickedness will be broken as a tree. He evil and treateth the barren that bears not and does not good to the widow and so forth. So build that has added.

I mean, he really doesn't have much more to say to Job. The fact that all of the guys are sort of just phasing out at this point. They really can't argue much against Job's logic.

He really has pretty much proved his case. Then answer build that the shoe height and said. Concerning God, dominion and fear are with him.

He makes peace in his high places. Is there any number of his armies and upon whom does not his light arise? How then can man be justified with God? Job, you've been trying to justify yourself before God, but how can man be justified with God? I would like to suggest to you that man cannot be justified with God apart from the work of Jesus Christ. It's not possible that a just God can forgive sins apart from Jesus Christ.

We'll go into that someday as we deal with the problems of the Christian life. We don't have time tonight. Or how can he be clean that is born of a woman? The moon shines not.

Yea, the stars are not pure in his sight. How much less man that is a worm and the son of man, which is a worm. So Job answers now this little saying of build that it's his third and final answer to Job and it's really nothing.

Job answered and said, how have you helped him that is without power? How can you save me with an arm that has no strength? How have you counseled him who has no wisdom? How have you really declared the thing as it really is? To whom have you uttered your words and whose spirit came from you? Dead things are formed from under the waters and the inhabitants thereof. Hell is naked before him and destruction hath no covering. He stretched out the north over an empty place and hangs the earth upon nothing.

Interesting statement indeed in that Job is one of the oldest books in the Bible, probably as old as the book of Genesis, maybe even older. It could have been written before Genesis and Job declares that God hangs the earth upon nothing. Now compare that with the scientific theories of those days.

The men of science in those days, the wise men had drawn pictures of the earth being held up by an elephant. Now I don't know what he was standing on or Atlas holding up the earth, but Job declares he

hung it on nothing. Interesting indeed.

He binds up the waters in the thick clouds and the clouds do not tear under them. Now how much water is contained in a cloud? And Job says, hey, he's got all that water bound up in the cloud and yet the cloud doesn't tear. Yet there's not much substance to a cloud.

You can run your hand right through it, but yet he can hold all that water there in the cloud. He holds back the face of his throne and spreads his cloud upon it. He has compassed the waters with bounds, the oceans.

He has set the boundaries for the oceans until the day and the night come to an end. The pillars of heaven tremble and are astonished at his reproof. He divides the sea with his power and by his understanding he smites through the proud.

And by his spirit he has garnished the heavens. His hand has formed the crooked serpent. Lo, these are parts of his ways, but how little a portion is heard of him, but the thunder of his power who can understand.

Job continued his answer and he said, as God lives, who has taken away my judgment and the almighty who has vexed my soul, all the while my breath is in me and the spirit of God is in my nostrils. My lips shall not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit. God forbid that I should justify you.

Till I die, I will not remove mine integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast. I'll not let it go.

My heart shall not reproach me as long as I live. Job has now just had it with these guys. He said, look, I don't care what you say.

As long as there is a breath in my mouth, I'm going to maintain my own integrity. My lips are not going to utter deceit. I'm not going to say I'm a sinner just to please you.

God forbid that I should justify your speeches, the things that you are saying. Till I die, I will not deny or remove mine integrity from me for my righteousness I hold fast. I'll not let it go.

My heart shall not reproach me as long as I live. Now, this is Job's response to his friends. Next week, you'll see Job's response to God.

It's quite different, which shows to me an interesting thing. I think that it is a mistake for us to try to bring our friends under conviction. I think that oftentimes we are in the position of trying to make a person feel guilty.

Aren't you sorry for what you've done? That's horrible. You know, and what is the response to that? It is the justifying of myself. I don't want you laying some guilt trip on me, you hypocrite.

You've done just as bad, you see, and I'm going to justify myself. I'm, you know, I'm not going to let others lay guilt trips on me. I don't like that.

I resent that. And here these guys are trying to make Job guilty. Oh, you know, you've done all these horrible things.

He said, hey, I'm not going to justify you. I hold fast mine integrity, my righteousness. I maintain it.

But when God began to speak, it was a different story, which tells me that rather than trying to make people feel guilty for what they have done or what they are doing, it would be better that we just ask God to reveal himself to them. And the conscious effect of God's revelation is always that of the revelation of myself to me. When I see me in God's light, then I cry, woe is me, for I am a sinful man.

I see then my own wickedness. And Job, when God revealed himself, then Job cried out for forgiveness. Different story.

So, we need to take a lesson from this. Rather than building resentment by trying to make people feel guilty for what they have done, best that we just pray and ask God to bring the conviction of his spirit upon their hearts. God, reveal yourself, your righteousness to them that they might see themselves in your light.

And that will bring about a dramatic change of attitude. Whereas all of my endeavors will only create resentment and only cause the person to become more solidified in his position, maintaining his innocence and so forth. So, Job's friends were totally unsuccessful in all of their arguments.

Let my enemy be as the wicked and he that rises up against me as the unrighteousness. For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he has gained, when God takes away his soul? Good question. What is the hope of the wicked man, though he has gained the whole world, when God takes away his own soul? Jesus said, what should it profit a man if he gained the whole world and loses his own soul? Basically, that's what Job said.

Jesus was sort of reiterating what Job had said, just put it in different terms. What reward is there to the hypocrite if he gains everything when God takes away his soul? What's left then? Will God hear his cry when trouble comes upon him? Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God? I will teach you by the hand of God. That which is with the Almighty will I not conceal.

Behold, all ye yourselves have seen it. Why then are you altogether vain? You've seen these things. You know they're true.

How come you're so empty? This is the portion of a wicked man with God and the heritage of oppressors, which they shall receive of the Almighty. If his children be multiplied, it is for the sword. If the offspring shall not be satisfied with bread, those that remain of him shall be buried in death, and his widows shall not weep.

Though he heap up silver as dust and prepare raiment as the clay, he may prepare it, but the just shall put it on, and the innocent shall divide the silver. In other words, he's never going to be able to enjoy it. You may lay up for yourself great wealth, but who's going to spend it? When you die, whose is it going to be? You're not going to take it with you.

Now, Job sees the place of the wicked and the place of the hypocrite. They were more or less accusing Job, hey, you're saying that the hypocrite and the wicked have it great. Job says, no, you're misunderstanding.

You know as well as I know that their day is coming. I'm not saying that that's the way to live. I know what the end of that kind of a life is.

I'm not advocating that lifestyle because they're going to get cut off. They're going to lose it all. They're going to get wiped out.

He may prepare it, but someone else is going to put it on. The innocent will divide the silver. He builds his house as a maw and as a booth that the keeper makes.

The rich man shall lie down, but he shall not be gathered. He opens his eyes and he is not. Terrorists take hold on him as waters.

The tempest steals him away in the night and the east wind carries him away and he departs as a storm hurls him out of his place. For God shall cast upon him and not spare. He would fain flee out of his hand.

Men shall clap their hands at him and shall hiss him out of his place. Now, Job said, turning now to a different vein of thought, he said, now there are places where gold is discovered and silver is discovered and iron and brass. Men dig the shafts.

They follow the vein of gold and so forth. And they mine these things out of the earth. He digs, overturns the rocks, digs his caves.

It's places that the birds don't know. The vultures haven't seen it, but he follows down through the vein, finding the gold, the silver and all. But where shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding? Man values gold.

Man values silver. He'll sacrifice to dig gold out of the ground. He'll go down in these dark shafts.

He'll get all grubby and dirty in order that he might find the treasure of gold, the treasure of silver. But where is wisdom found? Where is the place of understanding? Man knows not the price, neither is it found in the land of the living. The depth saith, it's not in me.

The sea says it's not with me. It cannot be gotten for gold. Neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof.

Wisdom, understanding, more valuable than this gold. You can't buy it for gold. Can't be purchased for silver.

It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir or with the precious onyx or the sapphire. The gold in the crystal cannot equal it and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold. No mention shall be made of coral or of pearls for the price of wisdom is above rubies.

The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold. Whence then cometh wisdom? Where does it come from? And where is the place of understanding? Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living and kept closed from the fowls of the air. Destruction and death say, we have heard the fame thereof with our ears, but God understands the way thereof and he knows the place thereof.

For he looks to the ends of the earth and he sees under the whole heaven to make the weight for the winds and he weighs the waters by measure. And when he has made a decree for the rain and the way of the lightning and the thunder, then did he see it and declare it and he prepared it. Yea, he searched it out and unto man he said, behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom.

And to depart from evil is understanding. Wisdom, more valuable than jewels, than gold, you can't buy it. Wisdom and understanding.

Men know how to find gold, they know how to mine it out of the ground, but wisdom and understanding, where can it be found? With God is wisdom, with God is understanding, and God has declared it and this is God's declaration. The fear of the Lord, to reverence God, that is wisdom. And to depart from evil, that is understanding.

Tremendous. Moreover, Job continued. He's got a lot to say.

Bildad was run out, so Job thought, well, I just keep going on. Oh, and now it's sort of a lament of the days before all of his afflictions, looking back and remembering the past glory that he had. Oh, that as I were in the months that are past, in the days when God was preserving me, when his candles shined upon my head and by his light I walked through darkness, as I was in the days of my youth when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle, when the Almighty was yet with me, when my children were about me.

And now Job makes a reference to his children. Ten of them were all killed in that accident and he remembers the beautiful day when the little children, his ten children, were round about him on his knee and coming around him. When I washed my steps with butter and the rock poured me out rivers of oil.

When I went out to the gate through the city, when I prepared my throne in the street, the young men they saw me and they hid themselves and the age it arose and stood up for me. The princes refrained talking and they laid their hand on their mouth. The nobles held their peace and their tongue stuck to the roof of their mouth.

When the ear heard me, then it blessed me and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me, because now Job is answering these accusations that the false accusations that were made against him and he's telling what he actually was doing, because I delivered the poor that cried and the fatherless and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness and it clothed me.

My judgment was as a robe and a diadem. I was eyes to the blind. I was feet to the lame.

I was a father to the poor and the cause which I knew not, I searched out and I broke the jaws of the wicked and I plucked the spoil out of his teeth. Then I said, I shall die in my nest and I shall multiply my days as the sand. My root was spread out by the waters and the dew lay all night upon my branch.

My glory was fresh in me and my bow was renewed in my hand. Unto many men gave ear and they waited. They kept silence at my counsel and after my words they spoke not again and my speech dropped upon them and they waited for me as the rain and they opened their mouth wide as for the latter rain.

If I laughed on them, they believed it not. In the light of my countenance, they cast not down. I chose out their way and sat chief and I dwelt as a king in the army and one that comforted the mourners.

So Job speaks to the former glory. People used to come to him for advice and counsel. They hearkened to his words.

He was held in honor and esteem by all of them. But now chapter 30, he tells of the present condition and just as glorious as was the past, so depressing is the present. But now they that are younger than I have me in derision, whose father I would have disdained to set with the dogs of my flock.

Yea, where to might the strength of their hands profit in whom old age was perished for wanton famine. They were solitary, fleeing into the wilderness in former times, desolate and waste, who cut up mallows by the bushes and juniper roots for their meat. They were driven forth from among men.

They cried after them as after a thief to dwell in the cliffs and the valleys and caves of the earth and in the rocks. These people are just the offscouring of the earth. Among the bushes, they braid under the nettles that were gathered together.

They were children of fools. Yea, children of base men. They were viler than the earth.

And now I am their song. Yea, I am their byword. They're looking down on me.

They abhor me. They flee far from me. They spare not to spit in my face.

Spitting, of course, is a is a insult in the Orient. It's an insult. Any of us spit in a guy's face, I suppose.

But in the Orient, it is a sign of great disdain. Many times walking in Israel through the old city, you can see hatred in the eyes of some of the Arabs there. And as you go by, they'll spit.

Sometimes they'll spit on you. But it's just a sign of utter contempt and disdain. It's about the worst insult that the Oriental can heap upon you is to spit on you.

We have a friend who went to Okinawa as a missionary. And there was a lot of anti-American feeling on Okinawa after the war. And his little boy, who was in first grade, had to go to an all-Oriental school.

And every day when his little boy would come home from school, they'd have to bathe him because he was covered with spit all over his body. As the children were showing their hatred and disdain of the ugly American. And the dad was so torn up and upset over it, he was thinking about just leaving the mission field.

And his little boy said, No, daddy. He said, I'm doing it for Jesus. And it's all right with me.

And he said, I'm just praying that the Lord help them to know his love. And maybe I can show it to him. But he said it was sickening as the poor little kid would get home from school just covered head to toe.

Kids would spit on him. And so Job speaks of this horrible thing. And of course, it wasn't just the mouth saliva.

It would be the... Sorry about that, honey. I just... Just facts are facts. My wife doesn't like me to say things like that, but you know, you might as well know the truth, even though it's ugly.

Because he has loosed my cord and afflicted me, talking about God, because God has afflicted me, they have also let loose the bridal before me. Upon my right hand rise the youth. Now here's what these kids were doing.

Rotten little kids. They push away my feet. In other words, they trip me as I'm walking along and they raise up against me the ways of their destruction.

They mar my path. They set forward my calamity. They have no helper.

They came upon me as a wide breaking in of waters in the desolation. They rolled themselves upon me. Terrors are turned upon me.

They pursue my soul as the wind and my welfare passes away as a cloud. And now my soul is poured out upon me and the days of my affliction have taken hold upon me. My bones are pierced in me in the night season and my sinews take no rest.

By the great force of my disease is my garment changed. It binds me about as the collar of my coat. He has chosen me into the... He has cast me into the mire and I am become like dust and ashes.

I cry unto thee and you do not hear me. I stand up and you don't regard me. You have become cruel to me with your strong hand.

You've opposed yourself against me. You lift me up to the wind and you cause me to ride upon it and dissolve my substance for I know that you will bring me to death and to the house appointed for all living. How be it? He will not stretch out his hand to the grave though they cry in his destruction.

Did not I weep for him that was in trouble? Was not my soul grieved for the poor? When I looked for good, then evil came unto me. And when I waited for light, there came darkness. My bowels boiled and rested not.

The days of affliction prevented me. I went mourning without the sun. I stood up and cried in the congregation.

I am a brother to the dragons, a companion to owls. My skin is black upon me and my bones are burned with heat. My harp also is turned to mourning and my organ into the voice of them that wail.

Oh, what a sad, tragic condition this Job was in. From this position of honor, esteem and all to the bottom, just absolutely to the bottom. In chapter 38, light finally comes.

So cheer up, we're going to get out of this hole. But oh, how long many times we go through bitter experiences that we cannot understand. And while we are in those experiences, it always seems forever.

They say that time is relative and I'm convinced of that. If you're having an extremely pleasurable experience, an hour can go by so quickly. But if you're hurting, an hour seems like eternity.

The relativity of time. Job going through these experiences seemed like forever, even as sometimes as you are going through trials and testings, it seems like forever. Oh God, why? And if we did not have as Job, basic foundational truths undergirding us, surely we would fall.

So one thing the book of Job really brings out and enforces in our minds is the necessity of the foundational truths being established within our lives. God is good. God is righteous.

God loves me. I know that. What I don't know is why, when He loves me.

He allows certain things to happen to me. He allows me to experience sorrows, griefs, pain. But I must just be satisfied with the fact that I know He does love me.

And nothing comes to me but what it isn't filtered through His love. God knows the way that I take. And when I am tried, I'm going to come out like gold.

Father, we thank you for your love and for your goodness. Be patient with us, Father, as we seek to understand that which cannot be understood by us. Your ways, your purposes, your dealings.

But Lord, may we walk in your love. And may your Spirit increase our faith. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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