

Crowley's Ridge College
22nd Annual Bible Lectureship

I KNOW THAT MY REDEEMER LIVES

Job's Hope Amidst Suffering

April 2-5, 2023



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DEDICATION

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO ONE OF CRC'S MOST ENTHUSIASTIC SUPPORTERS, TIM WOOLDRIDGE.

In 1983, Tim committed himself to Crowley's Ridge College (CRC) as the incoming Vice President for Advancement. He served this role diligently and passionately until 1986. He then returned to CRC in the same role from 1988 until 2000. As VP for Advancement, Tim conveyed his adoration to more than 500 churches, covering eight states on behalf of CRC. This role also took Tim all the way to Africa.

In addition to his commitment to the college, Tim served the church as a keynote speaker. Tim has held countless Gospel Meetings, as many as eight per year. He has had the privilege of serving the Twin Creek Church of Christ annually for thirty-one years, keynoting their Gospel Meeting.

As a public servant, Tim's talents have taken him to the Arkansas State Capital in two primary roles – State Representative and State Senator. Tim served in the Arkansas House of Representatives from 1991 until 1998 and then as an Arkansas Senator from 1998 until 2006. He also served as the Vice President of Arkansas Methodist Medical Center (Paragould, AR), President of the Arkansas Association of Public Universities, and Executive Director of Crowley's Ridge Development Council.

As a Christian, Tim has utilized his gifts and his public service platforms to serve Christ and advance The Kingdom of God. As an Arkansas State Senator, Tim co-hosted the Arkansas Prayer Breakfast. He also held the privilege to keynote the Southwest United States pre-meeting at the National Prayer Breakfast in Washington D.C. in February 2006. Additionally, he still serves as a frequent statewide convention speaker, using this platform to praise God and advance Christianity. Furthermore, Tim is the founding board member of the Arkansas Families First statewide Church of Christ lobbying organization. Yet, his most profound role is his service as an elder and shepherd for the Union Central Church of Christ in Marmaduke, AR.

Currently, Tim serves as the Director of Outreach for the Arkansas Finance Authority (ADFA) and a board member for the Mortgage Bankers of Arkansas. He was also the founding member of the Greene County Chamber of Commerce Economic Development Corporation. Other accolades include former member of the Statewide World Trade Center Board of Directors in Fayetteville; former board member of Accelerate Arkansas; former board member of Main Street Arkansas; former member of Jonesboro Rotary Club; and former member and president of Paragould Exchange Club. Over and above that, Tim has received the following awards: Statesman of the Year by the Arkansas Hospital Association and Senator of the Year by the Arkansas Municipal League.

Tim is a native of Paragould, AR. Second to only his relationship with God and commitment to Christ through the Spirit's sanctification, Tim's pride and joy is his family. He has been married to his beloved wife, Lisa, for 42 years. Together, Tim and Lisa boast of two incredible children, Jeremy (and wife Stephanie) and Tiffany (and husband Dustin). However, his most cherished title is "Poppy" by his five grandchildren – Max, Finley Grace, Jax Henry, Knox Harrison, and Sutton Blair. In his spare time, Tim relishes family time while camping, hunting, fishing, and kayaking. He is a distinguished Jeep enthusiast. In his downtime, Tim can be found watching Cardinals baseball and Andy Griffith reruns. Tim holds a BA in Communications from Arkansas State University.

FORWARD

Scholars suggest that the Book of Job has produced more literature than any other canonical Biblical texts other than the Psalms. Augustine believed Job to be the supreme illustration of God's grace. While others are just as relevant – for the Word of God is always relevant – it is challenging to conclude a book *more* timely and relevant than the Book of Job. Job offers much diversity when considering spiritual matters. The book (1) unveils the Sovereignty of God; (2) reveals the unseen spiritual battle between God and evil that we are called to encounter and participate in daily; (3) refutes the theological premise that God will always bless the righteous with prosperity while the absence or removal of such, along with any form of suffering, is the result of unrighteousness; and (4) warrants the intercessory power of the prayer of the righteous man while illustrating what authentic, raw communication with God resembles in the midst of suffering.

Our lectureship theme is best summarized by Job himself. “For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last, He will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh, I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints within me! If you say, 'How we will pursue him!' and, 'The root of the matter is found in him,' be afraid of the sword, for wrath brings the punishment of the sword, that you may know there is a judgment.” (Job 19:25-27). The pursuit of the Redeemer, Jesus Christ, is the only means to enduring suffering and encountering hope in the resurrection we must all confront.

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I KNOW THAT MY REDEEMER LIVES

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MANUSCRIPTS & OUTLINES

I KNOW MY REDEEMER LIVES: JOB 19:23-25

Dr. Steve Cloer

Professor, Harding School of Theology

What do you do when the unfairness of life smacks you in the face? Or when what you have been told of God does not match what you experience in God's world? This was the dilemma of Job. Job felt his suffering was completely unfair and he laid the blame at God's feet. And yet despite his isolation and hurt, Job chooses to trust in God as his redeemer. Job's affirmation in Job 19:25 is a resounding moment of faith where Job decides to hold onto hope that God will make things right, even though right now, Job did not understand. Is there a way for us to join Job in his resolute faith? Is there a way that we can face the unfairness of life and still declare "I know my redeemer lives!"?

INTRODUCTION

"For every parcel I stoop down to seize, I lose some other off my arms and knees and the whole pile is slipping, bottles, buns – extremes too hard to comprehend at once. Yet nothing I should care to leave behind. With all I have to hold with hand and mind, and heart, if need be I will do my best. To keep their building balanced at my breast, I crouch down to prevent them as they fall; then sit down in the middle of them all. I had to drop the armful in the road and try to stack them in a better load."¹

This poem by Robert Frost, entitled "The Armful" is about holding groceries. It refers to the experience that possibly you have had where you go to the store to buy groceries and you are trying to make it to the car while holding several bags in hand. But as you leave the store, you struggle to juggle the various bags. You have this nagging feeling that something is slipping and you are unsure what to do. For if you squeeze harder with your right hand, you might smush the bread. But if you squeeze harder with your left hand, you might smash the eggs. But if you don't do something, a bag is going to rip and the jar of pickles is going to splatter everywhere. So what do you do? You need to stop, set everything down, get a better grip, and try again. Or, as Frost suggests, "drop the armful in the road and try to stack them in a better load."

I think this is a good metaphor for faith. As believers in Christ, often we are trying to hold together, "extremes too hard to comprehend at once." For example, we try to juggle the truth that God is loving and merciful in one hand and that God is just and holy in the other. We try to balance that God is sovereign over all things in one hand and that God grants human freedom in the other. We cannot squeeze too hard or we will smush one or smash the other. Then something tragic happens: we lose a loved one, we experience a crisis, we hear "cancer." Our faith is shaken to the core, and all of a sudden,

¹ "The Armful", Robert Frost. <https://www.robertfrost.org/the-armful.jsp> Accessed Mar. 7, 2023.

it feels as if the bags are slipping. If we are not careful, one of them is going to rip and our faith is going to splatter. What do we do? *“Drop the armful in the road and try to stack them in a better load.”*

LIFE’S NOT FAIR!

I believe one person who felt this way was Job in the Old Testament. Job has been called, “the wizard of Uz.” He had it all – a beautiful family with seven sons and three daughters. He was wealthy, owning hundreds of sheep, oxen, and donkeys, along with thousands of camels. He had power with a large number of servants. Best of all, Job was a good man. In fact, God gives Job more compliments than any other person in the Bible: “blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil” (1:1, 8). Job was so pious that he even interceded on behalf of his family, just in case they might slip up. Job was a great spiritual leader. But then it all gets taken away. In the twinkling of an eye, four catastrophes affect Job’s family. The Sabeans steal his donkeys and oxen. Fire from heaven burns his sheep. The Chaldeans raid his camels. All of his children die in a tragedy. Job is left with nothing. To make matters worse, Job’s health begins to fail. By the end of chapter 2, the picture of Job is not of a powerful, wealthy man, but of a leper: shaved head, running sores, sitting in a landfill, and all alone. Job is left with the question, “Why?” A good description for the book of Job might be, “Life’s not fair.” For that is what Job felt. All of a sudden, the grocery bags of faith became very hard for Job to juggle. Job begins to question God because what he knows *of* God does not match his current experience *with* God. What do you do when your theology does not match your experience? Or when what you have been taught of God is not consistent with what you are observing in God’s world?

Often we have moments when the unfairness of life smacks us in the face. Maybe it is when you hear of a natural disaster, like the recent earthquake in Turkey that will most likely be the most devastating natural disaster in recent recorded history, killing over 40,000 people. You wonder where is God in this? Or when you witness an act of injustice, like the death of Tyre Nichols in Memphis, TN who was beaten to death by those who were supposed to protect him. You wonder where is God in this? Or when you experience in your own life, a tragic unfairness: treated wrongly by a teacher or coach, neglected by one of your parents, or dealt with an illness that just does not seem fair. You wonder where is God in this? It is in these moments where balancing the grocery bags of faith become very hard. What we know of God and what we are experiencing is not matching up. What do we do? Where do we turn?

WHO’S TO BLAME?

Scholars have noticed that Job’s responses to his tragic situation slowly changes.² After the first round of tragedies, Job, possibly numb from the shock, responds in praise, “The Lord gave and the Lord

² J. Gerald Janzen, *Job*, Interpretation (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 51. Janzen writes, “A close comparison between Job’s two responses to his experience...discloses that by 2:7 a pebble has been loosened within him which threatens to become an avalanche...”

has taken away, Blessed be the name of the Lord (Job 1:21).” But then after he loses his health and his wife encourages him to curse God and die, Job responds in resignation, “Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?” (2:10). And then after seven days of silence, the questions start to come. For the next 34 chapters, Job engages in a dialogue with his friends, where Job accuses and challenges God. Job is not shy about his feelings and emotions, rather he speaks honestly and authentically. He does not hold back. He expresses his frustration to God over the unfairness that he has been dealt and he wants to know why. A good example of Job’s complaint is found in Job 19.

Job cries out, “Behold I cry, ‘Violence!’ but I get no answer; I shout for help, but there is not justice (19:7).” Job believes that God is treating him unfairly: through no fault of his own, God has afflicted him. In fact, starting in v.7, Job describes God’s actions toward himself with ten different verbs, all in a negative way. God has blocked my way, put darkness on my paths, stripped my honor, removed the crown from my head, broke me down, uprooted my hope, considered me an enemy, advanced his troops, built a siege, and surrounded me. Job lays the blame for his plight directly at the feet of God. Instead of God being good, loving, and kind, Job sees God as the problem. And no one seems to care.

Job continues his lament by expressing the shame and isolation that he feels. In verses 13-20, Job gives a long list of people in his life who want no part of him. His brothers do not want him. His relatives have left him. His friends and acquaintances do not want to be near him. His close friends avoid him. No guest wants to come to his house. When he calls to his servants, they do not answer. Children laugh at him. And worst of all, his wife does not want to be around him (particularly because of his bad breath!). Even the friends who have come to comfort him – Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar – blame Job for his troubles. But Job believes that this alienation is all because of God. God has afflicted me, Job believes, and this is not fair. God has punished me and I am innocent. Despite Job crying out to God for answers, he receives no response. Where is God in this? Why does God not make this right? And yet, all Job receives is silence.

One of the hardest places to be as a human being is to feel that we have been treated unfairly in some way and there are no answers and no one cares. Unfortunately, in our broken world, chances are that you will experience this at some point. Justice often does not occur in our world. Often the guilty do not pay for their crimes. The innocent can be harmed instead of protected. The vulnerable can be taken advantage of and exploited. Abusers can get away with their crime. The poor are pushed down. Children are pushed aside. Justice is often bought by the highest bidder. Bullies get their way. Thieves don’t get caught. The rich and powerful get their way. And all of it is unfair! When we cry out, like Job, we are often left with silence. We can feel the grocery bags of faith starting to slip. What do we do? “Drop the armful in the road and try to stack them in a better load.”

THE BIGGER PICTURE

Sometimes the way we see the world and God’s involvement in it is incomplete. I do not understand fully how things work in the world or why things happen. But God does. He has the bigger

picture. From my perspective, I can think something is unfair, but from God's perspective, it can be something different. A simple, biblical example of this is in John 9, where the disciples see a blind man and they ask Jesus whose sin caused this tragedy. But Jesus explains it was not sin that caused this man's blindness, rather he is blind so that the works of God might be displayed in him (Jn. 9:3). From Job's perspective, this suffering was not fair because he had not committed sin. And he could not see nor understand God's perspective on the situation, maybe similar to my children sometimes. When I tell my children that it is time for their flu shots, they are not real excited (as you can imagine). They respond, "This is not fair!" From their perspective, it isn't. Why should a child receive a needle prick, just because a doctor says so? But from a parent's perspective, it makes sense as a means of protection. Sometimes life works that way. We can get frustrated at the unfairness of life because we have a certain template of how we think life should go. When God does not cooperate, we get mad at him. But what if God has a different perspective on the way the world should go and how our life should be? And what if we cannot see or even understand God's perspective on many things? And what if God has a plan for working all things out according to His will and purpose of justice and righteousness – plan that we do not always comprehend? If that is the case, it would be better to not fit God into our plans, but rather seek to fit in His plans. But that takes trust.

Throughout Job's conversation, it appears that underneath Job's complaints and questions, a reservoir of faith has been building. While Job does not understand why God has brought this suffering, he believes that God will make it right. We see this belief briefly in Job 9:25-33, where Job wishes for an arbiter who could bring Job's case to God and find understanding. Then in Job 16:18-22, Job describes a witness who could testify to his righteousness. Then, here in Job 19:25, a third example, where Job expresses hope in a redeemer. Scholars have referred to this moment as Job's burst of faith.³ Because in the midst of his complaint against God for the injustice in his life and the isolation that he has felt, he gives a powerful declaration, "I know that my redeemer lives..."

The verse is hard to interpret and it is important to not read the New Testament back into this phrase. Job uses the word "go'el" which refers to a relative who defends, protects, or avenges a person so their rights could be restored. Who is this redeemer that Job believes he has? A person? An angel? His own words? I believe it is God. Job is saying that even though I believe God has wronged me and I have experienced injustice, but I still believe in God's redemption and at some point – although I do not know when – God is going to make things right.

I Know!

The most powerful phrase of this verse could be, "I know..." Yes, Job felt like God was silent. Yes, Job's friends did not want to be around him. Yes, Job's comforters thought he had done something wrong. But Job could still declare, "I know..." *I know* that someday justice will be done. *I know* that God

³ John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 295. Hartley writes, "In this passage Job is expressing genuine faith, for he makes an unconditional affirmation about God's commitment to him against all circumstantial evidence to the contrary."

will work this all out. *I know* that God will give perspective on this situation. *I know* that my Redeemer lives. At the end of the book, his declaration came true. God comes to meet Job. He offers a divine perspective to Job. He helps him see that the world and the work of God are too difficult for him to comprehend. Job just cannot understand all of what God is doing. And after that meeting, Job concludes in a similar way to Job 19:25, “*I know* that You can do all things and that no plan is impossible for you” (42:2).

When disappointment hits our life in the form of injustice and we are treated unfairly, it is here that we have to step back. We have to “drop the armful in the road and try to stack them in a better load.” We have to gain a divine perspective. We have to realize that we do not see or understand everything clearly. God has a different perspective. God has a larger purpose. God has a bigger mission. While I may not understand, I know that my redeemer lives. So even though I might have been bullied, abused, or hurt, *I know that my redeemer lives*. Even though I might have been passed over, neglected, or pushed aside, *I know that my redeemer lives*. Even though the world might struggle with disasters, violence, and poverty, *I know that my redeemer lives*. Even though I might feel unloved, unwelcomed, and unaccepted, *I know that my redeemer lives*. God will work this all out in His way and in His time. **If I know this, then I can trust Him even when life does not make sense.** I can pick back up the groceries of faith with a better grip, believing that God will work things out, even when it does not make sense to me.

Lewis Smedes writes about a time when he and his wife lost their baby. His pregnant wife started to bleed and he rushed her to the hospital. The doctor warned that the baby would be disfigured. So he prepared himself for that. But when the baby came out, he was healthy. Smedes went home that night thankful for the miracle that had happened. Then the next morning, the doctor called and said, “Something is wrong.” Within a few hours, the baby was dead. Smedes writes that he sunk into a place like Job: desiring death, mad at God, wondering why. Smedes was experiencing the unfairness of life and his grocery bags of faith were slipping. But over time, Smedes writes that the darkness lifted. He forgave God and moved forward. How? Smedes writes, “When you forgive God, you just live in the silence and grope toward the goodness of life and believe that, in spite of everything, he is your friend.”⁴ Job makes the same decision in 19:25. Despite his anger, frustration, and isolation, Job chooses to trust: *I know that my redeemer lives*. It was that faith that sustained him during those dark moments. And it can sustain us too.

CONCLUSION

Bart Millard, frontman for the contemporary Christian group MercyMe, penned a song entitled “Even If.”⁵ The song was a response to Millard’s son’s struggle with juvenile diabetes. Millard

⁴ Lewis B. Smedes, *Forgive and Forget: Healing the Hurts We Don’t Deserve* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1984), 92.

⁵ “MercyMe’s Frontman Bart Millard Pens ‘Even If’ Song on Heartbreak Over Son’s Chronic Illness,” www.Christianpost.com Accessed March 8, 2023.

acknowledges in the song that, as a concerned parent, he has bad days and it is hard to push through and sing about God. In fact, Millard would later say that his faith can be weak over the heartbreak of seeing his son struggle so much. Yet, in the chorus of the song, Millard offers an affirmation of faith, “I know You’re able and I know You can, save through the fire with Your mighty hand, but even if You don’t, my hope is You alone. I know the sorrow, I know the hurt would all go away if You’d just say the word, but even if You don’t, my hope is You alone.”⁶

This was Job’s anthem and can be ours too. When we have those difficult days, where the experience of the world smacks us in the face and what we observe does not match what we have been told of God. And we wonder where God is in this. What do we do? We “drop the armful in the road and try to stack them in a better load.” We regain our grip. We remember our hope. We profess our faith. We declare, “We *know* that our redeemer lives.” And as Millard wrote, “even if You don’t,” even if God does not fix my problem immediately, even if God does not provide answers in my time, even if God does not solve the injustice this side of heaven, “even if You don’t, my hope is You alone.”

⁶ “Even If,” <https://www.lyrics.com/lyric/33813099/Even+If> Accessed March 8, 2023.

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD: DIVINE MAJESTY & HUMAN MISERY (JOB 38-42)

Dr. Kevin Youngblood
Professor, Harding University

YHWH's speeches to Job in Job 38-42 are designed to address three misunderstandings that afflict Job as a result of his innocent suffering. First, Job has mistaken his inability to discern order in his suffering with a complete absence of order in the cosmos. Thus, he finds fault with the operations of the world and therefore with God its creator. Second, Job has mistaken his experience of suffering as an indication of his insignificance when in fact it is just the opposite. It is an indication of how highly regarded he is by God and of YHWH's confidence in the resilience of his faith in God and his endurance in waiting for God's salvation. Finally, Job has mistakenly believed that God has abandoned him for no reason and that now he is on his own in a meaningless cosmos left to vindicate himself and save himself from despair. But humanity's dignity, integrity, resilience and ultimate eternal destiny remain in God's capable hands and God has in fact been sustaining Job in his suffering just as he always has cared for even the smallest and most remote creatures Job has never even bothered to notice.

INTRODUCTION

On January 20, 1649 an unprecedented and highly ironic event occurred. King Charles 1 was put on trial for tyranny and treason by the British Parliament. Previous kings had been deposed and some had been assassinated, but never before had one been tried and condemned to death while still king. Putting the king on trial, holding the monarchy accountable – what an idea! What could have inspired such a bold and gutsy move? One could argue that the inspiration came from the Book of Job. As bold and gutsy a move as putting the king of England on trial is, it pales in comparison to Scripture's daring in putting the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the sovereign of the universe on trial as it does not just once, but twice: first here in our text the Book of Job and second, in the gospel accounts of the trial of Jesus.

Think about this with me for just a moment and see if it doesn't astound you. Even before the incarnation, even before the trial of Jesus, God came down and subjected himself to human questioning. He humbly took the stand and testified because a human court consisting of Job and his three friends had basically put God on trial with Job playing a dual role very much like a plaintiff and prosecutor and Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar functioning much like counsel for the defendant who, in this case, is God.

Of course, the whole thing is quite theoretical at first. No one really expects God to show up and dignify this attempt to question his justice, to hold him accountable for innocent human suffering, least of all Job (Job 9:16-19, 32-33). But then YHWH does show up and by showing up demonstrates that he actually does take our pain seriously, that he actually does think our questions worthy of his time, and

that he actually, incredibly, is willing to turn this mock trial into the real thing by answering the subpoena issued by Job. It is a moment in Scripture surpassed only by the incarnation and Jesus' own trial where the remarkable humility of God is on such stark and naked display. Before we can talk about the divine sovereignty that is indisputably the focus of YHWH's two speeches in Job 38-41, we must first talk about the divine humility that compelled YHWH to show up in the first place. This is the focus of the narrator's framework for these two speeches – a framework without which we will inevitably misunderstand the speeches themselves.

Yes, I know that YHWH turns the tables on Job when he does show up and in essence puts Job on trial, peppering the innocent sufferer with a barrage of unanswerable questions. The point, however, is that YHWH did show up. He did dignify Job's suffering and his questions with his presence. He did face him and invite him to an intellectual wrestling match regarding the true nature of creation and its divine governance, and this speaks volumes about our God and it must not go unnoticed.

Nearly everything YHWH does and says in Job 38-41 is in response to Job's prayers, protests, and questions scattered throughout the book. Though upon a first reading YHWH's response may seem frustratingly irrelevant to Job's concerns, more careful consideration in light of everything Job has said up to this point reveals a carefully crafted affirmation of the divine order on display in creation and mysteriously at work in Job's suffering as well as ours.

YHWH'S PRESENCE IN THE WHIRLWIND

YHWH's gives two speeches in Job 38 – 41. Both begin with an identical introduction: "Then YHWH answered Job out of the whirlwind and said . . ." (38:1; 40:6). YHWH's decision to address Job from within a whirlwind seems an odd one under the circumstances. One would think that after all that Job had been through, YHWH would choose a much gentler, far less threatening approach. Why a tornado?

The answer may be found in something Job said earlier in the book. In Job 9:16-17 Job stated, "If I summoned him and he answered me, I would not believe that he was listening to my voice. For he crushes me with a whirlwind and multiplies my wounds without cause." In dialogue with his well-meaning but misguided friends, Job suggests that even if he were per chance to be granted his audience with God, that God would simply crush him with sheer force of his presence. You see, Job has mistaken divine sovereignty with raw, blind power. This is a common mistake and it is one of the mistakes that YHWH seeks to correct in the book of Job.

It is not unlike the movie *Bruce Almighty* in which Jim Carrey's character complains to God about a series of misfortunes he has suffered only to have God show up and invite him to try doing God's job for a couple of days. Bruce is given all of God's power and, with it, all of God's responsibility to see if he can do a better job of running the universe. The comically overwhelmed Bruce abuses his power, ignores prayers, and then, in his attempt to answer all prayers in the affirmative, wreaks havoc on the world thus learning that when everybody gets what they want, nobody will want what they get. In other

words, what human beings want and what human beings need are two entirely different things, and then there's all of non-human creation to consider as well.

When YHWH does appear to Job, he appears as a whirlwind for this very reason. To show Job that YHWH is capable of exercising his sovereign power without destroying Job. Job is stronger than he realizes and YHWH is more loving and merciful than Job realizes. It's just that sometimes divine love wants more for us than we want for ourselves. We may be satisfied with our simplistic faith and our naïve understanding of God and how God works in the world, but God wants more for us than that and, unfortunately, that greater, deeper faith, that more intimate and infinitely more satisfying knowledge of God comes at a price – the price of suffering. The point of the suffering, however, is not to destroy us but to push us to depths of intimacy with God and heights of selfless obedience that we would never even try for if left to our own devices.

Job may be windblown and disheveled after his encounter with God but he is still standing and, what's more, when all is said and done, he is even better off than he was before his bout with intense innocent suffering. Yes, I know that Job's restitution at the end of the book, as great as it is, can never make up for the loss of his children whom he loved dearly, nor does it erase the trauma of his experience. That restitution, however, was never about making up for what happened to Job. YHWH had nothing to make up for. At no point was YHWH ever in Job's debt. YHWH's blessing at the end of Job is an act of sheer, sovereign grace, and it does not come to Job until Job renounces all claims on God, drops his charges against God, and becomes willing to receive whatever God in his wisdom seems to fit offer. It turns out to be almost more goodness and joy than Job can contain. Indeed, had he received such divine largesse at the beginning of the book he could not have contained it, and it would have ruined him spiritually. Trust me when I tell you, beloved, that the ravines that have been carved into your heart by pain and suffering will one day be the very containers that hold the joy that God has in store for you. Without such ravines, all of God's blessings would run right off of us without notice or effect like water off a duck's back.

YHWH'S EXPLORATION OF CREATION

But what I think most readers of Job find so exasperating is the seeming irrelevance of YHWH's response. What does the diet of ravens or the due dates of pregnant mountain goats have to do with Job's problems? Is YHWH just engaged in a classic ploy of redirection? Is this all just a distraction, an attempt to change the subject because Job's pointed questions and compelling protests are too embarrassing for YHWH? No. I don't think so. I certainly understand why it strikes most readers that way. It used to strike me that way too but then I began to notice how deliberately YHWH keeps picking out details from Job's speeches and weaving them into his own response.

At the very least we are assured that YHWH has been listening because he weaves throughout his response little obscure details from Job's protests. What YHWH does, however, with nearly every one of these allusions is to turn it into an affirmation of something that Job has questioned or cursed.

Job cursed the day of his birth and the night of his conception wishing them both to be swallowed up in the dark void from which they came. If this kind of suffering is what awaits human-beings then why create them at all? Why have a world in which such injustice can occur (Job 3:1-10)? God responds by affirming the legitimacy of both day and night including the night of Job's conception and the day of his birth. YHWH reverses Job's curse by recalling the glory and splendor of his calling light out of darkness (Job 38:12-15, 19-21, 31-33). Far from being a mere historical act of creation, this was a precedent for a pattern. Ever since the first day of creation YHWH has been calling light of darkness and he will do so for Job's darkness as well as ours (2 Cor 4:6).

Job appealed to those who are able to summon Leviathan to unleash the fury of this mythical chaos monster on creation as a means of ending Job's pain and misery and perhaps preventing others from having to endure the same (3:8). YHWH, however, evokes Leviathan as evidence of his mastery over chaos (41:1-11). Leviathan is YHWH's creature and plays a role in the created order we cannot yet understand. Though chaos has not yet been banished from YHWH's creation, it is contained and whatever damage it causes is redeemed for YHWH's mysterious but always beneficent purposes.

Job summoned the beasts (Heb. *behemoth*) to testify to the arbitrary and destructive nature of YHWH's sovereign power (Job 12:7-17). He sees them as allies in making his case that YHWH exercises his sovereignty destructively and haphazardly, recalling sins from Job's youth that had supposedly been forgiven and using them as excuses for torturing him now (Job 13:23-28). YHWH, however, turns all of Job's witnesses into his defense. The beasts whether lions, mountain goats, wild donkeys and oxen, birds of prey, ostriches, or horses, all attest to YHWH's tenderness and attentiveness in creation (38:39-39:30). He exercises sovereignty on behalf of creation even in its accursed state. Yes, creation is fallen and does not yet reach the full potential YHWH intends but it is still beautiful and orderly as YHWH shepherds it toward perfection (Rom 8:18-23).

Then YHWH draws Job's attention to Behemoth. The name of this mysterious creature is actually simply the plural form of the Hebrew word for "beast" and thus evokes Job's own use of the term in Job 12:7. YHWH's point in describing Behemoth seems to be that YHWH has made this creature strong enough to endure the rigors of living in a fallen world. Even the turbulence of a flooding river rushing against him does not rattle him. YHWH reminds Job that he has created him as he did Behemoth (40:15-18) – strong and resilient, yet dependent on the very beneficent sovereignty of which Job has recently grown so suspicious.

The point is that Job is stronger and more significant than he thinks though he is not quite as wise as he thinks. His suffering in fact only serves to increase both his strength and his wisdom. Creation is more orderly than he thinks, and YHWH is more present and beneficent than he thinks.

JOB'S RESPONSES TO YHWH

Job offers two responses to YHWH, corresponding to YHWH's two speeches. Job's first response (40:3-5) clearly does not satisfy YHWH and provokes the second speech about Behemoth and Leviathan.

In his first response, Job seems to have once again misunderstood the intent of YHWH's sovereignty. Job's retreat into his assumed insignificance is a cop out that YHWH will not tolerate. He created all humans including Job for something far better than insignificance – an absurd. Meaningless existence in an absurd, meaningless world. Even the most intense suffering cannot and does not negate that. God wants more than Job's mere acquiescence precisely because divine sovereignty is not insecure nor is it exercised tyrannically and cruelly. Those who hear YHWH thundering in this first speech "How dare you question my sovereignty!" have, like Job, completely misunderstood what YHWH is saying. Thus the need for the second speech.

YHWH's problem with Job is not that Job questioned his sovereignty. Indeed, in Job 42:7 YHWH commends Job to Eliphaz for having the integrity and courage to speak honestly to YHWH about his protest – a protest Eliphaz and his friends tried repeatedly to silence as sheer sacrilege and blasphemy. Rather, YHWH's concern is that Job has so badly misunderstood divine sovereignty. Job has mistaken YHWH's exercise of power with either human abuse of power or its arbitrary exercise in the hands of the storied deities of Israel's neighbors and that cannot go unaddressed. When Job says, "I am of small account. What can I answer you? I lay my hand on my mouth." He is simply confirming what he suspected all along. "Just as I suspected, if YHWH does show up it will only be to silence and shutdown any human protest to the pain of living in a fallen (mismanaged?) creation. What's the point in even engaging in this debate? I quit! I'm out!" (Job 9:2-3, 13-18)

This will not do. So YHWH continues with yet another speech to impress upon Job the significance of creation and of Job's role within it. YHWH uses Behemoth, as we have seen to impress upon Job his strength and resilience as one created in the divine image. He is more than equal to the suffering he is enduring despite its gratuitous nature. Though undeserved, Job's suffering is not meaningless. In YHWH's hands it will bring Job to a new level of understanding of and intimacy with God.

YHWH uses Leviathan to demonstrate that he has the chaos still present in creation well in hand. While we humans may not understand its purpose, God does. We can trust YHWH on the basis of what we know about his character, power, and wisdom to have good reason for permitting a level of contained chaos to continue operating within his otherwise well-ordered world.

To this second speech, Job responds quite differently. Understanding has dawned on Job and now he sees that the real point of divine sovereignty is that suffering, even innocent suffering, cannot thwart YHWH's ultimate beneficent purposes for creation in general, humanity especially, and Job in particular. In this light, Job now can see that his suffering does not require the conclusion that YHWH has arbitrarily set his sights on Job's and, by implication, humanity's and all creation's destruction.

Job rightly rejected the simplistic and manipulative theology of his three friends who saw no other possibility than that Job's suffering was retributive – a just punishment from a just deity executed on a deserving sinner. Job wrongly, however, saw no alternative to this than to view his suffering as meaningless and God as arbitrary in his exercise of sovereignty. All of this was based on things Job had heard, what he'd been taught. It had served him well until he was hit with the kind of suffering he is

currently enduring. This drove him to seek something wiser, deeper, and more satisfying. Would any of us go looking for that greater truth were it not for the mystery of misery, the paradox of pain?

So now Job confesses that he has seen God with his own eyes. He has witnessed a whirlwind that spoke to him, listened to him, and abided with him without destroying him. Now he gets it. What Job says next, however, has often been misunderstood and mistranslated. This mistranslation and misunderstanding threatens to undo all of the progress YHWH and Job made in Job 38-42. The ESV and most other English translations render Job's next few words as "Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes." Were this, in fact, Job's response, we would be confronted with two insurmountable problems that render the book contradictory and unintelligible. First, the second response is essentially reduced to the same meaning as the first except even more groveling and self-loathing. As noted before, this is not satisfactory to YHWH and misses entirely his intent. Second, and more seriously, Job ultimately winds up following the advice of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar by repenting in order to be restored to his former station. This would completely undermine the direction and tenor of the book up to this point.

This translation is largely influenced by the Greek version of this verse which added the word "myself" after the verb "despise" – a word entirely absent in the original Hebrew. A better translation is one suggested by Dale Patrick: "Therefore I reject and change my mind about dust and ashes." In other words, Job drops his charges against YHWH. He has changed his mind about his suffering, YHWH's exercise of divine sovereignty, and the significance of creation and of himself. YHWH owes Job nothing, not even an explanation. Job now realizes that and finally achieves the status implied in the question that launched this whole experiment: Does Job fear God for nothing? Is his piety merely an attempt to manipulate divine favors from YHWH? Is a human being, like Job, capable of moving beyond mere quid pro quo obedience and into the realm of an obedience motivated purely by love of God and reverence for his holy sovereignty?

CONCLUSION

Now that YHWH's blessing is not demanded, or even expected, as payment for obedience or reparation for unjust suffering, YHWH is free to bestow his blessing as an act of grace, at his own loving initiative. In doing so, YHWH proves what he's been telling Job and the reader of the book ever since Job 38. YHWH exercises his sovereignty on behalf of all creation for the sake of bringing all of it and all of us to our full divinely ordained potential. Though, because of the fall, this now necessarily entails suffering, even innocent suffering, it ultimately results in our flourishing, in a blessing of such magnitude that hearts not yet hollowed out by pain cannot possibly contain.

SANCTIFICATION THROUGH SUFFERING

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The concept of sanctification through suffering is paradoxical in that we do not often see the connection as God sees it (Rom 5:3-5). In this lesson, we will briefly investigate the following as we look at principles helping us to form our own theodicies (i.e., “plan to show that God is just”): the nature of the book of Job, Job and his friends, the problem of suffering, the content in Job relevant to our study, and a summation of my thoughts about sanctification through suffering.

INTRODUCTION

The nature of the book of Job does not lend itself to a philosophical treatment of suffering. Nor does it lend itself to a detailed exposition of it. If one feels that Job will furnish this, this one is likely to be massively disappointed. The book of Job is a great dramatic, but historical, poem. That is why the book is in the wisdom literature section of the Old Testament. Its grandeur and scope is unexcelled by other books of wisdom literature.

THE NATURE OF THE BOOK

Regarding Job and his friends, let us note Job first. The name “Job” comes from an Arabic root word meaning “one who turns back,” turning back to God in the case of Job. Job was a real person (Eze 14:14, 20; Jam 5:11), from the land of Uz (Job 1:1-5; probably Edom in Lam 4:21; Gen 36:28). Eliphaz represents the true patriarchal chieftain, dignified, and influenced by genuine regard for Job in his affliction. Bildad does not seem to be very original since he says “ditto” to whatever Eliphaz says. He leans heavily on the wise laws of antiquity and the authority of his older friend. Zophar is probably a young man whose language is at best, coarse and at worse, violent. Elihu is probably an even younger man who remains silent until three cycles of speeches have been completed by the other three. This would be typical custom for a younger man.

The problem of suffering, as classically posed, is an examination of four ideas which all seem to be true but cannot be true at the same time, e.g., God is omnipotent, God is omniscient, God is omnibenevolent, and evil exists. The problem is that a God who is perfect in the three ways mentioned would eliminate evil if He could, but he does not. So, how can a Christian uphold all four concepts? Anyone who attempts to reconcile the four is attempting his or her own theodicy, i.e., how can God be just if all four are true? There are literally dozens, if not hundreds, of ways that people in the past have

proposed as workable theodicies. The overwhelming leader of all theodicies, among believers in God, is known as the theory of retribution. This theory proposes that God punishes people in this life for their sins, both quantitatively (according to the amount of sinfulness toward God we are guilty of) and qualitatively (according to the type or quality of the sins we have committed against God). Job's friends, in a variety of arguments, tell Job that his misfortunes and calamities have come upon him because of his own sinfulness. In the spirit of 1 Peter 3:15, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, et.al., it is incumbent upon each Christian to be prepared with his or her own theodicy. It is very difficult to praise and worship a God, after all, who is a moral monster. The book of Job gives us some direction into how we should answer such challenges to the nature of God.

THE CONTENT OF THE BOOK

Now we survey some of the content of Job that might help us in our own theodicies. In the prologue, we see that the righteous can suffer without impugning the nature of God (2 Tim 3:12), but it is still true that whatever happens on earth is either decreed or allowed by God. Job was rich. As such, many in his culture, as in ours, would assume that God was on his side. So, why would these things happen to Job?

Job's first test from Satan involved the loss of virtually everything and everyone in Job's life (1:6-20). When this did not produce the results Satan wanted (v. 20), Job's second test was the "skin for skin" test during which Job's body is covered with boils. At this point, the three friends leave their homes to go to comfort Job. If your inclination is to condemn everything about the three friends, do remember that they sat with Job for seven days and nights without speaking because they could see that his pain was great (2:1-10).

Next, there are three cycles of speeches between Job and his friends (chap 3-31) addressing the theory of retribution from various sides. In each of the cycles the friends argue strenuously that Job must repent of his wickedness so that God will relent.

Elihu now comes front and center stage (chaps. 32-37). Some feel that the Elihu speeches prepare the way for God's own speeches (known as the "Theophanies"). In my judgment, Elihu makes four worthy arguments in these speeches to justify God. First, Elihu argues that God instructs through affliction (chaps. 32-33). Second, God is not blameworthy for what happened to Job (chap. 34). Third, there are rich blessings in a life committed to God (chap 35). Fourth, God has a purpose, and His power and presence are seen everywhere. In contrast, people are very frail spiritually (chaps. 36-37). Elihu concludes in a most memorable way: "'Mighty God! Far beyond our reach! Unsurpassable in power and justice! It's unthinkable that He'd treat anyone unfairly. So, bow to him in deep reverence, one and all! If you're wise, you'll most certainly worship Him" (37:22-24; *The Message* translation). One should not fail to see Paul's allusion to this in Romans 11:33-34.

The readers have had to endure several of the "opening acts" for long enough. It is time for the immutable, unconquerable One to take the stage. God begins to speak in His first Theophany (38:1-40:5) from a whirlwind when He speaks for Himself these words: "Who are you to confuse the issue without

knowledge? Be strong, and answer me when I ask!” (38.1-3). God rehearses a few of the millions of things in nature which He does and is doing which Job cannot do. The conclusion of this theophany is: “Will the faultfinder contend with the Almighty?” (40:2). Job can only reply, “Behold I am insignificant; what can I reply to You?” (40:4).

In God’s second theophany, God speaks from a storm and says, “Take courage and answer me; will you really annul My judgment?” (40:6-42:6). Job is encouraged by God to pour out his anger (40:11), but reminds Job of phenomena in nature that only God can have produced. Job’s response this time is: “I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted . . . I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees you. Therefore, I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes” (42:2-6). Thus, we learn that Job’s sin was subsequent to his suffering; not the cause of it. God says to Eliphaz and the other two friends, “My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends, because you have not spoken of Me what is right as My servant Job has” (42:7). God instructs the three friends to take seven bulls and seven rams to Job for sacrifice, and to ask Job to pray for them (42:8).

In the Epilogue. Job is presented as the victor (42:10-17). When Job prays the prayer requested by the 3 friends, God restored Job’s fortunes by giving him twice as much (v. 10). All of Job’s relationships that he had before the suffering were restored. Each person gave him money and a gold ring (v. 11). He has twice the livestock, and again he has 7 sons and 3 daughters (v. 13). Job’s daughters were the fairest in the land. Job lived an additional 140 years, lived to see four generations of his family, and died an old man “full of days.”

APPLICATIONS TO JOB’S NARRATIVE

This final section details some of the lessons learned from Job about sanctification through suffering. My first point is of signal importance, i.e., that which would really have helped Job through his trials would also help us through ours. However, we cannot always know “what is behind the curtain.” If Job had only known what was “behind the curtain.” The dialogue between God and Satan would have illuminated his understanding of his predicament because he would have known he was suffering as a righteous man, not as a wicked one. When we suffer, we struggle to see as Christians what is behind the curtain. Why are these things happening to us? There are several possibilities. God did it. Or, Satan did it. Or, I did it. Or, others did it, and it involves me peripherally. Or, it was an accident. Or, it was genetic based on the original genetics God gave to us. Or, it was genetic based on the genetics resulting from living in a fallen world. Or, God did it, but it is for my own discipline. Or, I don’t know why. This last possibility is often a stellar conclusion because we may never know in this world. For that reason, the song “We’ll Understand it all by and by” notwithstanding, we may not even know or care when we get to heaven. God is still on His throne either way.

Second, God’s greater purposes override my present circumstances (Rom 8:28). Neither innocence nor virtue exempts us from suffering, as in the case of Job. Your suffering, or the lack of it, is not a spiritual barometer which registers your relationship with God. My job is to trust in Him even when my own understanding is thwarted (Pro 3:5-6).

Third, there are some things that suffering, or persecution, can do better, in a this-world context, than almost anything else. Persecution tests character (Rom 5:3-5). Persecution reveals weaknesses to work on (2 Cor 12:5-10). Suffering helps us to see the unseen (Lk 23:46). Suffering can help to cleanse the mind of distractions (Col 2:1). If you doubt this, you have never had a kidney stone. Persecution helps us to identify with Christ (Col 1:24). Persecution teaches us a lesson about life that help us on the other side, if such is to be (1 Pet 1:6-7). Finally, persecution helps us to minister to others (Rom 12:12). If you have had cancer and you happen to mention this in a church gathering, there is an immediate affinity with others in the body. You speak the same language and can minister to one another.

CONCLUSION

Finally, God loves you and has a plan for you in conjunction with your own free will and your own decisions about following God. If you remember God, God will remember you (Matt 10:32). Satan is really the evil one in Job. God's purpose, power, and presence are seen through the most powerful telescope and the most powerful microscope. He is near, and He is far away. God is alive and well, and He works in your lives.

CHRISTIAN EVIDENCES REVEALED IN JOB

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The Bible contains internal characteristics that testify to its divine origin. These features provide apologetic value for the Christian who seeks to draw people to Christ. The book of Job offers evidence that humans and dinosaurs cohabited in history—demonstrating that the evolutionary timeframe is incorrect. What’s more, God’s speeches to Job provide further evidence of the Bible’s supernatural origin when He refers to features of the created order that humans could not have known at the time Job lived.

INTRODUCTION

The Bible is replete with internal evidence of its own supernatural origin. The evidence within the pages of the Bible is so prolific and decisive that its supernatural origin cannot be successfully challenged. We can **know** that the Bible is the Word of God. Consider the book of Job.

JOB PROVIDES EVIDENCE THAT REFUTES AN OLD EARTH AS DEMANDED BY EVOLUTION.

1. Evolution **rejects** the co-existence of humans and dinosaurs in favor of an old earth.
 - a. Evolutionists claim that dinosaurs went extinct 60-70 million years before humans evolved into existence.
 - b. According to evolutionary theory, no humans have ever seen a living dinosaur.
 - i. The first dinosaur bones began to be discovered in the 1800s.
 - ii. All pictures of dinosaurs have been based on fossilized skeletons.
2. Creation, on the other hand, **endorses** the co-existence of humans and dinosaurs.
 - a. Is there any evidence **outside** the Bible that dinosaurs and humans lived contemporaneously?
 - i. A partial list: the Havasupai Canyon Carving; Ica Stones; Acambaro Figurines; Carlisle Cathedral; Cambodia Stegosaurus; Roman Mural; Mesopotamian seal; Natural Bridges Monument Petroglyph, et al. Let’s consider two.
 - ii. Bishop Bell’s tomb in the Carlisle Cathedral in northern England

Richard Bell, Bishop of the Carlisle Cathedral, died in 1496 and, in keeping with British custom, was buried beneath the floor in the cathedral’s choir. On a narrow piece of brass (9½ feet long) that runs around the outer edge of Bell’s

tomb are engravings of some 18 animals, including an aardvark, bird, bat, fox, pig, bear, dolphin, eel, four species of fish, and three dogs. One engraving depicts two animals in what appears to be a fighting posture with their necks intertwined. One has spikes on its tail, reminiscent of the stegosaurids. The other resembles a sauropod dinosaur.

iii. Ta Prohm Temple in Cambodia

Magnificent jungle temples exist in Cambodia that were produced by the Khmer civilization from the 8th-14th centuries. These awesome temples were rediscovered by Portuguese adventurers and Catholic missionaries in the 16th century. One of the greatest monarchs and monument builders of this empire was Jayavarman VII, who was crowned supreme king in A.D. 1181. In A.D. 1186, he built the beautiful temple monastery Ta Prohm in honor of his mother—which gained notoriety from the 2001 Lara Croft movie. At the corner formed by the front entrance and the front wall is a 10-foot column covered with decorative circles carved into the stone—including a monkey, a water buffalo, a lizard, a deer, two parrots, and—a stegosaurus. The stone carvers of the 10th century had seen a stegosaurus just as they had seen a monkey, a water buffalo, parrots, and a deer.

b. Is there any evidence **within** the Bible that dinosaurs and humans were contemporaneous?

i. Genesis 1:24-27—

1. The Bible teaches that land animals and humans were both created on Day 6 of Creation week. On the previous day of Creation He created “great sea monsters” (1:21)⁷—which sound remarkably like Job’s Leviathan.)
2. Therefore, the Bible teaches that dinosaurs and humans have lived together from the beginning of the Creation.

ii. But does the Bible get more specific?

1. God is certainly not obligated to mention every specie of plant or animal.
2. Nor should we expect Him to use modern terminology to identify a dinosaur.
3. The term “dinosaur” is from the Greek: *deinos* (“terrible/fearfully great”) and *sauros* (“lizard” or “reptile”)
4. First coined in 1842 by Britain’s leading paleontologist Sir Richard Owen when fossilized dinosaur bones were first discovered and reconstructed in modern times.

⁷ ASV, NAB, NASB, RSV, NRSV, NEB.

- iii. What are we to make of God’s remark to Job?—“Look now at the behemoth, which I made along with you” (40:15).⁸
 1. Key factors in interpreting Job:
 - a. God’s rhetorical questions necessitate **negative** answers.
 - b. Job had actually seen (or was shown) the creatures to which God calls his attention.
 - c. God employs a very specific strategy in His remarks, setting forth an argument that Job could understand and with which he was forced to agree.
 2. Follow God’s own logical argumentation strategy:
 - a. First, He dazzles Job with the intricacies, complexities, and mysteries of 21 features of the inanimate realm:

light, the ocean, lightening, thunderbolts, the springs of the sea, the Earth’s foundation, the wind, the rain, snow, hail, the gates of death, ice, the laws of the Universe, the recesses of the deep, dew, clouds, the morning, the constellations, light & darkness, and the expanse of the Earth

Conclusion: You, Job, lack the knowledge, wisdom, and power to control the physical world.
 - b. Second, moving from the inanimate realm to the animate realm, God further pummels Job with the marvels of nine of His animal creatures—specifically spotlighting characteristics that are unique for each animal:

the lion, raven, wild ox, mountain goat, wild donkey, war horse, hawk, eagle, and the ostrich.
 - c. Third, continuing a panorama of His animal creation, God next takes His scolding of Job to a higher level by reminding him of the gargantuan land animal which He identifies as the “beast” (Hebrew transliterated *behemoth*). English translators typically insert footnotes expressing their subjective (not linguistic) opinions as to the identity of Behemoth. For example, for “behemoth” the NIV translators inserted: “Possibly the hippopotamus or elephant.” Let us quickly examine just one attribute that the inspired writer pinpoints for Behemoth and compare it to these two speculated identities.

⁸ For a more thorough treatment of Behemoth, see the book *Behemoth & Leviathan* available from ApologeticsPress.org.

- iv. “He moves his tail like a cedar” (40:17). How does the Bible define “cedar”?⁹ Were they big? Read 1 Kings 7:1-3, 2 Kings 19:23, Isaiah 2:13 & 37:24, Ezekiel 17:3,22-23 & 31:3-5. These verses make clear that the cedar was widely recognized as **mighty, majestic, and renowned for its size and height**. But the tails of both the hippo and elephant are farcically tiny and insignificant—and certainly not a trait that God would have pinpointed as noteworthy. In stark contrast, an obvious anatomical trait of the sauropods would have been their enormous tails that clearly resembled massive trees.
- v. Don’t forget context! The point of this passage is obvious: The gargantuan behemoth is of such stature and strength that only the Creator could control it. In order for God’s argument to make sense or carry any weight with Job, Behemoth must be of such imposing, even ominous enormity, and of such immense, powerful proportions that, without hesitation, Job would acquiesce his own helpless, measly condition before His awesome Creator.

Summary: Humans and dinosaurs lived together on the Earth. The dinosaurs did not live millions of years ago as evolution alleges. This realization from Job has apologetic value.

JOB PROVIDES EVIDENCE OF BIBLE INSPIRATION BY MANIFESTING SUPERNATURAL FOREKNOWLEDGE.

The Bible alludes to things that were not known by people at the time. Specifically in Job, God’s remarks¹⁰ beginning in chapter 38 contain allusions to features of the created environment that demonstrate foreknowledge of things that took centuries, even millennia, for humans to discover. Some are still unknown or not fully understood.

1. God asked Job: “Have you entered into the **springs** of the sea...?” (38:16).
 - a. The underlying Hebrew word for “springs” (NASB, ESV, NIV, RSV, ASV, NRSV, OJB) is defined by lexicographers as “the springs, sources of the ocean,” “Sources; Arb: ‘bubble up,’” “to gush forth,” “the fountains of the sea,” “of gushing and bubbling water.”¹¹
 - b. As it turns out, freshwater springs have been found all over the world on the floor of the ocean.¹² As Barnes noted: “[I]t is known, also, that there are fountains at the bottom of

⁹ L. Koehler, W. Baumgartner, M.E.J. Richardson, & J.J. Stamm (1994-2000), *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, electronic ed.), p. 86; F. Brown, S.R. Driver, & C. Briggs (1906), *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004 reprint), p. 72.

¹⁰ One cannot necessarily assume that any postulations posed by Job’s three friends are correct.

¹¹ Brown, Driver, Briggs, p. 614; Koehler, et al., p. 663; William Gesenius (1847), *Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1979 reprint), p. 528; F. Delitzsch (1976 reprint), *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), p. 317; Benjamin Davidson (1848), *The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1970 reprint), p. 531.

¹² “Exploring the Deep Ocean Floor: Hot Springs and Strange Creatures” (1999), USGS, <https://pubs.usgs.gov/gip/dynamic/exploring.html>; “Ocean-Floor Springs Found” (1984), *The New York Times*,

the ocean, and in some places the amount of water that flows from them is so great, that its action is perceptible at the surface.”¹³

- c. Job had certainly not entered these springs—if he even could have known they existed!
2. God also asked Job: “Have you...walked in the **recesses** of the deep?” (38:16).
 - a. English definitions of “recess” include “a hidden, secret, or secluded place or part”; “INDENTATION, cleft: a deep *recess* in the hill”; “ALCOVE” (*Merriam-Webster*); “a small area in a room that is formed by one part of a wall being set back farther than other parts” (*Cambridge Dictionary*); “a receding or hollow place, as in a surface, wall, etc.; niche; a secluded, withdrawn, or inner place; subterranean recesses” (*Collins*).
 - b. Hebrew authorities define the word as “the most secret recesses of the sea,” “the deep places or caverns of the ocean,” “in pl. = *abysses* of sea,” “deep places.”¹⁴
 - c. In 1873, a team of British scientists, initiating deep-sea exploration, found a trench on the floor of the Pacific Ocean that is over five miles deep.
 - i. The Mariana Trench is located off the island of Guam. It is 1,580 miles long and 43 miles wide.
 - ii. On January 23, 1960, the Trieste descended to the deepest point of the Mariana Trench—35,800 feet. Nearly 7 miles! That’s eight tons of pressure per square inch!
 - iii. At least 22 trenches have been identified: 18 in the Pacific, 3 in the Atlantic, and 1 in the Indian Ocean.
 - d. Remember the context: God was quizzing Job. “Had Job gone down and observed the springs that gush forth from the ocean’s floor, or had he walked in the great canyons of the deep?”¹⁵ How could the writer of Job have known the ocean possesses “recesses”?
3. God further asked Job: “Do you know the **ordinances** of the heavens? Can you set their dominion over the earth?” (38:33).
 - a. The word “ordinances” refers to “something prescribed, enactment, statute,” “regulations,” or “law of nature.”¹⁶
 - b. Compare Jeremiah 33:25—“Thus says the LORD: ‘If My covenant is not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the **ordinances** of heaven and earth....’”

October 11, A:25, <https://www.nytimes.com/1984/10/11/us/ocean-floor-springs-found.html>; Cindy Lee Van Dover (2019), “Forty Years of Fathoming Life in Hot Springs on the Ocean Floor,” *Nature*, March 4, <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-00728-3>; Evan Lubofsky (2017), “Fresh Water Below the Seafloor?” *Oceanus*, May 16, <https://www.whoi.edu/oceanus/feature/fresh-water-below-the-seafloor/#:~:text=And%20they're%20finding%20it,the%20Earth's%20surface%20each%20year>.

¹³ Albert Barnes (2005 reprint), *Notes on the Old Testament: Job* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), p. 200.

¹⁴ Gesenius, p. 301; Barnes, p. 200; Brown, Driver, Briggs, pp. 1062-1063; R. Laird Harris (1980), *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason Archer, Jr. and Bruce Waltke (Chicago, IL: Moody), p. 965.

¹⁵ Wayne Jackson (1983), *The Book of Job* (Abilene, TX: Quality Publications), p. 80.

¹⁶ Brown, Driver, Briggs, p. 349; Koehler, et al., p. 347; Gesenius, p. 300.

- c. Humans have only gradually arrived at an awareness of set laws by which the entire Universe is governed (e.g., Sir Isaac Newton's theory of universal gravitation). Those in Job's day were surely unaware.
4. Sir James Jeans (1877-1946): English physicist, astronomer, and mathematician; Professor at both Cambridge and Princeton; Earned the Gold Medal of the Royal Astronomical Society in 1922; Knighted in 1928; Received the Order of Merit (1939); Had a crater on the Moon named after him (Jeans).

As a deist, he admitted:

"We discover that the universe shows evidence of a designing or controlling power that has something in common with our own individual minds—not, so far as we have discovered, emotion, morality, or aesthetic appreciation, but the tendency to think in the way which, for want of a better word, we describe as mathematical."¹⁷

CONCLUSION

1. "For thus says the Lord, who created the heavens (he is God!), who formed the earth and made it (he established it; he did not create it empty, he formed it to be inhabited!): 'I am the Lord, and there is no other'" (Isaiah 45:18).
2. "The Almighty—we cannot find Him; He is exalted in power and He will not do violence to justice and abundant righteousness. Therefore men fear Him" (Job 37:23-24, NASB).
3. Job provides evidence of the validity and truthfulness of the Bible and Christianity.¹⁸

¹⁷ James Jeans (1931), *The Mysterious Universe* (New York: Macmillan), pp. 186-187.

¹⁸ For a discussion of the thorny problem of suffering as it relates to Job, see *Why People Suffer* available from ApologeticsPress.org.

SPIRITUAL HEADSHIP & LEADERSHIP: MENTORING THE YOUNGER GENERATION

(JOB 1:1-5)

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The Christian faith, religious commitment, and true spiritual devotion are directly transmitted from generation to generation. Discipleship (aka “spiritual mentorship”) is an essential and critically important process that requires significant time, focus, resources, and energy in the family and the church. Parents and church leaders have a huge God-given responsibility to disciple and mentor the younger generation in the ways of the Lord. The Bible speaks much regarding spiritual headship and leadership. Therein we observe the mentorship examples of great men of God like Moses, Joshua, Paul and, of course, Jesus.

However, Job 1:1-5 also serves as another powerful example of spiritual leadership in the familial context, supplying nine key principles for mentoring the younger generation.

INTRODUCTION

Psalm 119:9 says, “How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word.” But faith is much more commonly *caught* than it is *taught*, via the genuine godly example of dedicated Christian parents and godly leaders. God’s Word speaks much to us regarding spiritual headship and leadership in both the Old and New Testaments. The Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4-9) discusses the centrality of parents’ role in teaching their children about God and instilling faith in them during the daily rhythms of life from morning to night.

Jesus was a mentor who made mentors who, in turn, made more mentors. This is at the core of what the Bible is describing when it talks about “making disciples.” Jesus’ last words on earth serve as our invitation to mentor others and be mentored ourselves. Matthew 28:18-20 says, “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’ Amen.”

In particular, the New Testament witnesses to the importance of male spiritual leadership within the home and the church (cf. Acts 6:1-6; 1 Cor 11:2-16; 1 Tim 2:8-15; 1 Tim 3:1-13). God’s Word describes the father’s primary role as being to bring his children up in the “nurture and admonition” or “discipline and instruction” of the Lord (Eph 6:4). One of the qualifications of elders is to “manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church? (1 Tim 3:4-5). 1 Timothy 2:8 states, “I

desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling.” After his relationship with Barnabas ended, Paul brought Timothy, whom he was mentoring, with him on his missionary journeys. They were so close that Paul calls him “my true son in the faith” (1 Tim 1:2) and “my beloved child” (2 Tim 1:2).

Lifeway Research recently published some eye-opening statistics regarding the spiritual influence of parents, particularly fathers, in the home.

Recent STATS on the Spiritual Influence of Parents by Lifeway Research

- If a father does not go to church (even if his wife does), only 1 child in 50 will become a regular worshiper.
- If a father does go regularly (regardless of what the mother does), between two-thirds and three-quarters of their children will attend church as adults.
- If a father attends church irregularly, between half and two-thirds of their kids will attend church with some regularity as adults.
- If a mother does not go to church, but a father does, a minimum of two-thirds of their children will end up attending church.
- In contrast, if a father does not go to church, but the mother does, on average two-thirds of their children will not attend church.

The point is that a dad’s impact on his children’s faith is HUGE! In our lives, spiritual headship, leadership, and mentorship begin in the home. This brings us to our biblical text in Job 1:1-5 which demonstrates godly leadership and mentorship in action.

Job 1:1-5 (NKJV)

¹ There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name *was* Job; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil. ² And seven sons and three daughters were born to him. ³ Also, his possessions were seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred female donkeys, and a very large household, so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the East. ⁴ And his sons would go and feast *in their* houses, each on his *appointed* day, and would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. ⁵ So it was, when the days of feasting had run their course, that Job would send and sanctify them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings *according to* the number of them all. For Job said, “It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.” Thus Job did regularly.

In these opening five verses to the Book of Job, we can infer several valuable principles regarding the true nature of spiritual leadership and mentorship:

SPIRITUAL MENTORSHIP IS *REPUTATIONAL* (JOB 1:1A)

It all begins with integrity, a godly reputation, and personal spirituality. Job was *blameless* and *upright*. “He was honest inside and out, a man of his word, who was totally devoted to God and hated evil with a passion” (Job 1:1-3, *The Message*). Our public Christian example before the world and private example within the context of our families is extremely important. We must always lead by example!

SPIRITUAL MENTORSHIP IS *REVERENTIAL* (JOB 1:1B)

We are informed that Job “feared God and shunned evil” (ESV). He “feared God and turned away from evil” (NKJV). It is abundantly clear from the text that Job was a pure and holy man with a heart for God. His loving respect for the Lord and trust in Him caused Job to flee from temptation. He kept himself pure in all ways demonstrating righteousness before his family and the world.

SPIRITUAL MENTORSHIP IS *INFLUENTIAL* (JOB 1:3C)

Job is described as being “the greatest of all the people of the East.” Though he was certainly materially wealthy possessing much property, land, and livestock, I believe his true *greatness* came from his godly example and spiritual influence. He was “the most influential man in all the East!” (The Message, a transliteration of the Bible). God raised him up because of his humble obedience and service. He practiced what he preached rather than living in hypocrisy.

SPIRITUAL MENTORSHIP IS *INTERGENERATIONAL* (JOB 1:2, 4-5)

Job’s leadership was prioritized and based within his home and family. Spiritual mentorship begins in the home with faithful parents and continues with our grown children. He had seven sons and three daughters with whom he shared his life and faith (v. 2). Even after his children grew up and left the home, Job continued to guide them and encourage them in their spiritual walk.

SPIRITUAL MENTORSHIP IS *INVITATIONAL* (JOB 1:5A)

Job was proactive about inviting each of his children individually to come and visit so he could share precious time with them, pray over them, and bless them. “So it was, when the days of feasting had run their course, that **Job would send** and sanctify them” (v. 5a). Job was careful to keep communication lines open and relationship bonds strong with his grown children.

SPIRITUAL MENTORSHIP IS *CONSECRATIONAL* (JOB 1:5B)

Furthermore, Job sought to consecrate his grown children by setting them apart to God in holiness and dedication to the Lord. The Bible says, “So it was, when the days of feasting had run their course, that Job would send and **sanctify them**” (Job1:5a). We may infer, therefore that mentorship is intentional in its sanctifying (or holy-making) purpose (cf. Eph 5:25-30).

SPIRITUAL MENTORSHIP IS *SACRIFICIAL* (JOB 1:5B)

The ministry of mentorship comes at a cost to the mentor. There is a sacrifice of time, energy, and possibly money to be made. Job “**would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all**” (v. 5b). His commitment to spiritual leadership and responsible familial headship came at a significant cost to himself.

SPIRITUAL MENTORSHIP IS *PERSONAL AND RELATIONAL* (JOB 1:5B)

Mentorship does not work well with a group mentality. Each person requires personal attention and needs to be seen as being unique in their individuality. One size doesn’t fit all when it comes to the ministry of mentorship. Job “would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings **according to the number of them all**. For Job said, ‘It may be that my children have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts’” (v. 5b).

SPIRITUAL MENTORSHIP IS *HABITUAL* (JOB 1:5C)

We see that spiritual leadership is an ongoing process that requires consistency, commitment, and regularity. Job’s habitual practice with his children was something “Job did continually” (ESV) or “regularly” (NKJV). The Message states, “Job **made a habit** of this sacrificial atonement, just in case they’d sinned” (MSG).

CONCLUSION

Being a spiritual mentor means taking an influential and important role in another person’s life. If you have a genuine relationship with Christ, are living in community, and are growing in your faith, you can come alongside others, family or not, and point them to Jesus. In Christian mentoring, not only will the person being mentored (i.e., the mentee) develop in their faith, but the person doing the mentoring (i.e., the mentor) will grow as well. Proverbs 27:17 says, “As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.” God is able to use the mentoring relationship to strengthen the faith of all involved.

Mentoring also helps Christians put their faith into action. Lots of people have the desire to live out and share their faith, teach others about Jesus, or be a part of a ministry, but they often lack the tools to get started. Once mentoring becomes a regular part of your life, your own walk with God will become more dynamic and exciting. Why? Because this is part of God's plan for how you grow. It's about helping people become more and more like another person, and that person is Jesus. We aim at helping to mold them more into the image of Christ by developing "the mind of Christ" (Phil 2:5).

Whether we are mentoring our own children or other individuals, you can find people who need mentoring at every stage of life. "To be a mentor, you do not have to be perfect, have all the Bible knowledge or ministry experience, or even have a particular personality. To begin with, you need a willing heart and a desire to pass on to someone else what God has done in your life. God promises to help you grow as you depend on His Holy Spirit and commit to learning how to mentor, one step at a time" (<https://www.cru.org/us/en/train-and-grow/help-others-grow/mentoring.html>).

Do you have a heart to help others grow and to share the wisdom you have graciously received from mentors in your life or gleaned through your own lived experiences? Are you willing to be real, and patient, and generously invest your time and energy into the next generation?

WHO AM I IN JOB'S NARRATIVE?

Deonte Watkins

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My sermon will focus on everyone being just like Job in the Job suffering story. Regardless of our longevity in the faith, we are all bound to suffer affliction and suffering and grief in our lives. It may seem unexpected for the people of God to have to endure suffering but this fact has always been true, even for the most honorable of God's people. Suffering, difficulty, and tragedy will occur in all of our lives but if we understand that God in His wisdom allows suffering, we will not be disillusioned and we can understand that meaning and purpose can be drawn out of even the worst suffering. Hope is only found in God.

INTRODUCTION

I'm sure many of you saw me come up here with this box. I want to tell you a little bit about life. Life is like a 5000-piece jig-saw puzzle, without the box, now puzzles aren't very difficult to put together, as long as you have the box. Now I know, I know some pieces are easy to put together because they have edges on them. The edge pieces are easy to understand because we know where they go. Well, life is like that. Sometimes, some things happen to us in life and we don't need to talk to God about it per se because it kind of makes sense to us, the reason it happened. But most of life is not like that. Most of life is like this craggily, jagged, obscure piece. We're not sure exactly where it fits; if we don't have the box. You might guess, you might assume, but we may not fully know what this piece could be without the box.

In my life and in your life I think we would all agree that there is a great benefit in seeing the box. But since we can't, we need to learn to trust the One who can. There's only One who knows, He's the puzzle maker, He's the Designer, He's the One because He is sovereign because He is omniscient because He is all present. He has the benefit of the box. And God in His omniscience, in every one of our lives knows how and where, and when this piece is supposed to fit.

There are some people in scripture who had a jagged puzzle piece, something they could not understand, but they went to the One who could.

Join me in Job 1 and I want to look at a story this morning that is very familiar to most of us. We've been talking about it all week. The story of Job. Job sat down one day at a table and he tried to fit the puzzle together, and the piece he could not understand was the death of his family, and how he lost everything. And he needed an expert to come along and help him understand why this event occurred.

Maybe this morning some of you are puzzled about the way your life has gone, maybe some of you have one of those jagged interior pieces right now in your heart and in your mind and it really doesn't make sense, maybe you prayed to God fervently about something and He didn't answer your prayers and you say why O God! Why did this happen? And right now heaven is silent and it just doesn't make sense. Or you might say Lord if you would've been here then this wouldn't've happened, and you know you're probably right.

Maybe some of you are isolated, maybe you're lonely, you feel out of touch with yourself, maybe some of you have been diagnosed with a chronic illness, you've been dealt a bad bill of health, maybe you've recently lost a parent, a sibling, or a spouse to cancer or death. Maybe your spouse was unfaithful and you've recently been divorced, perhaps you were a father-to-be but the baby never made it, and some nights you just find yourself crying. And so here you are weeping and you find yourself saying, Lord, I just don't understand.

Some time ago, 2016 to be exact, I suffered a great tragedy. Tremendous weeping, loss of appetite, sleepless nights, unbearable pain, and agony. I'll never forget the day I got the worst news of my life. That my dad should be placed in hospice. I stood there dumbfounded with this baffled look on my face. And I remember thinking to myself there has to be another way! There must be an alternative! Ok, guys, let's pull out the best technology we have, it's 2016 I said, let's get 'em well again. God, come off your throne, come down and rescue us!

But He didn't and I just didn't understand. And I had one of those jagged puzzle pieces, and questions in my life like this, just like Job. So this morning I want to share some things with you, in the book of Job that I learned in that time of my life and I hope it will help some of you if you are struggling as I have struggled. Because I believe, we are all like Job in this narrative.

READ Job 1:1-22

I've got to tell you a little bit about Job before we get started this morning. Job is a man of excellence, high character, and tremendous integrity. Job is described as having the character of Enoch, and the character of Noah. "Job lives up to the Lord's confidence in his character. Job's good character is evidenced by his righteous patterns of life. Both the narrator (1:1) and Yahweh (1:8) describe Job in glowing terms. Even though Job's wealth is impressive, that is not the focus. Rather, his résumé highlights his character more than his possessions...In his patterns of life Job demonstrates integrity, commitment to God's moral standards, reverence for God, and an aversion to evil, which in the Old Testament wisdom literature are the essential components of the wise and righteous life".

Only one other person in the Old Testament is described as being blameless and righteous, Noah. So you would think, if there was any person on the planet, that would get an exemption from suffering, Job would be on that list, this blameless and upright man, this model of a man, you would think that God would have said to satan (boom) exemption. Job is off limits, he's free from suffering. He walks after my ways, he carries out my statutes and decrees, and he's righteous and blameless.

Job was the one who feared God and shunned evil, he was the one who was so concerned for his children's wellbeing that he offered sacrifices on their behalf. He's so blameless that his friends have to speculate and try to find reasons why he is to blame for this tragedy. You would think if there was any high moral person that should've been exempt from suffering, it would have been Job, and by default, his family should've been exempt too.

So here's the first lesson we want to learn today:

TRAGEDY IS INEVITABLE EVEN FOR FOLLOWERS OF GOD

We must understand that on a fallen planet that tragedy is inevitable even for the **followers of God**. On a planet that is infested with sin, on a planet that has tilted off course. **Our world is messed up**, and in a messed up world, all of us at some point or another are all going to suffer. Tragedy is inevitable even for **followers of God**. **I'd like to demonstrate this truth** to you by going back and looking at some Bible history. Re-imagine these biblical scenes with me if you would.

Notice Abel's chalk outline as his blood cries out from the ground after his envious brother murdered him, **Abel was a good man**. Notice Joseph rotting away in jail for something he did not do. For 13 years he was wrongfully displaced for something he did not do, he was honorable to Potiphar and he was honorable to Mrs. Potiphar. **Joseph was a good man**. Moses was up to his neck in manna breath murmurers; never to enter the Promised Land, Moses wandered in the wilderness for forty years, **Moses was a good man**. Hannah, the barren womb mother, her eyes pierced through the windows of a Toys-R-US store wishing she had a reason to buy something. **Hannah was a good woman**. What about David the good king? Think about all the tragedy and suffering David had to endure. The Bible describes David as a man after God's own heart. **David was a good man**. Job, unwittingly caught up in the pitchfork/halo wars, lost all that he had. **Job was a good man**.

In the Old Testament, God's Old Testament friends and Jesus' New Testament friends as you look at the events that occurred in history, people who knew God, and people whom God knew, still suffered tragedy. **Tragedy is inevitable, even for the followers of God**.

I believe the very first thing we need to do today before we talk about Job is to agree on this one point. Because if we don't we'll be disillusioned and there is no answer for suffering. If you're disillusioned there is no answer. If we're going to learn to cope with the jagged puzzle piece in our life we call tragedy, grief, and suffering.

Then we better have realistic expectations about life. They have to be realistic, people will die, people will get sick, and we will lose things that are dear to us, I don't want it to be that way, God did not want it to be that way, but it will occur.

And as Christians, our faith will not be shaken if we start with this first premise. That tragedy is inevitable on a planet that has wobbled off course. We've got to start there, and if we start there then our ears will be open to the other answers we're going to hear today that will help us through these difficult times.

If there was ever a man in which God should have given an exemption, if there was ever a family which should have been given an exemption that should have been inoculated against any kind of disaster, it should have been Job and it should have been his family. Because he was blameless and upright.

But wait for a minute Deonte' that's not the whole story, you painted part of it but God could've stopped this whole thing from happening. He didn't have to give him an exemption, He could have paused and said away from Me satan, dismissed that offer; shunned him away, rebuked him, and continued receiving glory and running the universe. And you know what, you're right, God could've done that, but He didn't.

You say well, He disapproved of the Ninevites and He spared them. They were living unrighteous and wicked lives, and barbaric brutal lives and he spared them. They treated the Israelites with brutality and an iron fist and He spared them. They were enemies of the Israelites God's chosen people and therefore, enemies of God. I mean if He's gonna save people outside the fold, then shouldn't He save somebody in the fold? Doesn't that make sense to you? Isn't that why we have a problem with suffering?

Because that's not right, that no good, low-life, adulterous drunkard, he's being blessed, and the man up here in the amen corner, the man that has made Christ the heartbeat of all that he is. At 31 years old has 2 brand new twins, and the doctor says he has terminal cancer and lives less than 6 months. God ought to hop off His throne and get down here and fix that problem right? But we learn in the Job story that God does not do that, and we're gonna see why in a moment.

Ok, Deonté I give you this, He didn't give him an exemption, He didn't get off His throne and fix the problem. But Deonté, there's more to this story, He could've at least sent a cure telepathically. Right? Abraham and Moses both prayed and asked God to heal someone supernaturally. They said, just by your power LORD, and Miriam and Abimelech were healed. He didn't even do that. He didn't have to make Job wait for 42 chapters. So we've already learned our first lesson this morning that Tragedy is inevitable even for the people of God, we've got to learn a second lesson this morning.

DELAY IS PROBABLE; EVEN FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

Can I go back into history for a moment, just recap these events with me in your mind. I want to give you a few biblical scenes. Can't you see Noah going outside every day? Day one no rain, 5 years later, no rain, 10 years later still no rain.

Let me illustrate it this way for you, if Noah was given the command, let's say Noah was given the command about the flood in 1897, 126 years ago. I want you to think about what Noah would have experienced before God fulfilled His promise. Noah would have lived through 1903; the first car was made, 1914; WWI, 1929-1930 he would have lived through the great depression, 1941-1946 WWII, how about the Sixties Vietnam, 1970s Watergate, he would've seen the Gulf war, the invention of computers, cameras, putting a man on the moon, how many presidents. Think how long that is! And

God told him I'm going to destroy the earth by a flood and I want you to build a big giant arc. And I want it to be a floating zoo. That's a delay man. Now He had His reasons I'm sure but that's a delay. Let me give you some others.

How about Abraham and Sarah? Abraham wrote an announcement about the birth of his son Isaac on Facebook but he had to wait 14 years before he could post it! And really 25 if you count when the promise was first made. You know he's like we're gonna have a baby, log onto Facebook he's ready to post their big announcement and he can't post it for 14 years!

Think about this with me, sometimes we don't flush these stories out we just read them and skim them over. Imagine this, let's fast forward one year from today, and imagine if God comes to me and says Deonte', you and Jessa are going to have a baby. And I say ok Lord I believe you, I would be 33 then, now imagine this. I'm 33 years old when He promises me that, and I don't have a baby until I am 58. 25 years later, that's a delay.

And Abraham he's the father of the faithful, he's the main dude in the OT, he's the father of Israel, he's the one who's gonna give birth to the Messiah and God made him wait.

Delay is probable, even for the people of God.

God is not going to work on our timetable, He's not gonna work according to our schedule, even though I believe man is the most important creature in God's address book I believe that I really do, I believe Deonté Watkins is probably way up high on God's to-do-list every day, I believe I'm that important to Him, I really do. But I have to remember that God's calendars, God's wall clocks, and His watches are calibrated to a different standard than mine. His timing is not my timing.

So what have we learned? Tragedy is inevitable even for the people of God, and delay is probable, even for the people of God. This is what we learn in this story. Now, why would God delay? I think that's a fair question because I want to know why. Why does God delay in this Job story?

Let me give you a few suggestions. First of all, Job seems to be tested because not only is he blameless and upright but "he fears God and shuns evil". Job's piety lies at the heart of this book's message. His suffering would be tested to see if he fears God and shuns evil because of who God is or what God has given him.

One way of looking at this is if Job passes, God will be glorified but if Job fails, God would be shamed. All of you fellow weepers out there who are crying on our way to heaven as we struggle together. This is hard for me to say but I don't know how else to say it. God is more important than we are. And because He is more important than we are, it may necessitate that we go through periods of grieving. Even though we don't understand it.

One of the reasons this occurs is **so that God would be glorified**. (Were you there Job...?.)

We may not know where this jagged puzzle piece fits, but God does, and we may grieve because we do not know where this fits, and this may cause great anxiety. But God knows where it fits. And His glory is greater than any of our wants. And I think sometimes in the church we've forgotten that. And I

think in America we've certainly forgotten that. Because everything becomes about the person in the pew and not the God we read about in this book. And God says Job you don't get it, Eliphaz you don't get it, Bildad you don't get it, Zophar and Elihu you don't get it, but it's gonna be for My glory. Sometimes grief is like that, it's for some greater purpose.

Not only was it for God's glory but **it was also so our faith might be strengthened. Also, God delays for growth.** I don't know if you've ever had instant applesauce or instant lemon pudding or any of those kinds of things. You can get instant applesauce and instant lemon pudding but there's no such thing as instant apples or instant lemons. You can't shorten the growing season. And that's what God wants. God wants to not shorten the growing season in our lives, He wants our faiths to build. And unfortunately on a sin-cursed planet sometimes that requires sorrow and hardship and difficulty. And sometimes that brings tears. I haven't given you a lot of good news yet have I?

If Christ came to you and said I can either heal your son from sickness, or I can deliver him from satan. I can make him physically well or I can make him spiritually secure. I can give him a great life or I can give him eternal life which do you choose? Now we know that choice we know it's obvious. The fact that Jesus waited for Lazarus to die precipitated Jesus' death according to the gospel of John. It wasn't until that event occurred that they finally said that's it, we've had enough we're killing this Guy. Jesus knew that He knew that this event would send Him to the cross and when He gets to the cross guess what He does for Lazarus? He saves him from his sins.

The suffering of Job although it is tragic and sad and brings grief to the family, it was necessary because Jesus wanted to deliver him from something greater. And I honestly believe that a good God does that for everyone in this building. Even though we don't understand it.

I want to caution you because I have been so guilty of this. When I'm in tragedy and sorrow and difficulty, and grief, I want God to flex His muscle and get me out of it. I want Him to use His power and rescue me. But I don't usually ask for His wisdom. I don't usually ask Him to flex His mind about the matter. I think as Christians we need to rethink that, we need to ask God to deliver us with muscle and with power but we also need to say Lord in Your wisdom, in Your mind, You know what's best. If You will not deliver me from this tragedy then You deliver me from my immaturity. You make me the kind of man I'm supposed to be, the kind of woman You've called me to be here on this earth.

Isn't that what Jesus prayed for in the garden of Gethsemane? He begged for God's power. He said LORD if it's possible, let this cup pass from Me. But not My will, flex Your mind, God. Let Your will be done whatever it is.

CONCLUSION

So what have we learned? Tragedy is inevitable even for the people of God, Delay is probable even for the people of God, here's the third lesson we want to learn today. **Grief is natural even for the people of God.**

I kind of wondered what the household must have looked like at this time. This is my guess maybe you can relate. I'm sure Job's household life came to a standstill. It was as if someone pushed the pause button on life. Can't you picture Job normally concerned about the details of running an efficient homestead operation, allowing the farm equipment to rust, weeds starting to grow, the beds are not made up, and the clothes in the hamper have heaped up? "At this, Job got up and tore his robe, and shaved his head" (Job 1:20).

Grief is natural even for the people of God. Grief does not mean that we lack faith, grief does not mean we are weak, or there is something wrong with us. God made us to grieve a loss. In fact, it is so natural and such an appropriate response to the events and tragedies of our lives that Jesus cries Himself in verse 35. We say it all the time the shortest verse in the bible "Jesus wept".

Have you ever thought about how pregnant that little two-word statement is? Jesus wept even though He knew what? He knew He was going to raise him from the dead. I mean in 10 minutes He knew He was gonna be hanging out with His old buddy again and they were gonna be eating a leg of lamb again just like old times. He already knew that in advance but He still wept. Now I know the Bible says there's not gonna be any tears in heaven. I know we sing about it. But I believe God weeps with us. If we weep over an animal or a pet that gets sick and dies then certainly God will do no less for His children.

He sees what's happened to this planet, He is a Father and He loves us. And when we weep, I believe He weeps with us. He not only sees and hears our grief, and understands our grief, but I believe He grieves with us verse 35.

This leaves us with the last lesson we want to learn this morning. Tragedy is inevitable even for the people of God, Delay is probable even for the people of God, and Grief is natural even for the people of God, but **hope is possible only for the people of God.**

That's where we find victory, God is there in our time of grief. **Job 42:1-6, 10-12.** I'd like to go back in history just one more time.

Abraham, every sacrifice you are called to make, even if it's your own son. For every one of them, they'll be a ram caught in the thicket by the horns. For every giant you're summoned to fell David, they'll be a heavenly sniper to guide the stone. **For every** lion you face Daniel they'll be an unseen lion tamer there, **for every** fiery furnace you enter Shadrack, they'll be a fourth man in there with you dousing the flames, **for every** storm-tossed sea Peter, they'll be a Master of the tempest that's on deck if you just trust Him, **for every** cemetery grounds keeper who rolls your final tombstone in place, Lazarus, they'll be a Lord who says take away the stone, **for every** undertaker who lays your lifeless body in a Bethany tomb Lazarus they'll be a Uppertaker who say come forth, **for every** embalmer who cocoons you in grave clothes Lazarus they'll be One who comes along who is the Resurrection and the Life and He'll say loose him and let him go. For every tragedy, you suffer Job, there's a God in heaven whose wisdom surpasses understanding.

Those jagged puzzle pieces that we talked about, were tragedy, suffering, and grief. We all share this problem. But hope is only available in this building this morning for those of us who know Jesus.

That's where hope is found. That's where delay gains meaning and that's where grief is comforted. It's in Jesus Christ

Similarly, just as Job experienced new life after suffering, so too will those of us who know Jesus. If you're not friends with Jesus this morning I beg you, please don't leave this building without making the decision to do so this morning.

DIVINE DIALOG: AN INTRODUCTION TO JOB

Dr. Alden Bass

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The Book of Job is characterized by conversations: between God and Satan, Job and his friends, and ultimately between God and Job. In this brief introduction to Job, we will examine some of the difficult questions raised by the text regarding the character of God. In the face of Job's terrible and seemingly-unjust suffering, God is revealed to be a loving parent who is responsive to his children. The conversational form of the book contributes to this understanding of a God who both speaks and listens.

INTRODUCTION

Job is one of the most enigmatic books of the Bible. Its setting is ambiguous. Little can be said with certainty about the time or place in which the story occurs. Job and the other characters in the book are from lands east of the Jordan – Syria, Arabia, Mesopotamia – away from the main stage of Israelite history. They are Gentiles, yet they know and serve the God of Israel. The Jewish Talmud records that Job lived in the time before the Mosaic law, a placement that would make sense of the complete absence of references to the Torah. The Greek Septuagint links Job to a king of Edom named Jobab mentioned in Genesis 36:33. He and his friends are identified as descendants of Abraham.¹⁹ The text itself merely says that he was “blameless and upright, a man who feared God and turned away from evil.” (1:1)

THE BOOK OF JOB IS A SERIES OF DIALOGUES

The majority of the book – chapters 3 through 37 – consists of a series of dialogues between the righteous man Job and his friends: Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, and later Elihu. No other book of the Bible is so conversational. The main topic of those dialogues is the justice of God. Job, you see, has suffered immensely. In the first two chapters of the book, he loses everything: his considerable wealth, his home, his ten children, and his wife. He is also stricken with disease and cast out of his community, enduring both physical pain and the social stigma of the unclean (even his own family had abandoned him; see

¹⁹ Bildad is identified as a “Shuhite,” and Shuah was a descendent of Abraham and Keturah (Gen 25:1-2). Eliphaz from Teman in Edom is associated with Esau’s son Eliphaz, the father of Teman (Gen 36:11). Elihu was a descendent of Buz, who may have been a nephew of Abraham (Gen 22:20-21). Zophar alone has no connection and may have been a Gentile. He is a “Naamathite,” perhaps from the city of Naamah in Arabia.

42:11). Most painful of all, it seems that God himself has forsaken Job, despite Job's faithfulness. God has allowed the suffering, perhaps God is even the cause of the suffering.

Job cries out to God for answers. God's sovereignty and power he never doubts – God is “mighty in strength” (9:4), able to “move mountains” (9:5) and “shake the earth” (9:6), and the creator of all things (9:8-9). “If it is a contest of strength,” Job says, “he is the strong one! If it is a matter of justice, who can make him answer for anything?” (9:19, Hamilton trans.). Job wants answers, but he doubts that God is paying attention: “If I summoned him and he answered me, I do not believe that he would listen to my voice.” (9:16)

His companions have an answer, rooted in a certain kind of wisdom tradition. This wisdom tradition was common across the ancient near east and can be found in the wisdom literature of the Sumerians, the Babylonians, and the Egyptians. It's the tradition that is represented in the biblical Proverbs. “The wage of the righteous leads to life, the gain of the wicked to sin” (10:16-17). Likewise Psalm 37:25, “I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.” The wisdom is straightforward: the righteous are rewarded and the wicked are punished. They were not thinking of the afterlife, which is how we might square this. “If the righteous are repaid *on earth*, how much more the wicked and the sinner!” (11:31)

The tension between Job and his interlocutors mirrors a tension within the biblical literature. On the one hand, Proverbs presents a predictable and stable moral universe in which good is rewarded and evil is punished. “Be assured, the wicked will not go unpunished, but those who are righteous will escape.” (11:21) On the other hand, we have Ecclesiastes, which says the opposite: “the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to the skillful, but time and chance happen to them all” (Eccl. 9:11). Like Ecclesiastes, Job's story challenges the predictable moral world of conventional wisdom. “The tents of robbers are at peace” (12:6), Job complains. Guided by the conventional wisdom, his friends insist throughout the book that Job must have sinned; Eliphaz says, “Think now, who that was innocent ever perished? Or where were the upright cut off?” (4:7). Even though the friends are articulating biblically-informed wisdom, they are rebuked by God at the end of the book: “My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends, for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has.” (42:7).

I often present this apparent contradiction to my students: “Do we live in an ordered moral world where righteousness is rewarded in this life?” or “Do we live in a chaotic moral world where the good suffer and the wicked enjoy rewards?” The answer, of course, is “yes.” Both are true. Generally speaking, life goes better when one lives righteously, and generally speaking, sin results in suffering. Proverbs and to some extent the Psalms give us this general picture of the world. Yet we all know exceptions to this – sometimes the innocent suffer through no fault of their own. Job and Ecclesiastes help us see and make sense of that. There are no footnotes in Proverbs that explain this, no parenthetical instructions to “see Job for an exception.” God expects us to read *both* kinds of books and sort them out.

In other words, the wisdom of the Bible – like the wisdom in Job – is presented as a sort of canonical conversation. Job spars with Eliphaz or Bildad, just as the Book of Job grapples with the

Proverbs. God gives us both sides of the conversation and then invites us into that conversation because the search for wisdom requires just this kind of back-and-forth dialogue. This basic conversational structure actually recalls God's own inner life – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – who from eternity exist “in conversation” with each other.

The Book of Job is exceptional in its commitment to dialogue. And in the time that remains I want to consider three other ways we see God “in conversation” – first with Job, then with all creation, then with Satan.

THE CONVERSATION BETWEEN GOD & JOB

As we've already seen in chapter 9, Job does not believe God would design to answer his questions. “But I would speak to the Almighty,” he says, “and I desire to argue my case with God” (13:3). Indeed, part of the pathos of the Book of Job is the seeming absence of God through his suffering. Like the psalmist and later Jesus himself, Job could cry out “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

Job wants to know why. “Does it seem good to you to oppress, to despise the work of your hands and favor the schemes of the wicked?” (10:3)

Suffering isolates us. It cuts us off from the world. When our body or our soul is in pain, our world is reduced to that pain; it can consume us. Job says, “Just leave me alone to die” (7:16).

Yet the faithfulness of Job is that he stays at the table; he remains in dialogue. With his friends (“friends” in quotes – “my companions are treacherous” [6:15]). And with God. He questions God, accuses God, and comes near to denouncing God, but Job never stops talking to God.

And eventually, God responds to Job. Chapters 38-41 record God's response to Job. It's the longest direct dialogue between God and a human in the Old Testament. God appears in the whirlwind and tells Job to “gird up his loins like a man.” What follows is one of the most spectacular parts of scripture, a tour de force of God's power and might, and creativity.

Yet many modern commentators have noted that God seems to ignore Job's primary concern, which is why the righteous suffer. God's address instead appears to be focused on his divine power and might. There is nothing about cosmic justice, no explanation for the suffering of the innocent. Remember, Job never did question God's power, only his goodness. There is a danger that we receive this as a conversation stopper – God is super-powerful, so just submit to him and don't ask such questions. Yet if this were true, it would negate the very conversational structure of the book of Job and raise some difficult questions about the character of God. What are we to make of this?

One of my teachers, the philosopher Eleanor Stump, made some interesting observations about God's whirlwind speeches which gave me a new perspective on these texts. In her book *Wandering in Darkness*, she argues that in Job 38-42 God is actually demonstrating his loving relationship with the nonhuman created world. He portrays himself as a parent and the elements of the created order as his children. For instance, the morning stars are called “the sons of God” (38:7). In the very next verse God

adopts maternal imagery, speaking of the sea bursting forth from God's womb. God used the clouds to swaddle the sea like an infant (38:9). The ice and hoarfrost likewise were produced from God's womb (38:28-29), and God is the "father" of the rain (38:28).

THE CONVERSATION BETWEEN GOD & CREATION

He has the same kind of relationship with the animals. The hungry ravens do not cry to their mother, but to God (38:41). He feeds the lions (38:40) and the wild ox spends the night at his crib (39:9). None of these compare with the pure delight God takes in the great monsters Behemoth and Leviathan, the first of the great acts of God" (40:19) and the "king over all that are proud" (41:34). When God describes them, he sounds like a proud father bragging about his children. God plays with the Leviathan "as with a bird" (41:5). To this absolutely terrifying creature, God "speaks soft words" (41:3).

God is all-powerful, but God is not a tyrant over creation. Quite the opposite. His creative power is the power of words, not force. The soft words God speaks to Leviathan are like the words he spoke in the beginning: "Let there be light." Amazingly, God's words are always in the form of a call that anticipates a response. A kind of conversation. What happens when God calls the light into being? "The morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy" (38:7). When God spoke to the lightning, they answer: "Here we are!" (38:35).²⁰

Stump sums it up like this: "God relates to everything he has made...he deals as a parent with his creatures, from the sea and rain to the raven and the donkey and even the monstrous behemoth and leviathan. He brings them out of the womb, swaddles, feeds, and guides them, and even plays with them. Most importantly, he talks to them; and somehow, in some sense or other, they talk to him in return." (Stump, 190).

If this is a fair reading of the text, then what God is stressing to Job is not his sheer power, but rather his personal, even parental relationship of care to all creation. Which is exactly what Job is asking about. And if God shows such care and concern for even the smallest creatures, will he not also care for Job?

THE CONVERSATION BETWEEN GOD & SATAN

Before closing, we have to say something about the framing narrative of chapters 1-2, not only to be comprehensive but also because these chapters potentially cut against the argument that God cares for Job. It would not be difficult to read those opening chapters and see Job as a kind of pawn in a heavenly game, the object of a gentleman's wager between God and Satan. What's going on in this story?

²⁰ Contrast this with Adam and Eve's response to God's call in the garden – they hide.

Once again, we have the report of a conversation, this time set in the heavenly realm. The *bene Elohim*, or sons of God, present themselves to God, and among them is “the accuser,” *ha-satan*. He is a son of God, but an estranged son, one who is no longer at home in the Father’s presence. This being is opposed to God, and he has been actively working to turn people against God. When God mentioned his faithful servant Job, Satan already knew about him and the protective hedge about him; presumably because he had already tried to attack him (1:10).

Stump makes sense of this story through the analogy of an estranged child who suddenly shows up at the family dinner. The child is not unwelcome, but the relationship is strained. The parents may ask where the child has been or what they’ve been doing. Stump then argues that God’s actions can be understood as those of a loving parent trying to win back their erring child. He offers Job up as an example of a good son, perhaps so that Satan might reconsider his own rebellious stance and return to his father.

It is not clear to me whether Satan was ever capable of repenting – we do know that he and the other rebellious angels are destined for eternal fire (Matt 25:41). But the portrait of a God who never gives up on even his most wayward son fits well with the Father portrayed by Jesus in the Parable of the Prodigal Son. And again, if God still cares even for the rebellious Satan, does he not also care for his servant Job?

One could still say that God is sacrificing Job to make a point to Satan, even if it’s for Satan’s own good in a sense. Yet if God had refused to allow Satan to test Job, he would have demonstrated a lack of confidence in him. We all know that Job is faithful to God, but what this prologue shows is that God also believes in Job, enough to allow him to endure terrible suffering. And the suffering does not ultimately diminish Job. Quite the opposite in fact. The Lord’s brother James says, “You have heard of the endurance of Job, and you have seen the outcome that the Lord brought about, for the Lord is compassionate and merciful” (James 5:11). If Job had not demonstrated patience through such terror, we would not have heard about him and we would not be having a whole lectureship about him! He would just be another pious middle-eastern sheik who lived and died thousands of years ago.

CONCLUSION

Job not only gained an everlasting reputation for righteousness and patience but he was transformed by his experience. After his conversation with God, he sees himself differently: “I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes” (42:5-6). When we first encounter Job in chapter 1, he is an anxious parent, sacrificing daily on behalf of children *just in case* they have cursed God in their hearts the day before. At the end of the book, after his fortunes have been restored and his children replaced, he is depicted differently. Gone is the anxiety. Here is a man who lives life to its fullness (42:17). The text actually names his three new daughters, though none of the first children were named. They are called Jemimah, Keziah, and Keren-happuch, unique names in the OT which can translate Dove, Cinnamon Spice, and Glitter (literally,

“mascara-palette”). Reflecting on these names, OT scholar Ellen Davis suggests: “Maybe Job has learned from the Creator to love pizzazz” (Davis, *Opening Israel’s Scriptures*, 358).

My prayer for this gathering is that God would bless our conversation, our disagreements, and our lingering questions as we discuss matters of the greatest importance: suffering and death, grief and anger, and the nature of God. May we, like Job, be transformed by our encounter with this enigmatic, but brilliant book, and by the loving Father who inspired it and safeguarded it for us.

GOD'S WISDOM VS MAN'S WISDOM

Matthew Crowe

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Job's struggle to reconcile his suffering with his relationship with God is a search for wisdom, which is elusive through most of the book. This presentation argues that "man's wisdom," represented through supporting characters like Job's wife, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, does not originate with man but is formed by an incomplete revelation and understanding of God's wisdom. These supporting characters represent the principle of divine retribution which is best seen in Proverbs. Taking Job 28 and Job 38-40 as its texts, this presentation argues that wisdom cannot be found by human ingenuity but by divine revelation. Readers of Job, however, are often left with more questions than answers in their own search for wisdom. Ultimately, wisdom is found in the revelation of Jesus Christ.

INTRODUCTION

Some of the best things are born out of the midnight of tragedy. We like songs that are born out of midnight, even when we don't know that's when a song and its lyrics were inspired, but midnight does that. It did it to Paul Lawrence Dunbar in his poem "Sympathy." He had that one repeated line that captured the imagination and inspired the autobiography of Maya Angelou, I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings. She holds up the free bird, soaring and plummeting and soaring again, to show us what it's like to be the caged bird. Clipped wings and tied feet, narrow slits to look through bars. I know why the caged bird sings and it's got nothing to do with its conditions.

Maya Angelou, who experienced tragic, traumatic events in her youth, was writing this primarily to black women and then to all women, be proud, be courageous, and face life boldly. She was interviewed and asked what her seminal book was about and said, "Self-esteem." One with ears shaped theologically cannot help but hear a deeper meaning. That bird is in a cage but God has put something inside that bird. It doesn't sing because of its conditions but because it transcends its conditions.

What you are reading is not a study of our best poets. Rather, this is about poetry that has been breathed out by God. Specifically, this is about that original caged bird named Job. Like all good poetry, Job does not give us empty platitudes or easy answers. Instead, Job gives us a story, an experience, that invites us to sit in the ashes of physical and emotional pain, to lift up our own lament to God in our suffering, and to wait on the Lord.

When we meet the man from Uz named Job, we see a man who is free. He had a good life. Before there was Silicon Valley there was Mesopotamia Valley and if they had billionaires, Job would have been one of them. He had 7 sons and three daughters (Job 1:2). Not just that, he had 7000 sheep,

300 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 female donkeys, and very many servants (Job 1:3). Job had done very well in life. We might imagine that Job traded on the Babylonian Stock Exchange, maxed out his Roth IRA deposits, and multiple certificates of deposits, and each of his ten children had a trust fund so deep, they couldn't see the bottom of it. We see this in the fact that Job's ten kids weren't piled in the same bed as that family in Willy Wonka. They each had their own house. Not only were they feasting and partying all the time, but Job prayed for them every day in case they sinned. The man literally has everything.

But what he has isn't the point so much as what he does. Job was "blameless and upright, feared God and turned away from evil" (Job 1:1). Job is the premier example of doing the right things and getting the right results. He had done nothing but good so one would expect Job gets nothing but good in return. Now if all this doesn't capture our attention, maybe the next thing will, because it sure got Job's attention because even though his prayers kept going up, the blessings stopped coming down.

Many times when our lives are not shaken, we are not attentive to God's voice. When does God speak? Daily, regularly, and often. But when it is high noon, you don't lean in to hear what God says that much. Because high noon is springtime, it's when the spring fragrances are spraying on your face and you smell the scent of blooming flowers. It's when you're young and vibrant and agile and flexible and you are looking at so much life in front of you that you can't even imagine that there is an end to life's road. Who's got time for God, when you've got that? "I'm handsome, I'm strong." "I'm attractive, I'm pretty." "I'm educated and successful." "Who needs God?" And then, as only Job can repeat those words: "a messenger came...and while he was yet speaking there came another...and while he was yet speaking there came another....and while he was yet speaking there came another." Job hadn't finished washing his hands for supper when he learned he had lost his money, he had lost his livelihood, he had lost his servants, and he lost all of his children.

That would drive most men to the grave, but not Job. This is a man that feared the Lord so he took it on the chin and didn't blame God. Sometimes we can have the skin of diamonds, and some of us can block anything out, not feel the pain around us until that pain gets inside us. His own skin bore the sores that his soul had not yet seen. The free bird that had soared in the sunshine was suddenly caged in the darkness with clipped wings.

The story Job is not just about suffering. It is about the human relationship with God in the midst of suffering. What are we to think about God when disaster strikes? We need wisdom and that's what Job is about. And we need that kind of wisdom. Our churches and classrooms are full of people who bear the burden of suffering, some of us suffer because of things we have done, and some of us are suffering over things we haven't figured out. But suffering is part of our experience and Job has a word for us.

LOOKING FOR WISDOM

There are several different kinds of literature in the Bible. There are historical narratives like 1-2 Samuel that recount history, flatly telling us what happened. There are books of prophecy where God burdens a prophet to bring his word to his people and other people groups. And there is a genre of literature that is just called wisdom. Books like Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job would belong to this category. All these books basically tell us how to live under the sun, how to have a good life, and what's the meaning of it all.

Job is an important place in the wisdom literature. Proverbs tells us the principle of divine retribution: that if you do good things and live a good life you have blessings from God. If you avoid immoral people, don't fall into the wrong crowd, stay away from immoral relationships, don't take advantage of people, use your money wisely, and hold friendships wisely, then you're going to have a great life. In fact, if you don't do those things, or if you do bad things, then bad things are going to happen to you. You will become what Proverbs calls a fool, someone who is distant from God and his blessings. That makes sense to us but what about when you do good and good does not come? What about when you love the Lord but his blessings are not apparent? That's where the book of Job comes in. Here's a man that has done nothing wrong, but very bad things happened to him, things that he did not deserve.

But not everyone thinks Job is innocent. His wife apparently doesn't. In chapter 2, Job's wife had had enough. His own wife, his flesh and blood, told him to curse God and die. Now before we throw out Job's wife, we have to remember she was suffering too. She lost her class, her social standing, and more importantly her family. Whether she blamed God or she blamed Job, she was mad, and if Job needed to die to fix it, then so be it. That's bad enough when your own wife wants you dead. But then Job had a visit from his three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. They present Job with evidence of his own suffering as proof of his own wrongdoing. Like the prosperity preachers who tell us that if we perform certain actions, then we will receive certain blessings. If that's true then the converse must be true: if we perform other actions or omit certain actions, then we will receive curses. These three friends represent the partial, incomplete view of wisdom we find in the book of Proverbs, which is divine retribution. Some truth in what they say, but not the whole truth. What they say, like what Proverbs says, is generally true. That's what makes it a proverb.

This is why we can't just pick and choose what portions of Scripture we want. We got too many picky eaters with the Bible. Some cherry-pick their favorite verses and wonder why they're still hungry spiritually. "Just give me Jesus," they say, as they omit the God-breathed words of Jesus in the Law and the Prophets, which point to Jesus. A half-baked biblical theology, formed in the image of our preferences, is not God's wisdom, even if it sounds wise. We don't need some of the Bible, we need ALL of the Bible because all Scripture is breathed out by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness (2 Tim 3:16).

This search for wisdom in Job 3-27 is expressed with poetic precision in Job 28. This is a chapter in Job that some people call an "interlude." We don't know who spoke the words in this chapter, whether it's Job or some omniscient narrator. It seems like it interrupts the speech of Job between

chapters 27 and 29. But it is far from being a passage we should skip over because this is a major clue to interpret the book of Job: wisdom will not be found by mortals.

This hymn of wisdom in Job 28 uses the metaphor of mining: men have mined the earth for silver, copper, and iron, bringing bread out of the earth. Humans have cut channels out of rocks, and overturned mountains by their roots. But the question is asked in verse 12, "But where shall wisdom be found?" The answer is that we can't find it. The deep says, "It ain't here." The sea says, "I haven't seen it." Death says, "I've heard of it but that's all I can say." The clue comes in verse 23: God understands the way to it.

Human wisdom has accomplished a lot of great things. We have solved many problems. Diseases that used to be a death sentence are now cured with routine treatment. Human ingenuity has allowed us to explore space, to mine the recesses of our minds, We have invented creations that make life better: artificial light, automobiles, and blue jeans with stretchy waistlines.

But human reasoning cannot advance the deep problems of your life. Technology has not made us better humans. It has made us more efficient but God didn't intend for us to be machines, he intended for us to be humans. How is it that you can watch your front door from your phone but you really don't feel any safer? How is it that we can express ourselves in any way on any social media platform yet we still feel unseen and unheard? How is it we can connect with anyone in the world and still feel disconnected? How is it we are living longer, more luxurious lives than ever before but we are still hounded by depression, anxiety, and other illness? It's because man's wisdom can't get you to God. Keep looking. You will not find it. Keep looking for it in the world, you won't find it. Keep looking for it in the academy, you won't find it. All you will find is the emptiness and loneliness that will drive you back to those three friends and that one wife, to the nihilistic notion that life just isn't worth it.

There are families in our churches and in our classes who have been affected by people who had the same rationale as Job's wife, that life has been so difficult until the only path of deliverance is to take their life into their own hands, that there is no exit, no possibility. Here I want to say to you, Life is tough. Don't let anyone else tell you otherwise. It doesn't matter how much you love Jesus, life is still tough. Life is hard, even if you do everything the right way. You can take care of your body, you can take care of your mind, and you can take care of your wealth, but sickness and disease can still rob you.

But we have a God that when life is all shaken up, he will give somebody the right word to give to you at the right time. I can't tell you how many times in my life I have heard from the lips of people in my life who have said the right thing to me in the darkest moments of my life and they had no idea about my midnights. God will send you a word of encouragement at the right time that will encourage you to continue on. It may not be what you want to hear but it will be what you need to hear, much like what Job heard from God himself.

GOD REVEALS WISDOM

Brother Job has been fussing for nearly 40 chapters, along with Joel, Creflo, and Benny, but God has heard enough. From a whirlwind, this destructive force of nature, God gives his instructive word to Job. “Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?” (Job 38:2). He asked Job questions he could not answer: did you measure the foundation of the world? Tell me again Job, how did you contain the oceans in their places? How in the world do you keep making the sunrise, Job? Can you tell me about death and what’s on the other side? For four chapters, God goes on and on!

Here is Hebrew wisdom: God is God, and we are not. We cannot fathom the complexities of the universe. There are things going on that we haven’t even heard of! We barely know what is happening within our own hearts while God manages the universe at a subatomic level. And Job gets the picture. In chapter 40, God asks Job what he thinks. Job replies that he is just going to sit down and let the Lord talk (Job 40:4). And that’s where we need to be. When you get shaken up, God shakes us up to put us in the right position.

Job did all the right things, ticked the right boxes, and said the right prayers. But it took God to bring the darkness over his life for him to get off his high horse and really get down on his knees in the ashes where he could grow. I know it looks bad, I know it hurts, and I know it is dark, but everything you need is down there in the dirt. It may not come when you want it to, and it may not come as you want it to, but God will show up at the right time and just in time.

When I was a boy, I learned a heavy piece of wisdom: Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall; Humpty Dumpty had a great fall. Lewis Carroll is the pen name for Charles Dodgson who wrote the book for the little girl who played out in the courtyard of his home and church, *The Adventures of Alice in Wonderland*, followed by *Through the Looking Glass*. Alice saw the image growing larger of Humpty sitting on this wall. She was amazed that he had not fallen off because the wall was so thin and because of the egg-shaped life of the creature on top of it. Even she knew that if Humpty Dumpty who sat on the wall indeed had a great fall, she would have a situation on her hands. His life is fragile and he’s going to crack and fall apart. So our parents said to us, Humpty Dumpty sat on the wall; Humpty Dumpty had a great fall, so we have to fix Humpty. We have to repair life because I’m young and virile and agile and I have so much road of life ahead of me, I can’t live it fragmented and broken, so what do we do? Call in all the king’s horses! Call in all the king’s men! Bring in technology and sophistication and advancement, and see what it does. Like it was read to me, “they couldn’t put poor Humpty Dumpty together again.” You can’t use substitute fixes on an eternal problem.

Some of us may have stopped reading at that point, but the beauty of the church throughout the ages is that it always puts its own interpretation on things. After all, Jesus changed everything so the church can look at everything differently now. My grandmother read me this story with a sanctified imagination, telling me that, “all the king’s horses and all the king’s men couldn’t put Humpty together again, but the king can!”

There is always one greater than us who can put our lives back together again, even when we don’t understand what’s going on. We have learned that God shakes us up to put us back together. God

can put his super on top of your natural. He can make the wind work on his side. He did it then and he can do it now.

God shakes us up just to put us back together, better than before. At the end of Job's story, he's got double what he had at the start. Can you believe that when God got done with Job, he was better off than when he started? Every situation isn't an accident to you. What you think is coincidence maybe God's providence to get your attention to turn in a direction he's been wanting you to go in. "I lost my job." Did you really? You may have. But it could've been that when you had it God couldn't talk to you. He's got another job, and a better one than that, but what he wants first is your attention and then he can trust you with the other.

CONCLUSION

When we finish reading Job, we have more questions than you did when we started reading Job. God gives us the answers but we have to keep reading to find them. And I'm not about a genre of Hebrew literature, I'm talking about Jesus our Hebrew Lord. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom but Jesus Christ is the end of it.

He learned obedience by the things that he suffered (Hebrews 5:8). I can't explain the ins and outs of human suffering, but I can tell you Jesus suffered right along with us, even to death. And if God could bring Jesus out of that grave, trust that God is able and God is willing to work this out for you. Just like you have to go through the labor of birth, you have to go through the crushing waters of baptism for the new birth, and you have to go through some crushing waters in your life for God to get you where he wants you. You have to get in Jesus because Paul said that it is in Christ where are "hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

If you want to know wisdom, you can start with Job, but you had better get to Jesus.

INTERACTION BETWEEN GOD & SATAN: JOB 1-2

Chase Almond

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"The battle over each soul is a spiritual one. While much emphasis in the study of Job is spent applying Job's suffering to our own, the heavenly prologue reveals the larger characters at play. The accuser challenges God's sovereignty, and Job is the tool by which God reveals His understanding of His sons and the adversary's weak position. Satan supposes that any one of God's sons will desert Him without His blessings and provisions, even His best son. God says otherwise. The true and living God is in total control over Satan, and all of His creation. God is playing cat and mouse with Satan, not with Job."

INTRODUCTION

The problem with suffering is one we must all face. How can we overcome suffering? How can we persevere? What is the purpose of it all? Unfortunately, wisdom in this area must be gained personally. I can tell you how I have overcome moments of pain to encourage you in your times of trial, but until you've faced the heat of the fire, you will never know how you will respond. All we can do is offer comfort to those in pain and try to fortify ourselves for the next difficult time.

One incredible source of wisdom on the subject of suffering is the book of Job. The book stands to help us wrestle through our suffering and somehow find peace, as Job was eventually able to do. Considering the role of God in the book, with His interaction with Satan in the beginning and His powerful answer to Job at the end, we discover that God is truly at the center of each of our lives, totally in control of everything.

The interaction between God and Satan in Job 1 and 2 raises important questions about the nature of God and the existence of evil in the world. Why would God allow Satan to test Job in such a cruel and extreme way? Does God's willingness to allow suffering and hardship in the world mean that he is not truly benevolent or all-powerful?

To the unbeliever, perhaps a cynical person, it seems as if God is torturing Job, and that Job's pain is pointless. Likely, they conjure up some painful experiences in their own lives that caused them to resent God, and they weaponize the story of Job against Christians, asking how such a good God could allow such things.

James, the brother of Jesus, had a different opinion, not only about the nature of God but also concerning His purposes in what He does. James 5:11 - *"Behold, we consider those blessed who*

remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.”

The book of Job explores some of the most challenging questions of human existence, such as the problem of evil and suffering, the nature of God, and the meaning of faith. While the book is written about the inner war going on in the man of Job, it really is concerned more with the actions of God. James reminds us that in spite of the terrible pain and inner turmoil of Job’s story, the Christian must not shy away from it, for in its conclusion it reveals the sovereign, compassionate, and merciful nature of God.

SATAN’S ACCUSATION (1:6-12)

After the book of Job opens, in Job 1:1-5, introducing us to the wealthiest and the most righteous man on earth, who even prayed and offered sacrifices for uncommitted sins, we pull back from the earth into the heavenly realm.

We read of a scene in which the angels of God present themselves before God, and Satan comes among them. God asks Satan where he has come from, and Satan replies that he has been roaming around the earth. God then asks Satan if he has considered Job, a blameless and upright man. This appears, at a glance, as if God is placing Job on Satan’s chopping block. We must remember, God is all-knowing, we are not. We don’t have the perfect knowledge that God does, but we can assume a few things. God knows how faithful Job is. God knows Job’s faith will allow him to endure whatever Satan throws at him. Satan’s attacks are weaker than Job’s faith.

Satan then accuses Job of being righteous only because he has been blessed with material possessions and a good life. “I’ve tried to get him, but you’ve put a hedge around him!” Satan challenges God to take away these blessings, saying that Job will not only lose his faith but will curse God to His face. Satan is questioning Job’s motives and challenging the integrity of his faith. In this, he not only questions Job’s faith but also tests God. Satan tells God that no one would ever love Him if He did not bless them. Would your faith dissolve if your material possessions were removed? That is what Satan supposes.

SATAN TAKES JOB’S POSSESSIONS (1:13-22)

God, in his sovereignty, grants Satan permission to test Job, but with some limitations. In Job 1:12, God says, "Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand." God is in total control of the situation. Satan is not an independent force, but rather a fallen angel who is allowed to exist and act within certain limitations set by God. Satan's power is limited.

Notice also that God did not cause Job's suffering directly, but rather allowed it as part of a larger cosmic conflict between God and Satan, in which Job became a symbolic figure representing the human response to suffering and faith. God knew that Job was capable of enduring the trials and

tribulations that Satan would bring upon him. God also knew, as we do when reading the full story, that Job would emerge from this time with a deeper trust and understanding of God's sovereignty and goodness.

As Satan began his tests, he was intentional in the way he tormented Job. While two of the tragedies were done by the hands of men, the other two, including the one that took the lives of his children, were supernatural. Job may have wanted to seek revenge on the Sabeans and the Chaldeans, thinking the two losses were a terrible coincidence, but the sheep and servants were devoured by the “fire of God from heaven” and his children were killed by a great wind coming from across the wilderness.

Despite these trials, after every messenger, wave after wave of heartbreak, Job did not curse God or question His goodness. Instead, after hearing the worst of the reports, he fell to the ground and worshiped, saying “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.” (Job 1:21). Job does not curse God or question His goodness, but he worships Him and acknowledges the sovereignty of God. Job shows us that faith is not about having a perfect life or an easy journey, but about trusting God in the midst of trials and hardships. Satan failed!

THE SECOND ACCUSATION (2:1-6)

Now, heading back above the clouds, in Job 2:1-6 we see a second dialogue between God and Satan. Satan returns before God, with his previous attempt thwarted by a mere man, and God again asks him if he has considered Job. Job was able to endure overwhelming loss without compromising his “integrity” or blamelessness (Job 2:3). Satan does not give up. Perhaps Job merely hasn’t faced enough pain and suffering. Undeterred by his own failure, Satan now supposes that Job's faith is only skin-deep and that he will curse God if he is afflicted with physical suffering.

Satan’s second accusation builds off of his first one. This second challenge is not incredibly imaginative, Satan simply challenges God based on the only thing Job has left. “Job’s faith in you has brainwashed him to feel nothing for the loss of his possessions and children, but hurt the man himself and he will fall!”

Give the Devil his due, extreme physical pain can blind the sense of any good man. Satan has seen the effectiveness of the thorns of the flesh, twisting many of them into place before. He knows how selfish mankind can be and thinks that Job is no different. Would you abandon your faith if your health was taken from you? Satan thinks so.

SATAN TAKES JOB'S HEALTH (2:7-10)

God grants Satan permission saying, "Behold, he is in your hand; only spare his life." Whatever was about to happen, it would be from Satan's hand. Notice again, Satan is permitted to test Job, but with limitations. Wish as he might, Satan could not destroy the man, his soul, or his mind. Job must be alive and of sound mind. The trial must be fair. God permitted Satan to afflict Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the top of his head, but he must spare his life. With the rules in place, Satan begins to play his game again. Death was off-limits, so Satan set out to make life as close to death as possible.

The illness Satan set on Job was unlike any before or after it. His entire body became covered in terrible sores, foul, puss-emitting, bleeding boils. Everything hurt, every breath broke open the sores on his midsection, and any movement set his body on fire. Stand, sit, or lie down, there was never peace. Job remains alone in his pain.

He had no one to attend to him, no healing ointments or salves, not even dogs to lick his sores. Searching for some kind of comfort, he scrapes at himself with a shard of pottery sitting in the ashes. Job's wife, having endured much of Job's sufferings with him has seen enough. Unknowingly, she becomes an agent of the Accuser and tells Job to give up. "This God you serve is not worth living for if this is what you are to receive!" She asks him, "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die." (Job 2:9). She accepts that Job is blameless in God's eyes, but unlike him, doesn't see the point in being blameless if it doesn't bring God's blessings.

Job, still holding on to his faith, responds, "You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?" (Job 2:10). Job says, even if these things are from God, He still deserves my praise! Job is unaware of the heavenly activity behind his situation. He cannot see God's purpose, and it is only the integrity of his faith that prevents him from cursing God. Satan failed again!

CONCLUSION

This part of the story concludes with Job's three friends, coming to comfort him in his suffering. The best thing they ever did was to sit with Job in silence for a week. For now, Job has stood resolute. He has persevered! He never would truly give in, but his battle was just beginning. He would have a long time to think of his situation while defending himself against his friends who accuse him of sin. Job says he was innocent, and he knows that God is just, and so he suffers.

The interaction between God and Satan in Job chapters 1 and 2 reveals a profound theology of suffering, faith, and the sovereignty of God. We see that God allows Satan to test Job, but only within certain limitations and that God is ultimately in control of the situation. God is all-knowing and has a purpose for everything He allows to happen. While we may not always understand why God allows certain things to happen, we can trust that He knows why, and that is enough. In the case of Job, God

used his suffering to test his faith and to bring about a greater good, as we see in the end when God blessed him even more than before.

The book of Job reminds us that our faith is not based on our circumstances, but on our relationship with God, who is sovereign and in control of all things. Suffering can refine our faith and reveal our true character. It can also be used by God to bring about His purposes and to bless us in ways we never imagined. Job invites us to trust in God's ultimate purposes and to find hope and meaning even in the midst of our trials and afflictions.

“...You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.” (James 5:11)

HOW CHURCH LEADERS CAN HELP CHRISTIANS WITH STREET LEVEL FAITH & PASTORAL CHALLENGES

Dr. Jim Martin

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“Church leaders in most every congregation will be called to come alongside church members, who are discouraged, in crisis, or are challenged by other difficulties. In this practical session, we will look at the opportunity for spiritual mentoring that church leaders have during such times.”

INTRODUCTION

We had traveled to Memphis, Tn. from Florence, Ala. I was in my early 20s, single, and had been out of college for about a year. My friend, James Long, was the Advancement director at a small Bible college. That Sunday evening, James asked me to speak for about ten minutes at the Floyd Avenue Church of Christ. After a meal with the congregation, James Long asked me to come into the auditorium with him.

We sat on the front row in this otherwise empty room. He said, “You did a good job. Eventually, you will speak with more maturity. But tonight, you did a good job.” It was a kind and gracious way to affirm me and yet helped me see areas where I needed to grow. It was a significant moment for me.

You remember the story when Job’s friends approached him. Their approach and their words were questionable at best. Every church leader has the occasion to come alongside someone in some challenging or different situation.

HOW CHURCH LEADERS CAN HELP CHRISTIANS WITH STREET-LEVEL FAITH

I was talking to the head football coach at the school that our younger daughter attended. We both had a mutual friend, another minister in town. This minister worked in the inner city. The coach spoke about how much he respected this minister. He described him as having real “street-level faith.” He was referring to the kind of faith that speaks to the realities of life. This is the kind of faith that speaks to our brokenness and humanity.

Church leaders have to first understand that men and women are broken and that our faith in Christ speaks to our brokenness. Many church leaders eventually see that every person who makes up a congregation, whether it is 120 people or 1,200 people, has problems or challenges of some kind. A

church leader might better serve the people in the congregation by seeking to better understand and asking: “What’s it like?”

What’s it like . . .

- To be lonely
- To be divorced
- To be new, having just moved to town
- To be raising three children under the age of 10
- To have a teenager who thinks he/she is another gender (other than his/her birth gender)
- To be the primary caregiver of an aging parent with Dementia
- To lose a job
- To feel inferior or “less than”
- To grieve over the death of a close family member, perhaps a brother or sister
- To have cancer
- To be married to someone who looks at pornography

Seeking to learn about and understand people is a very different approach than someone who glibly says to various church members, “It’s all good” and then walks away. Perhaps one of the ways we as church leaders help Christians with street-level faith and pastoral challenges is through spiritual mentoring.

WHAT IS SPIRITUAL MENTORING? (2 TIMOTHY 2:2)

“So my son, throw yourself into this work for Christ. Pass on what you heard from me – the whole congregation saying ‘Amen!’ – to reliable leaders who are competent to teach others” (The Message). Now again, the word “mentor” is used a lot. The other day I was in Marshall’s checking out. The woman who was checking me out was wearing a cord around her neck that said, “mentor.”

What we are talking about, however, is spiritual mentoring – how a man/woman can mature in Christ. We are always growing and developing into the mind and character of Christ. There is always someone from whom we can learn and someone from whom we can learn. You may be 23 years old; however, someone who is 16 may be looking at you. If you are 40, perhaps a 20-year-old is looking at you.

“Mentoring is a relational experience through which one person empowers another by sharing God-given resources” (J. Robert Clinton). This is a “relational experience.” Spiritual mentoring is not about telling someone what you want to tell them or getting something off your chest. Rather, it is about empowering someone and leaving him or her in a better place because of this relationship.

Some of the spiritual mentoring relationships seen in the Bible (Hendricks, pp. 180-181) –

- Elijah and Elisha (1 Kings 19:16-21; 2 Kings 2:1-16, 3:11)
- Moses and Joshua (Deuteronomy 31:1-8, 34:9)

- Barnabas and John Mark (Acts 15:36-39; 2 Timothy 4:11)
- Paul and Timothy (Acts 16:1-3; Philippians 2:19-23; 1 and 2 Timothy)

Yet, this is a relationship rooted in the heart. That is, something is being shaped and formed in one and there is an attempt to help shape and form in the heart of another.

Spiritual mentoring involves guiding (helping another know what to do), challenging (raising a few questions regarding a behavior or decision), encouraging (“You can do this.”), affirming (catching people doing what is right.), and questioning (raising important questions). Basically, it means being intentional with a person or a group. It is the difference between being intentional and being reactive.

This is messy. Sometimes it will take place at specific times and places. For others, it will be more sporadic and occasional. One size does not fit all. You may have one person who looks to you as a mentor – who occasionally meets with you at critical moments. You may have another person who needs a relationship with more structure.

Practically:

- **We enter one another’s world (thought world, business, emotions, marriage, parenting).** We attempt to listen and understand what it is like to be another.
- **We dare to gently approach and inquire about someone’s life.**
- **We ask questions that might cause a person to think.** Don’t underestimate the power of very good questions. Questions have a way of helping another think and get unstuck. “What kind of woman/man would you like to be by age ____? What has been most helpful in your growth?”
- **We listen – really listen – to what is being said by another. We give another the gift of paying attention.** In a culture where we are prone to distraction, it is huge to offer someone your full attention. This kind of listening goes beyond hearing a few words and then stating your opinion. Rather, we listen for the thoughts and emotions that a person might express. It can be particularly helpful to reflect back on what another is saying not only to gauge your understanding but also because doing so causes you to really consider what another is saying.
- **We come alongside and help a person process possible responses to a particular problem.** What are your options?
- **Spiritual mentors deal with three key questions (Walter Wright, *Mentoring*, pp. 2-3):**
 1. What is the most important thing in life to you? (character)
 2. Projecting yourself to the end of your life, what do you want to be known for? (legacy)
 3. At this stage in your journey, what do you need to learn next? (present)

These are questions that can help take a conversation deeper and cause one to reflect on his/her life (Hendricks, pp. 171-173) We are prone to distraction. Saying it back causes one to seriously consider what another is saying.

- What would you like to do with your life?
- What are you good at?

- Will you tell me a little about your history?
- Will you tell me about your family?
- How did you learn to really put your faith in God?

Be fully present and pay attention. Spiritual mentoring is more than dispensing information or trying to get others to do what I want. This is a willingness to make oneself vulnerable and step into another's life. This is the decision to behave as a trustworthy person.

Some falsely perceive mentoring as dispensing their knowledge, insight, etc. Consequently, they are more focused on the "telling" than on the questions they need to be asking the mentees to help them think.

Spiritual mentoring is more of a two-way, genuine conversation in which the mentor has content, probing questions, and a listening ear. The challenge for the mentor is to *pay attention* to the other person.

Assist a person in forming or becoming aware of his/her purpose for living. Mentoring is the process of helping a person develop his/her purpose or mission and consider what it means to live out of that purpose.

In *Mentor Like Jesus* (pp. 62-63), Regi Campbell says that he asks everyone in his mentoring group to write their obituary.

The approach I've used to help me pick my mentorees involves asking each guy to write his obituary notice for the newspaper. Steven Covey popularized this exercise in his book Seven Habits of Highly Effective People. Here is the e-mail I use to assign the candidates the task of preparing their obituaries.

"From among you thirteen guys, eight will be in next year's next-generation mentoring group. The next thing I am asking you to do to help me finalize the group is a short writing assignment. Here it is.

"Write the obituary announcement that you would like to see in the paper the day after your death (of old age and by natural causes). Write it in the third person, like a reporter. Include the following:

Significant professional accomplishments – what would you like the paper to say you accomplished in your professional life?

- *Community accomplishments*
- *Church accomplishments*
- *Family accomplishments*
- *A quote from your wife*
- *A quote from each of your children (present and/or future, dreamed-of children)*
- *A quote from your best friend*

The obituary as described here is a sort of vision statement, a way to look inside the head of the candidate and see what he sees for himself and his family in the future.

Prepare yourself to mentor by cultivating the heart, the place where wisdom and character are built. A mentor gets prepared by cultivating the heart, the place where wisdom and character are built. You prepare yourself by being attentive to your own soul. This is because spiritual mentoring is not a technique nor is it necessarily a tool. Rather, this is a way we can serve and bless another. We do this by being fully present in Christ with another.

CONCLUSION

We have the opportunity by the grace of God to add value to another. I talk with lots of younger people who have no father (or mother). These people desperately need someone who will believe in them. Mentors communicate this kind of confidence.

THE FORESHADOWING OF JESUS IN THE BOOK OF JOB

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The central core event in scripture and in history is Jesus' life, death and resurrection. The book of Job has some interesting typology characteristics with Jesus, and even some aspects in the book that remind us of events in Jesus' life. However, wisdom literature like Job makes us wrestle with some of the big questions in life which are not easily answered. Those questions can center around suffering, human righteousness and hope. The questions and situations in life that Job (and we) wrestle with ultimately point to Jesus who provides understanding, perspective and answers to some of those difficult issues.

INTRODUCTION

History is filled with significant people and events. Those people and events have impacted events in this world. However, no person or event has impacted the history of the world more than Jesus and his coming to live as a human on this planet, his death, and his resurrection. His impact is felt in both this world and will continue for eternity.

The story of scripture revolves around the story of Jesus. Scripture is God revealing himself to us. He ultimately reveals himself to us in the incarnation of Jesus. The Old Testament is constantly looking forward to the coming of Jesus. The New Testament, after the gospels which tell us about Jesus' life, is looking back at Jesus – as we do today. But the coming of Jesus also impacted the way scripture was viewed and interpreted.

I believe those early apostles – Peter, Andrew, James, etc. and Paul – and early Christians all interpreted the Old Testament story of scripture through the lens of Jesus. I believe after Jesus they understood the Old Testament differently than before Jesus. They used those scriptures to teach the people of their day about Jesus. So as they read the Old Testament they saw the connections that taught about Jesus. So, as we approach the book of Job how would they have seen Jesus in Job?

Often our first instinct is to look for typology instances that connect to Jesus. Or maybe we look for similarities that remind us of Jesus. So take your Bible and a notebook and read through Job, making notes of passages and thoughts that remind you of Jesus. For instance, in Job and Jesus, you have two men who don't deserve to suffer - both suffering. You also see both Job and Jesus acting as intercessors for others. As I read through the book I also noticed similarities with Job's friends. His friends came to him, but in the end, basically were of little or no support to him – much like Jesus during his suffering found his friends sleeping in the garden and then deserting him – also of little support to Jesus. Job had three friends who offered advice and Jesus had three apostles who he took to the

garden. I am also reminded of the philosophical views of the friends of Job who offered advice that was not entirely true although it was based on their understanding of God and their world. Jesus dealt with Pharisees and other religious leaders who also saw their world in scripture in ways that were not correct. As you read the text you can probably come up with other examples.

However, I wonder sometimes if our efforts of typology and similar connections stretch the intent of scripture at times to say or make implications that may not really be there. Instead, maybe we should be considering the foreshadowing of Jesus in Job in a different way.

Job is wisdom literature. It forces the reader to wrestle with some of the greatest questions and dilemmas of life. It makes us wrestle with suffering, life after death, our own sinfulness, and why we even serve God. Although the book of Job doesn't directly answer all of the questions we may have, Jesus does give us answers and perspective to life's greatest questions.

G. Campbell Morgan wrote, "If there be no New Testament, or if we take away from it its essential value in its presentation of Christ, then we still have the Book of Job; it will remain in literature, but it will be the record of an unanswered agony. There is no answer to Job till we find it in Jesus. But we find an answer to every such cry of Job in Jesus."²¹

Just like Job, we may find ourselves in the midst of trials, situations, or suffering with no explanation or answer. We desire to make sense of it all. However, often making sense of everything is not the real issue, but being faithful to God is the real issue. It is only when we begin to look at Jesus that things begin to come into a proper perspective.

When we think of Job we often immediately think about suffering. Job really does not see behind the curtain, where God and the adversary Satan discuss him and God allows Satan to act against Job. Job just knows he has lost everything, and as a result, is in emotional and physical pain with no answers. The book through, the speeches and Job's responses, attempts to make sense of the situation. Like Job we may never get the answers we desire when it comes to suffering, but in Jesus, we might find some perspective that provides some help.

Jesus was perfect and yet he suffered going to the cross and dying for all humans. He did not deserve death, but still went through the process. Suffering and death entered the world as a result of Adam and Eve's sin in the garden. Not all suffering is a direct result of the sinful actions of a person or someone else, but indirectly you can argue that all suffering and death are a result of the sinful actions in the garden. Yet Jesus, who was sinless, suffered and died like every other human does or will.

In addition, one primary discussion of the book revolves around the idea that Job must have sinned in order to be suffering like this. However, in John 9, Jesus deals with this same line of argument from his apostles. The apostles asked Jesus, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" They like Job's friends assumed someone sinned for such a horrible thing to happen.

²¹ G. Campbell Morgan, The Answer of Jesus to Job: An Analysis of the Biblical Book of Job, and the Life of Jesus Christ. 1935. Republished by Adanson Publishing, 2018. P. 5.

Jesus though responds, “It was not that this man sinned or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.”²² Jesus instead lets us know that first, not all suffering is because of someone’s direct sinful actions or even the actions of another. Jesus more importantly helps us realize it is in the midst of suffering that God can do amazing things. Jesus will proceed to heal the blind man creating an even bigger debate among the Jewish leaders, but resulting in this once blind man defending Jesus’ actions and confessing his belief in Jesus. This blind man’s suffering opened a door in which he came to believe in Jesus, and others could be amazed at the compassion and power of God.

It is during suffering today that God still may amaze people. I have known people who were given a dismal prognosis because of their health issues, yet lived much longer than they were expected to live. I have watched as people enduring suffering have become an inspiration to others because of their faith. I have seen people who have gone through trials and suffering use those as a means to minister to others going through similar situations. Jesus lets us see that even though we may not ever understand why we go through the trials and suffering we do, God can and will use the faithfulness of suffering servants to inspire, amaze, and minister to others.

Job is described in Job 1 as “blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil.”²³ Throughout the friends’ speeches, they assume that Job must have sinned and that resulted in his suffering. Job continues to maintain his integrity and righteousness. Yet Job 9:2-3 says “Truly I know that it is so; but how can a man be in the right before God? If one wished to contend with him, one could not answer him once in a thousand times.” (ESV) Job said in 9:33, “There is no arbiter between us, who might lay his hand on us both.” Job’s friend Bildad said in Job 25:4, “How can a man be in the right before God? How can he who is born of woman be pure?” (ESV) Job recognizes that humans are not perfect and how can they even be justified enough to stand before God and contend with him? How can we possibly truly be righteous and how can we possibly stand before God?

We as humans face a dilemma. We are unable to stand in God’s presence because we are not righteous or justified on our own. There is no way for us to stand in God’s presence and argue our case as Job wants to do. We desperately need help.

The answer is found in Jesus. Paul writes these words to the Corinthians, “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”²⁴ Christ is our mediator who appears before God on our behalf.²⁵ We can be righteous because of Jesus’ sacrificial death on the cross. It is there he became sin for us, so we can be righteous. God sees us

²² John 9:2-3. English Standard Version (ESV)

²³ Job 1:1 (ESV)

²⁴ 2 Corinthians 5:21 (ESV)

²⁵ 1 Timothy 2:5, Hebrews 9:24

through the blood of Jesus and we appear pure and holy not as the sinful humans we are. In Job's world and our world, we cannot be righteous on our own but need the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross to make us holy.

Job also wrestles with his suffering with the prospect of death. He asks, "if a man dies, shall he live again?"²⁶ In the chapter he recognizes that trees can be cut down and new shoots will sprout again but struggle with the prospect of a man dying and then what. During suffering, we want hope. We want to believe there is more after death.

G. Campbell Morgan adds this perspective:

Job suddenly said within himself, is life after all something more than the present experience of it? Can it be that what we call death is only a change? If a man die, is he still living?

The question in itself is a revelation of the consciousness of the need for more time and space for the realization of life than the span of earthly life can afford. In effect Job said, If I could be sure that this life was not all, that the thing called death is but a process through which man passes, then the present, however full of suffering, would be bearable. I could stand up against all the bludgeonings of fate. I could bear anything if I thought I should still live."²⁷

Did Job believe in an afterlife? NT Wright says the expected answer of the text for the question shall man live again is no.²⁸ Longman and Walton say, "Job, like Israelites, saw God's reward in a long life filled with blessing. Spending an eternity with God was not an option to be considered, and there was no balancing of the scales by reward and punishment after death that they were aware of."²⁹

Imagine facing the suffering in life, with maybe no confidence that there was more. Our hope is found in Jesus, who is the resurrection and life.³⁰ Jesus' resurrection changed everything for all people of all time. God was proclaiming that there is more after death and that death is really just a change from this life to the next.

In Jesus, the answer to "if a man dies, shall he live again?"³¹ becomes a resounding yes. We celebrate and find hope in the resurrection.

We often focus on the suffering, but the real question we must wrestle with is the question Satan asked in response to the Lord, "Does Job fear God for no reason?"³² Job was a blessed man. He had a good life. He had a good family and lots of wealth. Life was comfortable and good for Job. In their theological belief system because of his blessings, he was also deemed righteous and good before God. Satan says in an essence of course he serves you now, you have blessed him with much, but if

²⁶ Job 14:14 (ESV)

²⁷ Morgan, p. 19

²⁸ Wright, NT. The Resurrection of the Son of God. 2003. Fortress Press, Minneapolis. P. 97

²⁹ Walton, John H. & Tremper Longman III. How to Read Job. 2015. Inter Varsity Press, Downers Grove. P. 117. Walton and Longman devote an entire chapter in the book to Job and the afterlife.

³⁰ John 11:25

³¹ Job 14:14

³² Job 1:9

you remove it all he will curse you.³³ The question behind the book that we all must wrestle with is – why do I serve God? Or put another way – would Job continue to have faith in God and follow him if he lost everything and his belief system were turned upside down? Would we?

Job in the story maintains his faith and integrity throughout the suffering, confusion, frustration, and lack of answers. We get a personal glimpse through the story into the questions, despair, and confusion Job endures. His thoughts and those of his friends dominate the dialogue allowing us to wrestle with them about how we understand the world and God when everything around us makes no sense. We can probably relate at times in our own lives to those same feelings Job may express and the questions he has. In the end, though he comes out victorious because the Lord is the Lord, and he believes him. Even though at times we see his frustration and despair, he continues to maintain his relationship with God.

And we like Job must ask and wrestle with the same question – why do I serve God? Hopefully our answer is that the Lord is God. He loves us and sent his only Son to our earthly world to suffer and die for us so we might be able to be with God in his presence. In Jesus God demonstrates his great power, compassion, and ultimate love for his creation. We can lose everything in this life like Job, but we know in Jesus we are still blessed beyond measure. We know that in Jesus we see the great love God has for us, and we serve the Lord because of that love. However, some turn from God and lose their faith when their world is turned upside down by trials and suffering or expectations that go unmet by God.

CONCLUSION

Job maintains faith without the benefit of seeing Jesus. He wrestled with the questions all humans have wrestled with in this world. The central and most important event in history is the cross and the resurrection of Jesus. We need to read Job looking at Jesus. Then we see a perspective and truth that gives us the answers, hope, and understanding we need to be victorious when our lives don't make sense.

³³ Job 1:9-11

LONELINESS & ISOLATION

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From the beginning of time when God said, "It is not good for man to be alone," people have desired human companionship. Scripture is filled with faithful people who experienced loneliness and isolation, none perhaps, more than Job. Some were even called by God into these desolate seasons of life. Although difficult, when endured with faith and humble acceptance instead of uncertainty, solitary times can be rich soil for nurturing spiritual growth. Deprived of human companionship, we turn with renewed intensity to God. There we find lasting peace and refined purpose through a more intimate knowledge of His constant presence in all the seasons of our life.

"I had only heard about you before, but now I have seen you with my own eyes." Job 42:5

INTRODUCTION

1. Welcome and Overview
2. Definition of Loneliness and Isolation
3. Genesis 2:17-22

EXPLORING LONELINESS AND ISOLATION

1. Job's Circumstances
 - a. Discussion: Explore Job's circumstances
 - b. Job 23:1-17
2. Other Biblical Characters
 - a. Discussion:
 - b. Brainstorm other Bible characters who experienced loneliness and isolation
3. Our Lives Today
 - a. Discussion:
 - b. Modern circumstances that often lead to loneliness and isolation

JOB'S STRUGGLE

1. The Inward Battle
 - a. Job 1:22. Job's initial statement of faith
 - b. Job 7:13-15. Time intensifies the pain. Job begs for death.

- c. Job 10:1-2. Job cannot keep silent. He battles bitterness.
 - d. Job 13. Job's friends & their accusations are no comfort; he begs for an audience with God.
 - e. Job 14 and following. He asks to die, requests a mediator to defend him, and questions why wicked people prosper and righteous people suffer.
 - f. Job 29:1-5. He longs for the former days of happiness.
 - g. Job 30:20-23. He accuses God of not caring about his pain.
 - h. Job 31. Job rehearses his life, defending his righteousness.
 - i. Job 1:21 and 31:35-37. Contrast Job's confidence at the beginning of his trials with his despair and frustration after days of accusations from friends and silence from God.
2. Job's Reactions Reflect Our Struggles
- a. Trials test our faith.
 - b. Job's responses mirror our own human tendencies.
 - c. What now?

5 ETERNAL TRUTHS FOR SEASONS OF LONELINESS AND ISOLATION

1. Truth 1: The Circumstances of Our Lives Are Filtered Through God's Hands.
 - a. Job 1:6-12 and 2:1-6
 - b. Luke 22:31
 - c. 1 Corinthians 10:13
2. Truth 2: God is God and We Are Not
 - a. Job 38-41. God answers Job.
 - b. Romans 11:33-35
 - c. Isaiah 55:8-9
3. Truth 3: God Will Meet Us in Our Season of Pain
 - a. Job 23:8-9
 - b. Romans 8:35-39
 - c. Discussion: What do we know to be true about the character and promises of God?
 - d. We hold tight to what we know, not what we feel.
4. Truth 4: Loneliness and Isolation Can Open Our Eyes
 - a. Mark 4:5-6.
 - b. Doubts call for self-examination.
 - c. Trusting the gifts vs trusting the Giver
 - d. Philippians 4:11-13. We learn to trust.
5. Truth 5: Loneliness and Isolation are Fertile Grounds for Spiritual Growth
 - a. We seek God with greater intensity.
 - b. Job 42:5. We come to a new knowledge of God.
 - c. Job 1:20 and 2:8 contrasted with Job 42:3. Sorrow over circumstances vs sorrow over sins
 - d. 2 Corinthians 4:16-18. Maintaining our focus

CONCLUSION

1. The inevitability of pain in this life
2. Job 13:15 and 23:10. Two highpoints in Job's ups and downs
3. 1 John 5:4-5. Faith *is* the Victory.
4. James 5:10-11. Victory for ourselves and for those who are watching

SORRY COMFORTERS YOU ARE

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Job, one of only three men in the Hebrew Bible to be called "righteous and blameless," undergoes incredible and unjust suffering, only to then endure a wave of insensitive commentary from his companions. In response, Job calls their attempts at assuaging his pain lousy, dubbing them "sorry comforters." What should his friends have said? How does anyone look suffering in the face and respond well? An examination of the concepts of suffering and consolation in Job and in the biblical story as a whole reveals that the key to offering comfort is found in the example of the perfect human: Jesus. The Son did not come to earth to offer direct answers to such questions, or to explain away all the pain in the world; instead, he came to be present in the brokenness, to meet suffering head-on, and to offer hope, both in his immediate circumstances and for all time. Through him, hope has been opened to all who believe in his name, and it is that hope, along with our compassionate presence, which we must offer to a hurting world.

JOB AND HIS SORRY COMFORTERS

1. Job's story
2. The Proverbs formula: the friends' approach
3. Job's response, God's response

THE CRY OF SCRIPTURE

1. Distress in the Psalms
2. Out of the garden: God's lament
3. The melody of the Hebrew Bible

THE ANSWER TO THE CRY

1. Jesus, the Image of God
2. Jesus and a suffering world
3. Jesus, the sufferer
4. The hope of resurrection

HOPE: A WORD STUDY

1. HOPE IN THE SCRIPTURES
2. HOPE VS. OPTIMISM
3. WAITING AND GROANING

BETTER COMFORTERS – PRACTICAL WAYS TO OFFER HOPE

1. Presence
2. Prayer; using the psalms
3. Replaying the melody
4. Cutting individual stones: Doing my part

BURNING WITH ANGER

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When pain and grief in this earthly life comes our way—and it will, how do we respond? What emotion consumes us? Do we distance ourselves from God or lean in closer to Him? Are we more like Job's wife, his friends or Job himself? Are we encouraged by others to curse God because of our circumstances and our own burning anger or do we respond with asking the question of accepting only good from God and not adversity also? What lessons do we learn from this book and Job's circumstances that can bring us to a better understanding of who our creator is and the faithful goodness of God. At the bottom of my emotional barrel, will I be like Job and say to the Lord, "I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be prevented from being accomplished" or will I choose to allow my emotions to consume me. Like Job, I can choose.

INTRODUCTION

1. Prayer
2. When pain & grief come our way...

DISCUSSION

1. Examining Job & who he was in God's eyes
 - a. Job 1:1
 - b. "There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, and that man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil."
2. Job's loss & suffering
 - a. The testing of his faith
 - b. Examining the motivation to do right
3. Conviction to follow God— NO MATTER WHAT
 - a. "Then his wife said to him, 'Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die'" (Job 2:9).
 - b. "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare[a] and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope" (Jeremiah 29:11).
 - c. "And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the

Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord”
(Joshua 24:14)

4. When others fuel our fire of anger
 - a. Job’s wife (Job 2)
 - b. Job’s friends (Job 4-31)
 - c. Elihu’s anger (Job 32-37)
 - d. Job’s anger (Job 9: 22-23; 16:9; 27:2,8)
 - e. “It is all one; therefore I say, ‘He destroys both the blameless and the wicked. When disaster brings sudden death, he mocks at the calamity of the innocent.’” (9:22-23)
 - f. “He has torn me in his wrath and hated me; he has gnashed his teeth at me; my adversary sharpens his eyes against me.” (16:9)
 - g. “‘As God lives, who has taken away my right, and the Almighty, who has made my soul bitter,’” (27:2)
 - h. “For what is the hope of the godless when God cuts him off when God takes away his life?” (27:8)
5. God’s thundering voice
 - a. Job 38
 - b. “Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge?” (38:2).
6. Job’s resolve despite his emotions
 - a. Job 42
 - b. “I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted” (42:2).

CONCLUSION

1. God created us all.
 - a. God created all our emotions & feelings in the purest sense.
 - b. God gives us all free choice.
2. And just as with Job, He doesn’t condemn our emotions but watches to see what we do with those emotions.
 - a. He watches to see how we respond to the circumstances of this life.
 - b. He wants us to come to Him with all trust & confidence in His plan.
3. Will we burn up in anger, bitterness, or even self-pity or will we choose to humble ourselves to do His will and glorify Him?

LONELINESS & ISOLATION: COPING WITH LONELINESS THROUGH CHRIST & COMMUNITY

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The book of Job begins by describing Job as an honorable person, worthy of receiving the honor he had from his family, friends and community. However, after tragically losing everything that humanity often places as the proof of honor, Job becomes shamed and estranged from his position of honor. Society forced him outside the camp to be forgotten and discarded like any other piece of trash. While the sickness and affliction was painful and discomforting enough, perhaps the most devastating plague to confront Job was the loneliness and isolation that followed. In Job 19, Job voices his complaint against this unnecessary loneliness he feels, concluding with, "[God] has put my brothers far from me, and those who knew me are wholly estranged from me. My relatives fail me, and my close friends have forgotten me. The guests in my house and my servants count me as a stranger; I have become a foreigner in their eyes" (19:13-15). In this lecture we will leave the story of Job in the introduction and launch into a study of loneliness and isolation, using Paul's Corinthian correspondence to exemplify how humanity tends to approach and cope with loneliness followed by some scriptural counsel on finding a cure for our loneliness.

INTRODUCTION

Everyone needs community. While both extroverts and introverts exist, both the outgoing and self-reserved alike need community. The tragedy flowing through Job's narrative is one of a loss of community, leaving Job lonely and isolated. Even those in his presence were still estranged from him emotionally. Job desires to plead to God for mercy. Yet, it is interesting, contextually, that his plea for mercy comes in the form of feeling abandoned by those to whom he was once close. The narrative confirms that his servants treated him as a stranger, his friends treated him like a criminal, his family treated him like a failure, and yes, even his wife distanced herself to avoid smelling the stench of his breath (cf. Job 19:13-19). Such suggests that the mercy for which Job hungered was one of a restored community that included him. Ben Zion Luria sums up Job's predicament accurately when he writes,

In antiquity, society was very cruel toward lepers and those afflicted with boils. They appeared to be incurable and were consequently outcasts, receiving no care. Society sought to be rid of them and to keep them out of sight. Thus, taking into consideration the position of the elder of the family in the patriarchal society of antiquity, Job's misfortune takes on huge proportions, and his fall is steep indeed. All he can see about him is estrangement and treachery (Luria 4-5).

In short, Job has been stripped of his position of honor and was being forced to live exiled on the island of loneliness and isolation. To quote Luria again, "Man is by nature a social creature, and loneliness is harder to bear than the worst sickness" (Luria 5). From this point forward we will leave

Job's narrative and venture into the New Testament where we find Jesus who is the provider and perfecter of community. Yet, despite what Jesus offers, our own society – even within Christian community – struggles with the ongoing pandemic of loneliness and isolation. Thus, the objectives of this lecture are to give attention to loneliness and isolation in both the contexts of society and Christianity; to examine the approaches and coping mechanisms humanity often appeals to when confronted with loneliness; and to offer a cure for loneliness and isolation in Jesus Christ. In order to accommodate each objective, we will give consideration to Paul and his Corinthian correspondence concerning a church endangered by loneliness and isolation in several capacities.

THE DEFINING MARKERS OF LONELINESS

Before we can address the essentialities behind loneliness and isolation, it is important to first properly define such. To begin with, consider what loneliness is *not*. Loneliness is not:

- A healthy withdrawal from people for the purpose of exercising spiritual disciplines (i.e. Jesus: fasting, praying, meditating)
- Parallel to personality types associated with introversion – who like healthy, solitary environments.
- A life committed to singleness (cf. 1 Cor 7:8 – “to the single I say, stay single as I am, so long as you can practice self-control”³⁴).
- A sin (although it can lead to sin).

To expand on the last point in particular, it is a shame that 15% of Christians view loneliness as embarrassing and 25% believe that loneliness is always bad (Mettes 49). To those who feel such is the case, please take comfort in knowing that the Apostle Paul experienced loneliness on several occasions, including the end of his life when confronted by death (2 Tim 4:9-11). To give even greater comfort, recognize that Jesus also experienced extreme loneliness that led to sweating blood (cf. Psa 22; Mat 26), yet, found restored community post resurrection.

So how does one define loneliness? Some clinical definitions are:

- “Loneliness refers to subjective feelings of distress, which is experienced when social relationships lack a certain important quality.” (Le Roux 321)
- “Loneliness is the distress someone feels when their social connection does not meet their need for emotional intimacy.” (Mettes 45)

In essence, loneliness is an emotional response to distress or the loss of social connection on an emotional level. It is not necessarily the absence of human contact, but rather the loss of human connection. The reality is, all are subject to it and no one is immuned from it. It is not when or if you experience loneliness, it is a matter of how long and to what extreme it impacts you.

According to the research Anda le Roux conducted for Free State University, there are primarily five factors that characterize loneliness (Le Roux 321):

³⁴ All Scripture references quoted from the English Standard Version (ESV) unless otherwise noted.

1. Emotional Distress – intense pain, inner turmoil, hopelessness, emptiness
2. Inadequacy and isolation
3. Growth and discovery
4. Feelings of abandonment and rejection
5. Self-Alienation – detachment of self, characterized by feelings of numbness, denial and immobilization

Further findings of Le Roux suggests that those most susceptible to loneliness are (ibid 322):

1. Victims of traumatic experiences
2. Social outcasts
3. Low social-economic status
4. Divorced
5. Dysfunctional marriages (by extension the children)
6. Personality factors under an unhealthy mental or emotional state.

Thus the reality is loneliness is no respecter of persons. It affects the wealthy and the poor; the beautiful and the not-so-attractive; the intelligent and the ignorant; the criminal and the just; the successful and the failure; the single and the married; the young and the aged.

It is interesting to note that many concluded that COVID generated an influx in loneliness; however, studies suggest that loneliness was a pandemic all its own prior to COVID. In fact, the reputable Barna Group held a survey before COVID and discovered the following: (1) 1/3 of US adults experience loneliness on a daily basis, 1/7 all the time; and (2) the younger the generation, the larger the struggle: (Weekly) 1/3 of boomers; 2/5 of Gen X; 2/3 of millennials (Mettes 45). Returning back to Le Roux's research, his findings reported that loneliness is greatly impacted by one's faith. In his research of 3,000 individuals of faith, he discovered that the lower the faith score, the higher the loneliness score. Furthermore, the study revealed that the more dedicated the individual is to living out their faith (by service) the less likely the individual is to experience extreme forms of loneliness.

But that is not to say that COVID did not have a significant impact on or report an increase in loneliness. The increase is just not in the area one might expect. Susan Mettes found that when churches stopped meeting, Christians had slightly higher levels of loneliness than non-practicing Christians or non-believers (Mettes 46). However, after churches returned to meeting, Christians recovered better and more quickly than non-believers (ibid).

Summary

"The greatest problem with lonely people is the severance of their vertical relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ. They have become estranged from the root of their existence: God. They are not involved in an intimate and personal relationship with Him, and can thus never come to full self-realization and growth. As a result of this, they feel lonely and rejected, and they experience feelings of emptiness and shallowness in a rapidly disintegrating world filled with animosity. They are continually seeking to find meaning and depth in their existence" (Le Roux 329).

HOW LONELY PEOPLE TEND TO APPROACH & COPE WITH LONELINESS

Companionship

One of the more obvious places people tend to go to escape loneliness is *companionship*. This should be of no surprise for this was God's response to the issue of loneliness in the beginning. God created woman to be a companion suitable for Adam to resolve God's observance of Adam's loneliness. However, for many this becomes an unhealthy solution for one's loneliness. There are a host of reasons for this, but two of primary significance. One, there may be some underlying trauma or emotional issue that needs to be resolved before entering into an emotional or intimate relationship. Some, perhaps, seek out companionship to avoid or escape some deep rooted, unresolved issue. Two, a forced or rash entrance into an intimate relationship – especially for the purpose of escape – can, and often does, lead to sin.

In 1 Corinthians 5, Paul is appalled to learn of a sin that not even the pagan Gentiles would be comfortable with or accepting of... a man who is sexually involved with his step-mother. While the context does not specify such, it is not outside the bounds of possibility that both the mother and child were lonely. In the event of an untimely death of one man, a woman lost her husband while a son lost his father. Either way, people make irrational decisions when plagued by loneliness. What begins with innocent affection often leads to sexual intimacy. Such is the plot to adultery often, as it is for most sexual sins.

Thus, Paul is compelled to give the church steps towards discipline in an attempt to save the soul of the weak brother. Paul's spiritual conclusion in chapter 6 is that the sexually immoral (no matter what sexual sin) cannot inherit the kingdom of God; just because something may be legal by state or national law does not mean it is expedient for one spiritually. This is the platform for which Paul gives his explicit instructions on marriage within the Corinthian church expressed in chapter 7. Paul argues the sanctity of singleness is due to the present distress. He admits that singleness is not for everyone. But if you can be single, do so with full devotion to the Lord. If you can't, understand that your interests will be divided for you must seek to be faithful to both the Lord and your spouse. Paul's conviction is that before marriage or companionship it is essential that a person have one's own heart "firmly established" and one's "desires under control" (7:37); but above all one must have the "Spirit of God" (7:40).

Cravings

A second coping mechanism for loneliness is seeking to satisfy one's *cravings*. Among these would be alcohol and drugs that lead to addictive behaviors which incapacitate one from sound judgment, numbing the body and the soul. Among the sexually immoral, Paul adds drunkards and the greedy (1 Cor 6:9). The greedy should be included in the list, for their greed leads them to excess and gluttony of whatever they crave. Humanity has often turned to alcohol in an attempt to lose a sense of self in order to embrace someone he/she feels is more acceptable by others. Others drink to the point of forgetting who they are, their circumstances, and whatever they believe to be responsible for their state of loneliness.

One struggling with either of these, should hold-fast to verse 11, "such were some of you, but you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit

of God.” This is a powerful verse for Paul begins his writing in this letter reminding all the Corinthian Christians that they are sanctified, thus belonging to the church of God. Meaning, because of their washings, sanctifications and justifications they have become their best selves and as a result belong to the community of God. Further validity comes from Paul’s use of the second person plural endings on the washings, sanctifications, and justifications – better translated by the KJV as ye or in good ole southern English, *y’all are washed, justified and sanctified*. It is through each of these theological concepts that the lonely individual becomes connected to the community. Therefore, loneliness is no longer their reality, community is.

Not only do some turn to their cravings to cope with loneliness, some create loneliness by feeding their cravings. In chapter 11, Paul rebukes some of the Corinthian Christians for getting drunk and overeating during the Love Feast because in doing so they were isolating those who were poor or without. The purpose of the Love Feast was to embrace community, but instead it had become a platform for loneliness and isolation. Thus Paul’s commission, “Wait for one another” and then eat and drink together (11:33).

In 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, Paul gives the formula for bringing one’s cravings under subjection: discipline and exercise.

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

We must discipline our bodies and bring them under self-control. Why? So that we do not become disqualified in the midst of our community. Feeding one’s craving is destined to result in a loss of community.

Crowds

Some are so lonely, they will join any group that will accept them, no matter what the cost. Thus they seek refuge from their loneliness in the *crowds*. In Mediterranean culture, social networking was not only a rite, but it was required. These groups were often selected through the temple cults. If you didn’t belong to a group, then you didn’t have access to a patron and therefore were left alone to defend yourself, provide for yourself and protect yourself. Punishment came in the form of ostracizing.

In 1 Corinthians 10 Paul gives the warning to be careful when following the crowd. The idol temples boasted of community and belonging. They generated unity; no matter your background, we can all come to this place, as we are, and share in the pleasures of life – sex (through temple prostitutes), drunkenness (cup of demons) and gluttony (the table of demons). Yet, the reality is that any of the aforementioned actually promote loneliness. This is the great deception with which Satan has been so successful. The fear of this author is that many Christians are experiencing loneliness because of their ongoing participation with demonic behaviors – attempting to hold on to both a life in Christ and a life in the world. This was the Corinthian church.

Yet, Paul reminds these Christians that the church offers the same unity, but in a holy context and community. As Israel shared a baptism led by the Rock, so Christians are baptized by Christ’s

example into a community. The weekly participation of bread and wine are not for the purpose of drunkenness and gluttony, but rather a remembrance to keep us in holy community with one another (cf 1 Cor 11). In Corinth, the pagan temples served as their social networking center. To abandon these temples was to implicate one's own social out-casting. Yet Paul says "flee" from them. The church presents a new social network for Christian's to belong to – one of grace and peace; one with a Father and a Brother and that is Spirit-filled.

Chameleonization

A fourth coping mechanism to loneliness is what this author calls *Chameleonization*. The chameleon is one of God's amazing creatures that has the capability of changing his appearance for the sole purpose of blending into his surroundings. It's a defense mechanism. Identity is all the hype right now and many Christians and individuals alike lose their identity trying to blend in. This has become our culture's defense mechanism – to identify myself politically correctly.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians,

*For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, **that I may share with them in its blessings** (1 Cor 9:19-23, emphasis mine).*

On the surface, it seems as though Paul was an advocate of Chameleonization. He presents himself like a chameleon, adjusting himself to blend into his surroundings. Such is strange. In the realm of psychology one must ask, "Is this method healthy?" Paul, seemingly, is losing his personal identity in order to conform to the people around him so as to blend in. If this is the case, such is unhealthy. But this is not the case. Paul's identity is *in Christ*. His conforming is only for the purpose of *serving*. Paul is exposing his identity in the text - he is a servant of all people in order that he might save some and share in the blessings with all (believers).

THE CURE FOR LONELINESS: CHRIST AND COMMUNION (COMMUNITY)

Kat Banakis describes herself as the "offspring of Chicago characters straight out of central casting for the Ellis Island immigrant experience" (Banakis 26). After being accepted into Yale University, her parents told her that she could not go because of cost. To which Kat questioned, "Why did you let me apply then?" The response, "We never thought you would be accepted." How is that for support? Kat found a way to financially make it work and began her studies at Yale. However, her first week of classes she questioned whether or not her parents were right and Yale had made a mistake – did she really belong at Yale. She was confronted with loneliness; accepted but not acceptable. It was the words of wisdom presented by Yale's president at orientation that offered Kat hope. "You will think at some point that an admission error was made. It was not. We chose you."

What a perfect illustration of being a Christian. How often we conclude, “An admission error must have been made! I don’t belong here.” And we too are confronted with loneliness. But Jesus offers the same wisdom, “We chose you!” In theology, we often consider God as one. We speak of God in reference to the individual personalities of God – Father, Son, or Spirit. Yet, how often do we speak of God in the sense of *We* (plural and not singular)? In her article, *Alone Among Friends*, Kat makes the following discovery, “What’s more, the very knowledge of God in Godself is always communal in Christianity. God is always the Trinity; the divine is always a team... What Christians have always agreed about, however, is that God in Godself is a group of three. Community is big in Christianity. Really big.” (Banakis 28).

What a discovery! God is community! And as Christians we are all invited into his perfect community. In 1 Corinthians 2, Paul quotes (or perhaps misquotes) Isaiah 64:4. Paul puts it this way,

*What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who **love** him* (1 Cor 2:9, emphasis mine).

Oh how we have misapplied this verse in the Kingdom of Christ. This verse is most commonly quoted in the context of heaven, the final, eternal reward. The problem with this conclusion is that contextually Paul is not speaking of heaven or the future. But rather, Paul is drawing attention to something that the Corinthians can have right now. Paul admits that at one time in the past it was unattainable – hidden wisdom, but now it is present and available. To better understand what Paul is teaching is to look directly at what Isaiah was teaching in Isaiah 64. Isaiah 64 is part of a prayer for mercy in which God’s people acknowledge their sin and His anger; thus questioning, “Shall we be saved?” Isaiah’s proposition,

*From of old not one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides you, who acts for those who **wait** for Him* (Isa 64:4).

Did you catch the subtle difference in Isaiah’s understanding versus Paul’s? It’s the difference in *waiting* versus *love*. Sin brings about loneliness, a disconnect from God. Augustine once wrote, “Without God, we cannot. Without us, God will not.” What a profound statement. The essence of this statement is one of community where all parties have responsibility. The people of Isaiah’s day had to wait on God to come down from the heavens to the mountains. Yet, when God came down it was to deliver the law or execute judgment (cf. Hebrews 12). Yet, Paul implies in 1 Corinthians 2, that God came down in the form of Jesus to be crucified, thus becoming the Lord of Glory. Upon Jesus’ ascension, God came down in the form of the Holy Spirit in order that all believers might have the mind of Christ. This is *love*. We don’t have to *wait* on God, because *love* has come down. 1 Corinthians 2 describes inspiration. The purpose of inspiration is to know God. God is community. As believers in Jesus and recipients of the gifts of the Holy Spirit we have become part of God’s community. And the significance of community – the community of Christians – is not to prevent loneliness, but offer a support system when battling loneliness.

To clarify, while we must wait to come into the absolute presence of God, we do not have to wait to come into His community. This is one of the implications to Paul’s quoting Isaiah 64:4 (1 Cor 2:9). Community is something available now in the present because of the cross of Christ. God did not choose us for a later time, but for the present time.

God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord" (1 Cor 1:27-31).

Notice the shift in tense in Paul's writings. We have become the wisdom of God, righteousness, sanctification and redemption in the present. Don't miss it. God chose you for now. God chose you, redeemed you and is sanctifying you to be a part of His present community.

In 1 Corinthians 11 – as part of Paul's admonition and rebuke to the Corinthians' grotesque display of a Love Feast (Sunday communion) – Paul uses the word *together* a total of five times. Divisions and factions are the result of selfishness and selfish ambitions and are the breeding ground for loneliness and isolation in the church. The church is one body with the same lifeline, the blood of Jesus. It is a place where people from all broken backgrounds can come together as one body and enjoy community – a place of acceptance, healing, support and sharing; it's a place of love. The church must gain a sense of fear and urgency in Paul's reference to taking Sunday communion in an *unworthy manner*. The unworthy manner isn't so much about my personal sins as much as it is in my acceptance or isolating of my fellow brother or sister in Christ.

The early church apologist, Justin Martyr wrote,

And we afterwards continually remind each other of these things. And the wealthy among us help the needy; and ***we always keep together***; and for all things wherewith we are supplied, we bless the Maker of all through His Son Jesus Christ, and through the Holy Spirit. And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country ***gather together to one place***, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise ***together*** and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen; and ***there is a distribution to each, and a participation*** of that over which thanks have been given, and ***to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons***. And they who are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and ***what is collected is deposited with the president, who succors the orphans and widows and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in bonds and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need***. But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Savior on the same day rose from the dead. For He was crucified on the day before that of Saturn (Saturday); and on the day after that of Saturn, which is the day of the Sun, having appeared to His apostles and disciples, He taught them these things, which we have submitted to you also for your consideration (emphasis mine).³⁵

³⁵ This is from chapters 61-67 of the First Apology of Justin Martyr – Ad155-157; Written to the Roman Emperor, Antoninus Pius.

Justin Martyr shared Paul's devotion of togetherness and the importance of Sunday communion. Sunday communion was so important, as well as the togetherness, that if one missed it, deacons carried the communion to them. The appreciation and devotion went beyond eating bread and drinking wine, it led to a community that shared all things in common. Simply put, the church is all about community, a beautiful reflection of the divine nature of God. It stands as God's resource to overcoming or coping with loneliness.

A Plea for Professional Ministers

What about professional ministers who dedicate their lives to Christ, communion and community and yet are plagued by loneliness? "Rural [ministers] predictably experience feelings of loneliness and isolation due to their circumstances" (Scott 78). Two things that seem to impact professional ministers the most are:

1. "Feel that your interests and ideas are not shared by those around you" (ibid).
2. "Feel that people are *around* you but not *with* you" (ibid).

First, know that you are not alone and serve in company with the great men of faith, such as Elijah, Jeremiah, Paul and even Jesus. Second, remember Obadiah. When the wicked Queen Jezebel had cut off all the prophets, Obadiah hid 100 of these prophets in caves and provided them with bread and water (1 Kin 18). One of the things Scott's study reported was that many ministers who were/are plagued with loneliness reported isolation from other ministers. When the church turned against the prophets, the prophets communed with one another – they became their own community support group. Ministers, we need each other. We need to feed and water each other spiritually, mentally and emotionally. We need to quit drawing alliances against one another determined by school affiliations, congregational affiliations and differences of religious philosophies and start supporting one another. How can we ever expect our churches to be a community, if we cannot commune as leaders?

CONCLUSION

Post COVID pandemic specialists encouraged doctors to prescribe the following to offset loneliness: (1) group singing, (2) community service, (3) community meetings, and (4) having confidants that one can confess to. The church offers all four; but one thing we are lacking in – that will play a key role in overcoming loneliness – is hospitality. Susan Mettes' research previously mentioned, also found the following: 1/3 of Christians rarely if ever practice hospitality; 60% of practicing Christians claim to host someone in their home only once a month at most, if ever – however, the majority of Christians host only family. If the church is to ever assist in recovery in the loneliness pandemic, we must do 4 things:

1. Become a worshipful people, communed together for the purpose of praise, thanksgiving and adoration to our God.
2. Become a prayerful people, intentional in prayer concerning the subject matter of loneliness.
3. Become a unified people, in full representation as the body of Christ.
4. Become a hospitable people, opening our homes to those suffering from loneliness.

At the core of Christian religion is the dissolving or softening of loneliness and isolation.

James 1:27 states, “Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.” In other words, pure religion before our communal God is to visit the lonely and isolated by extending a community that remains in the world but not of the world. Returning back to Job’s narrative, God’s response to ending Job’s loneliness was to bless him more afterward than in the beginning. How did God choose to do this? He restored Job’s community for another 140 years to experience life with four generations of people. Simply put, Christ and community are paramount to coping with loneliness in a healthy manner.

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BURNING IN ANGER: YOU GET WHAT YOU DESERVE MENTALITY

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As we read through the book of Job there are two things that are prevalent: suffering and confusion. However, there is one thing, though it is seemingly obscure, it is the most prominent emotion in Job; anger. The expression of anger, in Job, is seen in his friends as they struggle to force Job to accept his condition as a result of his sinful activity, Job as he struggles with his standing with God, his relationship with his friends, and his perspective concerning the Lord. As Job endures his struggles, he is faced with a myriad of thoughts that will change his perspective on God forever.

INTRODUCTION

Job, to me, is a book about anger and grief. Job starts off as a man who has it all. He is wealthy, he has a great family, and he is a righteous man of God. The true story of Job begins when he loses everything he ever had for no reason. He lost all his wealth, he lost his family, his relationship with his wife is severely damaged, and his friends think that he has been sinning against God for years, and nothing is the way it should be. He lost his children, he lost his family, his wife is against him, he is in the midst of grief, and is now being attacked by those who should have been there to comfort him. One can quickly read the grief and anger in the voice of Job. "It's not fair! I did nothing wrong, but I lost everything. Oh, if I could just die now! Oh, if I had never been born!"

The expression of anger, to me, is evident in this book about pain and suffering. The anger of Job's friends, wondering why this man of sin will not listen to reason and repent. The mindset they have is one of "you get what you deserve" as they attack the integrity of Job. The anger of Job is that he is suffering for no apparent reason and cannot find comfort. The anger of God is seemingly kindled against Job. This paper will seek to explore the concept of anger and seek to find a place of application for anger in a modern Christian setting.

THE ACCUSER(S): NOT WHO YOU THINK

When we think of the term "the accuser," we typically think of the enemy; Satan. However, in this book, the accuser is not who we would think. Satan appears, yes, but it's the ones who should have been the comforters that are seen as the accusers here.

Eliphaz is the first friend to speak to Job and at first, Eliphaz is gentle and appeals to Job's character. He knows that Job fears God and appeals to the fact that Job is known as a figure of

compassion. However, the rebuke begins with that in mind (4:5), as Eliphaz states that Job is a comforting figure when he is safe and at peace, but when he is in the midst of trial he cannot handle it.³⁶

The way Eliphaz handles Job's apparent situation quickly changes as he begins to refer to Job as a "fool."³⁷ The continuation of Eliphaz's speech to Job, 5:1-7, is clearly aimed at his suffering. He appears to be speaking for God as he blatantly states that "he cursed his abode...his sons are far from safety and even crushed in the gate...his harvest is empty and replaced with thorns...the schemer is eager for his wealth but his affliction does not come from nowhere." Eliphaz is bold in stating that all that has happened to Job and his family is his fault.³⁸

Recall, that this has just occurred. Job recently lost everything, his children killed, his wealth taken, family dismantled, and this "friend" was audacious enough to say, "Job, you did this you fool. You are the reason your children are dead. If you weren't such a sinner, these things would not have happened to you." Eliphaz and his rash conclusion concerning Job's character would result in unjust anger without premise.

Job's response isn't necessarily a response to Eliphaz, but rather it is a plea to God to end his suffering. His friends ignore the turmoil, the plea, to have his suffering ended, to find out what the wrong was. Surely Job was the kind of man to repent if he knew what his fault was, surely his friends would have known that. However, the anger of the friends continues to be spurned on "behalf of God."

Bildad continues the rebuke by stating that if Job were truly righteous, then God would bless him (8:1-6). This allows Zophar to take the argument one step further (11:1-3) stating that Job lost everything due to arrogance. The berating continues and the statements contradict one another which goes to show that these men were truly not inspired by God, nor were their arguments remotely close to the situation at hand.³⁹

I mention these arguments because they serve as the prelude to the stirring of the anger in three figures in Job: one is obviously Job, the second is Elihu, and finally God Himself. With these figures in mind, as we continue in the text, the idea of anger in the book of Job becomes more and more prevalent. Why must I suffer, where is the answer to my question, what have I done to deserve this, when will I receive my justification? These questions are on Job's mind as he is being accused of sinning against God by the sorry comforters that were his friends. "You get what you deserve Job."

³⁶1. Wilson, Lindsay. "Job." Grand Rapids, MI. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. 2015.

³⁷2. Ibid.

³⁸3. Ibid.

³⁹4. Chamberlin, Thomas C. *The Problem of Suffering*. TBW Vol: 8. 1896. 182.

THE FINAL ACCUSER: NO ANSWER GIVEN FOR SUFFERING

Elihu's speeches are ultimately concerned with the genuineness of the friends and Job.⁴⁰ The text indicates that this individual became fueled by his anger, Elihu burned with anger because of Job because he justified himself before God....his anger burned because of his friends because they gave no answer yet condemned Job (32:2-3). The problem with the speech of Elihu, which is only one speech divided into several parts as a literary device, is that he claims to provide an answer to Job and the friends' problem concerning sin, yet he actually offers no real solution.⁴¹

Elihu, like the rest of the friend group, provokes Job by claiming to speak for God while condemning him. Elihu, again like the rest of the friends, has no basis for his claims of speaking on behalf of God, nor does he have a basis for condemning Job. Again, the thought process behind the argument for Job's condition is that he deserved to be punished. He must have some sin that he has been hiding for some time during his life and God is giving him his due.

One can easily see, though, the reasoning for Elihu's frustration with both parties, that of Job and their friends. So much is being said, but the conversation is going nowhere. Job continues to claim to be righteous, though Elihu believes that the righteous will not suffer (34:1-11). The friends claim Job has sinned but offer no real evidence aside from his suffering. Though anger begins with a form of righteousness, anger of Elihu is baseless and aimless. He is like a man swinging in the darkness, there is a target but he cannot see it nor does he know where it is.

JOB: THE MAN OF ANGER & FRUSTRATION

Job, being the primary focus of all of the accusations, becomes more and more justified in his anger. He has suffered tremendously, he: has lost all he has, lost his family, and his friends claim it is all his fault and that he is a fool, and is being accused of being a sinner. The suffering of Job has begotten a form of anger, albeit controlled but anger nonetheless, that begins to show itself as bitter pain and agony.

Though Job is angry, we don't see any form of violence in him. As previously stated, Job's anger appears in the form of pain and agony. According to a study published concerning the topic of anger, Job's anger can be classified as resentful, scornful, and sullen.⁴² Job's anger is directed at himself, God, and his friends. He resents the day he was born, he is full of scorn toward his friends, and he feels that God has provoked his sullen mentality as he is full of gloom and despair.

⁴⁰5. Nichols, Helen Hawley. *The Composition of Elihu Speeches: Job 32-37*. AJSLL Vol: 27. 1911. 99.

⁴¹6. Freedman, David N. *The Elihu Speeches in the Book of Job: A Hypothetical Episode in the Literary History of the Work*. HTR Vol: 61. 52.

⁴²7. Hall, Stanley G. *A Study of Anger*. AJP Vol: 10. 1899. 518-519.

There are several moments where we, as readers, get to see Job break down in his sullen anger and frustration. In chapter 16, specifically in verses 9-10, Job claims that God has destroyed him. The Lord has made him His adversary and gnashes his teeth at him. It is here we see the bold language of Job insinuate that God is his enemy and hates him and wishes him dead.⁴³ This passage alone breaks our typical interpretation of Job, that Job never blamed God and was content with his situation. That is obviously a lousy interpretation as one can clearly see Job sees and holds God with a form of contempt.

To reiterate, Job's anger is not one of violence or wrath. Job's anger and frustration with his friends attacking his character and his view of God being his enemy is one that we, as readers, can be sympathetic toward. His friends are horrible comforters and he is torn in his faith. Job has become sore in his anger, he is literally in the worst pain he has ever been in and he is irritable.⁴⁴ He is an emotional wreck and his pain is unbearable.

Job's pain, as anger, is clearly seen in the text. He claims that he groans in pain and compares his groanings to that of water being poured out (3:24).⁴⁵ His anger is illustrated at this moment as he cries and his emotions pour out of him without his control, he is unable to control his own body.⁴⁶ The anger illustrated is that of brokenness. Does Job deserve this? His friends have preconceived that he does despite not knowing the full story. He does not understand why God has become his enemy, he has served God with the entirety of his being and was even known to be a blameless and upright man (1:1). His friends have concluded that Job was doing these things in order to hide his sin from God, but God has lost his patience with Job and has brought his sin to the light, destroying him. This is not the case as we will observe.

BURNING IN ANGER: JOB'S ANGRY CHALLENGE TO GOD

As previously mentioned, Job is torn. His faith has been placed in God, but it appears that God is the one ruthlessly attacking him. The readers can see the anger Job has with God in these moments of his dilemma. This is clearly seen in Job 10:8 when Job wonders why God would go through the trouble of creating him just to destroy him.⁴⁷

The most profound moment of Job's anger is when he finally snaps at God for his condition. He becomes confrontational with the Lord and demands a hearing before him face to face (13:13-15).

⁴³8. Lindsay, "Job."

⁴⁴9. Hall, "*A Study of Anger*," 518.

⁴⁵10. Raz, Yosefa. *Reading Pain in the book of Job*. De Gruyter. 87.

⁴⁶11. Ibid. 88.

⁴⁷12. Basset, Lytta. "Holy Anger: Jacob, Job, Jesus." Grands Rapids, MI. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. 2006, 80.

Psychologists who have studied this text recognize this outburst of anger as one committed by a man with post-traumatic stress.⁴⁸ Job places his life on the line, blaming God at the risk of his own demise.

Job finds solace in the challenge (13:16). He is confident in his virtuousness and that if God would be audience to his case, he knows that God will give him salvation.⁴⁹ There is hope in this situation, albeit bleak on Job's part mentally. Job sees God as the one who binds him, who has attacked him for no reason (13:23-28). If God would give Job an answer (13:23) he would surely face the death he deserves as a sinner, if God would only answer him.

GOD'S VINDICATION OF JOB: THE RESTORATION OF HOPE & THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOD AND JOB

God remains eerily silent throughout most of the book of Job. Job is suffering and crying out, begging God to give him an answer for his suffering. Job's friends are claiming to speak on God's behalf, calling Job a fool and cursing his apparent secret lifestyle. God finally speaks in chapter 38 to answer Job and his friends, each according to their own folly.

The irony about God's appearing before Job and friends is the previous speech in 37 as Elihu speaks of God and His interactions with nature. God appears in a whirlwind immediately after the conclusion of the speech to show that throughout this entire narrative, He has been present. He has, by His appearance, shown His care for the situation at hand. He answers Job's prayer for an opportunity to meet with God and converse with Him (13:15) (14:15), and by simply appearing, comforts Job.⁵⁰

As for an answer, God never gives one to Job. Instead, God uses His moment to use His speech to expand his perspective concerning the plan of God.⁵¹ The Lord presents a variety of impossible challenges to Job. He challenges Job to begin the process of birth in nature, to tame the Leviathan, and to be in control of all things. These challenges prove to be impossible for Job and possible only for God and were intended to be a presentation for Job's need for a reorientation so his relationship with the Lord could be restored.⁵²

Concerning the lack of an answer, this too proved to be beneficial to the resolution of Job's anger. As frustrating as it may be to us, to Job, this was exactly what was needed.⁵³ The lack of an answer proved to be more than enough of an answer for Job, he learned more about God, that He is

⁴⁸13. Ibid, 81.

⁴⁹14. Ibid, 84.

⁵⁰15. Lindsay, "Job."

⁵¹16. Ibid.

⁵²17. Ibid.

⁵³18. Ibid.

truly in control of all things and Job is not. Job learned that he is a finite being while God is eternal and omnipotent.

CONCLUSION

The answer Job needed was not one of “why,” but more so of “what.” “What is God in control of and what am I not in control of?” In this realization, Job’s anger is turned to penitence and hope. He has heard and learned about the goodness and power of God that he, at one point, did not see. God was nothing more than a being of justice rather than power and order. That was Job’s resolution to his anger and sorrow, a change in perspective being the answer he truly needed.

SERMONICS

1. Understanding anger in the Christian life
 - a. The need for Holy anger
 - b. Anger as motivation
 - c. Anger as passion
2. Anger misused
 - a. Typical: Anger misdirected
 - b. People
 - c. God
3. Anger as a veil
 - a. Misunderstanding one another
 - b. Misunderstanding God
4. Angry questions
 - a. Why
 - i. Why am I suffering
 - ii. Why does God hate me
 - iii. Why do I deserve this
 - b. Inward focus causes harm to the faith
 - i. The answer needed may be outward; looking to God
 - ii. What instead of why; What do I have/not have control of
5. Anger and its resolution
 - a. The answer may not be an answer
 - i. Job was never answered
 - ii. Satisfied with that
 - b. Sometimes the answer we need is not the answer we want
 - c. The answer may simply be a change in perspective

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