JOB

BIBLE STUDY

A Verse-by-Verse Study



A good man in the ashes, friends with the wrong answers, a Redeemer who lives, and the LORD who answers out of the storm

ANDREW DOMINGUEZ

TRINFINITY
Enterprises

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Andrew Dominguez

Trinfinity Enterprises

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A Note on the Bible Translation Used in This Study

My preferred Bible for personal study, teaching, and research is the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB). I chose it because it is a word-for-word translation in today's language, built on the ancient Scripture sources: the Hebrew and Aramaic of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament. I prepared the SLB myself, and the Scripture in this book is taken from it.

Where a literal phrase would mislead an English reader, the SLB gives the writer's meaning in plain words. Words added for sense are set in bold italics so you can see what is in the original and what is not.

The complete Steadfast Literal Bible is free to read, search, download, and print at trinfinityenterprises.com/slb. If you want to check a verse in its full setting or read the translation's preface and principles, that is the place to go.

Above all, my desire is not to promote one translation over another, but to faithfully teach the Word of God, encourage careful examination of the Scriptures, and help readers grow in their knowledge, understanding, and relationship with the Lord.

May every page of this study direct attention not to the translation itself, but to the truth of God's Word and the One whom it reveals.

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Introduction

Welcome, and thank you for taking the time to work through this verse-by-verse study of the book of Job. My purpose in writing this study guide is the same as it was for my study of Revelation: to bring you closer to our Creator and to give you a way to grow in your Christian walk.

The hard season I am willing to share is my battle with alcohol. After a hiking accident in 2014 and four major surgeries, I used alcohol for six years to mask the pain until it became an addiction. I did not get every answer about why. Like Job, I learned that God was still there in the middle of it.

Job is the story of a good man who lost almost everything in one day. He lost his wealth, his ten children and his health, and then his three friends came and told him it was his own fault. For most of the book Job and his friends argue about why he is suffering, and Job cries out for God to answer him. At the end, God does speak, out of a storm. He does not explain Job's suffering, but He shows Job who He is, and that is enough. Job's questions are our questions: Why do good people suffer? Is God fair? Can I trust Him when I cannot see what He is doing? I do not claim to be an authority on the Bible or on Job. I am simply someone like you who wants to grow closer to God and understand His Word. Before you read any part of this book, or any part of Scripture, I ask that you pray, asking God:

- For the Holy Spirit to be present, to help open your eyes and your heart (Psalm 119:18, 119:105)
- For discernment and knowledge (Psalm 119:66, James 1:5)

2 Timothy 2:15 (SLB)

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker not needing to be ashamed, cutting straight the word of truth."

The Bible is God's Word to us (2 Timothy 3:16), given for training in righteousness. If we cannot understand what it says, we cannot apply it to our lives or help build God's kingdom.

So how do we go about understanding God's Word?

The first rule is context. You may have heard the saying "Context is King," but what does that mean? Every word, sentence, and passage helps explain the ones around it. Before we read any passage, we should ask a few simple questions: Who wrote it? Who was it written to? What came right before it? Knowing the answers gives us a clearer picture of what God is saying, both in general and to each of us personally.

Context matters a great deal in Job, maybe more than in any other book of the Bible. In chapters 1 and 2 we, the readers, are taken behind the curtain into heaven. We hear the LORD speak of Job as His servant, and we hear Satan claim that Job only serves God for what he gets. Job never hears that conversation. His friends never hear it. All through the long speeches that follow, we know

something they do not: Job is not suffering because he sinned. If we forget the first two chapters, we will read the friends' speeches and think they make good sense. If we keep those chapters in mind, we see how wrong they were, and we see why God says at the end that they had not spoken what was right about Him (42:7).

Exegesis, Eisegesis, and Hermeneutics

People typically interpret the Bible using one of two methods, Exegesis or Eisegesis. Both are explained below, along with a third word, Hermeneutics. Sometimes people use both methods to "make their case" for the interpretation they want. These definitions are based on www.merriam-webster.com, with my own notes added.

Exegesis means explaining a text, especially a passage of Scripture. Exegesis is reading and interpreting the full text of a passage, and drawing out what it is actually saying.

Eisegesis means reading your own ideas into a text. This happens when we try to find something in the text that really isn't there. It can lead to many errors, especially when we bring assumptions to a passage that aren't actually in it. This method can be used to justify a behavior, position, or belief that goes against what the text originally meant.

Hermeneutics is the study of the principles used to interpret a text, such as the Bible. "Hermeneutics" and "Exegesis" are sometimes used to mean the same thing. The difference is that Exegesis is the work of explaining a passage, while Hermeneutics is the set of principles that guides that work. In Biblical Hermeneutics, the Bible should be read literally unless the text itself gives us a different meaning.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (SLB)

"16 Every Scripture ***is*** God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training which ***is*** in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be complete, fully equipped for every good work."

This passage tells us plainly that the writers of Scripture were inspired by God. Every passage in the Bible came from God and was written down by man. These are not fairy tales or made-up stories. They are God's own breath, given to us so we can be equipped and ready to do good work.

Because every word was inspired and breathed by God, I believe we must let God's Word interpret itself. We must study the Bible using Exegesis, drawing out what the text says, guided by sound Biblical Hermeneutics.

We should study God's Word using the Golden Rule of Interpretation, as Dr. David L. Cooper stated it:

"When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise."

(http://www.biblicalresearch.info/page55.html)

I read the Bible as it is written, and that means reading each book as the kind of writing it is. Job was a real man who lived in a real place. God Himself names him with Noah and Daniel as men of righteousness (Ezekiel 14:14, 20), and James points to "the endurance of Job" as a true example for believers (James 5:11). The opening and closing chapters are told as plain history. The long middle of the book, from 3:1 to 42:6, is poetry. Hebrew poetry does not rhyme sounds. It rhymes thoughts. A line says something, and the next line says it again in other words, or adds to it, or gives its opposite. This is called parallelism. When Job says, "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and they have come to an end with no hope" (7:6), the second line carries the first one further. Once you see this pattern, the poetry is much easier to follow, and you will not try to build a separate teaching on each half of a line.

There is one more thing to keep in mind. Every word in Job is a true record of what was said, but not everything that was said is true. Job's three friends say many things that sound wise, and some of them are true in general. But they apply them wrongly, and the LORD says at the end that they did not speak what was right about Him (42:7). Job himself says some things in his pain that go too far, and he takes them back (40:4-5; 42:3-6). So in every section of this study I will tell you who is speaking, and where a speaker goes wrong, I will say so. A note on the name of God: in the SLB, when you see "LORD" in capital letters, it stands for God's personal name, Yahweh (often written YHWH), which He made known to Moses (Exodus 3:14-15). In Job that name is used mostly in the opening and closing chapters and when the LORD speaks from the storm. In the speeches, Job and his friends mostly call Him "God" (El or Eloah, the general Hebrew words for God) and "the Almighty" (Shaddai).

This study uses the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB) unless I note otherwise. To better understand the original Hebrew, I also used The Interlinear Bible (Jay P. Green Sr., ISBN 1-56563-977-4).

How This Study Is Laid Out

Each chapter of this study follows the same pattern as my study of Revelation:

- Scripture: the full text of the chapter, broken into sections, so you can read it straight through first.
- Preview: a short look at what the chapter covers.
- Study: the chapter again, verse by verse, with my notes on what each verse says and what it means for us.
- Summary: the main points of the chapter in a few lines.
- Study Questions: questions for personal study or a small group, from simple fact questions to questions about how we live. Some of them are personal. In a group, no one should ever have to answer one aloud, and what is shared in the group stays there.

Because Job is poetry, I usually take two to four verses at a time in the Study section, where one thought runs through them. At the start of each speech I name the speaker, so you always know whose words you are reading.

Using This Study With a Group

This study works for one person or for a group. Job has 42 chapters, so here are two ways a group can pace it:

- One chapter a week: forty-two weeks, or a little over nine months. If you like, add a first meeting to read the Introduction and the Background together.
- A faster pace of about twenty-nine weeks: take chapters 1 and 2, 4 and 5, 6 and 7, 9 and 10, 12 and 13, 16 and 17, 23 and 24, 25 and 26, 29 and 30, 32 and 33, 36 and 37, 38 and 39, and 40 and 41 two at a time, and the rest one at a time. Many of these pairs are one long speech that runs across two chapters.

For each meeting, I suggest reading the Scripture out loud together first, straight through, before anyone comments. Then walk through the Study section, stopping where the group has questions, and finish with the Study Questions and prayer. The first questions in each list can be answered from the text. The later ones are more personal, and no one should feel pressed to answer them aloud.

Job is a hard book to read, because it is about real pain. In chapter 1 Job loses all ten of his children in one day. In chapter 3 and again in later chapters he wishes he had never been born and longs for death. His friends tell him his suffering proves he has sinned, and Job says bitter and bold things about God. Some people in your group may be grieving a child or a spouse. Some may be living with long illness or pain, or may have been told by other Christians that their suffering was their own fault. Read each chapter ahead of time, and be ready to listen more than you speak. The friends did best when they sat with Job in silence (2:13). If someone in your group says they wish they were dead or are thinking of harming themselves, take it seriously, stay with them, and help them get help right away from a pastor, a doctor, or a crisis line.

I look forward to walking with you through the book of Job. If you'd like to share feedback, please email me at andrew@trinfinityenterprises.com.

May God bless you and your time studying and getting to know Him better.

Overview of Job

Job is the eighteenth book of the Bible. In our English Bibles it is the first of the poetic and wisdom books, which run from Job through the Song of Songs. In the Hebrew Bible it belongs to the third section, the Writings. Wisdom books deal with how to live under God and with the hard questions of life. Proverbs teaches how life usually works under God. Ecclesiastes and Job look at what happens when life does not seem to work that way.

Job does not fit neatly into Israel's history. It never mentions Israel, the exodus, the Law of Moses, the tabernacle or the temple. The events seem to have taken place in the time of the patriarchs, the days of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in a land east of Israel. Job is not an Israelite, yet he knows and fears the true God. His book reminds us that God has always had people who knew Him, and that the questions of suffering are as old as the human race.

The theme of Job is that God is sovereign, that He is good, and that He can be trusted even when we do not understand what He is doing. The book asks why the righteous suffer, but it never gives a full answer to that question. Instead it answers a deeper one: will a man trust and worship God for who He is, and not only for what He gives? Job gave his answer on the worst day of his life:

Job 1:21 (SLB)

"Naked I came out from the womb of my mother, and naked I shall return there. The LORD has given, and the LORD has taken; let the name of the LORD be blessed."

Job wrestles hard after that. He questions, he complains, he demands a hearing. But he never curses God, and he never lets go of Him. At the end, when the LORD speaks, Job says, "By the hearing of the ear I had heard of You, and now my eye has seen You" (42:5). That is where the book takes us: from knowing about God to knowing Him.

Job has 42 chapters and 1,070 verses. Here is its structure:

Part One: Job Tested in Heaven and on Earth (chapters 1 and 2)

- Chapter 1: Job's Integrity and His First Test
- Chapter 2: Job's Second Test and His Three Friends

Part Two: Job's Lament (chapter 3)

- Chapter 3: Job Curses the Day of His Birth

Part Three: The First Round of Speeches (chapters 4 to 14)

- Chapter 4: Eliphaz's First Speech
- Chapter 5: Eliphaz Urges Job to Seek God
- Chapter 6: Job Answers Eliphaz
- Chapter 7: Job Cries Out to God
- Chapter 8: Bildad's First Speech

- Chapter 9: Job Longs for a Mediator
- Chapter 10: Job Pleads With His Maker
- Chapter 11: Zophar's First Speech
- Chapter 12: Job Answers: God's Wisdom and Power
- Chapter 13: Job Defends His Integrity
- Chapter 14: If a Man Dies, Will He Live Again?

Part Four: The Second Round of Speeches (chapters 15 to 21)

- Chapter 15: Eliphaz's Second Speech
- Chapter 16: Job's Witness in Heaven
- Chapter 17: Job's Hope Fades
- Chapter 18: Bildad's Second Speech
- Chapter 19: I Know That My Redeemer Lives
- Chapter 20: Zophar's Second Speech
- Chapter 21: Job Answers: The Wicked Often Prosper

Part Five: The Third Round of Speeches (chapters 22 to 27)

- Chapter 22: Eliphaz's Third Speech
- Chapter 23: Job Longs to Find God
- Chapter 24: Job Asks Why God Delays Judgment
- Chapter 25: Bildad's Third Speech
- Chapter 26: Job Answers Bildad: The Greatness of God
- Chapter 27: Job Holds Fast to His Integrity

Part Six: The Poem on Wisdom and Job's Final Defense (chapters 28 to 31)

- Chapter 28: Where Can Wisdom Be Found?
- Chapter 29: Job Remembers His Former Days
- Chapter 30: Job's Present Humiliation
- Chapter 31: Job's Final Oath of Innocence

Part Seven: Elihu Speaks (chapters 32 to 37)

- Chapter 32: Elihu Begins to Speak
- Chapter 33: Elihu: God Speaks to Man
- Chapter 34: Elihu Defends God's Justice
- Chapter 35: Elihu: What Man's Righteousness Means to God
- Chapter 36: Elihu Exalts God's Greatness
- Chapter 37: Elihu: God's Majesty in the Storm

Part Eight: The LORD Speaks From the Storm (chapters 38 to 41)

- Chapter 38: The LORD Answers Job From the Storm
- Chapter 39: The LORD and the Wild Creatures
- Chapter 40: Job's Reply and Behemoth
- Chapter 41: Leviathan

Part Nine: Job Restored (chapter 42)

- Chapter 42: Job Repents and Is Restored

Where this book points to Christ: Job is not a book of prophecy, but again and again Job reaches for something only Christ would bring. In 9:33 he cries that there is no one to stand between him and God and lay a hand on them both. The New Testament answers, "there is one God, and one mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). In 16:19 Job says his witness is in heaven, and we know that Christ is our Advocate with the Father (1 John 2:1) who always lives to intercede for us (Hebrews 7:25). In 19:25-27 Job says, "I know that my Redeemer lives," and that in his flesh he will see God. Christ is that living Redeemer, raised from the dead as the firstfruits of all who belong to Him (1 Corinthians 15:20). Job himself, a righteous man who suffered though he had not sinned as his friends claimed, mocked by those around him, and then praying for the very friends who wronged him (42:8-10), gives us a picture of the only truly innocent Sufferer, who prayed for those who wronged Him. And Satan, the accuser of chapters 1 and 2, is the same "accuser of our brothers" who will one day be thrown down for good (Revelation 12:10).

Background of the Book

Author: The book does not name its author. Jewish tradition gives it to Moses. Others have suggested Job himself, Elihu, or Solomon, or an unknown wise man of Israel. Whoever wrote it knew the speeches in great detail, and knew what happened in heaven in chapters 1 and 2, which no man could know unless God revealed it. I believe the writer was a man of deep faith who was guided by the Holy Spirit to record these events and speeches truly.

When it was written: We do not know, and good Bible teachers disagree. Some believe it was written in the time of the patriarchs, soon after the events, perhaps by Job himself or someone close to him. Some follow the Jewish tradition that Moses wrote it, perhaps during his forty years in Midian, about 1500 B.C. Others place it in the days of Solomon, about 950 B.C., when Israel's wisdom writing flourished. Many modern critical scholars date it much later, during or after the exile, between about 600 and 400 B.C., and some think it was written in stages. The book itself does not settle the question. What matters most is that it is a true record of real events.

When the events happened: Most likely in the time of the patriarchs, about 2000 B.C. Several things point to this. Job offers sacrifices himself as the head of his family (1:5), with no priest, as Abraham and Jacob did. His wealth is counted in flocks, herds and servants. He lives another 140 years after his trials (42:16), a lifespan like the patriarchs'. The book never mentions Israel, the exodus or the Law. Raiders from Sheba and the Chaldeans still roam as tribes (1:15, 17).

Setting: The land of Uz, east of Israel (1:1, 3). Scripture links Uz with Edom, south and east of the Dead Sea (Lamentations 4:21), and some place it further north and east, toward the desert lands of Aram. The friends come from nearby peoples. Eliphaz is from Teman, a town and clan of Edom named for a grandson of Esau (Genesis 36:11). Bildad is a Shuhite, perhaps from Shuah, a son of Abraham by Keturah (Genesis 25:2). Zophar is a Naamathite, from a place we cannot identify for sure. Elihu is a Buzite, perhaps from Buz, a nephew of Abraham (Genesis 22:21; Job 32:2). These were desert and borderland peoples, many of them related to Abraham's family.

A real man: Some have taught that Job is a parable, a story told to make a point. I do not believe that. The book begins like a history, naming Job, his land and his friends. God names Job alongside Noah and Daniel, two real men, in Ezekiel 14:14 and 20, and James points to Job's endurance and the Lord's compassion toward him as true examples for us (James 5:11). Job was a real man, and his suffering was real.

How to read the speeches: The speeches are a true record of what each man said. That does not make every statement true teaching. The three friends hold one idea above all: God always blesses the righteous and always punishes the wicked in this life, so great suffering must mean great sin. That idea is partly true, but it is not the whole truth, and when they used it to accuse Job, they were wrong. The LORD says so in 42:7. Jesus faced the same idea when His disciples asked whose sin made a man born blind, and He answered, "Neither this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be revealed in him" (John 9:3). Even so, the friends say true things at times, and Paul quotes Eliphaz in 1 Corinthians 3:19 (Job 5:13). We read their words the

way we would weigh any sermon: hold on to what agrees with the rest of Scripture, and set aside what does not.

Purpose: To show that God is sovereign and good and worthy of our worship even when we do not understand our suffering; to show that suffering is not always a punishment for sin; to warn us against easy answers when others hurt; and to show that God hears honest cries, answers in His own time, and is "very compassionate and merciful" (James 5:11).

Chapter 1: Job's Integrity and His First Test

Scripture

1:1-12 ***There*** was a man in the land of Uz; Job ***was*** his name; and that man was blameless and upright, and fearing God and turning aside from evil. And seven sons and three daughters were born to him. And his livestock was seven thousand sheep and three thousand camels and five hundred pairs of oxen and five hundred female donkeys, and very many servants; and that man was greater than all the sons of the east. And his sons went and made a feast ***in*** the house of each one on his day, and they sent and invited their three sisters to eat and to drink with them. And it was, when the days of the feast had gone around, that Job sent and sanctified them, and he rose early in the morning and offered up burnt offerings ***according to*** the number of them all; for Job said, "Perhaps my sons have sinned and cursed God in their heart." Thus Job did all the days. And it was the day ***when*** the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came in their midst. And the LORD said to Satan, "From where are you coming?" And Satan answered the LORD and said, "From roving about on the earth and from walking about on it." And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you set your heart on My servant Job? For ***there is*** none like him on the earth, a man blameless and upright, fearing God and turning aside from evil." And Satan answered the LORD and said, "Has Job feared God for nothing? Have You not Yourself put a hedge around him and around his house and around all that ***is*** his, all around? The work of his hands You have blessed, and his livestock has spread out in the land. But now, stretch out Your hand, please, and touch all that ***is*** his; if he does not curse You to Your face!" And the LORD said to Satan, "Look, all that ***is*** his ***is*** in your hand; only against him do not stretch out your hand." And Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

1:13-22 And it was the day ***when*** his sons and his daughters ***were*** eating and drinking wine in the house of their brother, the firstborn, and a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the female donkeys grazing beside them, and Sheba fell ***on them*** and took them, and they struck the youths by the mouth of the sword; and I have escaped, only I alone, to tell you." This one ***was*** still speaking, and this ***one*** came and said, "The fire of God fell from the heavens and burned among the sheep and among the youths and consumed them; and I have escaped, only I alone, to tell you." This one ***was*** still speaking, and this ***one*** came and said, "The Chaldeans formed three bands and made a raid on the camels and took them, and they struck the youths by the mouth of the sword; and I have escaped, only I alone, to tell you." Yet this one ***was*** speaking, and this ***one*** came and said, "Your sons and your daughters ***were*** eating and drinking wine in the house of their brother, the firstborn, and look, a great wind came from across the wilderness and touched the four corners of the house, and it fell on the youths, and they died; and I have escaped, only I alone, to tell you." And Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the earth and bowed down. And he said, "Naked I came out from the womb of my mother, and naked I shall return there. The LORD has given, and the LORD has taken; let the name of the LORD be blessed." In all this Job did not sin, and he did not ascribe unseemliness to God.

Chapter 1 Preview

The book opens by introducing a man named Job. He lives in the land of Uz, he is the greatest man in the east, and above all he is "blameless and upright, and fearing God and turning aside from evil." Then the scene moves from earth to heaven. The angels come before the LORD, and Satan comes with them. The LORD points to Job as His servant, and Satan answers with a charge: Job only serves God because God has blessed him. Take it away, and he will curse You. The LORD allows Satan to touch everything Job has, but not Job himself.

Then, in one day, four messengers arrive one after another. Job's oxen and donkeys are stolen, his sheep are burned, his camels are taken, and a great wind brings down the house where all ten of his children are feasting. They all die. Job tears his robe, falls to the ground and worships. This is one of the hardest chapters in the Bible to read, and one of the most important. It shows us what real faith looks like on the worst day of a man's life.

Chapter 1 Study

1:1 ***There*** *was a man in the land of Uz; Job* ***was*** *his name; and that man was blameless and upright, and fearing God and turning aside from evil.*

The book begins like a history: "There was a man in the land of Uz; Job was his name." Uz was east of Israel, probably near Edom (Lamentations 4:21). Job was a real man in a real place (Ezekiel 14:14; James 5:11).

Four things are said about him. He was "blameless," which means whole and sincere, a man of integrity. It does not mean he never sinned. Job himself speaks later of "the iniquities of my youth" (13:26). He was "upright," straight in how he dealt with people. He was "fearing God," holding God in awe and trust. And he was "turning aside from evil," which means he kept away from it on purpose. The rest of the book depends on this verse. Whatever the friends will say, God's own record says Job was not suffering for some hidden sin.

1:2-3 *And seven sons and three daughters were born to him. And his livestock was seven thousand sheep and three thousand camels and five hundred pairs of oxen and five hundred female donkeys, and very many servants; and that man was greater than all the sons of the east.*

Job had seven sons and three daughters. In that culture, seven and three, and the ten together, were numbers that spoke of fullness. His family was complete and blessed.

His wealth was counted in animals and servants: "seven thousand sheep and three thousand camels and five hundred pairs of oxen and five hundred female donkeys." This was the wealth of a great chief in the days of the patriarchs, like Abraham (Genesis 13:2). "That man was greater than all the sons of the east." The "sons of the east" were the peoples living east of the Jordan and in the deserts beyond. Job was the greatest of them all. Keep this in mind. When everything is taken, we will see how far he fell.

1:4-5 *And his sons went and made a feast **in** the house of each one on his day, and they sent and invited their three sisters to eat and to drink with them. And it was, when the days of the feast had gone around, that Job sent and sanctified them, and he rose early in the morning and offered up burnt offerings **according to** the number of them all; for Job said, "Perhaps my sons have sinned and cursed God in their heart." Thus Job did all the days.*

Job's sons took turns holding feasts in their homes, "each one on his day," perhaps their birthdays (compare 3:1). They invited their sisters. This was a close family that enjoyed being together.

After each round of feasting, Job "sent and sanctified them." He called them to set themselves apart and get ready to come before God. Then he rose early and offered burnt offerings for each one. A burnt offering was an animal wholly burned on the altar, given to God for worship and to atone for sin, which means to cover it so the sinner could be at peace with God. There was no priesthood yet, so Job, as the head of his family, served as its priest, as Noah, Abraham and Jacob did (Genesis 8:20; 22:13; 35:7).

Why? "Perhaps my sons have sinned and cursed God in their heart." Job did not know that they had. He was not worried about outward sin only, but about the heart. "Thus Job did all the days." His faith was not a one-time thing. It was his habit. A father who prays for his children's hearts, again and again, is doing what Job did.

1:6-7 *And it was the day **when** the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came in their midst. And the LORD said to Satan, "From where are you coming?" And Satan answered the LORD and said, "From roving about on the earth and from walking about on it."*

Now the scene moves from Uz to heaven. "It was the day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD." Who are the "sons of God"? In Job the phrase means angels, the heavenly beings who serve God. In 38:7 the "sons of God" shouted for joy when God laid the foundations of the earth, long before any human being existed. They come to report to their King, like officials before a throne.

"And Satan also came in their midst." In Hebrew the word is ha-satan, "the adversary" or "the accuser." The word satan means one who opposes or accuses, and here it has "the" in front of it, like a title. Some scholars read ha-satan here as a title for an angel of God's court who acts as a prosecutor, not yet the devil of later Scripture. I believe this is the same being the rest of the Bible calls Satan and the devil, the fallen angel who "walks around as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8), and who is called "the accuser of our brothers" (Revelation 12:10). Notice that he must "present himself" too. Satan is not God's equal. He has to answer to Him.

"From where are you coming?" God did not need the answer. He asked so Satan would have to give account. Satan says he has been "roving about on the earth and from walking about on it." He is restless, always looking.

1:8 *And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you set your heart on My servant Job? For **there is** none like him on the earth, a man blameless and upright, fearing God and turning aside from evil."*

It is the LORD, not Satan, who brings up Job. "Have you set your heart on My servant Job?" God calls him "My servant." That is the highest honor a person can have. God is proud of Job. He repeats the words of verse 1 and adds, "there is none like him on the earth."

Think about that. Before Job's trials began, God already knew how Job would stand. God was not taking a gamble. He knew His servant. We should also notice that the trials that follow are not because Job was bad. They come because he was good. That will be the very thing the friends cannot accept.

1:9-11 *And Satan answered the LORD and said, "Has Job feared God for nothing? Have You not Yourself put a hedge around him and around his house and around all that **is** his, all around? The work of his hands You have blessed, and his livestock has spread out in the land. But now, stretch out Your hand, please, and touch all that **is** his; if he does not curse You to Your face!"*

Satan answers with a question that goes to the heart of the book: "Has Job feared God for nothing?" In other words, Job is only good because it pays. "Have You not Yourself put a hedge around him?" God had protected Job, his house and everything he had, and blessed the work of his hands.

Satan admits something here without meaning to. He could not get through God's hedge. God had been guarding Job all along.

Then the challenge: "stretch out Your hand, please, and touch all that is his; if he does not curse You to Your face!" Satan's charge is really against both Job and God. He says Job's faith is fake, and he says God is not worth loving for His own sake, only for His gifts. The question the book will test is this: will anyone love God when there is nothing in it for him?

That question is for us too. Do I love God, or do I love what He gives me?

1:12 *And the LORD said to Satan, "Look, all that **is** his **is** in your hand; only against him do not stretch out your hand." And Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.*

"Look, all that is his is in your hand; only against him do not stretch out your hand." God gives Satan permission, and God sets the limit. Satan can do nothing without God allowing it, and he cannot go one step past the line God draws. Jesus told Peter the same kind of thing: "Satan has asked for you, to sift you like wheat," and then He said He had prayed for him (Luke 22:31-32).

Why would God allow this? Scripture does not tell Job, and it does not tell us everything either. What we are shown is that God had a purpose, that He set the limits, and that He was never out of control. "And Satan went out from the presence of the LORD." He goes at once. He is eager to do harm.

1:13-15 *And it was the day **when** his sons and his daughters **were** eating and drinking wine in the house of their brother, the firstborn, and a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the female donkeys grazing beside them, and Sheba fell **on them** and took them, and they struck the youths by the mouth of the sword; and I have escaped, only I alone, to tell you."*

The day of disaster starts like any other day of feasting. The children are at the oldest brother's house, "eating and drinking wine." Then the first messenger runs up: the oxen were plowing and the donkeys grazing nearby, "and Sheba fell on them and took them." Sheba here means raiders from the Sabeans, desert tribes from Arabia. They killed the servants "by the mouth of the sword," a Hebrew way of saying with the edge of the sword.

"I have escaped, only I alone, to tell you." Each messenger will end with the same words. One alone is left each time to bring the news. The pattern is meant to hit hard.

1:16-17 *This one **was** still speaking, and this **one** came and said, "The fire of God fell from the heavens and burned among the sheep and among the youths and consumed them; and I have escaped, only I alone, to tell you." This one **was** still speaking, and this **one** came and said, "The Chaldeans formed three bands and made a raid on the camels and took them, and they struck the youths by the mouth of the sword; and I have escaped, only I alone, to tell you."*

"This one was still speaking, and this one came." Before Job could take in the first loss, the next came. "The fire of God fell from the heavens," probably lightning, and burned up the sheep and the servants. Notice the servant calls it "the fire of God." Job will soon wonder the same thing. It looked like God Himself was against him. We know from verse 12 that Satan was the one acting, with God's permission.

Then a third messenger: "The Chaldeans formed three bands" and took the camels. The Chaldeans were then a raiding people from the north and east, long before they became the rulers of Babylon. In a few minutes Job's wealth was gone. Raiders from the south and the north, and fire from heaven: it was coming from every side.

1:18-19 *Yet this one **was** speaking, and this **one** came and said, "Your sons and your daughters **were** eating and drinking wine in the house of their brother, the firstborn, and look, a great wind came from across the wilderness and touched the four corners of the house, and it fell on the youths, and they died; and I have escaped, only I alone, to tell you."*

"Yet this one was speaking, and this one came." The fourth messenger brought the worst news of all. All of Job's sons and daughters were at the firstborn's house, and "a great wind came from across the wilderness and touched the four corners of the house." The whole house fell, "and they died." All ten.

I will not pretend this is easy to read. Losing one child is a grief no parent should have to bear. Job lost ten in a single moment, and on top of it lost everything he owned. If you have lost a child, or someone you love, you know that no words can fix that pain. The Bible does not try to make it small. It tells it plainly, and then it shows us how one man brought that grief to God. If your grief is heavy, please do not carry it alone. Talk to someone: a pastor or a trusted friend.

1:20 *And Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the earth and bowed down.*

"Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head." These were the signs of deep mourning in the ancient world. Job did not hide his grief or pretend he was fine. Faith does not mean we do not weep. Jesus Himself wept at the tomb of Lazarus (John 11:35).

"He fell to the earth and bowed down." The word for "bowed down" is the word for worship. With his robe torn and his head shaved, Job worshiped. This is one of the most remarkable verses in the Bible. On the worst day of his life, Job's first move was toward God, not away from Him.

1:21 *And he said, "Naked I came out from the womb of my mother, and naked I shall return there. The LORD has given, and the LORD has taken; let the name of the LORD be blessed."*

Job's words are short and deep. "Naked I came out from the womb of my mother, and naked I shall return there." He came into the world with nothing, and he will leave it with nothing. Everything in between was a gift.

"The LORD has given, and the LORD has taken; let the name of the LORD be blessed." Job did not know about Satan. He did not blame the Sabeans or the Chaldeans or the wind. He saw God's hand behind it all, and he still blessed God's name. Satan had said Job would curse God to His face (1:11). Instead he blessed Him.

Many people have prayed these words at the graveside of someone they loved. They do not make the pain go away. But they say that God is still God, and still good, even here.

1:22 *In all this Job did not sin, and he did not ascribe unseemliness to God.*

"In all this Job did not sin, and he did not ascribe unseemliness to God." To ascribe unseemliness to God means to charge Him with doing something wrong or unfitting. Job did not accuse God of evil. Satan's first charge has failed. Job feared God for nothing, because God Himself was worth fearing.

That does not mean Job will never struggle. In the chapters ahead he will cry out, complain and ask hard questions. But this verse stands over the whole book. Job's faith was real. James tells us, "You have heard of the endurance of Job, and you have seen the outcome of the Lord, that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful" (James 5:11).

Chapter 1 Summary

Job was a blameless and upright man in the land of Uz who feared God and turned from evil, the greatest man in the east, with ten children and great wealth. He prayed and offered sacrifices for his children's hearts. In heaven the angels, the sons of God, came before the LORD, and Satan came with them. The LORD pointed to Job as His servant, and Satan charged that Job only served God for what he got. The LORD allowed Satan to touch all that Job had, but not Job himself. In one day raiders, fire and a great wind took Job's animals, his servants and all ten of his children. Job tore his robe, fell to the ground and worshiped, saying that the LORD had given and the LORD had taken, and blessing His name. In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.

Chapter 1 Study Questions

1. What four things does the first verse say about Job's character? (1:1)

2. What did Job do after his children's feasts, and why? (1:5)

3. Who came before the LORD in heaven, and what did the LORD say about Job? (1:6-8)

4. What was Satan's charge against Job, and what was he really saying about God? (1:9-11)

5. What limit did the LORD set on what Satan could do? (1:12)

6. What four disasters struck Job, and what did they take from him? (1:13-19)

7. What did Job do and say when he heard the news? (1:20-21)

8. Job and his friends never saw the scene in heaven. How does knowing what happened there change the way you read the rest of the book?

9. Satan asked, "Has Job feared God for nothing?" If God took away the good things in your life, what would be left of your faith?

10. Have you, or someone you love, faced a loss that seemed too great to bear? What would it look like to bring that grief to God the way Job did, honestly, with tears, and still in worship?

Chapter 2: Job's Second Test and His Three Friends

Scripture

2:1-13 And it was the day ***when*** the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came in their midst to present himself before the LORD. And the LORD said to Satan, "From where are you coming?" And Satan answered the LORD and said, "From roving about on the earth and from walking about on it." And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you set your heart on My servant Job? For ***there is*** none like him on the earth, a man blameless and upright, fearing God and turning aside from evil. And he ***is*** still holding fast to his integrity, and you incited Me against him to swallow him up for nothing." And Satan answered the LORD and said, "Skin for skin! And all that ***belongs*** to the man he will give for his life. But stretch out Your hand, please, and touch his bone and his flesh; if he does not curse You to Your face!" And the LORD said to Satan, "Look, he ***is*** in your hand; only guard his life." And Satan went out from the presence of the LORD, and he struck Job with bad boils from the sole of his foot and to his crown. And he took for himself a potsherd to scrape himself with it, and he ***was*** sitting in the midst of the ashes. And his wife said to him, "***Are*** you still holding fast to your integrity? Curse God and die." And he said to her, "As one of the foolish women speaks, you speak. Shall we also accept the good from God, and not accept the evil?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips. And the three friends of Job heard of all this evil that had come on him, and they came, each one from his own place, Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite; and they met together by appointment to come to show sympathy to him and to comfort him. And they lifted up their eyes from a distance and did not recognize him, and they lifted up their voice and wept; and they tore each one his robe and sprinkled dust on their heads toward the heavens. And they sat with him on the earth seven days and seven nights, and ***there was*** none speaking a word to him, for they saw that the pain was very great.

Chapter 2 Preview

Once more the angels come before the LORD, and once more Satan is with them. The LORD points to Job again: he is still holding fast to his integrity, though Satan moved God against him for nothing. Satan does not give up. "Skin for skin," he says. Touch Job's own body, and he will curse You. The LORD allows it, but Satan must spare Job's life. Job is struck with painful sores from head to foot, and he sits in the ashes scraping himself with a piece of broken pottery.

Then Job's wife tells him to curse God and die. Job answers her with one of the great lines of the book: shall we accept good from God and not accept evil? Finally, three friends hear what has happened and come to comfort him. They do not even recognize him. They weep, and they sit with him on the ground for seven days without saying a word. That silence is the best thing they do in the whole book.

Chapter 2 Study

2:1-3 *And it was the day **when** the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came in their midst to present himself before the LORD. And the LORD said to Satan, "From where are you coming?" And Satan answered the LORD and said, "From roving about on the earth and from walking about on it." And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you set your heart on My servant Job? For **there is** none like him on the earth, a man blameless and upright, fearing God and turning aside from evil. And he **is** still holding fast to his integrity, and you incited Me against him to swallow him up for nothing."*

The scene in heaven is repeated almost word for word from 1:6-8. The "sons of God," the angels, come before the LORD, "and Satan also came in their midst to present himself before the LORD." Again Satan has been "roving about on the earth."

The LORD speaks of Job just as He did before, and then adds: "he is still holding fast to his integrity." Integrity means being whole, the same inside and out. Satan's first attack failed. Then God says, "you incited Me against him to swallow him up for nothing."

"For nothing" is the same Hebrew word Satan used in 1:9 ("Has Job feared God for nothing?"). Satan said Job's faith had no real cause except his blessings. God turns the word around. Job's suffering had no cause in Job. He had done nothing to deserve it. This is the key the friends never have. Job's suffering was not punishment.

God's words, "you incited Me," do not mean Satan controls God. God allowed the test for His own purpose. But God takes the full weight of it on Himself. He does not hide behind Satan.

2:4-6 *And Satan answered the LORD and said, "Skin for skin! And all that **belongs** to the man he will give for his life. But stretch out Your hand, please, and touch his bone and his flesh; if he does not curse You to Your face!" And the LORD said to Satan, "Look, he **is** in your hand; only guard his life."*

"Skin for skin!" This sounds like a trader's saying. Satan means that a man will give up anything to save his own skin. "All that belongs to the man he will give for his life." Losing his goods and even his children was not enough, Satan says. Touch "his bone and his flesh," and then Job will curse You to Your face.

This is a cruel charge. Satan says that at bottom every man is selfish and loves himself more than God. He is the accuser, and he never stops looking for one more way to prove God's people false.

"Look, he is in your hand; only guard his life." Once again God gives permission and draws the line. Satan may touch Job's body, but he may not take his life. Even in the hardest test, God is still in charge of the limits. Paul says that God is faithful and does not let us be tested beyond what we can bear (1 Corinthians 10:13).

2:7-8 *And Satan went out from the presence of the LORD, and he struck Job with bad boils from the sole of his foot and to his crown. And he took for himself a potsherd to scrape himself with it, and he* ***was*** *sitting in the midst of the ashes.*

"Satan went out from the presence of the LORD, and he struck Job with bad boils from the sole of his foot and to his crown." Scripture does not name the disease. Later verses add more: his skin hardened and oozed and was covered with worms (7:5), he could not sleep (7:4), his skin turned black and his bones burned with heat (30:30), pain gnawed at him through the night (30:17), and he grew thin to the bone (19:20). Whatever it was, it was painful and it went on for a long time.

Job "took for himself a potsherd to scrape himself with it." A potsherd is a piece of broken pottery. He was scraping the sores to relieve the itching and the pus. "He was sitting in the midst of the ashes." The ash heap outside a town was where the town's waste was burned, and where outcasts and the sick would sit. The greatest man in the east was now sitting on the garbage heap.

If you have lived with long sickness or constant pain, you know how it wears down the body and the spirit. Job knew it too. God has not forgotten anyone who suffers this way.

2:9-10 *And his wife said to him, "****Are*** *you still holding fast to your integrity? Curse God and die." And he said to her, "As one of the foolish women speaks, you speak. Shall we also accept the good from God, and not accept the evil?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.*

Job's wife speaks only once in the book: "Are you still holding fast to your integrity? Curse God and die." She uses the same words God used in verse 3, "holding fast to his integrity." But where God praised Job for it, she tells him to let it go.

We should be careful how we judge her. She had also lost all ten of her children and everything they owned, and now she watched her husband rot in the ashes. Her words came out of terrible grief. Some think she wanted his suffering to end, even by death. Even so, what she said was wrong, and it was exactly what Satan wanted Job to do.

Job answered, "As one of the foolish women speaks, you speak." In the Bible a fool is not someone who lacks brains but someone who lives as if God does not matter (Psalm 14:1). Job did not call her a fool. He said she was talking like one. Then he asked, "Shall we also accept the good from God, and not accept the evil?" Here "evil" means trouble or disaster, not moral wrong. God does not do evil. But He does allow hard things into our lives, and He is still God when He does.

"In all this Job did not sin with his lips." Satan's second attack has failed. Job did not curse God. He held on.

2:11 *And the three friends of Job heard of all this evil that had come on him, and they came, each one from his own place, Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite; and they met together by appointment to come to show sympathy to him and to comfort him.*

News traveled, and "the three friends of Job heard of all this evil that had come on him." They were "Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite." Teman was in Edom (Genesis 36:11). Shuah may be linked to a son of Abraham and Keturah (Genesis 25:2). We

do not know for sure where Naamah was. These were men of standing, likely wise men and leaders in their own lands, and they had to travel some distance.

"They met together by appointment to come to show sympathy to him and to comfort him." Their motive was good. They came because they cared. As we read their speeches in the chapters ahead, and see how badly they went wrong, we should remember how they started. Good friends with good intentions can still say very harmful things.

2:12-13 *And they lifted up their eyes from a distance and did not recognize him, and they lifted up their voice and wept; and they tore each one his robe and sprinkled dust on their heads toward the heavens. And they sat with him on the earth seven days and seven nights, and* ***there was*** *none speaking a word to him, for they saw that the pain was very great.*

"They lifted up their eyes from a distance and did not recognize him." Job's sickness and grief had changed him so much that his friends could not tell who he was. They wept aloud, tore their robes, "and sprinkled dust on their heads toward the heavens." These were all signs of mourning.

Then they "sat with him on the earth seven days and seven nights, and there was none speaking a word to him, for they saw that the pain was very great." Seven days was the usual time of mourning for the dead (Genesis 50:10). They mourned with Job as if he had already died.

This silence was the best comfort they ever gave him. When someone is hurting deeply, we often feel we have to say something, to explain it or fix it. Usually what they need most is for us to be there. Paul tells us to "weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15). The friends did that for seven days. Their trouble started when they opened their mouths.

Chapter 2 Summary

The angels came before the LORD again, and Satan came with them. The LORD said Job was still holding fast to his integrity, though Satan had moved Him against Job for no cause. Satan said that if Job's own body were touched, he would curse God. The LORD allowed it but told Satan to spare Job's life. Satan struck Job with painful sores from head to foot, and Job sat in the ashes scraping himself with a broken piece of pottery. His wife told him to curse God and die, but Job said that we should accept trouble from God as well as good, and he did not sin with his lips. Three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, came to comfort him. They hardly recognized him, wept, and sat with him on the ground seven days and nights without a word, because his pain was so great.

Chapter 2 Study Questions

1. What did the LORD add about Job in the second scene in heaven? (2:3)

2. What does "for nothing" mean in 2:3, and how does it answer Satan's question in 1:9?

3. What was Satan's second charge, and what limit did God set? (2:4-6)

4. Describe Job's condition after Satan struck him. (2:7-8)

5. What did Job's wife say, and how did Job answer her? (2:9-10)

6. Who were Job's three friends, and why did they come? (2:11)

7. What did the friends do for the first seven days? (2:12-13)

8. Job's wife spoke out of grief. How can we be honest about wrong words without forgetting the pain behind them?

9. Job said we should accept trouble from God as well as good. Is that hard for you to accept? Why or why not?

10. Think of someone you know who is hurting right now. What would it look like for you to sit with them, the way the friends did for seven days, without needing to fix it?

Chapter 3: Job Curses the Day of His Birth

Scripture

3:1-10 After this Job opened his mouth and cursed his day. And Job answered and said, "Let the day perish on which I was born, and the night ***which*** said, 'A man has been conceived.' That day, let it be darkness; let not God above seek it, and let not daylight shine on it. Let darkness and deep darkness redeem it; let a cloud settle on it; let the blacknesses of day terrify it. That night, let gloom take it; let it not rejoice among the days of the year; into the number of the months let it not come. Look, that night, let it be barren; let no cry of joy come into it. Let the cursers of day curse it, those ready to rouse Leviathan. Let the stars of its twilight grow dark; let it wait for light, and ***let there be*** none, and let it not look on the eyelids of the dawn, for it did not shut the doors of my womb, and hide trouble from my eyes.

3:11-26 Why did I not die from the womb, come forth from the belly and expire? Why did knees receive me, and why breasts, that I should suck? For now I would have lain down and been quiet; I would have slept; then ***there*** would be rest for me, with kings and counselors of ***the*** earth, who built ruins for themselves, or with princes ***who had*** gold, who filled their houses ***with*** silver. Or like a hidden miscarriage I would not exist, like infants ***who*** have not seen light. There the wicked cease ***from*** turmoil, and there the weary of strength rest. Together the prisoners are at ease; they do not hear the voice of the taskmaster. The small and the great ***are*** there, the same, and the slave ***is*** free from his master. Why does He give light to the sufferer, and life to the bitter of soul, who long for death, and it is not, and dig for it more than for hidden treasures, who are glad to ***the point of*** rejoicing; they exult when they find the grave, to a man whose way is hidden, and whom God has hedged around? For my sighing comes before my bread, and my roarings pour out like the waters. For I dreaded a dread, and it has come to me; and what I feared comes to me. I am not at ease, and I am not quiet, and I am not at rest, and turmoil has come."

Chapter 3 Preview

After seven days of silence, Job speaks first. He does not curse God, as Satan said he would, but he curses the day he was born. He wishes that day had never come, that the night he was conceived had been wiped out of the calendar. Then he asks why he did not die at birth, since then he would be at rest in the grave with kings and slaves alike. Finally he asks why God gives life to people who long for death and cannot find it.

This is the first chapter of poetry in Job, and it is raw. Job is not teaching here. He is crying out. God put this lament in the Bible so that people in deep pain would know that God hears even words like these. If you have ever wished you had never been born, this chapter is for you, and I hope you will read the whole study of it, especially the last section.

Chapter 3 Study

3:1-2 *After this Job opened his mouth and cursed his day. And Job answered and said,*

"After this Job opened his mouth and cursed his day." "His day" means the day of his birth. Notice what Job did not do. He did not curse God. Satan had said he would (1:11; 2:5), and his wife had urged him to (2:9). Job cursed the day, not the God who made the day.

"And Job answered and said." He was answering the silence, and the whole terrible week. From here to 42:6 the book is poetry. Hebrew poetry rhymes ideas, not sounds. One line says something, and the next line repeats it in different words, or builds on it, or sets it against its opposite. This is called parallelism. Look at verse 3: "Let the day perish on which I was born" and "the night which said, 'A man has been conceived.'" Day and night, birth and conception: the two lines say one thing twice, and the repeating makes it stronger. Watch for this all through Job.

3:3-5 *"Let the day perish on which I was born, and the night* ***which*** *said, 'A man has been conceived.' That day, let it be darkness; let not God above seek it, and let not daylight shine on it. Let darkness and deep darkness redeem it; let a cloud settle on it; let the blacknesses of day terrify it.*

Job wants that day undone. "Let the day perish on which I was born." He goes back even further, to "the night which said, 'A man has been conceived.'" He wishes he had never begun.

In verse 4 he says, "That day, let it be darkness." At creation God said, "Let there be light" (Genesis 1:3). Job speaks as if he wants to reverse that word for one day of his life. "Let not God above seek it." He wishes God would forget that day ever happened.

"Let darkness and deep darkness redeem it." To redeem means to buy back or claim. Job wants darkness to take that day back as its own. Clouds and the "blacknesses of day," like an eclipse, should terrify it. Job is piling up every word for darkness he can find. That is how deep his despair was.

3:6-10 *That night, let gloom take it; let it not rejoice among the days of the year; into the number of the months let it not come. Look, that night, let it be barren; let no cry of joy come into it. Let the cursers of day curse it, those ready to rouse Leviathan. Let the stars of its twilight grow dark; let it wait for light, and* ***let there be*** *none, and let it not look on the eyelids of the dawn, for it did not shut the doors of my womb, and hide trouble from my eyes.*

Now Job turns to the night of his conception. "Let it not rejoice among the days of the year." Let it be taken off the calendar. "Let it be barren; let no cry of joy come into it." The birth of a son was usually a time of shouting for joy. Job wishes that joy had never been heard.

"Let the cursers of day curse it, those ready to rouse Leviathan." Leviathan is a great sea creature. God describes it at length in chapter 41 as a creature He made and controls. Many Bible teachers explain that in the ancient world, some who claimed to put curses on days also spoke of stirring up a sea monster to swallow the sun or moon, as in an eclipse. Job is not saying he believes in their power. He is using a picture his hearers knew: if anyone can curse a day, let them curse that one.

Then he says why: "for it did not shut the doors of my womb," meaning his mother's womb, "and hide trouble from my eyes." If he had never been born, he would never have seen this trouble.

3:11-12 *Why did I not die from the womb, come forth from the belly and expire? Why did knees receive me, and why breasts, that I should suck?*

Job moves from wishing he had never been born to asking why he did not die at birth. "Why did I not die from the womb, come forth from the belly and expire?" "Why did knees receive me," meaning the knees of his mother or father who took him as a newborn, "and why breasts, that I should suck?" Every care that kept him alive as a baby now seems to him like a cruelty.

This is the first time Job asks "why." He will ask it again and again. Notice that asking "why" is not the same as cursing God. Jesus Himself cried out on the cross, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:46, quoting Psalm 22:1). God can handle our honest questions.

3:13-15 *For now I would have lain down and been quiet; I would have slept; then **there** would be rest for me, with kings and counselors of **the** earth, who built ruins for themselves, or with princes **who had** gold, who filled their houses **with** silver.*

If he had died at birth, Job says, "now I would have lain down and been quiet; I would have slept; then there would be rest for me." Rest is what Job wanted most. He had no rest in body or in mind.

In death he would be "with kings and counselors of the earth, who built ruins for themselves." Even the greatest men built cities and monuments that ended up as ruins. He would be "with princes who had gold, who filled their houses with silver." Their wealth did not keep them from the grave. Death levels everyone.

Job's view of death here is limited. He sees the grave mainly as rest and quiet. As the book goes on, Job will begin to reach for more, for a hope beyond death (14:14; 19:25-27). The New Testament shows that hope fully in Christ, who "abolished death and brought life and incorruptibility to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:10).

3:16-19 *Or like a hidden miscarriage I would not exist, like infants **who** have not seen light. There the wicked cease **from** turmoil, and there the weary of strength rest. Together the prisoners are at ease; they do not hear the voice of the taskmaster. The small and the great **are** there, the same, and the slave **is** free from his master.*

"Or like a hidden miscarriage I would not exist, like infants who have not seen light." Job wishes he had been a stillborn child, one who never saw the light of day.

Then he describes the grave as a place where trouble stops. "There the wicked cease from turmoil, and there the weary of strength rest." Prisoners are at ease and "do not hear the voice of the taskmaster." "The small and the great are there, the same, and the slave is free from his master."

In his pain, Job sees the grave as the one place of peace. We know from the rest of Scripture that death is not simply rest for everyone. There is a judgment, and a resurrection for both the

righteous and the wicked (John 5:28-29; Hebrews 9:27). But Job is not giving a teaching on the afterlife. He is telling us how tired he is.

3:20-23 *Why does He give light to the sufferer, and life to the bitter of soul, who long for death, and it is not, and dig for it more than for hidden treasures, who are glad to* ***the point of*** *rejoicing; they exult when they find the grave, to a man whose way is hidden, and whom God has hedged around?*

Now his question becomes general. "Why does he give light to the sufferer, and life to the bitter of soul?" Job means God, though he does not say His name. Why keep alive the people who "long for death, and it is not, and dig for it more than for hidden treasures"? They "exult when they find the grave."

Then he brings it back to himself: "to a man whose way is hidden, and whom God has hedged around." This is a painful echo. Satan said God had put a hedge of protection around Job (1:10). Now Job feels hedged in, trapped, with no way out. The same God who once protected him now seems to be closing him in. Job did not know what we know from chapters 1 and 2.

3:24-26 *For my sighing comes before my bread, and my roarings pour out like the waters. For I dreaded a dread, and it has come to me; and what I feared comes to me. I am not at ease, and I am not quiet, and I am not at rest, and turmoil has come."*

"My sighing comes before my bread." Groaning had become his daily food. "My roarings pour out like the waters." His cries came like a flood.

"For I dreaded a dread, and it has come to me; and what I feared comes to me." Job may mean that he had always feared losing it all, and now it had happened. Or he may mean that each new fear came true as soon as he felt it. Either way, his worst nightmare was real.

"I am not at ease, and I am not quiet, and I am not at rest, and turmoil has come." Four lines with no hope at the end. Job's lament stops there. God does not answer him in this chapter. But God did put these words in His Book.

I want to speak to you plainly if you have ever felt what Job felt here. Maybe you have wished you had never been born. Maybe you have thought the grave would be a relief. Job was a man God called blameless, and he felt that way too. Jeremiah the prophet felt it (Jeremiah 20:14-18). Elijah asked God to take his life (1 Kings 19:4). Feeling this way does not mean you have no faith, and it does not mean God has left you. God did not scold Job for this lament, and He did not end Job's life. He stayed with him, and in the end He spoke to him.

Please do not carry this alone. Talk to someone today: a pastor, a doctor, or a crisis line. Your life matters to God, and it matters to the people around you more than you may know. Jesus said, "Come to Me, all who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). The rest Job longed for is found in Him.

Chapter 3 Summary

After seven days of silence, Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth, but he did not curse God. He wished that day and the night of his conception had been wiped out in darkness. He asked why he did not die at birth, since then he would be at rest in the grave with kings, princes, prisoners and slaves, where trouble ends. He asked why God gives life to those who long for death, to a man whose way is hidden and whom God has hedged in. He ended with groaning and no rest. God put this honest lament in Scripture, and it tells us that He hears even our darkest words, and that no one should carry such feelings alone.

Chapter 3 Study Questions

1. What did Job curse in this chapter, and what did he not curse? (3:1-3; compare 2:9)

2. Read verse 3 again. How do the two lines show Hebrew parallelism? (3:3)

3. What did Job wish for the day of his birth and the night of his conception? (3:4-10)

4. What did Job ask in verses 11 and 12, and what did he think death would bring him? (3:11-15)

5. Who does Job say are at rest in the grave? (3:17-19)

6. How does Job's word "hedged" in verse 23 echo what Satan said in 1:10? What is different? (3:23)

7. What does Job say about his sighing and his fears at the end? (3:24-26)

8. Why do you think God put a lament like this in the Bible?

9. Jesus asked "why" on the cross (Matthew 27:46). How does that help you bring your own hard questions to God?

10. Have you ever felt the way Job felt in this chapter? Who is one person you could talk to honestly about it this week?

Chapter 4: Eliphaz's First Speech

Scripture

4:1-11 And Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said, "Should one attempt a word to you, will you be weary? And to hold back words, who is able? Look, you have instructed many, and you have strengthened slack hands. Your words have raised up the stumbling, and you have made firm bending knees. For now it comes to you, and you are weary; it touches you, and you are dismayed. ***Is*** not your fear your confidence, your hope, and the integrity of your ways? Remember, please: who ***that was*** innocent has perished? And where were the upright cut off? Just as I have seen, the plowers of wickedness and the sowers of trouble reap it. From the breath of God they perish, and from the wind of His anger they come to an end. The roaring of a lion and the voice of a fierce lion, and the teeth of young lions are broken. A strong lion ***is*** perishing for lack of prey, and the young of the lioness are scattered.

4:12-21 And to me a word was brought secretly, and my ear received a whisper of it. In disquieting thoughts from visions of the night, when deep sleep falls on men, dread met me, and trembling, and it made the multitude of my bones dread. And a spirit passed over my face; the hair of my flesh bristled. It stood still, and I did not recognize its appearance; a form ***was*** before my eyes; silence, and a voice I heard: 'Shall a mortal be righteous before God? Shall a man be pure before his Maker? Look, in His servants He does not trust, and against His angels He charges error; how much more those who dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation ***is*** in the dust; they crush them before a moth. From morning to evening they are crushed to pieces; without anyone regarding ***it***, they perish forever. Has not their tent cord been pulled up within them? They die, and not with wisdom.'

Chapter 4 Preview

Eliphaz the Temanite is the first friend to answer Job. He is probably the oldest of the three, and he begins gently. He reminds Job that he has comforted many others in their troubles, and he says Job should take comfort in his own fear of God. But then he asks a question that shows what he really believes: "who that was innocent has perished?" In his view, people reap what they sow, and the righteous do not suffer like this.

Then Eliphaz tells of a strange night vision. A spirit passed before his face and whispered that no mortal can be righteous before God, since even angels are charged with error. Eliphaz's speech runs through chapter 5. Much of what he says sounds wise, and parts of it are true. But he has the wrong answer for Job, and in this chapter we start to see why.

Chapter 4 Study

4:1-2 *And Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said, "Should one attempt a word to you, will you be weary? And to hold back words, who is able?*

"And Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said." Eliphaz speaks first, likely because he was the oldest (compare 15:10). Teman was a town of Edom known for its wise men (Jeremiah 49:7).

He starts politely: "Should one attempt a word to you, will you be weary?" He knows Job is in no state to hear a lecture. "And to hold back words, who is able?" But he cannot keep quiet after what Job said in chapter 3. Job's lament has troubled him.

From here to the end of chapter 31, Job and his three friends take turns speaking. Each friend speaks, and Job answers each one. Remember as you read that the friends never saw what happened in heaven in chapters 1 and 2.

4:3-6 *Look, you have instructed many, and you have strengthened slack hands. Your words have raised up the stumbling, and you have made firm bending knees. For now it comes to you, and you are weary; it touches you, and you are dismayed.* ***Is*** *not your fear your confidence, your hope, and the integrity of your ways?*

Eliphaz reminds Job of his past: "you have instructed many, and you have strengthened slack hands." Job had been a counselor and comforter to others. "Your words have raised up the stumbling, and you have made firm bending knees." This was true. Job later says the same (29:12-16).

"For now it comes to you, and you are weary; it touches you, and you are dismayed." This sounds kind, but there is a sting in it. Eliphaz is saying, in effect, that Job could give advice but cannot take it. There is some truth there. It is often easier to comfort others than to be comforted ourselves. But a grieving man who has lost ten children does not need to be told he is not handling it well.

"Is not your fear your confidence, your hope, and the integrity of your ways?" Eliphaz means: you fear God and you have lived a good life, so trust in that. It sounds comforting, but it sets up what comes next. If Job's goodness should protect him, then why is this happening?

4:7-9 *Remember, please: who* ***that was*** *innocent has perished? And where were the upright cut off? Just as I have seen, the plowers of wickedness and the sowers of trouble reap it. From the breath of God they perish, and from the wind of His anger they come to an end.*

Here is the heart of Eliphaz's view. "Remember, please: who that was innocent has perished? And where were the upright cut off?" He believes the innocent never suffer disaster like this. "Just as I have seen, the plowers of wickedness and the sowers of trouble reap it." People reap what they sow. "From the breath of God they perish."

Is this true? In part, yes. The Bible does teach that sin has consequences and that we reap what we sow (Galatians 6:7). God does judge the wicked. But Eliphaz has turned a general truth into an

iron rule that has no exceptions: if you are suffering greatly, you must have sinned greatly. That is not true. Abel was innocent, and he was murdered. The prophets were righteous, and they were persecuted. Above all, Jesus was perfectly innocent, and He was crucified.

Jesus answered this same idea. When His disciples saw a man born blind, they asked, "who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?" Jesus said, "Neither this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be revealed in him" (John 9:2-3). When a tower fell and killed eighteen people, Jesus asked whether they were worse sinners than everyone else in Jerusalem, and He answered, "No" (Luke 13:4-5).

We know from chapters 1 and 2 that Job was not suffering for his sin. God Himself said so (2:3). Eliphaz's rule is wrong, and the LORD will say at the end that the friends did not speak what was right about Him (42:7). If you have ever been told that your sickness or loss proves you have some hidden sin, please know that the Bible does not teach that. Sometimes suffering is the result of sin. Often it is not, and only God knows the reasons.

4:10-11 *The roaring of a lion and the voice of a fierce lion, and the teeth of young lions are broken. A strong lion **is** perishing for lack of prey, and the young of the lioness are scattered.*

Eliphaz adds a picture. Lions roar and growl, but "the teeth of young lions are broken." "A strong lion is perishing for lack of prey, and the young of the lioness are scattered." The wicked may be as fierce as lions, but God breaks their teeth and scatters their young.

It is hard not to notice that Job's children had just been "scattered" by death. Eliphaz may not have meant it cruelly, but the picture fits Job's family too closely. He is hinting that Job's losses are the kind that come to the wicked.

4:12-16 *And to me a word was brought secretly, and my ear received a whisper of it. In disquieting thoughts from visions of the night, when deep sleep falls on men, dread met me, and trembling, and it made the multitude of my bones dread. And a spirit passed over my face; the hair of my flesh bristled. It stood still, and I did not recognize its appearance; a form **was** before my eyes; silence, and a voice I heard:*

Now Eliphaz tells where his wisdom came from. "To me a word was brought secretly, and my ear received a whisper of it." It came "in disquieting thoughts from visions of the night, when deep sleep falls on men." He was seized by dread, and trembling went through his bones.

"A spirit passed over my face; the hair of my flesh bristled." A shape stood before him that he could not make out. There was silence, and then a voice.

This is a frightening scene, and Eliphaz uses it to give his words weight. He is claiming a special revelation. But we should be careful. Eliphaz does not say this spirit came from God, and God never confirms it. The message the spirit gave does not sound like the God who speaks so warmly of "My servant Job" (1:8; 42:7). Bible teachers differ on this vision. Some think it was a real message from God that Eliphaz misused. Others think it was only a dream, and some think it came from an evil spirit. What we can say is that a frightening experience does not make a message true. We must test every message by God's Word (1 John 4:1).

4:17-19 *'Shall a mortal be righteous before God? Shall a man be pure before his Maker? Look, in His servants He does not trust, and against His angels He charges error; how much more those who dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation **is** in the dust; they crush them before a moth.*

Here is what the spirit said: "Shall a mortal be righteous before God? Shall a man be pure before his Maker?" No human being is perfect in God's sight. That much is true, and the Bible teaches it plainly (Romans 3:23). Even God's angels are not beyond His notice: "in His servants He does not trust, and against His angels He charges error." Some angels did fall into sin (2 Peter 2:4).

"How much more those who dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust." Our bodies are houses of clay, made from dust (Genesis 2:7), and we can be crushed "before a moth," as easily as a moth is crushed.

So what is wrong with this? The words are partly true, but Eliphaz uses them to say that Job cannot claim to be innocent. Job never said he was sinless. He said he had not done anything to deserve this. Eliphaz is answering a claim Job did not make. And the spirit's words leave out something important: God does not only see our weakness. He also loves His servants and calls them blameless by His grace (1:8).

4:20-21 *From morning to evening they are crushed to pieces; without anyone regarding **it**, they perish forever. Has not their tent cord been pulled up within them? They die, and not with wisdom.'*

"From morning to evening they are crushed to pieces." Human life is short and fragile. People die "without anyone regarding it," and "they perish forever." "Has not their tent cord been pulled up within them?" Our life is like a tent. When the cord is pulled, it collapses. Paul uses a similar picture of our bodies as an earthly tent (2 Corinthians 5:1).

"They die, and not with wisdom." Eliphaz means that people die without ever understanding. He is hinting that Job should get wisdom before it is too late.

It is true that life is short. But this is cold comfort to a man who has just buried ten children. Eliphaz has much to say about God's greatness and man's weakness, but very little about God's mercy toward the one who is suffering. That is the problem with his whole speech.

Chapter 4 Summary

Eliphaz the Temanite spoke first. He reminded Job that he had comforted many others, and said that now Job was weary when trouble came to him. He asked who that was innocent had ever perished, and said that those who sow trouble reap it. That is the heart of his error: he believed great suffering always comes from great sin, which Jesus Himself denied (John 9:1-3), and which the LORD rejects at the end of the book (42:7). Eliphaz told of a frightening night vision in which a spirit said that no mortal can be pure before God, since even angels are charged with error, and that human life is crushed as easily as a moth. Some of his words are true, but he applied them wrongly to Job.

Chapter 4 Study Questions

1. Who spoke first, and how did he begin? (4:1-2)

2. What had Job done for others in the past, according to Eliphaz? (4:3-4)

3. What question in verse 7 shows what Eliphaz believed about suffering? (4:7-8)

4. What picture does Eliphaz use in verses 10 and 11, and how might it have hurt Job?

5. How did Eliphaz say he received his message, and what did the spirit say? (4:12-17)

6. What parts of Eliphaz's words are true? Where does he go wrong?

7. Read John 9:1-3 and Luke 13:4-5. How did Jesus answer the idea that suffering always comes from personal sin?

8. Why is it easier to comfort others than to be comforted ourselves?

9. Have you ever been told, or have you ever told someone, that their suffering must be because of their sin? How does this chapter change the way you think about that?

10. When a friend is suffering, what is one thing you will try not to say, and one thing you will try to do?

Chapter 5: Eliphaz Urges Job to Seek God

Scripture

5:1-16 Call, please; is there ***one*** answering you? And to which of the holy ones will you turn? For vexation kills the fool, and jealousy puts the simple to death. I myself have seen a fool taking root, and suddenly I cursed his abode. His sons are far from safety, and they are crushed in the gate, and ***there is*** no deliverer; whose harvest the hungry eats, and even from among thorns he takes it, and the snare pants for their wealth. For hardship does not come forth from the dust, and trouble does not spring up from the ground. For man is born to trouble, and the sons of flame rise high to fly. But as for me, I would seek God, and to God I would set my cause, who does great ***things***, and ***there is*** no searching ***them*** out, wonders until ***there is*** no number; who gives rain on the face of the earth and sends waters on the face of the open places, to set the lowly on high, and those who mourn are lifted high ***in*** safety; who frustrates the plans of the crafty, and their hands do not accomplish success; who catches the wise in their craftiness, and the counsel of the twisted is hastened. By day they meet darkness, and like the night they grope at noon. And He saves from the sword, from their mouth, and from the hand of the strong, the needy. And there is hope for the poor, and injustice shuts its mouth.

5:17-27 Look, how blessed ***is*** the mortal whom God reproves; and do not reject the discipline of the Almighty. For He causes pain, and He binds up; He shatters, and His hands heal. In six distresses He will deliver you, and in seven evil will not touch you. In famine He will ransom you from death, and in battle from the hands of the sword. In the whip of the tongue you will be hidden, and you will not be afraid of destruction when it comes. At destruction and at hunger you will laugh, and of the living things of the earth do not be afraid. For your covenant ***will be*** with the stones of the field, and the living things of the field will be at peace with you. And you will know that your tent ***is*** peace, and you will inspect your abode and not miss ***anything***. And you will know that your offspring ***will be*** many, and your descendants like the plants of the earth. You will come in full vigor to the grave, as a heap of sheaves goes up in its season. Look, this we have searched out; so it ***is***. Hear it, and you, know ***it*** for yourself."

Chapter 5 Preview

Eliphaz goes on with the speech he began in chapter 4. He warns Job that anger and complaining destroy a fool, and he tells of a fool whose children were crushed and whose harvest was taken. Then he gives his advice: if I were you, I would seek God and commit my cause to Him. God does great things. He lifts up the lowly and catches the wise in their own craftiness.

Eliphaz ends with a beautiful promise. Happy is the man whom God corrects. If Job will accept God's discipline, God will heal him, protect him, give him many children and bring him to the grave in old age. Many of these words are true and lovely, and Paul even quotes one of them. But they rest on the same wrong idea: Job is suffering because God is correcting his sin. The advice is good in itself. It is the wrong diagnosis.

Chapter 5 Study

5:1-2 *Call, please; is there **one** answering you? And to which of the holy ones will you turn? For vexation kills the fool, and jealousy puts the simple to death.*

Eliphaz is still speaking. "Call, please; is there one answering you? And to which of the holy ones will you turn?" The "holy ones" are the angels (compare 15:15). Eliphaz is saying that no one in heaven will take Job's side if he keeps complaining. Job will in fact soon long for someone to stand between him and God (9:33; 16:19).

"For vexation kills the fool, and jealousy puts the simple to death." Vexation is angry frustration. The "simple" are people easily led astray. Eliphaz is warning Job that his bitter words in chapter 3 are the kind of thing that destroys a fool. It is true that anger can eat a person alive. But Job's lament was grief, not foolishness.

5:3-5 *I myself have seen a fool taking root, and suddenly I cursed his abode. His sons are far from safety, and they are crushed in the gate, and **there is** no deliverer; whose harvest the hungry eats, and even from among thorns he takes it, and the snare pants for their wealth.*

"I myself have seen a fool taking root, and suddenly I cursed his abode." Eliphaz saw a foolish man who seemed to be doing well, and then he saw his home come under judgment. "His sons are far from safety, and they are crushed in the gate." The gate was where the town elders judged cases. The fool's children had no one to defend them. Strangers took his harvest, even from among the thorns.

We should feel how this would land on Job. His sons and daughters had been crushed when the house fell (1:19). His goods had been carried off by raiders. Eliphaz is describing what happened to Job and calling it the fate of a fool. Whether he meant to or not, these words would cut deep. This is what happens when we fit someone's suffering into our theory instead of listening to them.

5:6-7 *For hardship does not come forth from the dust, and trouble does not spring up from the ground. For man is born to trouble, and the sons of flame rise high to fly.*

"For hardship does not come forth from the dust, and trouble does not spring up from the ground." Trouble does not grow like weeds by chance. It has a cause. "For man is born to trouble, and the sons of flame rise high to fly." The "sons of flame" are sparks. Just as sparks fly up from a fire, trouble is part of human life.

Both of these sayings are true. Since the fall, trouble is part of every life (Genesis 3:17-19). But Eliphaz means that trouble comes from what a man does. His point is that Job's trouble must have a cause in Job. That is where he goes wrong.

5:8-11 *But as for me, I would seek God, and to God I would set my cause, who does great **things**, and **there is** no searching **them** out, wonders until **there is** no number; who gives rain on the face of the earth and sends waters on the face of the open places, to set the lowly on high, and those who mourn are lifted high **in** safety;*

Now Eliphaz gives his advice: "But as for me, I would seek God, and to God I would set my cause." This is good advice in itself. Job will do just that, more boldly than Eliphaz expects.

Eliphaz praises God, "who does great things, and there is no searching them out, wonders until there is no number." Job will say almost the same words in 9:10. God sends rain on the earth. He does it "to set the lowly on high, and those who mourn are lifted high in safety." These are true and beautiful words about God. He does lift up the humble and comfort those who mourn. Jesus said, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted" (Matthew 5:4).

5:12-14 *who frustrates the plans of the crafty, and their hands do not accomplish success; who catches the wise in their craftiness, and the counsel of the twisted is hastened. By day they meet darkness, and like the night they grope at noon.*

God "frustrates the plans of the crafty." He "catches the wise in their craftiness." Paul quotes this line in 1 Corinthians 3:19 as Scripture: "He is the One catching the wise in their craftiness." So Eliphaz could say true things, and the Holy Spirit made sure this one was recorded and later used by Paul.

That shows us how to read the friends. They were not always wrong. They often spoke true things about God. Their error was in how they applied those truths to Job. God does catch the crafty, and their schemes fall apart. "By day they meet darkness, and like the night they grope at noon." But Job was not one of the crafty.

5:15-16 *And He saves from the sword, from their mouth, and from the hand of the strong, the needy. And there is hope for the poor, and injustice shuts its mouth.*

"He saves from the sword, from their mouth, and from the hand of the strong, the needy." God rescues the poor from those who would harm them, whether by violence or by words. "There is hope for the poor, and injustice shuts its mouth."

This is true, and Job himself had been that kind of rescuer for others (29:12-17). It is a good word for anyone who feels powerless. God sees the needy, and He defends them. The irony is that Job, now poor and needy, was being crushed by the words of his own friends.

5:17-18 *Look, how blessed **is** the mortal whom God reproves; and do not reject the discipline of the Almighty. For He causes pain, and He binds up; He shatters, and His hands heal.*

"Look, how blessed is the mortal whom God reproves; and do not reject the discipline of the Almighty." This is one of the best-known verses in Eliphaz's speech. Proverbs 3:11-12 says much the same, and Hebrews 12:5-11 teaches that God disciplines those He loves, as a father does his children. It is a true and comforting teaching. God does use hard things to train us.

"The Almighty" translates Shaddai, a name for God that appears often in Job. It speaks of His power over all things.

"For He causes pain, and He binds up; He shatters, and His hands heal." God can wound and heal. Hosea 6:1 says the same. But again Eliphaz has assumed something he does not know. He assumes Job's suffering is discipline for sin. It was not. Discipline is real, but not every trial is discipline for something we did. Some trials are a test of faith, as Job's was, or for the glory of God, as in John 9:3.

5:19-22 *In six distresses He will deliver you, and in seven evil will not touch you. In famine He will ransom you from death, and in battle from the hands of the sword. In the whip of the tongue you will be hidden, and you will not be afraid of destruction when it comes. At destruction and at hunger you will laugh, and of the living things of the earth do not be afraid.*

Eliphaz promises that if Job accepts God's correction, God will protect him: "In six distresses He will deliver you, and in seven evil will not touch you." This pattern of six, and then seven, is a Hebrew way of saying in every trouble, and more. In famine, war, slander ("the whip of the tongue") and destruction, God will keep him safe. "At destruction and at hunger you will laugh."

These words have comforted many believers. God is our protector. But Job had already lost everything. Promising him safety from famine and raiders after the raiders had taken everything sounds hollow. Eliphaz is offering a future that depends on Job admitting a sin he did not commit.

5:23-26 *For your covenant **will be** with the stones of the field, and the living things of the field will be at peace with you. And you will know that your tent **is** peace, and you will inspect your abode and not miss **anything**. And you will know that your offspring **will be** many, and your descendants like the plants of the earth. You will come in full vigor to the grave, as a heap of sheaves goes up in its season.*

Eliphaz paints a picture of restored peace. "Your covenant will be with the stones of the field," so the stones will not ruin his crops, "and the living things of the field will be at peace with you." His tent will be safe. "You will know that your offspring will be many." He will come to the grave "in full vigor," like grain gathered at harvest.

Here is a painful line for Job: "your offspring will be many." His children were dead. Eliphaz does not seem to notice how that sounds. Even so, God did in the end restore Job, give him more children, and let him die "old and satisfied with days" (42:13-17). But it was not because Job confessed some hidden sin. It came after God spoke and Job prayed for these very friends.

5:27 *Look, this we have searched out; so it **is**. Hear it, and you, know **it** for yourself."*

"Look, this we have searched out; so it is. Hear it, and you, know it for yourself." Eliphaz closes with confidence. He and the others have studied the matter, and this is the answer.

That confidence is the problem. Eliphaz has a neat system, and he thinks it explains everything. But he does not know what we know from chapters 1 and 2. It is a warning to all of us. We can know much true theology and still be wrong about why someone is suffering. Humility says

something like this: I do not know why this happened to you, but I know God is good, and I am here with you.

Chapter 5 Summary

Eliphaz went on speaking. He warned that anger destroys a fool, and described a fool whose children were crushed and whose harvest was taken, words that cut close to Job's own losses. He said trouble has a cause, and that man is born to trouble as sparks fly upward. He told Job to seek God, who does great things, lifts up the lowly and catches the wise in their craftiness, a line Paul quotes in 1 Corinthians 3:19. He said that the man whom God corrects is blessed, and promised that if Job accepted God's discipline, God would protect him and give him peace and many offspring. Many of his words are true, but he assumed Job was being disciplined for sin, and that was not so.

Chapter 5 Study Questions

1. What did Eliphaz say kills the fool? (5:2)

2. What happened to the fool Eliphaz described, and why would this have hurt Job? (5:3-5; compare 1:19)

3. What did Eliphaz say he would do if he were Job? (5:8)

4. What does Eliphaz say God does for the lowly and for the crafty? (5:11-13)

5. Which line from this chapter does Paul quote, and what does that tell us about the friends' words? (5:13; 1 Corinthians 3:19)

6. What does Eliphaz say about God's discipline? How does Hebrews 12:5-11 agree? (5:17-18)

7. What did Eliphaz promise Job if he accepted correction? Why would those promises sound hollow to Job? (5:19-26)

8. How can a true teaching, like God's discipline, be applied wrongly to someone who is suffering?

9. Has God ever used a hard time in your life to correct or train you? Has He ever let you go through a hard time that was not about correction at all? How could you tell the difference?

10. Eliphaz said, "this we have searched out; so it is." When have you been too sure you knew why something happened to someone else?

Chapter 6: Job Answers Eliphaz

Scripture

6:1-13 And Job answered and said, "If only my vexation were surely weighed, and they would lift up my calamity in the balances together! For now it would be heavier than the sand of the seas; therefore my words have been rash. For the arrows of the Almighty ***are*** with me, whose poison my spirit ***is*** drinking; the terrors of God are arranged against me. Does a wild donkey bray over grass, or does an ox low over its fodder? Is tasteless ***food*** eaten without salt? Or is there taste in the slime of purslane? My soul refuses to touch ***them***; they ***are*** like the sickness of my bread. Who will grant ***that*** my petition come, and ***that*** God give my hope, and ***that*** God be willing and crush me, loosen His hand and cut me off! And may it still be my comfort, and may I leap ***for joy*** in anguish; He does not spare; for I have not hidden the words of the Holy One. What ***is*** my strength, that I should wait? And what ***is*** my end, that I should prolong my life? ***Is*** my strength the strength of stones, or ***is*** my flesh bronze? Is it ***that*** my help is not in me, and ***that*** success has been driven from me?

6:14-30 To the despairing ***is due*** steadfast love from his friend, and the fear of the Almighty he forsakes. My brothers have acted treacherously like a wadi, like the channel of wadis ***that*** pass away, which are dark because of the ice; over them the snow hides itself. At the time they are scorched, they are silenced; in its heat they are extinguished from their place. The paths of their way twist; they go up into the wasteland and perish. The caravans of Tema looked; the travelers of Sheba waited eagerly for them. They were ashamed because he had trusted; they came to it and were disappointed. For now you have become ***like*** it; you see a terror and are afraid. Is it that I have said, 'Give to me,' and, 'From your wealth offer a bribe for me,' and, 'Rescue me from the hand of an adversary,' and, 'From the hand of the ruthless ransom me'? Teach me, and I myself will keep silent; and in what I have erred, make me understand. How painful are words of uprightness! And what does reproving from you reprove? Do you plan to reprove words, and the sayings of one who despairs ***are*** for the wind? Even over a fatherless one you would cast ***lots***, and you would bargain over your friend. And now be willing, turn to me; and to your faces, if I will lie! Turn back, please; let it not be injustice; and turn back, my righteousness ***is*** still in it. Is there injustice on my tongue? Or does my palate not discern calamities?

Chapter 6 Preview

Job answers Eliphaz. He begins by saying that if his grief could be weighed, it would be heavier than the sand of the sea, and that is why his words have been wild. He feels that God's arrows are in him. He does not complain without cause, any more than a donkey brays when it has grass. He wishes God would go ahead and end his life, and he takes comfort that he has not denied the words of the Holy One.

Then Job turns to his friends. He says they have failed him like a desert stream that dries up just when thirsty travelers reach it. He has not asked them for money or rescue, only for kindness and honesty. "Teach me," he says, "and in what I have erred, make me understand." He begs them to look at him again and see that he is not lying.

Chapter 6 Study

6:1-3 *And Job answered and said, "If only my vexation were surely weighed, and they would lift up my calamity in the balances together! For now it would be heavier than the sand of the seas; therefore my words have been rash.*

"And Job answered and said." Job now replies to Eliphaz's speech in chapters 4 and 5. His reply runs through chapter 7.

"If only my vexation were surely weighed, and they would lift up my calamity in the balances together!" Eliphaz had warned that "vexation kills the fool" (5:2). Job picks up the same word. Put my grief on the scales, he says, and see how heavy it is. "It would be heavier than the sand of the seas." That is a picture of something no one could lift.

"Therefore my words have been rash." Job admits that his words in chapter 3 were wild. He does not take them back, but he asks his friends to understand where they came from. Here is a lesson for us. When someone in deep pain says rash things, we should weigh the pain before we judge the words.

6:4 *For the arrows of the Almighty **are** with me, whose poison my spirit **is** drinking; the terrors of God are arranged against me.*

"For the arrows of the Almighty are with me, whose poison my spirit is drinking." Job feels as if God has been shooting at him with poisoned arrows, and the poison is spreading through his spirit. "The terrors of God are arranged against me," lined up like an army in battle.

Job believes his suffering comes from God. In one sense he is right: nothing happened to him without God's permission (1:12; 2:6). But he does not know about Satan's part, and he does not know God's purpose. So he feels that God has become his enemy. Many believers have felt this way in great suffering. The feeling is real, even when it is not the whole truth. God had not turned against Job. He was still calling him "My servant" (1:8; 2:3).

6:5-7 *Does a wild donkey bray over grass, or does an ox low over its fodder? Is tasteless **food** eaten without salt? Or is there taste in the slime of purslane? My soul refuses to touch **them**; they **are** like the sickness of my bread.*

"Does a wild donkey bray over grass, or does an ox low over its fodder?" An animal with food does not complain. Job's point is that he is not crying out for nothing. He has a real reason.

"Is tasteless food eaten without salt? Or is there taste in the slime of purslane?" Purslane is a plant with a slimy juice, something like the white of an egg. Job may be describing Eliphaz's words, which were as tasteless to him as bland food. Or he may be describing his whole life, which had lost all flavor. "My soul refuses to touch them; they are like the sickness of my bread." What he was given made him sick.

6:8-10 *Who will grant **that** my petition come, and **that** God give my hope, and **that** God be willing and crush me, loosen His hand and cut me off! And may it still be my comfort, and may I leap **for joy** in anguish; He does not spare; for I have not hidden the words of the Holy One.*

Now Job says something hard: "Who will grant that my petition come, and that God give my hope, and that God be willing and crush me, loosen His hand and cut me off!" His "hope" is that God would end his life.

We should notice two things. First, Job does not take his own life, and he does not talk about doing so. He leaves his life in God's hands. He asks God, the only One who has the right. Second, God does not grant this prayer. God had a better answer coming.

"And may it still be my comfort, and may I leap for joy in anguish; He does not spare; for I have not hidden the words of the Holy One." Even in agony, Job has one comfort: he has not denied God's words. He has stayed faithful. The "Holy One" is a name for God that speaks of His perfect purity. Job still holds on to his faith even when he wants to die.

If you have ever prayed for God to take you home because the pain was too great, you are not the first. Moses prayed like this (Numbers 11:15), and so did Elijah (1 Kings 19:4). God was gentle with each of them, and He did not answer as they asked. Please do not carry this alone. Talk to someone today: a pastor, a doctor, or a crisis line.

6:11-13 *What **is** my strength, that I should wait? And what **is** my end, that I should prolong my life? **Is** my strength the strength of stones, or **is** my flesh bronze? Is it **that** my help is not in me, and **that** success has been driven from me?*

"What is my strength, that I should wait?" Eliphaz had promised a bright future (5:19-26). Job asks how he can wait for it. He has no strength left. "Is my strength the strength of stones, or is my flesh bronze?" He is not made of stone or metal. He is flesh, and flesh wears out.

"Is it that my help is not in me, and that success has been driven from me?" Job feels completely spent. Eliphaz said to take comfort in his own integrity (4:6), but Job has nothing left inside to lean on. That is an honest place to be, and a place where God often meets us. Paul learned that God's power is made perfect in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9).

6:14-17 *To the despairing **is due** steadfast love from his friend, and the fear of the Almighty he forsakes. My brothers have acted treacherously like a wadi, like the channel of wadis **that** pass away, which are dark because of the ice; over them the snow hides itself. At the time they are scorched, they are silenced; in its heat they are extinguished from their place.*

Now Job speaks to his friends about friendship. "To the despairing is due steadfast love from his friend." Steadfast love translates hesed, a rich Hebrew word for loyal, faithful kindness. A man in despair should be able to count on his friend's loyalty, "and the fear of the Almighty he forsakes." This line can be read two ways. It may mean that a friend who withholds kindness has forsaken the fear of God. Or it may mean that a despairing man needs kindness even if he is in danger of losing his faith. Either way, Job's point is clear: he needed love from them, and he did not get it.

"My brothers have acted treacherously like a wadi." A wadi is a desert stream bed that runs full in the rainy season when the snow melts, but dries up in the heat of summer. "At the time they are scorched, they are silenced." When you need water most, there is none. His friends were like that. They came to him full of sympathy, but when he needed them, they dried up.

6:18-21 *The paths of their way twist; they go up into the wasteland and perish. The caravans of Tema looked; the travelers of Sheba waited eagerly for them. They were ashamed because he had trusted; they came to it and were disappointed. For now you have become **like** it; you see a terror and are afraid.*

Job extends the picture. Caravans traveling through the desert turn off the road to find these streams, "and perish." "The caravans of Tema looked; the travelers of Sheba waited eagerly for them." Tema and Sheba were in Arabia, known for their trading caravans. They hoped for water and found dry riverbeds. "They were ashamed because he had trusted; they came to it and were disappointed."

"For now you have become like it; you see a terror and are afraid." Job sees why his friends have turned. They looked at his disaster and were afraid. Perhaps they feared that if it could happen to Job, it could happen to them. It was easier to believe Job had sinned than to believe a righteous man could suffer like this.

6:22-23 *Is it that I have said, 'Give to me,' and, 'From your wealth offer a bribe for me,' and, 'Rescue me from the hand of an adversary,' and, 'From the hand of the ruthless ransom me'?*

Had Job ever said to them, Give to me? No. Job reminds them that he has not asked them for anything costly. He did not ask them to pay a bribe for him, to rescue him from an enemy or to ransom him from the ruthless. He asked for nothing but their friendship.

Sometimes we stay away from hurting people because we do not know what we could possibly do to help. Job's words remind us that usually they are not asking us to fix anything. They just need us to be loyal and kind.

6:24-27 *Teach me, and I myself will keep silent; and in what I have erred, make me understand. How painful are words of uprightness! And what does reproving from you reprove? Do you plan to reprove words, and the sayings of one who despairs **are** for the wind? Even over a fatherless one you would cast **lots**, and you would bargain over your friend.*

"Teach me, and I myself will keep silent; and in what I have erred, make me understand." This is a humble request. Job is willing to listen and willing to be shown his error, if they can show him one. But they have only hinted. They have not named a single sin.

"How painful are words of uprightness!" Honest words can hurt, but they can also help. "And what does reproving from you reprove?" Their correction did not hit anything real. "Do you plan to reprove words, and the sayings of one who despairs are for the wind?" They were picking apart his words, when his words were the cries of a desperate man.

"Even over a fatherless one you would cast lots, and you would bargain over your friend." That is a strong charge. Job says they are treating him like an orphan to be sold, like goods to be bargained over. They are thinking about their theory, not about him.

6:28-30 *And now be willing, turn to me; and to your faces, if I will lie! Turn back, please; let it not be injustice; and turn back, my righteousness **is** still in it. Is there injustice on my tongue? Or does my palate not discern calamities?*

"And now be willing, turn to me." Look at me, Job pleads. "And to your faces, if I will lie!" He invites them to look him in the eye and see that he is telling the truth.

"Turn back, please; let it not be injustice." He asks them to change their minds before they do him wrong. "My righteousness is still in it." His case is still good. "Is there injustice on my tongue? Or does my palate not discern calamities?" The palate is the sense of taste. Job says he can still tell right from wrong. He knows the difference between suffering for sin and what is happening to him.

Job's answer to Eliphaz is not perfect. He has spoken rashly, and he says so. But he is right about the main thing: he is not being punished for some hidden sin, and his friends have failed him.

Chapter 6 Summary

Job answered Eliphaz. He said his grief, if weighed, would be heavier than the sand of the sea, and that was why his words had been rash. He felt that God's poisoned arrows were in him. He said he would not cry out without cause, and he wished God would end his life, though his comfort was that he had not denied the words of the Holy One. He said he had no strength left to wait. Then he told his friends that a despairing man should receive steadfast love from his friends, but they had failed him like a desert stream that dries up in the heat. He had asked them for nothing but kindness. He asked them to show him where he had erred, and begged them to look at him and see that he was not lying.

Chapter 6 Study Questions

1. What did Job say his grief would weigh if it could be put on a scale? (6:2-3)

2. How did Job describe what God seemed to be doing to him? (6:4)

3. What did Job ask God to do, and what comfort did he still have? (6:8-10)

4. What does Job say a despairing man should receive from his friends? (6:14)

5. How were Job's friends like a desert stream? (6:15-20)

6. Why did Job think his friends had turned against him? (6:21)

7. What did Job ask his friends to do in verses 24 and 28-29?

8. Why might it be easier for the friends to believe Job had sinned than to believe a righteous man could suffer like this?

9. Job said, "my words have been rash." When someone you love says hard things in pain, how can you weigh the pain before you judge the words?

10. Is there someone in your life who is hurting and needs your loyal kindness more than your advice? What will you do for them this week?

Chapter 7: Job Cries Out to God

Scripture

7:1-10 Is ***there*** not hard service for man on earth, and like the days of a hired laborer ***are*** his days? Like a slave ***who*** longs for shade, and like a hired laborer ***who*** waits for his wages, so I have been made to inherit for myself months of worthlessness, and nights of trouble they have appointed to me. If I lie down, then I say, 'When will I arise?' And the evening stretches on, and I am filled ***with*** tossings until the twilight. My flesh is clothed ***with*** worms and clods of dust; my skin has hardened and oozes. My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and they have come to an end with no hope. Remember that my life ***is*** a breath; my eye will not return to see good. The eye of the one who sees me will not observe me; Your eyes ***will be*** on me, and I ***will be*** no more. A cloud vanishes and goes; so the one who goes down ***to*** Sheol will not come up. He will not return again to his house, and his place will not recognize him again.

7:11-21 I also will not restrain my mouth; I will speak in the distress of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul. Am I the sea, or the sea monster, that You set a guard over me? When I say, 'My couch will comfort me; my bed will bear ***a share*** in my complaint,' and You dismay me with dreams, and from visions You terrify me, and my soul chooses strangling, death rather than my bones. I reject ***it***; I will not live forever. Cease from me, for my days ***are*** a vapor. What ***is*** man, that You make him great, and that You set Your heart on him, and You visit him every morning, every moment You test him? How long will You not look away from me, ***and*** not let me alone until I swallow my spittle? I have sinned; what do I do to You, O watcher of mankind? Why have You set me as a target for Yourself, and I have become a burden to myself? And why do You not forgive my transgression and take away my iniquity? For now I will lie down in the dust, and You will seek me, and I ***will be*** no more."

Chapter 7 Preview

Job is still answering Eliphaz, but in this chapter he turns from his friends and speaks straight to God. He describes his life as hard labor with no wages, long nights tossing in pain, and a body covered with sores. His days fly by faster than a weaver's shuttle, and he expects to go down to the grave and never return.

So Job decides he will not keep quiet. He asks God why He watches him so closely, as if he were a sea monster that needs guarding. He turns the words of Psalm 8 around: what is man, that You pay so much attention to him, and test him every moment? He ends with a question that only the gospel can fully answer: why do You not forgive my sin and take away my iniquity?

Chapter 7 Study

7:1-3 *Is **there** not hard service for man on earth, and like the days of a hired laborer **are** his days? Like a slave **who** longs for shade, and like a hired laborer **who** waits for his wages, so I have been made to inherit for myself months of worthlessness, and nights of trouble they have appointed to me.*

Job is still speaking. "Is there not hard service for man on earth, and like the days of a hired laborer are his days?" "Hard service" is the word for a soldier's term of duty or forced labor. Human life feels like that to Job: one long shift of hard work.

He gives two pictures. A slave longs for shade at the end of a hot day. A hired worker waits for his pay. Both have something to look forward to. But Job has nothing. "So I have been made to inherit for myself months of worthlessness, and nights of trouble they have appointed to me." This verse tells us something important: Job's suffering had already gone on for months. It was not a few bad days.

7:4-5 *If I lie down, then I say, 'When will I arise?' And the evening stretches on, and I am filled **with** tossings until the twilight. My flesh is clothed **with** worms and clods of dust; my skin has hardened and oozes.*

When Job lies down, he asks how soon he can get up. When night comes, he longs for morning. "And the evening stretches on, and I am filled with tossings until the twilight." Anyone who has lain awake all night in pain knows how long those hours can be.

"My flesh is clothed with worms and clods of dust; my skin has hardened and oozes." Job's sores had become infested. His skin cracked and wept. He was covered with dirt from sitting in the ashes. I mention this not to dwell on it, but so we understand how much he was carrying, in body as well as in heart.

7:6-8 *My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and they have come to an end with no hope. Remember that my life **is** a breath; my eye will not return to see good. The eye of the one who sees me will not observe me; Your eyes **will be** on me, and I **will be** no more.*

"My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle." A weaver's shuttle moves back and forth across the loom very quickly. Job's life seems to be racing to its end. "They have come to an end with no hope." The Hebrew word for "hope" can also mean "thread." The shuttle runs out of thread, and the weaving stops. Job's life seems to be running out with it.

Now Job turns to God directly: "Remember that my life is a breath." Our lives are short, like a breath on a cold morning. "My eye will not return to see good." He does not expect to be happy again.

"The eye of the one who sees me will not observe me; Your eyes will be on me, and I will be no more." Soon, Job says, people will look for him and not find him. Even God will look for him, and he will be gone.

7:9-10 *A cloud vanishes and goes; so the one who goes down **to** Sheol will not come up. He will not return again to his house, and his place will not recognize him again.*

"A cloud vanishes and goes; so the one who goes down to Sheol will not come up." Sheol is the Hebrew word for the grave or the place of the dead. In the Old Testament it is the place where the dead go, both good and bad. Job sees death as a one-way road. "He will not return again to his house, and his place will not recognize him again."

In one sense, Job is right. The dead do not come back to live their old lives in their old homes. But Job does not yet see the full truth that God will reveal through the rest of Scripture. In chapter 14 he will ask, "If a man dies, will he live again?" In chapter 19 he will say he will see God in his flesh. And Jesus, who rose from the dead, said that all who are in the tombs will hear His voice and come out (John 5:28-29).

7:11 *I also will not restrain my mouth; I will speak in the distress of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.*

"I also will not restrain my mouth." Since his life is so short and hopeless, Job decides he will speak. "I will speak in the distress of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul."

Is this wrong? Job is going to say some strong things to God in the next verses. But notice where he takes his complaint: to God. He does not turn away from God, and he does not curse Him. Many of the psalms do the same (Psalm 13; Psalm 88). An honest complaint brought to God is a kind of prayer. It is better to pour out our bitterness to God than to hide it and drift away from Him.

7:12-14 *Am I the sea, or the sea monster, that You set a guard over me? When I say, 'My couch will comfort me; my bed will bear **a share** in my complaint,' and You dismay me with dreams, and from visions You terrify me,*

"Am I the sea, or the sea monster, that You set a guard over me?" The sea was a picture of chaos and danger, something God sets limits on (38:8-11). Job asks why God is treating him like a great threat that must be held in check. He is just a man.

Job hopes his couch will comfort him and his bed will share his complaint. He hopes that sleep will give him relief. But "You dismay me with dreams, and from visions You terrify me." Even his sleep is full of nightmares. There is no escape day or night.

Job thinks God is sending the nightmares. Perhaps he is thinking of Eliphaz's frightening vision too (4:12-16). Whatever their source, they took away his last refuge.

7:15-16 *and my soul chooses strangling, death rather than my bones. I reject **it**; I will not live forever. Cease from me, for my days **are** a vapor.*

"My soul chooses strangling, death rather than my bones." Job would rather die than go on living in this body, which is nothing but bones. "I reject it; I will not live forever." He is tired of living. "Cease from me, for my days are a vapor." Leave me alone, he asks God. My days are like a puff of breath.

Again Job does not say he will end his own life. He asks God to let him go. These are the words of a man who has reached the end of his strength. If you have ever felt this, you are not alone, and God is not angry with you for feeling it. Please do not carry this alone. Talk to someone today: a pastor, a doctor, or a crisis line.

7:17-19 *What **is** man, that You make him great, and that You set Your heart on him, and You visit him every morning, every moment You test him? How long will You not look away from me, **and** not let me alone until I swallow my spittle?*

"What is man, that You make him great, and that You set Your heart on him, and You visit him every morning, every moment You test him?"

These words sound like Psalm 8:4: "what is man that You remember him, and a son of man that You attend to him?" In the psalm, David marvels that the great God would care for small human beings. Job turns the same question into a complaint. Why does God pay so much attention to him? Why does He inspect him every morning and test him every moment? To Job, God's attention feels like being watched by a stern guard.

"How long will You not look away from me, and not let me alone until I swallow my spittle?" That is, not even long enough to swallow. Job feels he cannot get a moment's break.

There is a deep irony here. God was in fact paying close attention to Job. He had set His heart on him and called him "My servant." But the attention Job felt as pressure was really the care of a God who would not let him go. Hebrews 2:6-9 quotes Psalm 8 and shows that its full answer is in Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels and suffered death for us.

7:20-21 *I have sinned; what do I do to You, O watcher of mankind? Why have You set me as a target for Yourself, and I have become a burden to myself? And why do You not forgive my transgression and take away my iniquity? For now I will lie down in the dust, and You will seek me, and I **will be** no more."*

"I have sinned; what do I do to You, O watcher of mankind?" Job does not claim to be sinless. He means: even if I have sinned, how does that hurt You, the great God? "Why have You set me as a target for Yourself?" He feels like the bullseye of God's arrows (6:4).

Then comes his most searching question: "And why do You not forgive my transgression and take away my iniquity?" If Job has sinned, why does God not simply forgive him? "For now I will lie down in the dust, and You will seek me, and I will be no more." Job pictures God coming to look for him, perhaps to show him kindness, and finding him already dead.

That question, "why do You not forgive," is answered in the gospel. God does forgive sin, not by ignoring it, but by laying it on His Son. John the Baptist called Jesus the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). Job's suffering was not punishment for sin. But his longing to be forgiven and set right with God is the longing of every human heart, and it is fully met in Christ.

Chapter 7 Summary

Job went on speaking, now directly to God. He described human life as hard labor, his own months as empty and his nights as long and full of pain, with his body covered in sores. His days flew by like a weaver's shuttle, and he expected to go down to Sheol and not return. So he decided to speak in the bitterness of his soul. He asked why God guarded him like a sea monster and terrified him with dreams, and said he would rather die than live. He turned the words of Psalm 8 into a complaint, asking why God watched and tested him every moment. He ended by asking why God did not forgive his sin and take away his iniquity before he died, a question fully answered in Christ.

Chapter 7 Study Questions

1. What two pictures did Job use for human life in verses 1 and 2?

2. How long had Job's suffering lasted by this point? (7:3)

3. What did Job say about his nights and his body? (7:4-5)

4. What did Job compare his days to? (7:6-7)

5. What did Job believe about Sheol in verses 9 and 10? How does Jesus give fuller hope in John 5:28-29?

6. Why did Job decide not to keep quiet? Who did he speak to? (7:11)

7. How did Job turn the words of Psalm 8:4 into a complaint? (7:17-19)

8. What question did Job ask in verse 21, and how does the gospel answer it?

9. Is it wrong to complain to God? How is an honest complaint to God different from grumbling about Him?

10. Have you ever had nights like the ones Job describes? What helps you bring those nights to God?

Chapter 8: Bildad's First Speech

Scripture

8:1-10 And Bildad the Shuhite answered and said, "How long will you say these ***things***, and the words of your mouth ***be*** a mighty wind? Does God pervert justice, or does the Almighty pervert righteousness? If your sons sinned against Him, and He sent them away into the hand of their transgression, if you will seek God earnestly, and to the Almighty you will plead for favor, if you ***are*** pure and upright, surely now He will rouse Himself over you and restore the habitation of your righteousness. And your beginning will be a small thing, and your latter end will grow exceedingly great. For ask, please, of a former generation, and give attention to the searching of their fathers. For we ***are of*** yesterday and do not know, for our days on earth ***are*** a shadow. Will they not instruct you ***and*** say to you, and bring forth words from their heart?

8:11-22 Will papyrus grow tall without a marsh? Will reeds grow without water? While it ***is*** still in its greenness, ***and*** not plucked off, and before any grass it withers. So ***are*** the paths of all who forget God, and the hope of the godless will perish, whose confidence is cut off, and the house of a spider ***is*** his trust. He leans on his house, and it does not stand; he takes hold of it, and it does not endure. He ***is*** a fresh ***plant*** before the sun, and over his garden his shoots go out. Over a heap his roots are interwoven; between stones he looks. If one swallows him from his place, then it will deny him, 'I have not seen you.' Look, this ***is*** the joy of his way, and from the dust others will spring up. Look, God will not reject a blameless ***man***, and He will not take hold of the hand of evildoers, until He fills your mouth ***with*** laughter, and your lips ***with*** a shout of joy. Those who hate you will be clothed ***with*** shame, and the tent of the wicked will be no more."

Chapter 8 Preview

Bildad the Shuhite speaks next, and he is much blunter than Eliphaz. He calls Job's words a mighty wind. He asks whether God would ever pervert justice, and then he says the cruelest thing in the book so far: if your children sinned, God handed them over to their sin. But if Job will seek God and is pure and upright, God will restore him, and his latter days will be greater than his beginning.

Bildad leans on the wisdom of past generations. He uses pictures from nature: papyrus and reeds that wither without water, a spider's web that cannot hold, a plant pulled up from its place. That, he says, is the end of everyone who forgets God. His last words promise that God will not reject a blameless man. Bildad is right that God is just. He is wrong about Job, and very wrong about Job's children.

Chapter 8 Study

8:1-2 *And Bildad the Shuhite answered and said, "How long will you say these **things**, and the words of your mouth **be** a mighty wind?*

"And Bildad the Shuhite answered and said." Bildad is the second friend. Shuah was a son of Abraham by Keturah (Genesis 25:2), so Bildad may have come from a people descended from him.

He has no gentle opening. "How long will you say these things, and the words of your mouth be a mighty wind?" He thinks Job's words are just a lot of loud, empty air. Job had said that the words of a despairing man are "for the wind" (6:26). Bildad treats them that way.

8:3 *Does God pervert justice, or does the Almighty pervert righteousness?*

"Does God pervert justice, or does the Almighty pervert righteousness?" To pervert means to bend or twist. Bildad's answer is obvious: no, God never twists justice. And that is true. God is perfectly just (Deuteronomy 32:4; Genesis 18:25).

But Bildad has made a jump. He thinks that if God is just, then whatever happens to a person must be what that person deserves, right now, in this life. That leaves no room for God's purposes we cannot see, for testing, for grace, or for a final judgment yet to come. Job will struggle with this same question, and he will say things that seem to question God's justice. But Bildad's simple answer is not the right one either.

8:4 *If your sons sinned against Him, and He sent them away into the hand of their transgression,*

"If your sons sinned against Him, and He sent them away into the hand of their transgression." Bildad says it straight out: Job's children died because they sinned, and God let their sin destroy them.

This is a terrible thing to say to a grieving father. We know from 1:5 that Job prayed and offered sacrifices for his children regularly. We know from 1:12 and 1:18-19 that their deaths came from Satan's attack, allowed by God for reasons that had nothing to do with their sin. Bildad did not know that, and he spoke anyway.

If you have lost someone and been told it was because of their sin, or yours, please hear this: that is not something any of us can know, and it is often simply false. Jesus warned against this kind of thinking (Luke 13:1-5). Leave the judgment to God, who knows all things and is full of mercy.

8:5-7 *if you will seek God earnestly, and to the Almighty you will plead for favor, if you **are** pure and upright, surely now He will rouse Himself over you and restore the habitation of your righteousness. And your beginning will be a small thing, and your latter end will grow exceedingly great.*

Now Bildad offers a way back: "if you will seek God earnestly, and to the Almighty you will plead for favor, if you are pure and upright, surely now He will rouse Himself over you." God will "restore the habitation of your righteousness," that is, rebuild his home and his life.

"And your beginning will be a small thing, and your latter end will grow exceedingly great." This is a striking verse, because it came true. At the end of the book, "the LORD blessed the latter part of Job more than his beginning" (42:12). But it did not come true the way Bildad thought. Job did not get it by confessing a sin. God blessed him by grace, after He had spoken to Job and after Job prayed for his friends (42:10).

There is also a hidden condition in Bildad's words: "if you are pure and upright." Bildad does not think Job is. God had already said Job was "blameless and upright" (1:1, 8).

8:8-10 *For ask, please, of a former generation, and give attention to the searching of their fathers. For we **are of** yesterday and do not know, for our days on earth **are** a shadow. Will they not instruct you **and** say to you, and bring forth words from their heart?*

"For ask, please, of a former generation." Bildad rests his case on tradition, the wisdom of the fathers. "For we are of yesterday and do not know, for our days on earth are a shadow." Our lives are short. We have not been around long enough to learn much. So we should listen to those who came before.

"Will they not instruct you and say to you, and bring forth words from their heart?" There is value in the wisdom of past generations, and Scripture tells us to honor it (Proverbs 1:8; Jeremiah 6:16). But tradition is not the same as God's Word. Human wisdom passed down can be wrong, or right in general and wrong in a particular case. Jesus warned against setting aside God's commands for human tradition (Mark 7:8-9).

8:11-13 *Will papyrus grow tall without a marsh? Will reeds grow without water? While it **is** still in its greenness, **and** not plucked off, and before any grass it withers. So **are** the paths of all who forget God, and the hope of the godless will perish,*

Bildad gives a picture from the marsh. "Will papyrus grow tall without a marsh? Will reeds grow without water?" Papyrus and reeds grew along the Nile and in wetlands. They need water. Take away the water, and "while it is still in its greenness, and not plucked off, and before any grass it withers." They grow fast and die fast.

"So are the paths of all who forget God, and the hope of the godless will perish." Bildad's point is that people who forget God may flourish for a little while, but they wither suddenly. Job, he hints, is one of them. His sudden fall shows he had no real roots in God.

The picture is true of the godless. Psalm 1 says the wicked are like chaff and the righteous are like a tree planted by streams of water. But Job's roots were in God. That is what God Himself had said.

8:14-15 *whose confidence is cut off, and the house of a spider **is** his trust. He leans on his house, and it does not stand; he takes hold of it, and it does not endure.*

The godless man's "confidence is cut off, and the house of a spider is his trust." A spider's web looks strong, but it cannot hold any weight. "He leans on his house, and it does not stand; he takes hold of it, and it does not endure."

Here is a good warning for all of us. Anything we trust in place of God is a spider's web. Money, health, our own goodness, our family: none of them can hold us up in the end. Only God can. But Bildad was using this truth to say that Job's house fell because he trusted in a web. Job's house fell because Satan pulled it down, and God allowed it for a purpose Bildad could not see.

8:16-19 *He **is** a fresh **plant** before the sun, and over his garden his shoots go out. Over a heap his roots are interwoven; between stones he looks. If one swallows him from his place, then it will deny him, 'I have not seen you.' Look, this **is** the joy of his way, and from the dust others will spring up.*

Another picture: a plant that is fresh "before the sun," spreading its shoots across the garden, its roots wrapped around a heap of stones. It looks strong. But "if one swallows him from his place, then it will deny him," saying it has never seen him. When it is pulled up, the garden itself acts as if it never knew it.

"Look, this is the joy of his way, and from the dust others will spring up." Bildad says with some sarcasm that this is all the joy the godless man gets. He is gone, and others take his place as if he had never been.

These words would sting Job. He had been the greatest man in the east, and now he was forgotten in the ash heap. Bildad's pictures all point to one thing: Job's ruin proves he was godless.

8:20-22 *Look, God will not reject a blameless **man**, and He will not take hold of the hand of evildoers, until He fills your mouth **with** laughter, and your lips **with** a shout of joy. Those who hate you will be clothed **with** shame, and the tent of the wicked will be no more."*

"Look, God will not reject a blameless man, and He will not take hold of the hand of evildoers." To take hold of the hand means to help. God helps the blameless, Bildad says, and does not help the wicked. So if Job is truly blameless, God will soon fill his mouth "with laughter, and your lips with a shout of joy." His enemies will be clothed with shame, "and the tent of the wicked will be no more."

Bildad ends on a hopeful note, and in the end God did restore Job. But Bildad's logic still runs backward. He reasons that because Job is suffering, he must not be blameless. God had said Job was blameless, and Job was suffering anyway. Bildad's neat system could not hold both of those truths together. The book of Job asks us to hold them both: God is perfectly just, and righteous people sometimes suffer for reasons only God knows.

Chapter 8 Summary

Bildad the Shuhite spoke next. He called Job's words a mighty wind and asked whether God would ever pervert justice. Then he said Job's children must have died for their own sin, a cruel and false charge. He told Job that if he would seek God and was pure and upright, God would restore him and make his latter end greater than his beginning, which God later did, but by grace and not on Bildad's terms. Bildad pointed Job to the wisdom of past generations and described the godless as papyrus that withers without water, a man who trusts in a spider's web, and a plant pulled up and forgotten. He ended by saying God does not reject the blameless or help evildoers. He was right that God is just, but wrong to conclude that Job's suffering proved his guilt.

Chapter 8 Study Questions

1. How did Bildad describe Job's words? (8:2)

2. What question did Bildad ask about God's justice, and what is the right answer? (8:3)

3. What did Bildad say about Job's children? What do 1:5 and 1:18-19 show us? (8:4)

4. What did Bildad promise if Job would seek God? How did God later fulfill part of this, and in what way was it different? (8:5-7; 42:10-12)

5. Where did Bildad tell Job to look for wisdom? (8:8-10)

6. What pictures from nature did Bildad use for those who forget God? (8:11-19)

7. What did Bildad say God will and will not do in verse 20?

8. Bildad was right that God is just, but wrong about Job. How can a true belief lead to a wrong conclusion?

9. What "house of a spider" are you tempted to lean on instead of God? (8:14-15)

10. How can you respect the wisdom of older believers and still test everything by God's Word?

Chapter 9: Job Longs for a Mediator

Scripture

9:1-13 And Job answered and said, "Truly I know that ***it is*** so; and how can man be righteous with God? If one desires to contend with Him, he will not answer Him one ***time*** out of a thousand. ***He is*** wise of heart and mighty of strength; who has hardened ***himself*** toward Him and remained unharmed? the One who removes mountains, and they do not know, who overturns them in His anger; the One who shakes the earth from its place, and its pillars tremble; the One who speaks to the sun, and it does not rise, and around the stars He sets a seal; who stretches out the heavens by Himself, and treads on the high places of the sea; who makes ***the*** Bear, Orion, and ***the*** Pleiades, and the chambers of the south; who does great ***things*** until ***there is*** no searching, and wonders until ***there is*** no number. Look, He passes by me, and I do not see ***Him***; and He passes on, and I do not perceive Him. Look, He snatches away; who can turn Him back? Who will say to Him, 'What are You doing?' God will not turn back His anger; under Him the helpers of Rahab bowed down.

9:14-24 How much less I, ***that*** I should answer Him, ***that*** I should choose my words with Him, I who, though I am righteous, will not answer; to my Judge I will plead for favor. If I called and He answered me, I would not believe that He was giving ear to my voice, He who crushes me with a storm and multiplies my wounds without cause. He does not allow me to bring back my breath, for He fills me ***with*** bitter things. If ***it is a matter*** of power, look, ***He is*** mighty! And if of justice, who will summon me? Though I am righteous, my mouth will declare me guilty; I ***am*** blameless, and it declares me perverse. I ***am*** blameless; I do not know my soul; I reject my life. It ***is*** one ***thing***; therefore I say, 'The blameless and the wicked He brings to an end.' If a scourge kills suddenly, He mocks at the despair of the innocent. The earth has been given into the hand of a wicked ***man***; he covers the faces of its judges. If not, then who ***is*** it?

9:25-35 And my days are swifter than a runner; they flee, they do not see good. They pass on with ships of reed, like an eagle ***that*** swoops on food. If I say, 'I will forget my complaint, I will leave off my ***sad*** face and be cheerful,' I dread all my pains; I know that You will not acquit me. I will be guilty; why then should I labor ***in*** vain? If I wash myself in snow water and cleanse my hands with lye, then You will plunge me into the pit, and my clothes will abhor me. For ***He is*** not a man like me, ***that*** I should answer Him, ***that*** we should come together in judgment. There is no arbiter between us, ***who*** might lay his hand on the two of us. Let Him remove His rod from on me, and let His dread not terrify me. ***Then*** I will speak and not fear Him; for I ***am*** not so with myself.

Chapter 9 Preview

Job answers Bildad, and he begins with a question that goes to the heart of the gospel: "how can man be righteous with God?" Job agrees that God is just and all-powerful. He moves mountains, shakes the earth, commands the sun and made the stars. But that is Job's very problem. How could anyone argue his case before a God like that? Even if Job were in the right, he could not answer Him.

In his pain Job says some things that go too far. He says God destroys the blameless and the wicked alike, and mocks the despair of the innocent. Then, near the end of the chapter, he cries out for something he does not have: an arbiter, someone to stand between him and God and lay a hand on them both. That cry is one of the great longings of the Old Testament, and it is answered in Jesus Christ, the one mediator between God and men.

Chapter 9 Study

9:1-3 *And Job answered and said, "Truly I know that **it is** so; and how can man be righteous with God? If one desires to contend with Him, he will not answer Him one **time** out of a thousand.*

"And Job answered and said." Job now replies to Bildad. His answer runs through chapter 10.

"Truly I know that it is so." Job agrees with what his friends have said about God's justice and power. Then he asks, "how can man be righteous with God?" Eliphaz had asked almost the same thing (4:17). But Job means something different. Eliphaz meant that no man is pure. Job means: how can a man ever win his case before God? How can he be declared in the right?

"If one desires to contend with Him, he will not answer Him one time out of a thousand." To contend means to argue a case in court. Job pictures himself in a courtroom with God. God could ask a thousand questions, and Job could not answer one. This question, how can a man be right with God, is answered fully in the New Testament. Paul says we are "justified," declared righteous, by faith in Christ, as a free gift of God's grace (Romans 3:24-26; 5:1).

9:4-7 ***He is*** *wise of heart and mighty of strength; who has hardened **himself** toward Him and remained unharmed? the One who removes mountains, and they do not know, who overturns them in His anger; the One who shakes the earth from its place, and its pillars tremble; the One who speaks to the sun, and it does not rise, and around the stars He sets a seal;*

"He is wise of heart and mighty of strength; who has hardened himself toward Him and remained unharmed?" No one who stands against God comes out unhurt.

Job describes God's power in creation. He "removes mountains, and they do not know," as if He moves them before they realize it. He "overturns them in His anger." He "shakes the earth from its place, and its pillars tremble." He speaks to the sun, "and it does not rise," and He "sets a seal" around the stars, shutting them away when He wishes.

Job is not doubting God's power. He knows God better than his friends think. The trouble is that he now sees that power turned against him.

9:8-10 *who stretches out the heavens by Himself, and treads on the high places of the sea; who makes **the** Bear, Orion, and **the** Pleiades, and the chambers of the south; who does great **things** until **there is** no searching, and wonders until **there is** no number.*

God "stretches out the heavens by Himself, and treads on the high places of the sea." Treading on the sea means God rules over it. Many have thought of Jesus walking on the Sea of Galilee (Mark 6:48-50). Only God walks on the sea.

God "makes the Bear, Orion, and the Pleiades, and the chambers of the south." These are star groups people could see in the night sky. The Bear is a constellation in the north, Orion is the hunter, and the Pleiades is a small cluster of stars. "The chambers of the south" may be the stars of the southern sky. God names them in 38:31-32 as well.

"Who does great things until there is no searching, and wonders until there is no number." Job uses nearly the same words Eliphaz used in 5:9. They agree on this. God's works are beyond counting and beyond understanding.

9:11-13 *Look, He passes by me, and I do not see **Him**; and He passes on, and I do not perceive Him. Look, He snatches away; who can turn Him back? Who will say to Him, 'What are You doing?' God will not turn back His anger; under Him the helpers of Rahab bowed down.*

"Look, He passes by me, and I do not see Him." God is so great that Job cannot even see Him go by. "Look, He snatches away; who can turn Him back? Who will say to Him, 'What are You doing?'" God took away Job's children and goods, and no one could stop Him or demand an explanation.

"God will not turn back His anger; under Him the helpers of Rahab bowed down." Rahab here is not the woman of Jericho in Joshua 2. It is a name in Hebrew poetry for a great sea monster, a picture of proud chaos and evil, and in some places a name for Egypt (Psalm 89:10; Isaiah 51:9). Job's point is that even the proudest powers bow to God. How then could Job stand before Him?

9:14-16 *How much less I, **that** I should answer Him, **that** I should choose my words with Him, I who, though I am righteous, will not answer; to my Judge I will plead for favor. If I called and He answered me, I would not believe that He was giving ear to my voice,*

"How much less I, that I should answer Him, that I should choose my words with Him." If great powers bow before God, how could Job find the right words to argue with Him?

"I who, though I am righteous, will not answer; to my Judge I will plead for favor." Here is the tension. Job believes he is in the right. He is not saying he is sinless, but that he has done nothing to deserve this. Still, he knows he could never win against God. All he could do is beg for mercy.

"If I called and He answered me, I would not believe that He was giving ear to my voice." Job's pain has shaken his confidence that God is listening. He feels that even if God answered, it would not be a fair hearing.

9:17-20 *He who crushes me with a storm and multiplies my wounds without cause. He does not allow me to bring back my breath, for He fills me **with** bitter things. If **it is a matter** of power, look, **He is** mighty! And if of justice, who will summon me? Though I am righteous, my mouth will declare me guilty; I **am** blameless, and it declares me perverse.*

"He who crushes me with a storm and multiplies my wounds without cause." Job does not know about Satan, but he is right that his wounds came "without cause." God Himself had used that word: "for nothing" (2:3) is the same Hebrew word. Job had done nothing to deserve this.

"He does not allow me to bring back my breath, for He fills me with bitter things." Job cannot even catch his breath.

"If it is a matter of power, look, He is mighty! And if of justice, who will summon me?" Job cannot win by strength, and he cannot take God to court. Who would summon God to appear? "Though I am righteous, my mouth will declare me guilty." Even if he were in the right, in God's presence his own words would trip him up. Job feels trapped.

9:21-24 *I **am** blameless; I do not know my soul; I reject my life. It **is** one **thing**; therefore I say, 'The blameless and the wicked He brings to an end.' If a scourge kills suddenly, He mocks at the despair of the innocent. The earth has been given into the hand of a wicked **man**; he covers the faces of its judges. If not, then who **is** it?*

"I am blameless; I do not know my soul; I reject my life." Job clings to his innocence, but he no longer cares what happens to him.

Then he says something that goes too far: "It is one thing; therefore I say, 'The blameless and the wicked He brings to an end.'" Job says it makes no difference to God whether a man is good or bad. "If a scourge kills suddenly, He mocks at the despair of the innocent." He even says that God laughs at the innocent when disaster strikes. "The earth has been given into the hand of a wicked man; he covers the faces of its judges. If not, then who is it?"

These are hard words. Job is right that the wicked often seem to win in this world, and that the good sometimes die with the bad. His friends refused to admit that. But Job is wrong to say that God does not care, or that He mocks the innocent. God was not mocking Job. He was proud of him (1:8; 2:3). Later God will say that Job darkened counsel "by words without knowledge" (38:2), and Job will take back what he said (40:4-5; 42:3-6). Job's words here are a true record of what a man says in agony. They are not true teaching about God. God is "very compassionate and merciful" (James 5:11).

9:25-26 *And my days are swifter than a runner; they flee, they do not see good. They pass on with ships of reed, like an eagle **that** swoops on food.*

"And my days are swifter than a runner." In 7:6 his days were like a weaver's shuttle. Now they are like a messenger running with news. "They flee, they do not see good." They "pass on with ships of reed," light boats made of papyrus that skimmed quickly along the Nile, "like an eagle that swoops on food." His life is rushing away from him.

9:27-29 *If I say, 'I will forget my complaint, I will leave off my **sad** face and be cheerful,' I dread all my pains; I know that You will not acquit me. I will be guilty; why then should I labor **in** vain?*

"If I say, 'I will forget my complaint, I will leave off my sad face and be cheerful.'" Job has tried to put on a brave face. But it does not work: "I dread all my pains; I know that You will not acquit me." To acquit means to declare not guilty. Job feels God has already decided against him.

"I will be guilty; why then should I labor in vain?" If he is going to be judged guilty anyway, why even try? This is the voice of hopelessness. Job feels that nothing he does can change God's verdict.

9:30-31 *If I wash myself in snow water and cleanse my hands with lye, then You will plunge me into the pit, and my clothes will abhor me.*

"If I wash myself in snow water and cleanse my hands with lye." Lye was a strong soap made from plant ashes. Even if Job scrubbed himself clean, "then You will plunge me into the pit, and my clothes will abhor me." God would throw him into a pit of mud, and he would be so filthy that his own clothes would not want to touch him.

Job is saying that he cannot make himself clean enough for God. In a way he has stumbled on a deep truth. No human being can wash away his own sin. David prayed, "wash me, and I will be whiter than snow" (Psalm 51:7), asking God to do it. Only God can make us clean, and He does it through the blood of Christ (1 John 1:7).

9:32-33 *For **He is** not a man like me, **that** I should answer Him, **that** we should come together in judgment. There is no arbiter between us, **who** might lay his hand on the two of us.*

"For He is not a man like me, that I should answer Him, that we should come together in judgment." Here is the core of Job's problem. If God were a man, they could go to court together as equals. But God is God, and Job is only a man. There is an endless gap between them.

"There is no arbiter between us, who might lay his hand on the two of us." An arbiter is a go-between, a person who judges between two parties and brings them together. In the ancient world a judge or arbiter might lay one hand on each person in a dispute, as a sign that he had authority over both and would settle the case fairly. Job longs for someone like that, someone who could stand between God and man, put one hand on God and one on Job, and make peace.

Job says there is no one like that. But God had someone in mind all along. Paul writes: "For there is one God, and one mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). A mediator is exactly what Job was asking for. And look at what Paul says: "the man Christ Jesus." Jesus is fully God and fully man. Job said, "He is not a man like me." In Jesus, God became a man like us, so He can lay His hand on both. He knows God perfectly because He is God. He knows us perfectly because He became one of us and was tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15).

Hebrews 9:15 says Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, and that His death brought redemption. He did not only judge between God and man. He gave Himself to make peace. Job's cry in 9:33 is the cry of every human heart that knows it cannot reach God on its own, and God answered it at Bethlehem and at the cross.

9:34-35 *Let Him remove His rod from on me, and let His dread not terrify me. **Then** I will speak and not fear Him; for I **am** not so with myself.*

"Let Him remove His rod from on me, and let His dread not terrify me." Job asks for two things: that God would stop striking him, and that the terror of God's presence would not overwhelm him. He will ask the same again in 13:21.

"Then I will speak and not fear Him; for I am not so with myself." If God would do that, Job could finally speak freely. He knows in himself that he is not the guilty man his friends think he is.

In Christ, God has given us what Job asked for. Through Jesus we can come before God's throne with confidence, not in terror (Hebrews 4:16). The fear Job felt is taken away, not because God is less holy, but because our Mediator has made peace.

Chapter 9 Summary

Job answered Bildad. He agreed that God is just, but asked how a man can be in the right before God. God is so wise and powerful that no one could win a case against Him. He moves mountains, shakes the earth, commands the sun and made the stars, and even the proudest powers bow to Him. Job believed he was innocent, but he felt that his own words would condemn him before God. In his agony he went too far, saying God destroys the blameless and the wicked alike and mocks the innocent. He felt that no amount of washing could make him clean before God. He cried out that there was no arbiter to stand between him and God and lay a hand on them both. That longing is answered in Jesus Christ, the one mediator between God and men (1 Timothy 2:5).

Chapter 9 Study Questions

1. What question did Job ask in verse 2, and how is it different from Eliphaz's question in 4:17?

2. What does Job say about God's power in creation? (9:4-10)

3. Why did Job feel he could not argue his case with God? (9:14-20)

4. What did Job say about the blameless and the wicked in verses 22-24? Where does he go too far?

5. What did Job say would happen even if he washed himself in snow water? (9:30-31)

6. What is an arbiter, and what did Job long for in verse 33?

7. How does 1 Timothy 2:5 answer Job's cry? Why does it matter that Paul says "the man Christ Jesus"?

8. Job said, "He is not a man like me." How does the coming of Jesus change that?

9. Have you ever felt there was a gap between you and God that you could not cross? What does it mean to you that Jesus stands in that gap?

10. Hebrews 4:16 says we can come to God's throne with confidence. What keeps you from coming to God that way, and what would help?

Chapter 10: Job Pleads With His Maker

Scripture

10:1-12 My soul loathes my life; I will let loose my complaint upon myself; I will speak in the bitterness of my soul. I will say to God, 'Do not declare me guilty; make known to me on what ***grounds*** You contend with me. Is it good for You that You oppress, that You reject the toil of Your hands, and on the counsel of the wicked You shine forth? Do You have eyes of flesh? Or do You see as man sees? Are Your days like the days of man, or Your years like the days of a man, that You seek for my iniquity and search for my sin, in spite of Your knowledge that I am not guilty, and ***there is*** no deliverer from Your hand? Your hands shaped me and made me, together all around; and You have swallowed me! Remember, please, that like the clay You made me; and will You turn me back to dust? Did You not pour me out like the milk, and curdle me like the cheese? ***With*** skin and flesh You clothed me, and with bones and sinews You wove me together. Life and steadfast love You have done with me, and Your care has kept my spirit.

10:13-22 And these ***things*** You hid in Your heart; I know that this ***was*** with You. If I sinned, then You would watch me, and from my iniquity You would not acquit me. If I am guilty, woe to me! And ***if*** I am righteous, I will not lift up my head, full of shame; and see my affliction! And ***if*** it rises up, like the lion You hunt me, and You again show Yourself wonderful against me. You renew Your witnesses before me, and You increase Your vexation with me; changes and an army ***are*** with me. And why did You bring me out from the womb? I would have expired, and no eye would have seen me. I would have been as though I had not been; from the womb to the grave I would have been carried. Are not my days few? And cease, and set ***Yourself*** away from me, so that I may be cheerful a little, before I go, and I will not return, to the land of darkness and deep darkness, a land of gloom like thick darkness, of deep darkness and no order, and it shines like thick darkness.'"

Chapter 10 Preview

Job goes on with his answer to Bildad, and now he speaks his complaint straight to God. He begs God not to condemn him without telling him the charge. He asks whether God sees as a man sees, or has a man's short lifespan, that He must hunt for Job's sin. God knows Job is not guilty.

Then Job remembers how God made him, shaping him like clay, knitting him together with skin, flesh, bones and sinews, and giving him life and steadfast love. How could the God who made him so carefully now destroy him? Job ends where he began in chapter 3, asking why he was ever born, and begging God to leave him alone for a little while before he goes to the land of deep darkness. This is one of the most moving prayers in the book, full of pain and yet still spoken to God.

Chapter 10 Study

10:1-2 *My soul loathes my life; I will let loose my complaint upon myself; I will speak in the bitterness of my soul. I will say to God, 'Do not declare me guilty; make known to me on what **grounds** You contend with me.*

Job is still speaking. "My soul loathes my life." He is sick of living. "I will let loose my complaint upon myself; I will speak in the bitterness of my soul." He uses the same words as in 7:11. He has decided he will not hold back.

He will say to God, "Do not declare me guilty." Job wants a fair trial. "Make known to me on what grounds You contend with me." He wants to know the charge. A man accused in court has the right to know what he is accused of. Job feels he is being punished without ever being told why.

We know the answer Job could not know. There was no charge. God had not accused him of anything. The test came because Job was righteous, not because he was guilty (1:8; 2:3).

10:3 *Is it good for You that You oppress, that You reject the toil of Your hands, and on the counsel of the wicked You shine forth?*

"Is it good for You that You oppress, that You reject the toil of Your hands, and on the counsel of the wicked You shine forth?" Job asks three hard questions. Does God enjoy crushing people? Would He throw away what His own hands made? Does He smile on the plans of the wicked while He frowns on Job?

These questions are bold, and they show how confused Job is. But they also show what Job still believes deep down: that God is good, that He values what He has made, and that He should not favor the wicked. Job's complaint only makes sense because he knows God is just. If he thought God were cruel, he would not be surprised. He is shocked because what is happening does not fit the God he knows.

10:4-7 *Do You have eyes of flesh? Or do You see as man sees? Are Your days like the days of man, or Your years like the days of a man, that You seek for my iniquity and search for my sin, in spite of Your knowledge that I am not guilty, and **there is** no deliverer from Your hand?*

"Do You have eyes of flesh? Or do You see as man sees?" People can only see the outside, and they often judge wrongly. Does God? Of course not. God looks on the heart (1 Samuel 16:7). "Are Your days like the days of man?" People have short lives, so they hurry to find out the truth before time runs out. God has no such limit.

So why, Job asks, does God "seek for my iniquity and search for my sin," as if He has to dig to find something, "in spite of Your knowledge that I am not guilty"? Job believes God knows he is innocent. He is right about that. God did know. "And there is no deliverer from Your hand." No one can rescue Job from God.

Job's questions are wrong in one way and right in another. He is wrong that God is hunting for his sin. But he is right that God sees perfectly and knows his heart.

10:8-9 *Your hands shaped me and made me, together all around; and You have swallowed me! Remember, please, that like the clay You made me; and will You turn me back to dust?*

Now Job turns to how God made him. "Your hands shaped me and made me, together all around; and You have swallowed me!" The same hands that formed him are now destroying him. That is what hurts Job most. It is not only pain. It is pain from the One who made him.

"Remember, please, that like the clay You made me; and will You turn me back to dust?" God formed Adam from the dust of the ground (Genesis 2:7), and like a potter God shapes each of us (Isaiah 64:8). Job asks God to remember that He made him. Will He now crush His own pottery?

10:10-12 *Did You not pour me out like the milk, and curdle me like the cheese? **With** skin and flesh You clothed me, and with bones and sinews You wove me together. Life and steadfast love You have done with me, and Your care has kept my spirit.*

Job describes how God formed him in the womb. "Did You not pour me out like the milk, and curdle me like the cheese?" This is a picture of how a child takes shape in the womb, the way milk thickens into cheese. "With skin and flesh You clothed me, and with bones and sinews You wove me together." David says much the same: "You wove me together in the womb of my mother" (Psalm 139:13).

This is a beautiful passage about the value of every human life. Every person, from the very beginning in the womb, is the careful work of God's hands. Job knew that God had made him on purpose and with care.

"Life and steadfast love You have done with me, and Your care has kept my spirit." Job remembers that God gave him life and showed him hesed, His steadfast love. God's care watched over him all his days. In the middle of his complaint, Job still remembers God's kindness. That memory is what makes his present pain so confusing.

10:13-15 *And these **things** You hid in Your heart; I know that this **was** with You. If I sinned, then You would watch me, and from my iniquity You would not acquit me. If I am guilty, woe to me! And **if** I am righteous, I will not lift up my head, full of shame; and see my affliction!*

"And these things You hid in Your heart; I know that this was with You." Job thinks God had a hidden plan all along: to make him, care for him, and then crush him. In a way, Job was right that God had a hidden purpose. But he was wrong about what it was. God's hidden purpose was not to destroy Job, but to show the truth of his faith and in the end to bless him.

"If I sinned, then You would watch me, and from my iniquity You would not acquit me." Job feels that God is waiting for him to slip. "If I am guilty, woe to me! And if I am righteous, I will not lift up my head, full of shame." Either way, Job loses. If he is guilty, he is doomed. If he is innocent, he still cannot hold his head up, because he is covered with shame and misery. "And see my affliction!" He begs God to look at what he is going through.

10:16-17 *And **if** it rises up, like the lion You hunt me, and You again show Yourself wonderful against me. You renew Your witnesses before me, and You increase Your vexation with me; changes and an army **are** with me.*

"And if it rises up, like the lion You hunt me." If Job tries to lift his head, God hunts him like a lion hunting its prey. "And You again show Yourself wonderful against me." God's mighty works, which should be wonders of goodness, now seem to be turned against him.

"You renew Your witnesses before me, and You increase Your vexation with me." Each new pain feels like another witness testifying against him in court. "Changes and an army are with me." Trouble keeps coming in waves, like fresh troops sent into battle.

Job is describing what it feels like when suffering goes on and on. Each new wave seems to prove that God is against you. But feelings are not always facts. Job felt hunted. In truth, God was holding Satan on a leash and watching over His servant.

10:18-19 *And why did You bring me out from the womb? I would have expired, and no eye would have seen me. I would have been as though I had not been; from the womb to the grave I would have been carried.*

"And why did You bring me out from the womb?" Job returns to the question of chapter 3. Now he asks it of God directly. "I would have expired, and no eye would have seen me." It would have been better, he says, if he had died at birth. "I would have been as though I had not been; from the womb to the grave I would have been carried."

These are heavy words. We should not hurry past them or try to argue someone out of feeling this way. But we can also see the contrast in this very chapter. A few verses ago Job said God had shaped him with His own hands and shown him steadfast love (10:8-12). A life God made with such care was not a mistake. Job could not see it in that moment, but his life still had a purpose, and God would show it. If you have ever wished you had never been born, please do not carry this alone. Talk to someone today: a pastor, a doctor, or a crisis line.

10:20-22 *Are not my days few? And cease, and set **Yourself** away from me, so that I may be cheerful a little, before I go, and I will not return, to the land of darkness and deep darkness, a land of gloom like thick darkness, of deep darkness and no order, and it shines like thick darkness.'"*

"Are not my days few?" Job knows his life is short. "And cease, and set Yourself away from me, so that I may be cheerful a little." He asks God to back off and give him a little relief before he dies.

"Before I go, and I will not return, to the land of darkness and deep darkness, a land of gloom like thick darkness." Job piles up words for darkness again, as he did in chapter 3. "Of deep darkness and no order, and it shines like thick darkness." Even the light there is darkness. Job sees death as a place of total gloom and confusion.

Job's view of death here is the view of a man without the full light of the gospel and in deep pain. Jesus brought light into that darkness. He said, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one believing in Me, even if he dies, will live" (John 11:25). For the believer, death is not a land of no

order and endless gloom. It is the doorway to being with Christ. Job will begin to glimpse that hope in the chapters ahead.

Chapter 10 Summary

Job went on speaking to God in the bitterness of his soul. He begged God not to condemn him without telling him the charge. He asked whether God enjoyed oppressing what His own hands had made, and whether God saw only as a man sees or had a man's short days, that He must hunt for Job's sin when He knew Job was not guilty. Job remembered how God had formed him in the womb, clothed him with skin and flesh, wove him together with bones and sinews, and given him life and steadfast love. He could not understand why the God who made him so carefully now hunted him like a lion. He asked again why he was ever born, and begged God to leave him alone for a little relief before he went to the land of deep darkness.

Chapter 10 Study Questions

1. What did Job ask God to tell him? (10:2)

2. What three questions did Job ask in verse 3?

3. What did Job say God knew about him? (10:7)

4. How did Job describe the way God made him? (10:8-11)

5. What did Job remember God had given him? (10:12)

6. How did Job feel trapped whether he was guilty or righteous? (10:14-15)

7. What did Job ask God for at the end of the chapter? (10:20-22)

8. Compare 10:8-12 with Psalm 139:13-16. What do these passages teach about the value of every human life, from the womb onward?

9. Job's complaint only makes sense because he still believes God is good. How can remembering God's past kindness help us in a time when He seems far away?

10. Job asked God to tell him what was wrong. Have you ever wanted an explanation God did not give? How did you, or how can you, keep trusting Him without it?

Chapter 11: Zophar's First Speech

Scripture

11:1-20 And Zophar the Naamathite answered and said, "Should a multitude of words not be answered? And should a man of lips be righteous? Should your empty boasts silence men? And you mock, and ***there is*** no one who puts ***you*** to shame? And you have said, 'My teaching ***is*** pure, and I am clean in Your eyes.' But oh that God would speak, and open His lips with you, and tell you the secrets of wisdom! For sound wisdom ***is*** double. And know that God causes some of your iniquity to be forgotten for you. Will you find the searching of God? Or will you find ***out*** to the limit of the Almighty? ***It is*** the heights of the heavens; what can you do? Deeper than Sheol; what can you know? Its measure ***is*** longer than the earth, and broader than the sea. If He passes on, and shuts up, and summons an assembly, then who can turn Him back? For He knows men of worthlessness, and He sees wickedness, and will He not give attention ***to it***? And a hollow man will get understanding, and a colt of a wild donkey will be born a man. If you direct your heart, and spread out your palms toward Him, if wickedness ***is*** in your hand, put it far away, and do not let injustice dwell in your tents. For then you will lift up your face without blemish, and you will be firmly established and will not fear. For you will forget ***your*** trouble; like waters ***that*** have passed away you will remember ***it***. And ***your*** lifespan will rise more than noon; ***its*** gloom will become like the morning. And you will be secure, for there is hope; and you will search ***around***, ***and*** you will lie down in security. And you will lie down, and ***there will be*** no one who makes ***you*** afraid; and many will entreat your face. And the eyes of the wicked will fail, and escape will be lost from them, and their hope ***will be*** the breathing out of life."

Chapter 11 Preview

Zophar the Naamathite is the third friend to speak, and he is the harshest of all. He calls Job a man of empty talk and a mocker. Job had claimed to be clean in God's eyes. Zophar wishes God would speak and show Job the secrets of wisdom, and then he says something shocking: God has punished Job less than his sin deserves.

Then Zophar speaks beautifully about how deep and high God's wisdom is, higher than heaven and deeper than Sheol. He calls Job to turn his heart to God, spread out his hands in prayer and put away his sin. If he does, his life will become brighter than noon, and he will rest secure. Zophar's call to repentance is good advice for a sinner. But Job's suffering was not caused by sin, and so Zophar's words were not comfort but another blow.

Chapter 11 Study

11:1-3 *And Zophar the Naamathite answered and said, "Should a multitude of words not be answered? And should a man of lips be righteous? Should your empty boasts silence men? And you mock, and* ***there is*** *no one who puts* ***you*** *to shame?*

"And Zophar the Naamathite answered and said." Zophar is the third friend. We do not know for sure where Naamah was. He is likely the youngest of the three, and he speaks last in each round. In the third round he does not speak at all.

"Should a multitude of words not be answered? And should a man of lips be righteous?" A "man of lips" is someone who is all talk. Zophar thinks Job's long speeches prove nothing. "Should your empty boasts silence men? And you mock, and there is no one who puts you to shame?" Zophar feels that Job has been mocking God and his friends, and someone needs to shame him.

Zophar has heard Job's pain and calls it mockery. That is a hard thing to do to a suffering man. James tells us to be "swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger" (James 1:19). Zophar was the opposite.

11:4-6 *And you have said, 'My teaching* ***is*** *pure, and I am clean in Your eyes.' But oh that God would speak, and open His lips with you, and tell you the secrets of wisdom! For sound wisdom* ***is*** *double. And know that God causes some of your iniquity to be forgotten for you.*

"And you have said, 'My teaching is pure, and I am clean in Your eyes.'" Job had said he was innocent (9:21; 10:7). Zophar takes that as a claim to be sinless, which Job never made.

"But oh that God would speak, and open His lips with you." Zophar wants God to show up and set Job straight. In the end God does speak (38:1). But when He does, it is the friends whom He rebukes for speaking wrongly about Him (42:7). Be careful what you wish for when you are sure you are right.

God would "tell you the secrets of wisdom! For sound wisdom is double." Zophar means God's wisdom has two sides, what we see and what is hidden. That is true. Then he says, "know that God causes some of your iniquity to be forgotten for you." In other words: Job, you are getting off easy. You deserve worse than this.

This is the cruelest thing any friend has said yet. Job had lost ten children, all he owned and his health, and Zophar says it is less than he deserves. It is true that in one sense none of us gets what our sins deserve; that is the mercy of God (Psalm 103:10). But Zophar is not offering mercy. He is using a true doctrine as a club. The LORD will say these friends did not speak rightly (42:7).

11:7-9 *Will you find the searching of God? Or will you find* ***out*** *to the limit of the Almighty?* ***It is*** *the heights of the heavens; what can you do? Deeper than Sheol; what can you know? Its measure* ***is*** *longer than the earth, and broader than the sea.*

Now Zophar speaks well. "Will you find the searching of God? Or will you find out to the limit of the Almighty?" Can anyone search out God completely? No. "It is the heights of the heavens; what

can you do? Deeper than Sheol; what can you know?" God's wisdom is higher than the sky and deeper than the grave. "Its measure is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea."

These are true and wonderful words. Paul says something like them: "O depth of riches and of wisdom and of knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and untraceable His ways!" (Romans 11:33). God's ways are far above ours (Isaiah 55:8-9). When God speaks in chapters 38 to 41, He will show Job this same truth.

But notice the irony. Zophar says no one can search out God's wisdom, and then he speaks as if he knows exactly why Job is suffering. If God's ways are past finding out, then Zophar should have been humble enough to admit that he did not know.

11:10-12 *If He passes on, and shuts up, and summons an assembly, then who can turn Him back? For He knows men of worthlessness, and He sees wickedness, and will He not give attention* ***to it****? And a hollow man will get understanding, and a colt of a wild donkey will be born a man.*

"If He passes on, and shuts up, and summons an assembly, then who can turn Him back?" If God arrests a man and calls the court together, no one can stop Him. Zophar is answering Job's words in 9:12, "who can turn Him back?" Zophar agrees, and says Job had better accept it.

"For He knows men of worthlessness, and He sees wickedness, and will He not give attention to it?" God sees all sin, even what is hidden. That is true (Hebrews 4:13). Zophar means God sees Job's hidden sin.

"And a hollow man will get understanding, and a colt of a wild donkey will be born a man." This was probably a saying of the time. It means a foolish, empty-headed man will get wisdom when a wild donkey gives birth to a human being, in other words, never. Zophar is calling Job a fool who will never learn. It is an insult dressed up as a proverb.

11:13-15 *If you direct your heart, and spread out your palms toward Him, if wickedness* ***is*** *in your hand, put it far away, and do not let injustice dwell in your tents. For then you will lift up your face without blemish, and you will be firmly established and will not fear.*

Now Zophar calls Job to repent. "If you direct your heart, and spread out your palms toward Him." To direct the heart means to set it right, to make it ready for God. Spreading out the palms is the posture of prayer. "If wickedness is in your hand, put it far away, and do not let injustice dwell in your tents."

"For then you will lift up your face without blemish." Job had said he could not lift up his head (10:15). Zophar says he will, if he gets right with God. "You will be firmly established and will not fear."

This is a good call to repentance, and for someone living in sin it would be the right word. Turning to God in prayer, putting away sin, and coming to Him with a clean heart always leads to blessing. But it was the wrong word for Job. You cannot repent of a sin you did not commit. If Job had confessed a sin just to get his blessings back, he would have proven Satan right, that he served God only for what he got.

11:16-19 *For you will forget **your** trouble; like waters **that** have passed away you will remember **it**. And **your** lifespan will rise more than noon; **its** gloom will become like the morning. And you will be secure, for there is hope; and you will search **around**, **and** you will lie down in security. And you will lie down, and **there will be** no one who makes **you** afraid; and many will entreat your face.*

Zophar describes what Job's life could be. "You will forget your trouble; like waters that have passed away you will remember it." His trouble would pass like a flood that is gone. "And your lifespan will rise more than noon; its gloom will become like the morning." His darkness would become brighter than midday.

"And you will be secure, for there is hope." Job had said his days ended "with no hope" (7:6). Zophar offers hope, on his terms. "You will lie down in security," with no one to make him afraid, "and many will entreat your face." People would come again to seek his favor, as they used to (29:7-11).

In the end, God did restore Job, and people did come to him again (42:11). But it came by God's grace after God had spoken, not as a reward for confessing what Zophar wanted him to confess.

11:20 *And the eyes of the wicked will fail, and escape will be lost from them, and their hope **will be** the breathing out of life."*

"And the eyes of the wicked will fail, and escape will be lost from them, and their hope will be the breathing out of life." Zophar ends with a warning. The wicked will look for help and not find it. Their only hope will be death.

Notice the warning Zophar leaves hanging. If Job does not repent, this is his future. Each of the friends ends his speech the same way: a promise if Job turns, and a threat if he does not (5:17-27; 8:20-22). Their speeches are well made, and many of their lines are true. But they have one big blind spot. They cannot imagine that a righteous man might suffer for reasons known only to God. Because of that blind spot, all their true words added up to a false message.

Chapter 11 Summary

Zophar the Naamathite spoke third, and he was the harshest. He called Job a man of empty words and a mocker, and he twisted Job's claim of innocence into a claim to be sinless. He wished God would speak to Job, and he said God was punishing Job less than his sin deserved, a true doctrine used as a weapon. He spoke well about God's wisdom, higher than heaven and deeper than Sheol, but did not see that this should have made him humble about Job's suffering. He called Job a fool who would never learn, and then urged him to set his heart right, pray and put away his sin, promising that his life would become bright and secure. His call to repentance would be good for a sinner, but Job was not suffering for sin, and his speech ended with a threat for the wicked.

Chapter 11 Study Questions

1. How did Zophar describe Job at the start of his speech? (11:2-3)

2. What did Zophar claim Job had said about himself? Is that fair? (11:4; compare 9:21; 10:7)

3. What did Zophar say about Job's punishment in verse 6?

4. How did Zophar describe God's wisdom? (11:7-9)

5. What did Zophar tell Job to do in verses 13 and 14?

6. What did Zophar promise Job if he repented? (11:15-19)

7. Why would it have been wrong for Job to confess a sin he did not commit, just to get his blessings back?

8. Zophar said God's wisdom is past finding out, and then acted as if he knew exactly why Job was suffering. How can we keep from doing the same?

9. Psalm 103:10 says God has not dealt with us according to our sins. How is that truth a comfort when we hear it from God, and a weapon when we use it against someone who is hurting?

10. Think of a time when you gave advice that was true but not what the other person needed. What would you do differently now?

Chapter 12: Job Answers: God's Wisdom and Power

Scripture

12:1-12 And Job answered and said, "Truly you ***are*** the people, and with you wisdom will die. I also have a heart like you; I ***am*** not falling below you. And with whom ***are there*** not ***things*** like these? A laughingstock to his friend I am, one who called to God and He answered him; a laughingstock ***is*** the righteous, blameless ***man***. ***There is*** contempt for disaster in the thought of one at ease, a blow for those slipping of foot. The tents of destroyers are at peace, and securities ***belong*** to those who provoke God, to ***him*** who has brought God into his hand. And yet ask, please, the animals, and they will teach you, and the birds of the heavens, and they will tell you; or talk to the earth, and it will teach you, and the fish of the sea will recount to you. Who does not know among all these that the hand of the LORD has done this, in whose hand ***is*** the life of every living thing, and the breath of all the flesh of man? Does not the ear test words, and the palate taste food for itself? With aged ***men is*** wisdom, and ***with*** length of days understanding.

12:13-25 With Him ***are*** wisdom and might; to Him ***belong*** counsel and understanding. Look, He tears down, and it will not be rebuilt; He shuts ***the door*** on a man, and it will not be opened. Look, He holds back the waters, and they dry up; and He lets them loose, and they overturn the earth. With Him ***are*** strength and sound wisdom; to Him ***belong*** the one who goes astray and the one who leads astray. He leads away counselors barefoot, and judges He makes foolish. He loosens the bonds of kings, and He binds a loincloth on their loins. He leads away priests barefoot, and those long established He overturns. He removes the lip of trusted ones, and takes away the discernment of elders. He pours contempt on nobles, and loosens the belt of the strong. He reveals deep ***things*** out of darkness, and He brings out deep darkness to the light. He makes the nations great, and He destroys them; He spreads out the nations, and He leads them ***away***. He removes the heart of the heads of the people of the earth, and He makes them wander in a wasteland ***with*** no way. They grope ***in*** darkness and not light, and He makes them wander like the drunkard.

Chapter 12 Preview

Job begins his answer to Zophar, the longest of his replies in the first round, running from chapter 12 to chapter 14. He starts with sharp sarcasm: you must be the people, and wisdom will die with you! Job knows as much as they do. He has become a laughingstock, a righteous man mocked by people at ease, while robbers live in peace.

Then Job shows that he knows God's greatness as well as anyone. Ask the animals, the birds, the earth and the fish, he says, and they will tell you that the hand of the LORD has done this. Job describes God's wisdom and power over all of nature and over all human rulers. God tears down and no one can rebuild. He makes judges foolish, strips kings and priests, and makes nations rise and fall. Job agrees with his friends that God is sovereign. What he cannot accept is their claim that this explains his suffering.

Chapter 12 Study

12:1-3 *And Job answered and said, "Truly you **are** the people, and with you wisdom will die. I also have a heart like you; I **am** not falling below you. And with whom **are there** not **things** like these?*

"And Job answered and said." Job now answers Zophar. This reply runs through chapter 14 and ends the first round of speeches.

"Truly you are the people, and with you wisdom will die." This is sarcasm. Job is saying: you three talk as if you are the only wise people in the world, and when you die, wisdom will be gone. Zophar had called Job a hollow man who would never get understanding (11:12). Job throws it back.

"I also have a heart like you; I am not falling below you." In Hebrew the heart is the center of thinking, not only of feeling. Job has a mind too. "And with whom are there not things like these?" Everything his friends have said about God's greatness, everyone already knows. They have not told him anything new.

12:4-6 *A laughingstock to his friend I am, one who called to God and He answered him; a laughingstock **is** the righteous, blameless **man**. **There is** contempt for disaster in the thought of one at ease, a blow for those slipping of foot. The tents of destroyers are at peace, and securities **belong** to those who provoke God, to **him** who has brought God into his hand.*

"A laughingstock to his friend I am, one who called to God and He answered him." Job was a man of prayer, who used to call on God and receive His answers. Now he has become a joke. "A laughingstock is the righteous, blameless man." This is the bitter heart of it. The man God called blameless (1:1) is now being laughed at.

"There is contempt for disaster in the thought of one at ease, a blow for those slipping of foot." People who are comfortable look down on those who are in trouble. When someone is already slipping, the comfortable give them a push. Job's friends were at ease, and they looked down on him.

That is a warning for us. When life is going well, it is easy to think that those who struggle must have done something to bring it on themselves. Job's words remind us to have compassion instead.

"The tents of destroyers are at peace." Robbers and violent men live untroubled. "Securities belong to those who provoke God, to him who has brought God into his hand." Some may be people who trust in their own strength as their god. Job's point is simple. If his friends are right that the wicked always suffer and the good always prosper, how do they explain the robbers who live in peace?

12:7-10 *And yet ask, please, the animals, and they will teach you, and the birds of the heavens, and they will tell you; or talk to the earth, and it will teach you, and the fish of the sea will recount to you. Who does not know among all these that the hand of the LORD has done this, in whose hand the life of every living thing, and the breath of all the flesh of man?*

"And yet ask, please, the animals, and they will teach you, and the birds of the heavens, and they will tell you." Job says even the animals know what his friends are trying to teach him. "Or talk to the earth, and it will teach you, and the fish of the sea will recount to you."

"Who does not know among all these that the hand of the LORD has done this?" This is the only time in the speeches of Job and his friends, from chapter 3 to 37, that God is called by His personal name, the LORD. All creation knows that the LORD made it and rules it. Paul says the same: God's power and divine nature are clearly seen in the things He has made (Romans 1:20).

"In whose hand is the life of every living thing, and the breath of all the flesh of man." Every living creature, every breath we take, is in God's hand. That is a comfort and a humbling truth. Job agrees with it fully. He has never denied God's power. In fact that is exactly why he is so troubled: if God holds everything, then God has allowed what happened to him.

12:11-12 *Does not the ear test words, and the palate taste food for itself? With aged* ***men is*** *wisdom, and* ***with*** *length of days understanding.*

"Does not the ear test words, and the palate taste food for itself?" Just as the tongue tastes food and tells good from bad, the ear tests words and tells true from false. Job is weighing his friends' words, and he finds them lacking. Elihu will repeat this saying later (34:3).

"With aged men is wisdom, and with length of days understanding." This may be Job quoting a saying his friends lean on. Bildad had pointed to the wisdom of the fathers (8:8-10), and Eliphaz will soon boast that gray-haired men are on his side (15:10). Job may be saying: yes, the old are supposed to be wise. But as the next verse shows, true wisdom belongs to God.

12:13-16 *With Him* ***are*** *wisdom and might; to Him* ***belong*** *counsel and understanding. Look, He tears down, and it will not be rebuilt; He shuts* ***the door*** *on a man, and it will not be opened. Look, He holds back the waters, and they dry up; and He lets them loose, and they overturn the earth. With Him* ***are*** *strength and sound wisdom; to Him* ***belong*** *the one who goes astray and the one who leads astray.*

"With Him are wisdom and might; to Him belong counsel and understanding." This is the real answer. Wisdom is not finally found in old men or in tradition. It belongs to God. Daniel says the same (Daniel 2:20).

Job now describes what God's wisdom and might do. "Look, He tears down, and it will not be rebuilt; He shuts the door on a man, and it will not be opened." When God acts, no one can undo it. "He holds back the waters, and they dry up; and He lets them loose, and they overturn the earth." Drought and flood are both in His control.

"With Him are strength and sound wisdom; to Him belong the one who goes astray and the one who leads astray." Even the deceiver and the deceived are under God's rule. This does not mean God causes people to sin. It means that no one, not even the worst deceiver, is outside His control. He rules over all of it and will judge it all.

12:17-21 *He leads away counselors barefoot, and judges He makes foolish. He loosens the bonds of kings, and He binds a loincloth on their loins. He leads away priests barefoot, and those long established He overturns. He removes the lip of trusted ones, and takes away the discernment of elders. He pours contempt on nobles, and loosens the belt of the strong.*

Job shows how God brings down the great. "He leads away counselors barefoot." In the ancient world, captives were led away barefoot and stripped. God humbles the wise advisers of kings. "And judges He makes foolish." The men who decide cases lose their good sense.

"He loosens the bonds of kings, and He binds a loincloth on their loins." He strips kings of their authority and dresses them like slaves. "He leads away priests barefoot, and those long established He overturns." Even religious leaders and old powerful families fall when God wills it.

"He removes the lip of trusted ones," so the trusted speakers have nothing to say, "and takes away the discernment of elders. He pours contempt on nobles, and loosens the belt of the strong." The strong man's belt held his clothes in place for work or battle. Loosening it means making him weak.

Job is listing all the kinds of people who seem wise and strong: counselors, judges, kings, priests, elders, nobles. God can bring every one of them down. Hannah sang the same truth: the LORD brings low and He lifts up (1 Samuel 2:7). Job himself had been a great man, and he had been brought down. Was it because he was wicked? Job's point is that God's ways with the great are beyond our neat explanations.

12:22-25 *He reveals deep **things** out of darkness, and He brings out deep darkness to the light. He makes the nations great, and He destroys them; He spreads out the nations, and He leads them **away**. He removes the heart of the heads of the people of the earth, and He makes them wander in a wasteland **with** no way. They grope **in** darkness and not light, and He makes them wander like the drunkard.*

"He reveals deep things out of darkness, and He brings out deep darkness to the light." Nothing is hidden from God. One day He will bring every secret into the open (1 Corinthians 4:5).

"He makes the nations great, and He destroys them; He spreads out the nations, and He leads them away." The rise and fall of empires is in God's hand. History is not random. Paul told the people of Athens that God set the times and boundaries of the nations (Acts 17:26).

"He removes the heart of the heads of the people of the earth, and He makes them wander in a wasteland with no way." He takes away the understanding of leaders, and they wander like people lost in the desert. "They grope in darkness and not light, and He makes them wander like the drunkard."

Job has shown his friends that he knows God's power over creation and over the nations as well as they do. He is not denying God's sovereignty. His complaint is that God's sovereignty does not fit their simple rule that good people always prosper and bad people always suffer. God's ways are greater and deeper than that.

Chapter 12 Summary

Job began his answer to Zophar with sarcasm, saying his friends talked as if wisdom would die with them, though he knew as much as they did. He said he, a righteous and blameless man who once called on God and was answered, had become a laughingstock, while those at ease looked down on the suffering and robbers lived in peace. He said even the animals, birds, earth and fish know that the hand of the LORD has done this, and that the life and breath of every creature is in His hand. True wisdom and might belong to God. He tears down and builds, holds back and sends the waters, humbles counselors, judges, kings, priests, elders and nobles, brings hidden things to light, and makes nations rise and fall. Job agreed that God is sovereign, but denied that this proved his friends' simple explanation of his suffering.

Chapter 12 Study Questions

1. What did Job say, with sarcasm, about his friends' wisdom? (12:2-3)

2. How did Job describe himself in verse 4?

3. What did Job say about people at ease and about robbers? (12:5-6)

4. What can the animals, birds, earth and fish teach, according to Job? (12:7-10)

5. What name of God appears in verse 9, and why is it worth noticing?

6. Where does true wisdom finally come from? (12:13)

7. List the kinds of people Job says God can bring down. (12:17-21)

8. What does this chapter teach about God's control over nations and history? (12:23-25; Acts 17:26)

9. Job said people at ease look down on those in trouble (12:5). When have you been tempted to look down on someone who was struggling?

10. How does knowing that every breath is in God's hand (12:10) help you when life feels out of control?

Chapter 13: Job Defends His Integrity

Scripture

13:1-12 Look, my eye has seen all ***this***; my ear has heard, and it has understood it. As your knowledge ***is***, I also know; I ***am*** not falling below you. But I will speak to the Almighty, and I desire to argue ***my case*** with God. But you ***are*** smearers of falsehood; physicians of worthlessness ***are*** all of you. Oh that you would be completely silent, and it would be wisdom for you! Hear, please, my argument, and pay attention to the contentions of my lips. Will you speak injustice for God, and for Him will you speak deceit? Will you show Him partiality? Or will you contend for God? Will it be good when He searches you out? Or as one deceives a man, will you deceive Him? He will surely rebuke you if in secret you show partiality. Will not His majesty terrify you, and His dread fall on you? Your memorials ***are*** proverbs of ashes; your defenses ***are*** defenses of clay.

13:13-28 Be silent from me, and let me speak, I ***myself***, and let whatever ***may come*** pass over me. Why should I take my flesh in my teeth, and put my life in my palm? Look, He will kill me; I will hope in Him. Nevertheless I will argue my ways to His face. This also ***will be*** salvation for me, for a godless ***man*** will not come before Him. Listen carefully to my speech, and ***let*** my declaration ***be*** in your ears. Look, please, I have arranged ***my*** case; I know that I am righteous. Who ***is*** he ***that*** will contend with me? For now I would be silent and expire. Only two ***things*** do not do to me; then I will not hide myself from before You. Put Your hand far from on me, and let Your dread not terrify me. And call, and I will answer; or let me speak, and respond to me. How many iniquities and sins ***are*** mine? Make known to me my transgression and my sin. Why do You hide Your face and consider me Your enemy? Will You terrify a driven leaf? And will You pursue dry chaff? For You write bitter things against me, and You make me inherit the iniquities of my youth. And You put my feet in the stocks, and You watch all my paths; on the roots of my feet You engrave ***a mark***. And he wears out like rottenness, like a garment ***that*** a moth eats.

Chapter 13 Preview

Job goes on answering Zophar. He has seen and heard everything his friends have said, and he knows it as well as they do. But he is done arguing with them. He wants to take his case to God Himself. He calls his friends "smearers of falsehood" and "physicians of worthlessness," and he warns them that God will not be pleased with men who tell lies to defend Him.

Then Job says one of the boldest things in the book: "Look, He will kill me; I will hope in Him." Whatever God does, Job will keep hoping in Him and will keep pressing his case to God's face. He asks God for two things: take Your hand off me, and do not terrify me. Then he asks God to show him his sins, and to tell him why He has hidden His face. Job feels like a leaf blown by the wind, and he asks why God would chase something so small.

Chapter 13 Study

13:1-2 *Look, my eye has seen all **this**; my ear has heard, and it has understood it. As your knowledge **is**, I also know; I **am** not falling below you.*

Job is still speaking. "Look, my eye has seen all this; my ear has heard, and it has understood it." Everything his friends have said about God's power and justice, Job already knows. He described it himself in chapter 12.

"As your knowledge is, I also know; I am not falling below you." He repeats what he said in 12:3. His friends are not wiser than he is. They have simply chosen a wrong explanation for what is happening to him.

13:3-5 *But I will speak to the Almighty, and I desire to argue **my case** with God. But you **are** smearers of falsehood; physicians of worthlessness **are** all of you. Oh that you would be completely silent, and it would be wisdom for you!*

"But I will speak to the Almighty, and I desire to argue my case with God." This is a turning point. Job is tired of talking to his friends. He wants to go straight to God. That is the right direction, even if Job's tone is not always right. Better to bring our case to God than to keep arguing with people who do not understand.

"But you are smearers of falsehood." To smear is to paint over or plaster. Job means they are covering over the truth with lies, as a man smears plaster over a crack. "Physicians of worthlessness are all of you." They came as doctors to heal him, but their medicine was useless.

"Oh that you would be completely silent, and it would be wisdom for you!" Proverbs 17:28 says even a fool who keeps silent is counted wise. Job's friends had done their best work in the seven days they said nothing (2:13). Job wishes they would go back to that.

13:6-9 *Hear, please, my argument, and pay attention to the contentions of my lips. Will you speak injustice for God, and for Him will you speak deceit? Will you show Him partiality? Or will you contend for God? Will it be good when He searches you out? Or as one deceives a man, will you deceive Him?*

"Hear, please, my argument." Job turns the tables. He has been on trial. Now he puts his friends on trial.

"Will you speak injustice for God, and for Him will you speak deceit?" Job charges them with lying in order to defend God. They were so sure God must be punishing Job that they bent the facts to fit. "Will you show Him partiality? Or will you contend for God?" They were acting like God's lawyers, taking His side no matter the truth.

This is a strong warning for anyone who teaches or defends the faith. God does not need us to lie for Him. He does not need us to invent answers we do not have. "Will it be good when He searches you out?" One day God will examine their words. "Or as one deceives a man, will you deceive Him?" You can fool a man with clever words. You cannot fool God.

God Himself confirms Job's point in the end. He says the friends did not speak what was right about Him (42:7). Their defense of God displeased God.

13:10-12 *He will surely rebuke you if in secret you show partiality. Will not His majesty terrify you, and His dread fall on you? Your memorials **are** proverbs of ashes; your defenses **are** defenses of clay.*

"He will surely rebuke you if in secret you show partiality." Job warns them that God will rebuke them, and He did (42:7-8). God wants the truth, even from those who think they are defending Him.

"Will not His majesty terrify you, and His dread fall on you?" They should be afraid to misrepresent God. "Your memorials are proverbs of ashes; your defenses are defenses of clay." Their wise sayings are like ashes, light and worthless. Their arguments are like clay walls that crumble at a touch. Job is sitting in ashes (2:8). He says their proverbs are no more solid than the ash heap.

13:13-14 *Be silent from me, and let me speak, I **myself**, and let whatever **may come** pass over me. Why should I take my flesh in my teeth, and put my life in my palm?*

"Be silent from me, and let me speak, I myself, and let whatever may come pass over me." Job is ready to speak to God no matter what happens to him. He is willing to take the risk.

"Why should I take my flesh in my teeth, and put my life in my palm?" These were sayings for risking one's life. A wild animal carrying its prey in its teeth risks losing it. A man holding his life in his hand might drop it. Job knows that speaking boldly to God could cost him his life. He will do it anyway.

13:15-16 *Look, He will kill me; I will hope in Him. Nevertheless I will argue my ways to His face. This also **will be** salvation for me, for a godless **man** will not come before Him.*

"Look, He will kill me; I will hope in Him." This is one of the great statements of faith in the Bible. Job does not know what God will do. He thinks God may kill him. But he will go on hoping in God. Even if God takes his life, Job will not stop trusting Him.

Many older Bibles translate this verse as a vow to trust God even if He slays him, and it has comforted believers in their darkest hours. The Hebrew can be read two ways, and some translations take it more darkly, as if Job is saying he has no hope. The SLB follows the reading that Job will hope in God. That fits the next line well. "Nevertheless I will argue my ways to His face." Job will hope in God and still bring his complaint to Him. Faith and honest wrestling are not enemies.

"This also will be salvation for me, for a godless man will not come before Him." Job sees something important. A godless man would not dare to come before God. The very fact that Job wants to come before God shows he is not godless, as his friends claim. His longing to meet God is evidence of his faith. And he believes that meeting God will be his salvation.

13:17-19 *Listen carefully to my speech, and **let** my declaration **be** in your ears. Look, please, I have arranged **my** case; I know that I am righteous. Who **is** he **that** will contend with me? For now I would be silent and expire.*

"Listen carefully to my speech, and let my declaration be in your ears." Job asks his friends to listen to what he is about to say to God.

"Look, please, I have arranged my case; I know that I am righteous." Job has prepared his case like a lawyer. He is sure of his innocence. Again, he does not mean he has never sinned (7:21; 13:26). He means he has not done anything that would deserve this.

"Who is he that will contend with me?" Is there anyone who can prove a charge against him? "For now I would be silent and expire." If someone could prove him guilty, Job would say nothing more and simply die. He is that sure.

13:20-22 *Only two **things** do not do to me; then I will not hide myself from before You. Put Your hand far from on me, and let Your dread not terrify me. And call, and I will answer; or let me speak, and respond to me.*

Now Job turns to God. "Only two things do not do to me; then I will not hide myself from before You." Job will come before God if God grants him two requests.

"Put Your hand far from on me," that is, stop the suffering long enough for me to think. "And let Your dread not terrify me," do not overwhelm me with Your awesome presence. He asked the same in 9:34.

"And call, and I will answer; or let me speak, and respond to me." Job offers God the choice. God can speak first and Job will answer, or Job can speak and God can answer. Job wants a conversation. He wants God to speak to him. In the end God does speak (38:1), though not in the way Job expected.

13:23-25 *How many iniquities and sins **are** mine? Make known to me my transgression and my sin. Why do You hide Your face and consider me Your enemy? Will You terrify a driven leaf? And will You pursue dry chaff?*

"How many iniquities and sins are mine? Make known to me my transgression and my sin." Job asks God to show him his sin. This is a fair request, and a humble one. If he has done wrong, he wants to know it. It is a good prayer for any of us: Psalm 139:23-24 asks God to search us and see if there is any hurtful way in us.

"Why do You hide Your face and consider me Your enemy?" This is what hurts Job most. Not just the pain, but the sense that God has turned His face away. In the Bible, God's face shining on someone means His favor (Numbers 6:25). His face hidden means His favor withdrawn. Job feels God is treating him as an enemy. The Hebrew word for "enemy" here, oyeb, sounds very much like Job's name, Iyyob. Job may be asking, in effect, whether God has turned Job into His foe.

"Will You terrify a driven leaf? And will You pursue dry chaff?" Job feels as small and helpless as a leaf blown by the wind or a bit of straw. Why would the great God chase something so small?

13:26-28 *For You write bitter things against me, and You make me inherit the iniquities of my youth. And You put my feet in the stocks, and You watch all my paths; on the roots of my feet You engrave* ***a mark****. And he wears out like rottenness, like a garment* ***that*** *a moth eats.*

"For You write bitter things against me, and You make me inherit the iniquities of my youth." Job feels as if God has written up a list of charges against him, and is bringing up the sins of his youth, long ago forgiven. Job admits he sinned when he was young. He does not claim to be perfect. But he cannot believe God would punish him now for those old sins.

"And You put my feet in the stocks, and You watch all my paths." Stocks were wooden blocks that held a prisoner's feet so he could not move. "On the roots of my feet You engrave a mark." Some think this means marking the soles of a prisoner's feet so he could be tracked. Job feels like a prisoner under constant watch.

"And he wears out like rottenness, like a garment that a moth eats." Job shifts to speaking of man in general, leading into chapter 14. Human life wastes away like rotting wood or a moth-eaten coat.

God does not bring up the forgiven sins of our youth to punish us. When God forgives, He removes our sins as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12). Job did not know why he was suffering, and it felt to him like old sins coming back. But we know from chapters 1 and 2 that this was not the reason.

Chapter 13 Summary

Job went on answering Zophar. He said he knew everything his friends knew, and that he wanted to argue his case with God Himself. He called his friends smearers of falsehood and worthless physicians, and warned them that God would rebuke them for speaking lies to defend Him. Then he said that though God might kill him, he would hope in Him, and still argue his case to God's face, since a godless man would not dare come before God. Job asked God for two things: to take His hand away and not to terrify him. He asked God to show him his sins and to tell him why He had hidden His face and treated him as an enemy. He felt like a driven leaf or dry chaff, a prisoner in stocks, and he ended by saying that man wears out like a moth-eaten garment.

Chapter 13 Study Questions

1. Who did Job say he wanted to argue his case with? (13:3)

2. What did Job call his friends, and why? (13:4)

3. What warning did Job give his friends about speaking for God? (13:7-10)

4. What did Job say in verse 15, and why is it a great statement of faith?

5. Why did Job say his desire to come before God was evidence that he was not godless? (13:16)

6. What two things did Job ask God not to do? (13:20-21)

7. What did Job ask God to show him? (13:23)

8. Job warned his friends not to lie in order to defend God. How can Christians today make the same mistake?

9. Job said, "He will kill me; I will hope in Him." Is there an area of your life where you need to keep hoping in God even when you do not understand what He is doing?

10. Job felt God had hidden His face. What do you do when God seems far away? What truths from Scripture help you then?

Chapter 14: If a Man Dies, Will He Live Again?

Scripture

14:1-12 Man born of a woman ***is*** short of days and full of turmoil. Like a flower he comes forth, and he withers; and he flees like the shadow, and he does not remain. Do You indeed open Your eyes on this ***one***, and bring me into judgment with You? Who can bring a clean ***thing*** out of an unclean? Not one. If his days ***are*** determined, the number of his months ***is*** with You; You have appointed his limits, and he will not pass ***beyond***. Look away from him, that he may cease, until he takes pleasure in his day like a hired laborer. For there is hope for a tree: if it is cut down, it will sprout again, and its young shoots will not cease. Though its root grows old in the ground, and its stump dies in the dust, from the scent of water it will bud and make shoots like a plant. And a man dies, and he is laid low; and man expires, and where ***is*** he? Waters disappear from ***the*** sea, and a river is drained and dries up. And a man lies down and will not arise; until the heavens are no more they will not awake, and they will not be roused from their sleep.

14:13-22 Oh that You would hide me in Sheol, that You would conceal me until Your anger turns back, that You would set a limit for me and remember me! If a man dies, will he live ***again***? All the days of my hard service I will wait, until my change comes. You will call, and I will answer You; You will long for the work of Your hands. For now You count my steps; You do not keep watch over my sin. My transgression ***is*** sealed up in a bag, and You smear over my iniquity. And yet a falling mountain crumbles away, and a rock moves from its place; waters wear away stones; its overflowings wash away the dust of the earth; and You destroy the hope of man. You overpower him forever, and he goes; changing his face, You send him away. His sons are honored, and he does not know ***it***; and they become insignificant, and he does not perceive ***it*** of them. Only his flesh on him is in pain, and his soul on him mourns."

Chapter 14 Preview

Job ends his answer to Zophar, and the first round of speeches, with a meditation on how short and fragile human life is. Man born of a woman lives only a few days, full of trouble. He blooms like a flower and fades like a shadow. A tree that is cut down can sprout again from its stump, but when a man dies, he lies down and does not rise, at least not until the heavens are no more.

Then Job reaches for a hope he has not voiced before. What if God would hide him in the grave until His anger passed, and then remember him? "If a man dies, will he live again?" Job says he would wait all his days of hard service for his change to come, and God would call and he would answer. For a moment the light breaks through. Then the darkness comes back, and Job ends by saying that God wears away the hope of man like water wears away stone. This chapter asks the question that only the resurrection of Jesus fully answers.

Chapter 14 Study

14:1-2 *Man born of a woman **is** short of days and full of turmoil. Like a flower he comes forth, and he withers; and he flees like the shadow, and he does not remain.*

Job is still speaking. "Man born of a woman is short of days and full of turmoil." Every human being is born of a woman, and every one of us shares the same lot: a short life and plenty of trouble. Job is speaking for all of us now, not only himself.

"Like a flower he comes forth, and he withers; and he flees like the shadow, and he does not remain." A flower blooms for a few days and is gone. A shadow moves across the ground and disappears as the sun moves. The Bible often uses these pictures for our lives (Psalm 103:15-16; James 1:10-11; 1 Peter 1:24). Life is beautiful, and life is brief.

14:3-4 *Do You indeed open Your eyes on this **one**, and bring me into judgment with You? Who can bring a clean **thing** out of an unclean? Not one.*

"Do You indeed open Your eyes on this one, and bring me into judgment with You?" If man is so frail and short-lived, why would the great God bother to keep such close watch on him and take him to court?

"Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." Here Job admits something important. Human beings are born unclean. Since the fall, every person born of a woman inherits a sinful nature (Psalm 51:5; Romans 5:12). No one can make himself clean. Job is not claiming to be sinless. He knows he is part of a fallen race.

This verse also points to something the New Testament shows. The answer to "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" is God alone. Jesus was born of a woman, yet He was without sin, because He was conceived by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35). And through Him, God makes the unclean clean (1 John 1:7).

14:5-6 *If his days **are** determined, the number of his months **is** with You; You have appointed his limits, and he will not pass **beyond**. Look away from him, that he may cease, until he takes pleasure in his day like a hired laborer.*

"If his days are determined, the number of his months is with You." God has set the length of every life. "You have appointed his limits, and he will not pass beyond." We cannot add a single day to the span God has set (Psalm 139:16; Matthew 6:27).

"Look away from him, that he may cease, until he takes pleasure in his day like a hired laborer." Since man's life is so short and already set, Job asks God to look away and give him rest, like a hired worker who finishes his shift and can enjoy the end of the day. He asked the same in 7:19 and 10:20.

14:7-9 *For there is hope for a tree: if it is cut down, it will sprout again, and its young shoots will not cease. Though its root grows old in the ground, and its stump dies in the dust, from the scent of water it will bud and make shoots like a plant.*

"For there is hope for a tree: if it is cut down, it will sprout again, and its young shoots will not cease." Anyone who has cut down a tree knows that the stump can send up new shoots. "Though its root grows old in the ground, and its stump dies in the dust, from the scent of water it will bud and make shoots like a plant." Even a stump that looks dead can come back to life with just a little water.

Job is setting up a contrast. A tree has hope. Does a man? The picture of a stump that sprouts again is used later in Scripture for the Messiah, the "shoot" from the stump of Jesse (Isaiah 11:1). And in a far greater way, Jesus was cut down in death and rose again.

14:10-12 *And a man dies, and he is laid low; and man expires, and where **is** he? Waters disappear from **the** sea, and a river is drained and dries up. And a man lies down and will not arise; until the heavens are no more they will not awake, and they will not be roused from their sleep.*

"And a man dies, and he is laid low; and man expires, and where is he?" Unlike the tree, man does not sprout again. "Waters disappear from the sea, and a river is drained and dries up." When a lake dries up in the heat, it is gone.

"And a man lies down and will not arise; until the heavens are no more they will not awake, and they will not be roused from their sleep."

Notice what Job says, and what he does not say. He says man will not arise "until the heavens are no more." In Job's mind this probably meant "never," because the heavens seemed to last forever. But the Bible teaches that the heavens will one day pass away (Psalm 102:25-26; 2 Peter 3:10; Revelation 21:1). And Job uses the word "sleep" for death. That is the same picture the New Testament uses for believers who have died, because they will wake up (John 11:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14). Without fully knowing it, Job has used words that point to the resurrection.

14:13 *Oh that You would hide me in Sheol, that You would conceal me until Your anger turns back, that You would set a limit for me and remember me!*

Now hope begins to break through. "Oh that You would hide me in Sheol, that You would conceal me until Your anger turns back, that You would set a limit for me and remember me!"

Job pictures something new. What if the grave were not the end? What if God would hide him there safely, like a treasure tucked away, until the hard time passed? And then, what if God would "set a limit" and "remember" him? In the Bible, when God remembers someone, it means He acts for them. God remembered Noah and brought him out of the ark (Genesis 8:1). Job longs for God to remember him after death.

14:14-15 *If a man dies, will he live **again**? All the days of my hard service I will wait, until my change comes. You will call, and I will answer You; You will long for the work of Your hands.*

"If a man dies, will he live again?" This is one of the great questions in the Bible. Every human being who has stood beside a grave has asked it. Job asks it in the middle of his suffering, not as an idle puzzle, but as a man staring at death.

Job does not give a full answer yet, but his next words lean toward hope. "All the days of my hard service I will wait, until my change comes." "Hard service" is the soldier's term of duty again (7:1). Job pictures his time in the grave as a soldier waiting to be relieved. "My change" is the word for relief, when a new guard takes over. Job is saying: I will wait, even in death, for the day God relieves me.

"You will call, and I will answer You; You will long for the work of Your hands." This is beautiful. Job pictures God calling him out of the grave, and Job answering. And why would God call him? Because God longs for what His hands have made. Job had complained that God was destroying the work of His hands (10:3, 8). Now he believes God would not leave His own handiwork in the grave forever.

The New Testament answers Job's question with a clear yes. Jesus said that an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear His voice and come out (John 5:28-29). He said to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one believing in Me, even if he dies, will live" (John 11:25). Paul says that Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep (1 Corinthians 15:20), and that at the last trumpet the dead will be raised incorruptible, "and we will be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:52). Job's "change" will come. For those who belong to Christ, death is not the end. God will call, and we will answer.

14:16-17 *For now You count my steps; You do not keep watch over my sin. My transgression **is** sealed up in a bag, and You smear over my iniquity.*

"For now You count my steps; You do not keep watch over my sin." This verse can be read two ways. Job may be continuing his hopeful picture: in that day God would count his steps to guide him, and no longer watch for his sins. Or he may be coming back to the present: right now God counts every step he takes.

"My transgression is sealed up in a bag, and You smear over my iniquity." In the ancient world, a merchant might seal valuables or records in a bag. Job may mean his sins are sealed away out of sight, and covered over, as God forgives. That fits the hopeful reading. Micah says God will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea (Micah 7:19). When God forgives, He does not keep our sins on display.

14:18-19 *And yet a falling mountain crumbles away, and a rock moves from its place; waters wear away stones; its overflowings wash away the dust of the earth; and You destroy the hope of man.*

But Job's hope does not last. He comes back to the hard facts of life. "And yet a falling mountain crumbles away, and a rock moves from its place." Even mountains wear down over time. "Waters wear away stones; its overflowings wash away the dust of the earth."

"And You destroy the hope of man." Just as water slowly wears down a stone, Job feels that suffering slowly wears away a man's hope. It was gone in a flash for the tree's stump, which revived. But for man, Job feels, hope erodes until nothing is left.

This is how grief often works. One moment we see a glimmer of hope. The next moment the pain rushes back. Job is not a man who has it all figured out. He is a man holding on through the waves.

14:20-22 *You overpower him forever, and he goes; changing his face, You send him away. His sons are honored, and he does not know **it**; and they become insignificant, and he does not perceive **it** of them. Only his flesh on him is in pain, and his soul on him mourns."*

"You overpower him forever, and he goes; changing his face, You send him away." Death changes a person's face, and God sends him away from the land of the living.

"His sons are honored, and he does not know it; and they become insignificant, and he does not perceive it of them." The dead do not see what happens to their children afterward. For Job, whose children had died, these words carry a special sadness.

"Only his flesh on him is in pain, and his soul on him mourns." The first round of speeches ends in pain and mourning.

But we do not have to end there. We know what Job did not yet fully know. Jesus has gone through death and come out the other side. Because He lives, we will live also (John 14:19). In chapter 19 Job himself will rise to a much clearer hope: "I know that my Redeemer lives."

Chapter 14 Summary

Job ended his answer to Zophar and the first round of speeches. He said that man, born of a woman, is short of days and full of trouble, blooming like a flower and fading like a shadow. No one can bring a clean thing out of an unclean. God has set the limits of every life. A tree that is cut down can sprout again, but a man lies down and does not rise until the heavens are no more. Then Job longed for God to hide him in Sheol until His anger passed, and to remember him. He asked, "If a man dies, will he live again?" and said he would wait for his relief to come, when God would call and he would answer, because God longs for the work of His hands. But the hope faded, and Job ended by saying that God wears away man's hope as water wears away stone. The New Testament answers his question with the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Chapter 14 Study Questions

1. What two pictures does Job use for human life in verses 1 and 2?

2. What does Job admit in verse 4 about human nature?

3. Why does Job say there is hope for a tree? (14:7-9)

4. What did Job say about man in verses 10-12? What word does he use for death?

5. What did Job wish God would do for him in Sheol? (14:13)

6. What question did Job ask in verse 14, and what did he say he would do?

7. What did Job picture in verse 15? Why would God call him?

8. How do John 5:28-29, John 11:25 and 1 Corinthians 15:20 answer Job's question?

9. Job's hope flickered and then faded again (14:18-22). Have you ever felt hope come and go like that in a hard time? What helps you hold on?

10. If someone asked you, "If a man dies, will he live again?", how would you answer from what Jesus has done?

Chapter 15: Eliphaz's Second Speech

Scripture

15:1-16 And Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said, "Will a wise ***man*** answer ***with*** knowledge of wind, and fill his belly ***with*** the east wind, arguing with a word ***that*** is of no use, and with words by which he does no good? Indeed, you do away with fear, and you diminish meditation before God. For your iniquity teaches your mouth, and you choose the tongue of the crafty. Your mouth declares you guilty, and not I; and your lips testify against you. Were you born the first man? And were you brought forth before the hills? Have you listened in the council of God, and do you restrict wisdom to yourself? What do you know, and we do not know? ***What*** do you understand, and it ***is*** not with us? Both the gray-haired and the aged ***are*** among us, greater than your father in days. ***Are*** the consolations of God too little for you, and a word ***spoken*** gently with you? Why does your heart carry you away, and why do your eyes flash, that you turn your spirit against God and bring out words from your mouth? What ***is*** man, that he should be pure, and that one born of a woman should be righteous? Look, He does not trust in His holy ones, and the heavens are not pure in His eyes; how much less one who is abhorrent and corrupt, a man who drinks injustice like water!

15:17-35 I will tell you; listen to me; and what I have seen, let me recount, what wise ***men*** have told, and have not hidden, from their fathers, to whom alone the land was given, and no stranger passed among them. All the days of a wicked ***man*** he is writhing in pain, and the number of years ***that*** have been stored up for the ruthless. A sound of dreads ***is*** in his ears; in peace the destroyer will come on him. He does not believe ***that he will*** return from darkness, and he ***is*** watched for the sword. He wanders for bread, ***saying***, 'Where ***is it***?' He knows that a day of darkness is ready at his hand. Distress and anguish terrify him; it overpowers him like a king ready for the battle. For he has stretched out his hand against God, and against the Almighty he makes himself mighty. He runs against Him with a ***stiff*** neck, with the thick bosses of his shields. For he has covered his face with his fat, and made fat on ***his*** loins. And he has dwelt in desolate cities, ***in*** houses ***where*** they will not dwell, which are destined for heaps. He will not be rich, and his wealth will not endure, and their gain will not stretch out on the land. He will not depart from darkness; a flame will dry up his young shoots, and he will depart by the breath of his mouth. Let him not trust in worthlessness; he has been led astray; for worthlessness will be his recompense. Before his day it will be completed, and his palm branch will not grow luxuriant. He will shake off his unripe grapes like the vine, and he will shed his blossom like the olive tree. For the company of the godless ***is*** barren, and fire consumes the tents of bribery. Conceiving trouble and giving birth to wickedness, and their belly prepares deceit."

Chapter 15 Preview

The second round of speeches begins, and Eliphaz speaks first again. This time there is no gentle opening. He says Job's words are wind, that Job is undermining the fear of God, and that Job's own mouth condemns him. He asks whether Job thinks he was the first man ever born, or sat in God's council. He reminds Job that the gray-haired elders are on the friends' side, and he repeats the

message of his night vision: if even the heavens are not pure in God's sight, how much less a man who drinks injustice like water.

Then Eliphaz gives a long description of the wicked man. He lives in fear all his days, always expecting the destroyer. He has shaken his fist at God, and so he will not prosper. His wealth will not last, and he will wither like a vine that drops its grapes. Every line is aimed at Job. In the first round the friends hinted. In the second round they describe the fate of the wicked and leave Job to see himself in it.

Chapter 15 Study

15:1-3 *And Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said, "Will a wise **man** answer **with** knowledge of wind, and fill his belly **with** the east wind, arguing with a word **that** is of no use, and with words by which he does no good?*

"And Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said." The second round begins, and the friends speak in the same order: Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar.

"Will a wise man answer with knowledge of wind, and fill his belly with the east wind?" The east wind was the hot, dry wind off the desert. It brought nothing good. Eliphaz says Job's words are like that: hot air, and harmful. "Arguing with a word that is of no use, and with words by which he does no good?" Job, who claimed to be wise (12:3; 13:2), is talking uselessly, Eliphaz says.

Bildad had also called Job's words wind (8:2). And Job will throw the same word back at Eliphaz (16:3). Both sides felt the other was full of empty talk.

15:4-6 *Indeed, you do away with fear, and you diminish meditation before God. For your iniquity teaches your mouth, and you choose the tongue of the crafty. Your mouth declares you guilty, and not I; and your lips testify against you.*

"Indeed, you do away with fear, and you diminish meditation before God." Eliphaz charges Job with destroying the fear of God and weakening devotion. If people listened to Job's complaints, they might stop fearing God and praying.

This is a serious charge, and it shows that Eliphaz thought he was defending God's honor. He was afraid Job's honesty would hurt others' faith. Some Christians feel the same when someone brings hard questions about suffering. But God did not condemn Job's honesty. In the end He said Job had spoken rightly about Him, and the friends had not (42:7).

"For your iniquity teaches your mouth, and you choose the tongue of the crafty." Eliphaz says Job's words come from his sin. "Your mouth declares you guilty, and not I; and your lips testify against you." Job had said that his own mouth would condemn him before God (9:20). Eliphaz turns that around: yes, your words do condemn you.

15:7-10 *Were you born the first man? And were you brought forth before the hills? Have you listened in the council of God, and do you restrict wisdom to yourself? What do you know, and we do not know?* ***What*** *do you understand, and it* ***is*** *not with us? Both the gray-haired and the aged* ***are*** *among us, greater than your father in days.*

"Were you born the first man? And were you brought forth before the hills?" This is sarcasm. Does Job think he is Adam, the first man, or older than the hills, and so knows more than everyone else?

"Have you listened in the council of God, and do you restrict wisdom to yourself?" Has Job been sitting in heaven's council, hearing God's secrets? There is an irony here that Eliphaz does not see. The book began with a scene in God's council (1:6; 2:1). Job was not there, but neither was Eliphaz. Only the reader has been told what happened there. If Eliphaz had known, he would never have said what he said.

"What do you know, and we do not know?" Eliphaz throws back Job's own words (12:3; 13:2). "Both the gray-haired and the aged are among us, greater than your father in days." Eliphaz may mean that he himself is older than Job's father, or that the wise elders of tradition are on their side. Age deserves respect (Leviticus 19:32), but age alone does not make a person right.

15:11-13 ***Are*** *the consolations of God too little for you, and a word* ***spoken*** *gently with you? Why does your heart carry you away, and why do your eyes flash, that you turn your spirit against God and bring out words from your mouth?*

"Are the consolations of God too little for you, and a word spoken gently with you?" Eliphaz thinks the friends have brought Job God's comfort, and spoken to him gently. He thinks Job is rejecting God's consolation by rejecting theirs.

We should pause on this. Eliphaz sincerely believed his words were God's comfort. But comfort that tells a sufferer he must have sinned is not God's comfort to a righteous sufferer. Paul calls God the "God of all comfort," and says He comforts us "so that we may be able to comfort those in every affliction" (2 Corinthians 1:3-4). True comfort comes alongside the sufferer. It does not stand over him.

"Why does your heart carry you away, and why do your eyes flash, that you turn your spirit against God and bring out words from your mouth?" Eliphaz sees Job's flashing eyes and passionate words as rebellion against God. He cannot see that it is the anguish of a man who still holds on to God.

15:14-16 *What* ***is*** *man, that he should be pure, and that one born of a woman should be righteous? Look, He does not trust in His holy ones, and the heavens are not pure in His eyes; how much less one who is abhorrent and corrupt, a man who drinks injustice like water!*

Eliphaz goes back to the message of his vision (4:17-19). "What is man, that he should be pure, and that one born of a woman should be righteous?" No human being is pure before God. Job had said much the same (14:1, 4).

"Look, He does not trust in His holy ones, and the heavens are not pure in His eyes." The "holy ones" are the angels. If even angels and the heavens are not pure compared with God, "how much less one who is abhorrent and corrupt, a man who drinks injustice like water!"

It is true that all people are sinners (Romans 3:23). But notice how Eliphaz has sharpened his words since chapter 4. Then he spoke of man as frail clay. Now he calls man "abhorrent and corrupt," one who drinks injustice like water, and he means Job. He has moved from saying everyone is weak to saying Job is wicked.

15:17-19 *I will tell you; listen to me; and what I have seen, let me recount, what wise **men** have told, and have not hidden, from their fathers, to whom alone the land was given, and no stranger passed among them.*

"I will tell you; listen to me; and what I have seen, let me recount." Eliphaz again appeals to his own experience and to tradition. He will tell "what wise men have told, and have not hidden, from their fathers."

"To whom alone the land was given, and no stranger passed among them." Eliphaz means the wise men of old lived in a pure time, before foreign ideas mixed in. Their wisdom was untainted. He thinks Job's ideas are foreign and new.

There is nothing wrong with learning from those who went before us. But wisdom passed down from the fathers is still human wisdom. It must be tested by what God has said. Eliphaz's tradition had a blind spot, and he could not see it.

15:20-24 *All the days of a wicked **man** he is writhing in pain, and the number of years **that** have been stored up for the ruthless. A sound of dreads **is** in his ears; in peace the destroyer will come on him. He does not believe **that he will** return from darkness, and he **is** watched for the sword. He wanders for bread, **saying**, 'Where **is it**?' He knows that a day of darkness is ready at his hand. Distress and anguish terrify him; it overpowers him like a king ready for the battle.*

Now Eliphaz describes the wicked man. "All the days of a wicked man he is writhing in pain." His whole life is full of anguish. "A sound of dreads is in his ears; in peace the destroyer will come on him." Even when things seem peaceful, he hears frightening sounds, and the destroyer comes.

"He does not believe that he will return from darkness, and he is watched for the sword." He has no hope of escape. "He wanders for bread, saying, 'Where is it?'" He goes hungry. "He knows that a day of darkness is ready at his hand." Distress and anguish overpower him "like a king ready for the battle."

Look at this list: pain, fear, a destroyer who comes in peace, darkness, wandering, distress. Eliphaz is describing what happened to Job. Job had lived in peace, and the destroyer came. Job is in darkness and anguish. Eliphaz never says Job's name, but the picture is meant for him. It is true that sin often brings fear and misery, and that there is "no peace, says the LORD, for the wicked" (Isaiah 48:22). But not everyone in misery is wicked.

15:25-28 *For he has stretched out his hand against God, and against the Almighty he makes himself mighty. He runs against Him with a **stiff** neck, with the thick bosses of his shields. For he has covered his face with his fat, and made fat on **his** loins. And he has dwelt in desolate cities, **in** houses **where** they will not dwell, which are destined for heaps.*

Why does the wicked man suffer? "For he has stretched out his hand against God, and against the Almighty he makes himself mighty." He shakes his fist at God. "He runs against Him with a stiff neck, with the thick bosses of his shields." The bosses were the metal knobs on a shield. The picture is of a soldier charging at God, head down, shield up.

"For he has covered his face with his fat, and made fat on his loins." He is well fed and comfortable, grown fat from his wealth, like the rich fool Jesus described (Luke 12:16-21). "He has dwelt in desolate cities," places under a curse, houses "which are destined for heaps." He built his life on ruins.

Eliphaz is now hinting that Job had been proud and defiant toward God. But this is the opposite of the truth. Job had feared God and turned from evil (1:1). He had prayed for his children's hearts (1:5). His bold words came after his suffering, not before it.

15:29-32 *He will not be rich, and his wealth will not endure, and their gain will not stretch out on the land. He will not depart from darkness; a flame will dry up his young shoots, and he will depart by the breath of his mouth. Let him not trust in worthlessness; he has been led astray; for worthlessness will be his recompense. Before his day it will be completed, and his palm branch will not grow luxuriant.*

"He will not be rich, and his wealth will not endure." The wicked man's riches will not last. "He will not depart from darkness; a flame will dry up his young shoots." The "young shoots" are his children. A flame withers them. Job's sheep had been burned by fire from heaven (1:16), and his children had died. Again, the picture fits Job too closely.

"Let him not trust in worthlessness; he has been led astray; for worthlessness will be his recompense." If he trusts in empty things, empty things will be his reward. "Before his day it will be completed, and his palm branch will not grow luxuriant." He will die before his time, like a palm that never reaches its full growth.

15:33-35 *He will shake off his unripe grapes like the vine, and he will shed his blossom like the olive tree. For the company of the godless **is** barren, and fire consumes the tents of bribery. Conceiving trouble and giving birth to wickedness, and their belly prepares deceit."*

"He will shake off his unripe grapes like the vine, and he will shed his blossom like the olive tree." A vine that drops its grapes before they ripen, and an olive tree that sheds its blossoms, never bear fruit. The wicked man's life ends without a harvest.

"For the company of the godless is barren, and fire consumes the tents of bribery." The godless and those who take bribes will be left empty, their homes burned. "Conceiving trouble and giving birth to wickedness, and their belly prepares deceit." The wicked are always pregnant with mischief. Psalm 7:14 uses the same picture.

Every word Eliphaz says about the end of the wicked can be true in a final sense. God will judge the wicked (Romans 2:5-8). But Eliphaz insists that this judgment always comes in this life, quickly and visibly, and that anyone who suffers this way must be wicked. That was not true of Job, and it is not true of many godly people today. We must be careful not to see someone's suffering and quietly decide, as Eliphaz did, that it is the fate of the wicked.

Chapter 15 Summary

Eliphaz opened the second round by saying Job's words were wind, that Job was undermining the fear of God, and that Job's own mouth condemned him. He mocked Job as if he thought he were the first man or had sat in God's council, and he said the gray-haired elders were on the friends' side. He said the friends had offered God's consolations gently. He repeated his vision's message that no man is pure before God, now calling man abhorrent and corrupt. Then he gave a long description of the wicked man, who lives in fear, is visited by the destroyer in peace, defies God with a stiff neck, grows fat on his wealth, loses his riches and his young shoots, and withers without fruit. Every line was aimed at Job. Eliphaz was right that God judges the wicked, but wrong to think all suffering in this life proves wickedness.

Chapter 15 Study Questions

1. What did Eliphaz say about Job's words in verses 2-3?

2. What did Eliphaz say Job was doing to the fear of God? (15:4)

3. What sarcastic questions did Eliphaz ask in verses 7-8? What irony is there in verse 8, given 1:6?

4. What did Eliphaz think the friends had offered Job? (15:11)

5. How did Eliphaz's description of man in verse 16 change from what he said in 4:19?

6. List the things Eliphaz says happen to the wicked man. Which of them had happened to Job? (15:20-34)

7. Why does Eliphaz say the wicked man suffers? Was that true of Job? (15:25-27; compare 1:1, 5)

8. Eliphaz thought he was protecting other people's faith. How can hard, honest questions about suffering actually strengthen faith?

9. Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-4. What does true comfort look like, compared with what Eliphaz offered?

10. When you see someone suffering, what thoughts come to your mind first? How can you keep from quietly judging them as Eliphaz did?

Chapter 16: Job's Witness in Heaven

Scripture

16:1-11 And Job answered and said, "I have heard many ***things*** like these; comforters of trouble ***are*** all of you. ***Is there*** an end to words of wind? Or what provokes you that you answer? I also could speak like you, if your soul were in place of my soul; I could join ***together*** words against you, and shake my head at you. I could strengthen you with my mouth, and the condolence of my lips would restrain ***your pain***. If I speak, my pain is not restrained; and ***if*** I cease, what goes from me? Surely now He has made me weary; You have devastated all my company. And You have seized me; it has become a witness; and my leanness has risen up against me; it testifies to my face. His anger has torn ***me***, and He has assailed me; He has gnashed at me with His teeth; my adversary sharpens His eyes against me. They have opened wide their mouth against me; in scorn they have struck my cheeks; together they mass themselves against me. God delivers me up to an unjust one, and casts me into the hands of the wicked.

16:12-22 I was at ease, and He broke me apart; and He took hold of my neck and shattered me; and He set me up as His target. His archers surround me; He splits open my kidneys, and He does not have compassion; He pours out my gall on the ground. He breaks through me, breach upon breach; He runs on me like a warrior. I have sewn sackcloth over my skin, and I have thrust my horn into the dust. My face is reddened from weeping, and on my eyelids ***is*** deep darkness, although ***there is*** no violence in my hands, and my prayer ***is*** pure. O earth, do not cover my blood, and let ***there*** be no place for my outcry. Even now, look, my witness ***is*** in the heavens, and the one who testifies for me ***is*** in the high places. My companions ***are*** scoffing at me; my eye drips ***tears*** to God, and let him argue for a man with God, and a son of man for his companion. For years ***that can be*** numbered will come, and I will go a path ***from which*** I will not return.

Chapter 16 Preview

Job answers Eliphaz's second speech. He calls his friends "comforters of trouble," miserable comforters. If they were in his place, he says, he could heap up words against them and shake his head at them too, but he would rather strengthen them. Then Job pours out one of the most painful descriptions of his suffering in the whole book. He feels as if God has torn him like a wild beast, handed him over to the wicked, broken him apart, set him up as a target and run at him like a warrior.

Yet in the middle of this darkness, Job makes one of the great statements of faith in the Old Testament. "Even now, look, my witness is in the heavens, and the one who testifies for me is in the high places." Job's friends scorn him, but he believes someone in heaven will speak for him and plead his case with God. That longing points straight to Jesus Christ, our Advocate with the Father.

Chapter 16 Study

16:1-3 *And Job answered and said, "I have heard many **things** like these; comforters of trouble **are** all of you. **Is there** an end to words of wind? Or what provokes you that you answer?*

"And Job answered and said." Job now replies to Eliphaz's second speech. His reply runs through chapter 17.

"I have heard many things like these; comforters of trouble are all of you." The friends came to comfort him (2:11), but their comfort only made his trouble worse. They were comforters who brought more trouble, and they had nothing new to say.

"Is there an end to words of wind?" Eliphaz had called Job's words wind (15:2). Job throws it back. "Or what provokes you that you answer?" What makes you keep talking? Why can you not stop?

16:4-6 *I also could speak like you, if your soul were in place of my soul; I could join **together** words against you, and shake my head at you. I could strengthen you with my mouth, and the condolence of my lips would restrain **your pain**. If I speak, my pain is not restrained; and **if** I cease, what goes from me?*

"I also could speak like you, if your soul were in place of my soul." If they traded places, Job could do to them what they were doing to him. "I could join together words against you, and shake my head at you." Shaking the head was a gesture of scorn (Psalm 22:7; Matthew 27:39).

"I could strengthen you with my mouth, and the condolence of my lips would restrain your pain." But here is the difference. Job says that if they were suffering, he would use his words to strengthen them and ease their pain. That is what Job used to do for others (4:3-4). That is what a true friend does.

"If I speak, my pain is not restrained; and if I cease, what goes from me?" For Job there is no relief either way. Talking does not help, and silence does not help.

16:7-8 *Surely now He has made me weary; You have devastated all my company. And You have seized me; it has become a witness; and my leanness has risen up against me; it testifies to my face.*

"Surely now He has made me weary; You have devastated all my company." Job moves back and forth between speaking about God ("He") and speaking to God ("You"). God has worn him out and destroyed his whole household: his children, his servants, all those around him.

"And You have seized me; it has become a witness; and my leanness has risen up against me; it testifies to my face." Job's wasted, thin body has become like a witness in court testifying against him. People look at him and conclude that he must be guilty. His friends had done just that.

16:9-11 *His anger has torn **me**, and He has assailed me; He has gnashed at me with His teeth; my adversary sharpens His eyes against me. They have opened wide their mouth against me; in scorn they have struck my cheeks; together they mass themselves against me. God delivers me up to an unjust one, and casts me into the hands of the wicked.*

"His anger has torn me, and He has assailed me; He has gnashed at me with His teeth." Job describes God as a wild animal tearing its prey. These are the strongest words Job has used yet. "My adversary sharpens his eyes against me." His enemy stares at him with a piercing look.

Who is the "adversary"? Job means God, as he feels it. But the reader knows something Job does not. There really was an adversary, Satan, whose name means "the adversary." It was Satan who struck Job, by God's permission (1:12; 2:7). Job's words are the words of a man in agony who does not know what we know. God was not tearing Job. He was holding Satan's leash.

"They have opened wide their mouth against me; in scorn they have struck my cheeks." Now Job speaks of people who mock and insult him. Striking someone's cheek was a deep insult. "Together they mass themselves against me." "God delivers me up to an unjust one, and casts me into the hands of the wicked."

These words sound much like Psalm 22 and like what happened to Jesus. Men opened their mouths against Him. They struck Him on the face (Matthew 26:67). He was handed over to wicked men (Acts 2:23). Job's sufferings give us a picture of the sufferings of the only truly innocent man.

16:12-14 *I was at ease, and He broke me apart; and He took hold of my neck and shattered me; and He set me up as His target. His archers surround me; He splits open my kidneys, and He does not have compassion; He pours out my gall on the ground. He breaks through me, breach upon breach; He runs on me like a warrior.*

"I was at ease, and He broke me apart." Job had been living in peace before disaster struck. "He took hold of my neck and shattered me; and He set me up as His target." Job is like a man grabbed by the neck and shaken apart, then tied up as a target for archers.

"His archers surround me; He splits open my kidneys, and He does not have compassion; He pours out my gall on the ground." The kidneys in Hebrew thinking were the seat of the deepest feelings. Job feels pierced to the core.

"He breaks through me, breach upon breach; He runs on me like a warrior." Job is like a city wall with breach after breach knocked into it, and God like a warrior charging through the gaps.

These are hard words to read, and it is hard to hear a believer speak of God this way. But the Bible does not hide them. Job is telling us exactly how it felt. Sometimes suffering feels like an attack from God Himself. If you have felt that, Job's words show you that you can tell God so. He would rather hear your honest anguish than your silence.

16:15-17 *I have sewn sackcloth over my skin, and I have thrust my horn into the dust. My face is reddened from weeping, and on my eyelids **is** deep darkness, although **there is** no violence in my hands, and my prayer **is** pure.*

"I have sewn sackcloth over my skin." Sackcloth was a rough cloth made of goat's hair, worn in mourning. Job had sewn it on, as if he would never take it off. "And I have thrust my horn into the dust." The horn was a picture of strength and dignity. Job's strength lies in the dust.

"My face is reddened from weeping, and on my eyelids is deep darkness." His face is red and swollen from crying, and dark circles ring his eyes.

"Although there is no violence in my hands, and my prayer is pure." This is the heart of Job's complaint. He has done no violence to anyone, and his prayers have been sincere. He has not earned this. God had said the same about him (1:8; 2:3).

16:18 *O earth, do not cover my blood, and let **there** be no place for my outcry.*

"O earth, do not cover my blood, and let there be no place for my outcry." Job speaks as if he has been murdered. In the Bible, innocent blood cries out from the ground for justice (Genesis 4:10). Job asks the earth not to cover his blood, so that its cry will go on until he is vindicated. He does not want his cause to be forgotten after he dies.

"Let there be no place for my outcry" means: let my cry never find a resting place, let it keep rising until someone answers it.

16:19-21 *Even now, look, my witness **is** in the heavens, and the one who testifies for me **is** in the high places. My companions **are** scoffing at me; my eye drips **tears** to God, and let him argue for a man with God, and a son of man for his companion.*

Now comes a burst of faith. "Even now, look, my witness is in the heavens, and the one who testifies for me is in the high places."

Think about where Job is when he says this. He is on the ash heap, mocked by his friends, feeling attacked by God. And yet he says, "even now." Right now, in this darkness, he has a witness in heaven. Someone up there knows the truth about him and will testify for him.

"My companions are scoffing at me; my eye drips tears to God." On earth, his friends scorn him. But his tears go up to God. "And let him argue for a man with God, and a son of man for his companion." Job longs for this heavenly witness to plead his case before God, the way a man pleads for his friend.

Who is this witness? Job seems to be speaking of someone in heaven who is distinct from God in one sense, since he argues "with God," and yet who is so close to God that he is in heaven itself. Some teachers think Job means God Himself, the God he believes in deep down, as a witness against the God he feels is attacking him. Others think Job means a heavenly being, an angel or advocate. Many Christians have seen in Job's words a longing that only Jesus Christ fully answers.

I believe this points to Jesus Christ. In 9:33 Job longed for an arbiter. Here he is sure he has a witness in heaven. The New Testament tells us who He is. "If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous One" (1 John 2:1). An advocate is one who speaks for another, like a lawyer for the defense. Christ "is also at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us" (Romans 8:34). He is "always living to intercede for them" (Hebrews 7:25).

Notice the phrase "a son of man." Job means a human being. But Jesus took "the Son of Man" as His own favorite title for Himself (Mark 10:45; Daniel 7:13-14). The One who pleads for us in heaven is fully God and also a man, who knows our weakness from the inside (Hebrews 4:15). Job's tears went up to God, and God had already planned to send the Witness Job longed for.

Satan stood in heaven as the accuser (1:6-11; Revelation 12:10). Job longed for a defender. In Christ, the believer has both answered: the accuser is silenced, and the Advocate speaks for us.

16:22 *For years **that can be** numbered will come, and I will go a path **from which** I will not return.*

"For years that can be numbered will come, and I will go a path from which I will not return." Job expects to die soon. His years are few and counted. Soon he will take the road of death, from which no one comes back to this life.

That is why he needs his witness now. He wants his case settled before he dies. Job's hope in this chapter is not yet the full hope of the resurrection, but it is growing. In chapter 19 it will rise even higher.

Chapter 16 Summary

Job answered Eliphaz's second speech by calling his friends comforters of trouble, full of words of wind. He said that if they traded places he could mock them as they mocked him, but he would rather strengthen and comfort them. He described how it felt as though God had worn him out, destroyed his household, torn him like a beast, handed him over to the wicked, broken him, set him up as a target and charged him like a warrior. Yet he had done no violence, and his prayer was pure. He asked the earth not to cover his blood, so his cry would go on. Then he declared that even now he had a witness in heaven who would argue his case with God. That longing is answered in Jesus Christ, our Advocate with the Father, who always lives to intercede for us.

Chapter 16 Study Questions

1. What did Job call his friends? (16:2)

2. What did Job say he would do if he were in their place? (16:4-5)

3. How did Job's thin body seem to testify against him? (16:8)

4. What pictures did Job use for what God seemed to be doing to him? (16:9-14)

5. What did Job say about his hands and his prayer? (16:17)

6. What did Job ask of the earth, and why? (16:18; compare Genesis 4:10)

7. Who did Job say was in heaven, and what did he want him to do? (16:19-21)

8. How do 1 John 2:1 and Hebrews 7:25 answer Job's longing for a witness in heaven?

9. Job said "even now" in the middle of his worst pain. What would it mean for you to say "even now" about your faith in a hard season?

10. Job said he would use his words to strengthen others in pain (16:5). Who could you strengthen with your words this week?

Chapter 17: Job's Hope Fades

Scripture

17:1-16 My spirit has been destroyed; my days have been extinguished; graves ***are*** for me. Surely mockeries ***are*** with me, and on their provoking my eye lodges. Set ***it***, please; be surety for me with Yourself. Who ***is*** he ***who*** will strike ***hands*** with my hand? For You have hidden their heart from understanding; therefore You will not exalt ***them***. For a portion he informs on friends, and the eyes of his sons will fail. And He has set me up for a byword of peoples, and I am a spitting in ***the*** face. And my eye has grown dim from grief, and my members ***are*** like the shadow, all of them. Upright ***ones*** are appalled at this, and the innocent rouses himself against the godless. And the righteous holds to his way, and the clean of hands will increase strength. But all of them, you may return, and come, please, and I will not find among you a wise ***man***. My days have passed; my plans have been torn apart, the desires of my heart. Night into day they make; light ***is*** near before darkness. If I hope for Sheol ***as*** my home, in the darkness I have spread out my bed, to the pit I have called out, 'You ***are*** my father'; 'My mother and my sister' to the maggot, and where then ***is*** my hope? And my hope, who will observe it? To the bars of Sheol will they go down? Or together on the dust will we descend?"

Chapter 17 Preview

Job finishes his answer to Eliphaz. The faith he showed at the end of chapter 16 is still there, but now the darkness closes in again. His spirit is broken, his days are almost gone, and the grave is waiting for him. He is surrounded by mockers. He asks God Himself to put up a pledge for him, to stand surety for him, since no one else will.

Job says he has become a byword, a man people spit at, and his body is wasting to a shadow. Yet he believes the righteous will hold to their way. He tells his friends he cannot find a wise man among them. He ends by asking where his hope is. Will it go down with him to the bars of Sheol? This short chapter is one of the lowest points of the book, and it is honest about how hope can fade even in a believer.

Chapter 17 Study

17:1-2 *My spirit has been destroyed; my days have been extinguished; graves **are** for me. Surely mockeries **are** with me, and on their provoking my eye lodges.*

Job is still speaking. "My spirit has been destroyed; my days have been extinguished; graves are for me." Three short lines, each heavier than the last. His spirit is broken. His days are snuffed out like a lamp. The grave is ready for him. Job feels he is a dying man.

"Surely mockeries are with me, and on their provoking my eye lodges." He is surrounded by mockers, and he cannot stop seeing their scorn. The friends who came to comfort him have become people he has to look at day and night while they provoke him.

17:3-5 *Set **it**, please; be surety for me with Yourself. Who **is** he **who** will strike **hands** with my hand? For You have hidden their heart from understanding; therefore You will not exalt **them**. For a portion he informs on friends, and the eyes of his sons will fail.*

"Set it, please; be surety for me with Yourself." Job turns to God. To be surety means to put up a pledge or guarantee for someone, like co-signing a loan or paying bail. Job asks God to put up the pledge for him, with God Himself. In other words, he asks God to guarantee his case before God.

"Who is he who will strike hands with my hand?" Striking hands was how a man agreed to stand surety for another (Proverbs 6:1; 11:15). Job looks around and sees no one willing to do it. His friends will not. Only God can.

This is a remarkable thought, and it fits with what Job said about his witness in heaven (16:19). Job is reaching for a God who will be both his Judge and his guarantee. The New Testament shows us that God did just that. "Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant" (Hebrews 7:22). Jesus put up His own life as the pledge for us. He is the One who struck hands for us when no one else could.

"For You have hidden their heart from understanding; therefore You will not exalt them." Job means his friends. God has not given them understanding, so God will not let them win the argument. That turned out to be true (42:7-8).

"For a portion he informs on friends, and the eyes of his sons will fail." This seems to be a proverb about a man who betrays his friends for a share of the goods, and his children suffer for it. Job is warning that his friends' betrayal of him will not go unpunished.

17:6-7 *And He has set me up for a byword of peoples, and I am a spitting in **the** face. And my eye has grown dim from grief, and my members **are** like the shadow, all of them.*

"And He has set me up for a byword of peoples, and I am a spitting in the face." A byword is a name people use as an example of disaster. Job's name has become a byword for ruin. People point to him as the example of a man God has struck down. Some even spit in his face, the deepest insult in that culture.

Again, this points us to Jesus, who was spit upon and mocked, though He had done nothing wrong (Matthew 26:67; Isaiah 50:6).

"And my eye has grown dim from grief, and my members are like the shadow, all of them." Grief has dimmed his eyes. His body has wasted away until his arms and legs are as thin as shadows. Long grief does that to a person. It wears down the body as well as the heart.

17:8-10 *Upright **ones** are appalled at this, and the innocent rouses himself against the godless. And the righteous holds to his way, and the clean of hands will increase strength. But all of them, you may return, and come, please, and I will not find among you a wise **man**.*

"Upright ones are appalled at this, and the innocent rouses himself against the godless." Job may mean that good people who see what has happened to him are shocked, and stand up against the godless men who mock him. He is saying the upright would be on his side.

"And the righteous holds to his way, and the clean of hands will increase strength." This is a striking verse. In the middle of his darkness, Job says the righteous man keeps going. He holds on to his way, and grows stronger. Job may be speaking of himself here. He will not let go. He will keep walking with God. Suffering can make the righteous stronger, not weaker. Isaiah 40:31 says those who wait for the LORD will renew their strength.

"But all of them, you may return, and come, please, and I will not find among you a wise man." Job invites his friends to try again, but he says they will not find a wise man among them. They have spoken much and understood little.

17:11-12 *My days have passed; my plans have been torn apart, the desires of my heart. Night into day they make; light **is** near before darkness.*

"My days have passed; my plans have been torn apart, the desires of my heart." Job had hopes and plans for his life, his family and his future. They have all been ripped apart. Anyone who has lost a child, a spouse, a career or their health knows what it feels like to have the plans of the heart torn up.

"Night into day they make; light is near before darkness." His friends try to tell him that the darkness is really light, that if he repents, the dawn will come soon (11:17). But Job sees only night. They are making night into day with their words, but it is still night for him.

17:13-16 *If I hope for Sheol **as** my home, in the darkness I have spread out my bed, to the pit I have called out, 'You **are** my father'; 'My mother and my sister' to the maggot, and where then **is** my hope? And my hope, who will observe it? To the bars of Sheol will they go down? Or together on the dust will we descend?"*

"If I hope for Sheol as my home, in the darkness I have spread out my bed." If all Job can hope for is the grave, then he has already made his bed in the dark.

Job has called out to the pit, "You are my father," and to the maggot, "My mother and my sister." This is a grim picture. Job has lost his family, and now he speaks of the grave and the worms as his new family. Death has become closer to him than any living relative.

"And where then is my hope? And my hope, who will observe it?" Job asks his friends: You keep telling me to hope. Where is it? Can anyone see it? "To the bars of Sheol will they go down? Or together on the dust will we descend?" Will his hope go down with him into the grave and be locked behind its bars? Will they lie together in the dust?

This is a hard place to end a chapter, and Job is not finished. In just two chapters he will say, "I know that my Redeemer lives" (19:25). Hope does not travel in a straight line. Sometimes it seems to die, and then God raises it up again.

If you are in a place like Job's right now, where hope seems to be going down into the dust, please know that God has not left you. Paul says "the hope does not put us to shame, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit" (Romans 5:5). The hope we have in Christ is not something we hold up on our own. It is an anchor, sure and firm, that holds us (Hebrews 6:19). Please do not carry this alone. Talk to someone today: a pastor, a doctor, or a crisis line.

Chapter 17 Summary

Job ended his reply to Eliphaz in deep darkness. His spirit was broken, his days were almost gone, and the grave was ready for him, while mockers surrounded him. He asked God Himself to stand surety for him, since no one else would strike hands with him, a longing fulfilled in Jesus, the guarantee of a better covenant (Hebrews 7:22). He said God had made him a byword and a man people spit at, and his body had wasted to a shadow. Yet he said the righteous would hold to their way and grow stronger. He told his friends he could not find a wise man among them, and said they were calling night day. He ended by asking where his hope was, and whether it would go down with him to the bars of Sheol. In chapter 19 his hope would rise again.

Chapter 17 Study Questions

1. How did Job describe his spirit and his days in verse 1?

2. What did Job ask God to do for him in verse 3? What does it mean to be surety for someone?

3. How does Hebrews 7:22 show Jesus as the answer to Job's request?

4. What had Job become to the people around him? (17:6)

5. What did Job say about the righteous in verse 9, even in his darkness?

6. What did Job say his friends were doing with night and day? (17:12)

7. What did Job call the pit and the maggot, and why is that so sad? (17:14)

8. Hope does not always travel in a straight line. How does the difference between chapter 17 and chapter 19 encourage you?

9. Job said "my plans have been torn apart" (17:11). Have you ever had your plans torn apart? How did God meet you, or how do you hope He will?

10. Romans 5:5 and Hebrews 6:19 speak of a hope that does not put us to shame and holds like an anchor. How is that hope different from wishful thinking?

Chapter 18: Bildad's Second Speech

Scripture

18:1-21 And Bildad the Shuhite answered and said, "Until when will you set snares for words? Consider, and afterward we will speak. Why are we regarded like the cattle, considered stupid in your eyes? One tearing his soul in his anger, for your sake shall the earth be forsaken, and shall a rock move from its place? Also the light of the wicked will be extinguished, and the flame of his fire will not shine. The light has grown dark in his tent, and his lamp above him will be extinguished. The steps of his vigor will be restricted, and his own counsel will throw him down. For he has been sent into a net by his feet, and on a network he walks about. A trap will take hold on ***his*** heel; a snare will take hold on him. His rope ***is*** hidden in the ground, and his trap on ***the*** path. All around, terrors have terrified him, and they have scattered him at his feet. Let his vigor be hungry, and disaster ***is*** prepared for his stumbling. It will consume the parts of his skin; the firstborn of death will consume his parts. He will be torn away from his tent, his trust, and it will make him march to the king of terrors. It will dwell in his tent, from ***what is*** not his; sulfur will be scattered over his estate. From beneath his roots will dry up, and from above his branches will wither. His memory has perished from the earth, and ***there is*** no name for him on the face of ***the*** street. They will thrust him from light into darkness, and from the world they will chase him away. No offspring ***is*** his, and no progeny among his people, and ***there is*** no survivor in his sojourning places. At his day those behind are appalled, and those before have taken hold of shuddering. Surely these ***are*** the dwelling places of an unjust ***one***, and this ***is*** the place of ***one who*** has not known God."

Chapter 18 Preview

Bildad speaks a second time, and he is angrier than before. He is offended that Job treats the friends like stupid cattle. He asks whether Job expects the whole world to be rearranged for his sake. Then, without offering Job any hope this time, he gives a long and grim picture of what happens to the wicked man.

The light of the wicked goes out. His own plans trip him up, and he walks into net after net and trap after trap. Terrors chase him on every side. Disease eats his skin, and he is dragged away to "the king of terrors." Fire and sulfur fall on his home. His roots dry up, his name is forgotten, and he has no children or descendants left. Every detail points at Job: his disease, his lost home, his dead children. Bildad does not say Job's name, but he does not need to. This is a speech meant to wound.

Chapter 18 Study

18:1-4 *And Bildad the Shuhite answered and said, "Until when will you set snares for words? Consider, and afterward we will speak. Why are we regarded like the cattle, considered stupid in your eyes? One tearing his soul in his anger, for your sake shall the earth be forsaken, and shall a rock move from its place?*

"And Bildad the Shuhite answered and said." Bildad speaks for the second time. His first speech was in chapter 8.

"Until when will you set snares for words?" Bildad thinks Job is just hunting for words to win the argument. "Consider, and afterward we will speak." Think first, then we can talk. That is good advice in general (James 1:19), but Bildad does not follow it himself.

"Why are we regarded like the cattle, considered stupid in your eyes?" Job had said that even the animals could teach them (12:7) and that there was no wise man among them (17:10). Bildad is stung. His pride is hurt.

"One tearing his soul in his anger." Bildad says Job is tearing himself to pieces in his rage. Job had said God tore him in His anger (16:9). Bildad says: no, you are tearing yourself. "For your sake shall the earth be forsaken, and shall a rock move from its place?" Does Job think the whole order of the world should change just for him? Bildad means that the moral order, where the wicked always suffer, is as fixed as the rocks, and it will not be changed to make room for Job's claim of innocence.

Bildad is partly right. God's moral order is fixed, and Job could not change it. But Bildad's understanding of that order was too small. It had no room for the scene in heaven of chapters 1 and 2.

18:5-7 *Also the light of the wicked will be extinguished, and the flame of his fire will not shine. The light has grown dark in his tent, and his lamp above him will be extinguished. The steps of his vigor will be restricted, and his own counsel will throw him down.*

"Also the light of the wicked will be extinguished, and the flame of his fire will not shine." In the ancient world, a lamp burning in the home was a sign that a family was alive and well. When the lamp went out, the house was dark and empty. "The light has grown dark in his tent, and his lamp above him will be extinguished." Proverbs uses the same picture (Proverbs 13:9; 24:20).

Job's house had gone dark. His children were dead. Bildad is describing Job's home.

"The steps of his vigor will be restricted, and his own counsel will throw him down." The wicked man once walked with long, strong strides. Now his steps are cut short. His own schemes trip him up. Sin often works that way: the plans of the wicked bring about their own fall (Psalm 7:15-16).

18:8-10 *For he has been sent into a net by his feet, and on a network he walks about. A trap will take hold on **his** heel; a snare will take hold on him. His rope **is** hidden in the ground, and his trap on **the** path.*

Bildad piles up words for traps. "For he has been sent into a net by his feet, and on a network he walks about." He walks right into the net with his own feet. "A trap will take hold on his heel; a snare will take hold on him." "His rope is hidden in the ground, and his trap on the path."

Net, network, trap, snare, rope, trap. Six words, in three verses. Bildad is saying that the wicked man is surrounded by traps everywhere he steps. Sooner or later one will catch him.

There is truth in this picture. Sin is a trap, and those who walk in it are often caught by it. But Bildad uses it to say that Job, caught in his suffering, must have walked into it through his sin. Job had not. He was caught in something far beyond his own doing.

18:11-14 *All around, terrors have terrified him, and they have scattered him at his feet. Let his vigor be hungry, and disaster **is** prepared for his stumbling. It will consume the parts of his skin; the firstborn of death will consume his parts. He will be torn away from his tent, his trust, and it will make him march to the king of terrors.*

"All around, terrors have terrified him, and they have scattered him at his feet." Fear chases him wherever he goes. "Let his vigor be hungry, and disaster is prepared for his stumbling." His strength fails, and disaster waits for him to fall.

"It will consume the parts of his skin; the firstborn of death will consume his parts." "The firstborn of death" is a striking phrase. The firstborn son was the strongest and most important. Bildad means the worst and deadliest disease, death's strongest child. And it eats away the man's skin. Bildad is describing Job's sickness exactly (2:7; 7:5). This is cruel.

"He will be torn away from his tent, his trust, and it will make him march to the king of terrors." "The king of terrors" is death itself, pictured as a dark ruler. The wicked man is torn from his home and marched before death like a captive led before a cruel king.

For the believer, death is not a king of terrors. Christ has broken death's power. Hebrews 2:14-15 says that through His death, Jesus rendered powerless the one who holds the power of death, the devil, and set free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death.

18:15-17 *It will dwell in his tent, from **what is** not his; sulfur will be scattered over his estate. From beneath his roots will dry up, and from above his branches will wither. His memory has perished from the earth, and **there is** no name for him on the face of **the** street.*

"It will dwell in his tent, from what is not his; sulfur will be scattered over his estate." Strangers, or some terror, live in his tent now. Sulfur scattered on a place was a sign of total destruction, as with Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:24; Deuteronomy 29:23). Fire had fallen on Job's sheep from heaven (1:16).

"From beneath his roots will dry up, and from above his branches will wither." The wicked man is like a tree dead from root to branch. His roots are his family line before him, and his branches are his children after him.

"His memory has perished from the earth, and there is no name for him on the face of the street." In the ancient world, to be forgotten was one of the worst fates. No one would speak of him in the streets. His name would vanish.

How wrong Bildad was here. Job's name has not perished. Thousands of years later, believers all over the world still speak of "the endurance of Job" (James 5:11). God kept his name alive.

18:18-19 *They will thrust him from light into darkness, and from the world they will chase him away. No offspring **is** his, and no progeny among his people, and **there is** no survivor in his sojourning places.*

"They will thrust him from light into darkness, and from the world they will chase him away." He is driven out of life into the dark.

"No offspring is his, and no progeny among his people, and there is no survivor in his sojourning places." This is the cruelest line in Bildad's speech. The wicked man has no children, no descendants, no one left. Job's ten children were dead. Bildad had already said they died for their sin (8:4). Now he says that having no children left is the mark of the wicked man.

If you have lost a child, please do not hear Bildad's words as God's verdict on you. They are not. The LORD Himself said that the friends had not spoken what was right about Him (42:7). Job's children died in Satan's attack, permitted by God for a purpose that had nothing to do with their father's sin, and in the end God gave Job children again (42:13). If your grief is heavy, please do not carry it alone. Talk to someone: a pastor or a trusted friend.

18:20-21 *At his day those behind are appalled, and those before have taken hold of shuddering. Surely these **are** the dwelling places of an unjust **one**, and this **is** the place of **one who** has not known God."*

"At his day those behind are appalled, and those before have taken hold of shuddering." When his day of doom comes, people from west to east, or from later and earlier times, shudder at it. His fall is so terrible that everyone is horrified. Job had said upright people were appalled at what had happened to him (17:8). Bildad says they are appalled because it is the fate of the wicked.

"Surely these are the dwelling places of an unjust one, and this is the place of one who has not known God." Bildad's final line sums up his whole view: if this happens to you, you are unjust, and you do not know God.

That is the opposite of the truth about Job. God had said there was no one on earth like Job, a man who feared God (1:8). Job knew God better than Bildad did. Bildad's speech has some true warnings about the end of the wicked. God does judge sin, and sin does lead to darkness and death (Romans 6:23). But Bildad used those warnings to condemn an innocent man, and he left no

room at all for mercy or hope. A teaching about judgment that has no mercy in it does not reflect the God of the Bible.

Chapter 18 Summary

Bildad spoke a second time, angry that Job treated the friends as stupid and asking whether the world should be changed for Job's sake. He described the fate of the wicked man without offering any hope. His lamp goes out, his own plans trip him, and nets and traps catch him at every step. Terrors chase him, the firstborn of death eats his skin, and he is marched to the king of terrors. Sulfur falls on his home, his roots and branches wither, his name is forgotten, and he has no children left. Bildad ended by saying this is the place of one who has not known God. Every detail pointed at Job, and the speech was meant to wound. Bildad was right that God judges sin, but wrong about Job, and his picture of judgment had no mercy in it.

Chapter 18 Study Questions

1. Why was Bildad offended at the start of his speech? (18:2-3)

2. What did Bildad mean by asking whether the earth should be forsaken for Job's sake? (18:4)

3. What happens to the lamp of the wicked man? Why would this picture hurt Job? (18:5-6)

4. How many words for traps can you find in verses 8-10? What is Bildad's point?

5. What are "the firstborn of death" and "the king of terrors"? (18:13-14)

6. What did Bildad say would happen to the wicked man's name and his children? (18:17-19)

7. How was Bildad wrong about Job's name being forgotten? (James 5:11)

8. How does Hebrews 2:14-15 change the way a believer can face "the king of terrors"?

9. Bildad's speech had warnings but no mercy. Why is it dangerous to speak about God's judgment without His mercy?

10. Have words like Bildad's ever been said to you, or have you said them to someone? What would you want to say instead?

Chapter 19: I Know That My Redeemer Lives

Scripture

19:1-12 And Job answered and said, "Until when will you torment my soul and crush me with words? These ten times you have insulted me; you are not ashamed ***that*** you wrong me. And even ***if*** truly I have erred, my error lodges with me. If truly you will magnify yourselves against me, and argue against me my disgrace, know then that God has wronged me, and has closed His net around over me. Look, I cry out, 'Violence!' and I am not answered; I cry for help, and ***there is*** no justice. He has walled up my way, and I will not pass; and on my paths He sets darkness. He has stripped my glory from on me, and He has removed the crown of my head. He tears me down all around, and I am gone; and He has uprooted my hope like the tree. And He has kindled His anger against me, and He has counted me for Himself as His foes. Together His troops come, and they have built up their way against me, and they have encamped all around my tent.

19:13-29 My brothers He has put far from me, and those who know me surely have become strangers to me. My near ***ones*** have ceased, and my familiar ***ones*** have forgotten me. The sojourners of my house and my female servants count me as a stranger; a foreigner I have become in their eyes. I call to my servant, and he does not answer; with my mouth I implore him. My breath is loathsome to my wife, and I am repulsive to the sons of my womb. Even young boys reject me; I rise, and they speak against me. All the men of my council abhor me, and ***those*** whom I love have turned against me. My bone clings to my skin and to my flesh, and I have escaped with the skin of my teeth. Show me favor, show me favor, you my friends, for the hand of God has touched me. Why do you pursue me like God, and are not satisfied from my flesh? Oh that my words would then be written! Oh that they would be inscribed in the scroll, with a stylus of iron and lead, forever in the rock they would be engraved! And I, I know ***that*** my Redeemer lives, and last He will stand on ***the*** dust. And after my skin has been struck off, this, and from my flesh I will see God, whom I, I will see for myself, and my eyes will see, and not a stranger. My kidneys have failed within my bosom. If you say, 'How will we pursue him?' and the root of the matter has been found in me, be afraid for yourselves before the sword, for wrath ***brings*** the punishments of the sword, so that you may know ***there is*** a judgment."

Chapter 19 Preview

Job answers Bildad's second speech, and this chapter holds the high point of his faith. He begins in pain. His friends have insulted him ten times. He says it is God who has wronged him, walled up his road, stripped away his honor and treated him as an enemy. Then he describes how completely alone he is. His brothers, his relatives, his friends, his servants, even his wife and the young children in the town have turned away from him. He is nothing but skin and bones. "Show me favor, show me favor, you my friends," he pleads, "for the hand of God has touched me."

Then Job wishes his words could be carved in rock forever, and he speaks the words that have been carved on the hearts of believers ever since: "I know that my Redeemer lives, and last He will stand on the dust." After his skin is destroyed, in his flesh he will see God, with his own eyes. His

heart faints with longing for that day. From the lowest place in the book, Job rises to the clearest hope of resurrection in the Old Testament up to that time.

Chapter 19 Study

19:1-3 *And Job answered and said, "Until when will you torment my soul and crush me with words? These ten times you have insulted me; you are not ashamed **that** you wrong me.*

"And Job answered and said." Job now answers Bildad's second speech in chapter 18.

"Until when will you torment my soul and crush me with words?" Bildad had begun with "Until when" (18:2). Job throws the words back. How long will you keep torturing me? Words can crush a person as surely as blows. Proverbs says that death and life are in the power of the tongue (Proverbs 18:21).

"These ten times you have insulted me." "Ten times" is a way of saying again and again. "You are not ashamed that you wrong me." They should be ashamed of how they have treated him, and they are not.

19:4-6 *And even **if** truly I have erred, my error lodges with me. If truly you will magnify yourselves against me, and argue against me my disgrace, know then that God has wronged me, and has closed His net around over me.*

"And even if truly I have erred, my error lodges with me." Job says: even if I had done something wrong, it would be my business and God's, not yours. My error would stay with me. It would not hurt you. This is not Job saying he has sinned. It is Job saying they have no right to make themselves his judges.

"If truly you will magnify yourselves against me, and argue against me my disgrace." If the friends insist on standing over him and using his shame as proof against him, then they need to know something.

"Know then that God has wronged me, and has closed His net around over me." Bildad had described the wicked man walking into nets and traps (18:8-10). Job says: No, I did not walk into a net. God threw His net over me. Job says God has "wronged" him. This is one of the places where Job's words go too far. God had not wronged him. But Job is right about one thing that Bildad would not accept: this was not something Job brought on himself. It came from beyond him.

19:7-9 *Look, I cry out, 'Violence!' and I am not answered; I cry for help, and **there is** no justice. He has walled up my way, and I will not pass; and on my paths He sets darkness. He has stripped my glory from on me, and He has removed the crown of my head.*

"Look, I cry out, 'Violence!' and I am not answered." Job feels like a man being robbed in the street, shouting for help, and no one comes. "I cry for help, and there is no justice." He has appealed to God's court, and the court is silent.

"He has walled up my way, and I will not pass; and on my paths He sets darkness." Job feels like a traveler whose road has been blocked by a wall, with no way around, and darkness on every path.

"He has stripped my glory from on me, and He has removed the crown of my head." Job's glory was his honor and standing in the community. He had been like a king among his people (29:25). Now that crown is gone. He sits on the ash heap.

19:10-12 *He tears me down all around, and I am gone; and He has uprooted my hope like the tree. And He has kindled His anger against me, and He has counted me for Himself as His foes. Together His troops come, and they have built up their way against me, and they have encamped all around my tent.*

"He tears me down all around, and I am gone; and He has uprooted my hope like the tree." In chapter 14 Job said there is hope for a tree, since its stump can sprout again (14:7). Now he feels God has pulled up his hope by the roots. There is no stump left to sprout.

"And He has kindled His anger against me, and He has counted me for Himself as His foes." Job feels God sees him as an enemy (13:24). "Together His troops come, and they have built up their way against me, and they have encamped all around my tent." Job pictures himself as a small tent surrounded by an army laying siege. It seems absurd to Job: so much force aimed at one sick man in a tent.

19:13-16 *My brothers He has put far from me, and those who know me surely have become strangers to me. My near **ones** have ceased, and my familiar **ones** have forgotten me. The sojourners of my house and my female servants count me as a stranger; a foreigner I have become in their eyes. I call to my servant, and he does not answer; with my mouth I implore him.*

Now Job describes how alone he is. "My brothers He has put far from me, and those who know me surely have become strangers to me." His own brothers keep away. People who knew him act as if they never did. "My near ones have ceased, and my familiar ones have forgotten me." His close relatives and friends have dropped away.

"The sojourners of my house and my female servants count me as a stranger; a foreigner I have become in their eyes." Even the guests and servants in his household treat him like a stranger. "I call to my servant, and he does not answer; with my mouth I implore him." Job, the master, has to beg his own servant, and the servant ignores him.

This kind of loneliness is one of the hardest parts of suffering. People often pull away from those who are sick, grieving or disgraced. Sometimes they do not know what to say. Sometimes they are afraid. Sometimes, like Job's friends, they decide the person must deserve it. Jesus knew this too. In His hour of suffering, His disciples left Him and fled (Mark 14:50).

19:17-20 *My breath is loathsome to my wife, and I am repulsive to the sons of my womb. Even young boys reject me; I rise, and they speak against me. All the men of my council abhor me, and* ***those*** *whom I love have turned against me. My bone clings to my skin and to my flesh, and I have escaped with the skin of my teeth.*

"My breath is loathsome to my wife." His sickness had made his breath foul, and even his wife kept her distance. "And I am repulsive to the sons of my womb." This line is hard to understand, since Job's children had died. "The sons of my womb" may mean his brothers, sons of the same mother's womb, or the children of his household. Whatever the exact meaning, his closest family find him hard to be near.

"Even young boys reject me; I rise, and they speak against me." In that culture, the young always stood up to show respect to an elder like Job (29:8). Now even little boys mock him when he tries to stand.

"All the men of my council abhor me, and those whom I love have turned against me." His closest friends, the men he used to talk with in confidence, now hate him.

"My bone clings to my skin and to my flesh, and I have escaped with the skin of my teeth." Job is wasted to skin and bones. "The skin of my teeth" has become a saying in English, meaning to barely escape. Job means he has escaped with almost nothing. He is just barely alive.

19:21-22 *Show me favor, show me favor, you my friends, for the hand of God has touched me. Why do you pursue me like God, and are not satisfied from my flesh?*

"Show me favor, show me favor, you my friends, for the hand of God has touched me." This is a heartbreaking plea. Job has defended himself, argued and complained. Now he simply begs. Have pity on me. Be kind to me. He repeats it twice. He believes God's hand has struck him, and he asks his friends not to strike him too.

"Why do you pursue me like God, and are not satisfied from my flesh?" Job feels his friends are hunting him as relentlessly as God seems to be. "Not satisfied from my flesh" was a saying for slander, devouring a man with words. They could not get enough of attacking him.

This is what people in pain need from their friends: pity and kindness. Not a lecture, not a theory, not another accusation. Just mercy.

19:23-24 *Oh that my words would then be written! Oh that they would be inscribed in the scroll, with a stylus of iron and lead, forever in the rock they would be engraved!*

Now Job's tone changes. "Oh that my words would then be written! Oh that they would be inscribed in the scroll." Job wants his words recorded, so that after he dies, someone will know he was innocent.

And not only in a scroll, which could be lost. "With a stylus of iron and lead, forever in the rock they would be engraved!" Ancient kings carved their records into rock with iron chisels and filled the letters with lead so they would last. Job wants his testimony to last forever.

God granted Job's wish far beyond what he asked. His words were written, not in rock, but in the Word of God. Millions of people have read them for thousands of years. And the words he most wanted to last are the very next ones.

19:25 *And I, I know **that** my Redeemer lives, and last He will stand on **the** dust.*

"And I, I know that my Redeemer lives, and last He will stand on the dust."

Stop and feel the weight of this. Job has just said that his family has abandoned him, his friends torment him, his body is wasting away, and God seems to be his enemy. And then he says, "I know." Not "I hope" or "I guess." "I know." The Hebrew repeats the "I" for emphasis: "And I, I know." Whatever anyone else thinks, I know this.

What does Job know? "My Redeemer lives." The Hebrew word for Redeemer is go'el. In Israel's law, the go'el was the nearest male relative who had the duty to stand up for a family member in trouble. If a man became poor and sold his land, his go'el would buy it back (Leviticus 25:25). If a man was sold into slavery, his go'el would pay to set him free (Leviticus 25:47-49). If a man was murdered, his go'el would see that justice was done (Numbers 35:19, where the same word is used for the avenger of blood). If a man died without a son, his go'el might marry his widow to carry on his name, as Boaz did for Ruth (Ruth 3-4). The go'el was a family member who paid the price, set things right and defended his own.

Job has no one left. His family has turned away (19:13-19). But he says he has a Redeemer, a go'el, who is alive, who will take up his cause, defend his name and set everything right. Job's friends have condemned him, but his Redeemer will vindicate him.

Who is this Redeemer? In chapter 9 Job longed for an arbiter. In chapter 16 he said he had a witness in heaven. Here he goes further: his Redeemer lives, and will stand on the earth. Throughout the Old Testament, God Himself is called the Redeemer of His people: "your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel" (Isaiah 41:14), and "a Redeemer will come to Zion" (Isaiah 59:20). Job is speaking of God, the living God, as his near kinsman who will defend him. Some teachers think Job means a heavenly figure distinct from God, and others think he means only that God will clear his name in this life.

And yet a go'el had to be a relative, someone of the same flesh and blood. How could God be Job's kinsman? The New Testament gives the answer. God the Son became a man, sharing our flesh and blood (Hebrews 2:14), so that He could be our near Kinsman-Redeemer. He paid the price to set us free, "not with perishable things, silver or gold," but "with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:18-19). I believe this points to Jesus as the Redeemer Job longed for, the One who is both God and our Brother.

"Lives." Job says his Redeemer lives. He is not a dead hope, not a memory. Jesus said, "I was dead, and look, I am living to the ages of the ages" (Revelation 1:18). Our Redeemer is alive today.

"And last He will stand on the dust." "Last" can mean at the last, at the end. It can also be a title, the Last One, like God's words in Isaiah 44:6: "I am first and I am last." Either way, Job means that his Redeemer will have the final word. When everyone else has spoken, the Redeemer will stand

up last. "On the dust" means on the earth, and perhaps over the dust of Job's grave. He will stand on the earth to take up Job's case.

I believe this points to the day when Christ will stand on the earth. He came the first time and stood on this earth as a man. He will come again, and His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4; Acts 1:11). The Redeemer who lives will have the last word over death and the grave.

19:26-27 *And after my skin has been struck off, this, and from my flesh I will see God, whom I, I will see for myself, and my eyes will see, and not a stranger. My kidneys have failed within my bosom.*

"And after my skin has been struck off, this, and from my flesh I will see God." Job expects to die. His skin is already being destroyed by disease. After it is gone, after death has done its work, Job says, "from my flesh I will see God." He will see God, not as a spirit only, but in his flesh.

"Whom I, I will see for myself, and my eyes will see, and not a stranger." Again the doubled "I." Job himself will see God, with his own eyes, not someone else's. "Not a stranger" may mean that Job himself, and not another person, will be the one who sees, or it may mean that God will no longer seem a stranger or an enemy to him, but his friend. Both are true. The God who seemed so far away will be seen face to face, as Job's own Redeemer.

How can Job see God with his own eyes, in his flesh, after his skin has been destroyed? Many teachers answer: resurrection. Job's body will die, and God will raise it. Bible teachers read this verse in a few ways. Many believe Job is speaking of the resurrection of the body, and I believe this points to that hope. Some think Job means he will see God apart from his body, after death. Others think he means he will see God vindicate him in this life, before he dies, with his body already wasted. The Hebrew of verse 26 is hard, and good teachers differ. But "my eyes will see" fits a bodily seeing best.

The New Testament makes this hope clear. Jesus rose with a real body of flesh and bones (Luke 24:39). Because He rose, His people will rise. Paul says the body "is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption" (1 Corinthians 15:42). John says, "we know that when He is revealed, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is" (1 John 3:2). Job, who lived long before Christ, looked ahead by faith and saw that day from afar (Hebrews 11:13). In a smaller way, Job did "see" God before he died, when God spoke to him out of the storm: "now my eye has seen You" (42:5). But the full sight is still ahead, for him and for all who trust the Redeemer.

"My kidneys have failed within my bosom." In Hebrew thinking, the kidneys were the seat of the deepest feelings. Job means: my heart faints with longing for that day. He wants it so badly that he feels weak. That is the longing of every believer who has buried a loved one in Christ and waits for the resurrection.

If you are grieving, hold on to Job's words. Your Redeemer lives. He will stand on the earth. And those who belong to Him will see God with their own eyes, in bodies raised and made new.

19:28-29 *If you say, 'How will we pursue him?' and the root of the matter has been found in me, be afraid for yourselves before the sword, for wrath **brings** the punishments of the sword, so that you may know **there is** a judgment."*

Job ends with a warning to his friends. "If you say, 'How will we pursue him?' and the root of the matter has been found in me." The friends kept looking for the root of Job's trouble in Job himself, some hidden sin.

"Be afraid for yourselves before the sword, for wrath brings the punishments of the sword, so that you may know there is a judgment." Job turns the tables. They talk about judgment coming to the wicked. Job tells them they should fear judgment themselves, for the way they have falsely accused him. "There is a judgment," Job says. God will judge rightly in the end.

Job was right. In 42:7-8 God's anger burned against the three friends, and only Job's prayer for them spared them. The man they accused became the man who prayed for them. Job's hope in his Redeemer was not only comfort for himself. It was also a solemn reminder that God sees all, and will one day set every wrong right (Acts 17:31).

Chapter 19 Summary

Job answered Bildad by asking how long his friends would crush him with words, having insulted him ten times. He said that God, not his own sin, had thrown a net over him, walled up his road, stripped his honor and treated him as an enemy, going too far in saying God had wronged him. He described how his brothers, relatives, friends, servants, wife, and even young boys had turned from him, and how he had escaped with only the skin of his teeth. He begged his friends to have pity. Then he wished his words could be carved in rock forever, and declared, "I know that my Redeemer lives, and last He will stand on the dust." His Redeemer, his go'el, was the living God who would defend him. After his skin was destroyed, in his flesh he would see God with his own eyes, and his heart fainted with longing. This hope of resurrection is fulfilled in Jesus Christ, our living Kinsman-Redeemer. Job ended by warning his friends that there is a judgment.

Chapter 19 Study Questions

1. How many times did Job say his friends had insulted him, and what did he ask them? (19:2-3)

2. What did Job say God had done to him in verses 6-12?

3. List the people who turned away from Job in verses 13-19.

4. What did Job beg his friends for in verse 21?

5. Why did Job want his words carved in rock? (19:23-24)

6. What was a go'el, or redeemer, in Israel? (Leviticus 25:25; Ruth 4:14)

7. What did Job say he knew about his Redeemer? (19:25)

8. What did Job say he would see, and how? (19:26-27) How do Luke 24:39 and 1 John 3:2 help us understand this hope?

9. Job said "I know" at the lowest point of his life. What do you know about Jesus that holds you when everything else is shaking?

10. Who do you know who is grieving the death of a believer? How could Job's words in 19:25-27 encourage them, and how could you share them gently?

Chapter 20: Zophar's Second Speech

Scripture

20:1-11 And Zophar the Naamathite answered and said, "Therefore my disquieting thoughts make me respond, and because of my agitation within me. I hear the correction of my insult, and a spirit from my understanding answers me. Do you know this from of old, since mankind was set on ***the*** earth, that the shout of joy of the wicked ***is*** short, and the gladness of the godless ***is*** for a moment? Though his loftiness goes up to the heavens, and his head reaches to the cloud, like his own dung he will perish forever; those who saw him will say, 'Where ***is*** he?' Like a dream he will fly away, and they will not find him; and he will be chased away like a vision of the night. The eye caught sight of him, and it will not ***do so*** again, and his place will no longer see him. His sons will seek the favor of the poor, and his own hands will give back his wealth. His bones were full of his youthful vigor, and it will lie down with him on the dust.

20:12-29 Though evil is sweet in his mouth, ***and*** he hides it under his tongue, ***and*** he spares it and does not let it go, and holds it back in the midst of his palate, his food in his inward parts is changed; ***it is*** the venom of cobras within him. He has swallowed wealth, and he vomits it up; God drives it out from his belly. He will suck the poison of cobras; the tongue of a viper will kill him. Let him not look on streams, rivers, torrents of honey and curds. He gives back ***his*** gain, and he will not swallow ***it***; according to the wealth of his trading, and he will not rejoice. For he has crushed ***and*** neglected the poor; he has seized a house, and he will not build it. For he has not known quiet in his belly; with his desired ***things*** he will not deliver ***himself***. ***There is*** no survivor of his devouring; therefore his prosperity will not endure. In the fullness of his sufficiency it will be distress to him; every hand of a sufferer will come on him. Let it be, to fill his belly, He will send on him the burning of His anger, and He will rain ***it*** on him in his bowels. He will flee from a weapon of iron; a bow of bronze will pass through him. He draws ***it*** out, and it comes out from ***his*** back, and lightning from his gallbladder; terrors come on him. All darkness ***is*** hidden for his treasured ***things***; a fire ***that*** has not been fanned will consume him; it will be evil ***for*** a survivor in his tent. The heavens will reveal his iniquity, and ***the*** earth will rise up against him. The produce of his house will depart, flowing away in the day of His anger. This ***is*** the portion of a wicked man from God, and the inheritance of his decree from God."

Chapter 20 Preview

Zophar speaks for the second and last time. Job has just said, "I know that my Redeemer lives," (19:25) and warned his friends of judgment. Zophar does not respond to Job's great statement of faith at all. He is upset and insulted, and he answers with one more picture of the fate of the wicked man.

The joy of the wicked is short. He may rise to the heavens, but he will perish like his own dung and fly away like a dream. He enjoys evil like a sweet morsel under his tongue, but it turns to poison in his stomach. He swallows wealth, and God makes him vomit it up. He crushed the poor and seized houses, so God will rain His anger on him, iron and bronze weapons will pierce him, darkness and fire will consume his treasures, and heaven and earth will rise against him. Zophar's words about

God's justice against greed and oppression are strong and in many ways true. But he is still aiming them at Job, and Job was not that man.

Chapter 20 Study

20:1-3 *And Zophar the Naamathite answered and said, "Therefore my disquieting thoughts make me respond, and because of my agitation within me. I hear the correction of my insult, and a spirit from my understanding answers me.*

"And Zophar the Naamathite answered and said." This is Zophar's second speech. It is also his last. In the third round, he will not speak at all.

"Therefore my disquieting thoughts make me respond, and because of my agitation within me." Zophar is upset. Job's words have stirred him up inside, and he cannot keep quiet.

"I hear the correction of my insult." Zophar feels insulted by Job's warning that the friends should fear judgment (19:29). "And a spirit from my understanding answers me." He feels his own understanding moving him to reply.

Notice what Zophar does not say. Job has just made one of the greatest statements of faith in the Old Testament: "I know that my Redeemer lives" (19:25). Zophar does not even mention it. He is so focused on defending himself and his theory that he misses the heart of what Job said. It is possible to be so busy arguing that we never hear the faith in another person's words.

20:4-7 *Do you know this from of old, since mankind was set on **the** earth, that the shout of joy of the wicked **is** short, and the gladness of the godless **is** for a moment? Though his loftiness goes up to the heavens, and his head reaches to the cloud, like his own dung he will perish forever; those who saw him will say, 'Where **is** he?'*

"Do you know this from of old, since mankind was set on the earth." Zophar appeals to what has always been true, ever since Adam. "That the shout of joy of the wicked is short, and the gladness of the godless is for a moment."

This is true. The pleasure sin gives is short. Moses chose to suffer with God's people rather than enjoy "the temporary enjoyment of sin" (Hebrews 11:25). Psalm 37 and Psalm 73 both teach that the wicked may prosper for a while, but their end comes quickly.

"Though his loftiness goes up to the heavens, and his head reaches to the cloud," like the builders of Babel (Genesis 11:4), "like his own dung he will perish forever." That is a crude picture, and Zophar means it to be. The proud man who reached for the sky will end up like waste thrown on the dung heap. "Those who saw him will say, 'Where is he?'" He will be gone.

Job was sitting on the ash heap, where the town's waste was burned. Zophar's picture of the proud man ending like dung was not chosen by accident.

20:8-11 *Like a dream he will fly away, and they will not find him; and he will be chased away like a vision of the night. The eye caught sight of him, and it will not* ***do so*** *again, and his place will no longer see him. His sons will seek the favor of the poor, and his own hands will give back his wealth. His bones were full of his youthful vigor, and it will lie down with him on the dust.*

"Like a dream he will fly away, and they will not find him; and he will be chased away like a vision of the night." A dream seems real while it lasts, but in the morning it is gone. The wicked man's success is like that.

"The eye caught sight of him, and it will not do so again, and his place will no longer see him." Job had said almost the same words about himself (7:8, 10). Zophar takes Job's own description of his frail life and turns it into a description of the wicked.

"His sons will seek the favor of the poor, and his own hands will give back his wealth." The children of the wicked man will have to beg from the very poor people he oppressed. He will have to give back what he stole. "His bones were full of his youthful vigor, and it will lie down with him on the dust." He will die while still strong. His young strength will go into the grave with him.

20:12-14 *Though evil is sweet in his mouth,* ***and*** *he hides it under his tongue,* ***and*** *he spares it and does not let it go, and holds it back in the midst of his palate, his food in his inward parts is changed;* ***it is*** *the venom of cobras within him.*

Now Zophar uses a picture from eating. "Though evil is sweet in his mouth, and he hides it under his tongue." The wicked man enjoys his sin like a piece of candy. He keeps it in his mouth, rolling it around, savoring it. "And he spares it and does not let it go, and holds it back in the midst of his palate." He does not want to let it go.

"His food in his inward parts is changed; it is the venom of cobras within him." But when he swallows it, it turns to poison in his stomach.

This is one of the truest pictures of sin in the Bible. Sin is sweet at first. That is why it tempts us. But it turns bitter and deadly inside us. James says that when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death (James 1:15). Proverbs says that bread gained by deceit is sweet, but afterward the mouth will be filled with gravel (Proverbs 20:17). Zophar's picture is a good warning for all of us. It just did not fit Job.

20:15-17 *He has swallowed wealth, and he vomits it up; God drives it out from his belly. He will suck the poison of cobras; the tongue of a viper will kill him. Let him not look on streams, rivers, torrents of honey and curds.*

"He has swallowed wealth, and he vomits it up; God drives it out from his belly." The greedy man gulps down riches he got by wrong, but God makes him throw it all up. Ill-gotten gain does not stay down.

"He will suck the poison of cobras; the tongue of a viper will kill him." The sweet thing he sucked on turns out to be snake venom, and it kills him.

"Let him not look on streams, rivers, torrents of honey and curds." Honey and curds (or milk) were signs of rich blessing. The promised land was "a land flowing with milk and honey" (Exodus 3:8). The wicked man will never enjoy that kind of plenty. He will lose it all.

20:18-21 *He gives back **his** gain, and he will not swallow **it**; according to the wealth of his trading, and he will not rejoice. For he has crushed **and** neglected the poor; he has seized a house, and he will not build it. For he has not known quiet in his belly; with his desired **things** he will not deliver **himself**. **There is** no survivor of his devouring; therefore his prosperity will not endure.*

"He gives back his gain, and he will not swallow it; according to the wealth of his trading, and he will not rejoice." He has to return what he took. He will not get to enjoy the profits of his dishonest dealings.

Why? "For he has crushed and neglected the poor; he has seized a house, and he will not build it." This is the sin Zophar is charging. The wicked man oppressed the poor and seized their homes. God cares deeply about this sin. The prophets thunder against those who add house to house and field to field by taking from the poor (Isaiah 5:8; Micah 2:2). James warns the rich who cheat their workers (James 5:1-6).

"For he has not known quiet in his belly; with his desired things he will not deliver himself." His greed was never satisfied. And all the things he craved cannot save him. "There is no survivor of his devouring; therefore his prosperity will not endure." He devoured everything, and so in the end nothing will be left for him.

Zophar's words are strong and right about greed and oppression. But was Job this kind of man? No. Job will later describe how he rescued the poor, helped the fatherless, was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame (29:12-16). Eliphaz will soon accuse Job outright of these very sins (22:6-9), and Job will deny them under oath (31:13-22). God's verdict was that Job was blameless (1:8).

20:22-25 *In the fullness of his sufficiency it will be distress to him; every hand of a sufferer will come on him. Let it be, to fill his belly, He will send on him the burning of His anger, and He will rain **it** on him in his bowels. He will flee from a weapon of iron; a bow of bronze will pass through him. He draws **it** out, and it comes out from **his** back, and lightning from his gallbladder; terrors come on him.*

"In the fullness of his sufficiency it will be distress to him." Just when the wicked man has everything, trouble comes. "Every hand of a sufferer will come on him." All the people he made suffer will turn against him.

"Let it be, to fill his belly, He will send on him the burning of His anger, and He will rain it on him in his bowels." The wicked man wanted to fill his belly with wealth. God will fill it with His burning anger instead. "Rain" may remind us of the fire that fell on Sodom (Genesis 19:24), and of the fire that fell on Job's flocks (1:16).

"He will flee from a weapon of iron; a bow of bronze will pass through him." He escapes one weapon only to be pierced by another. "He draws it out, and it comes out from his back, and lightning from his gallbladder; terrors come on him." The arrow goes right through him, and the

shining arrowhead comes out from his back. It is a violent picture of judgment that cannot be escaped.

20:26-29 *All darkness **is** hidden for his treasured **things**; a fire **that** has not been fanned will consume him; it will be evil **for** a survivor in his tent. The heavens will reveal his iniquity, and **the** earth will rise up against him. The produce of his house will depart, flowing away in the day of His anger. This **is** the portion of a wicked man from God, and the inheritance of his decree from God."*

"All darkness is hidden for his treasured things." Darkness is stored up for everything he treasured. "A fire that has not been fanned will consume him." That is, a fire no human lit, a fire from God. "It will be evil for a survivor in his tent."

"The heavens will reveal his iniquity, and the earth will rise up against him." Job had called on the earth not to cover his blood, and said his witness was in heaven (16:18-19). Zophar turns it around. Heaven and earth will not testify for the wicked man. They will testify against him.

"The produce of his house will depart, flowing away in the day of His anger. This is the portion of a wicked man from God, and the inheritance of his decree from God." Zophar ends by saying this is what God has assigned to the wicked.

There will be a day of God's anger, and the wicked will face it (Romans 2:5). Zophar is not wrong about that. But Zophar has said his last word, and it is a word of judgment, with no mercy, no hope and no recognition of Job's faith. He leaves the conversation having never once heard what Job was really saying. The tragedy of Zophar is a warning to us: we can know true things about God's judgment and still fail completely to love the person in front of us.

Chapter 20 Summary

Zophar spoke for the second and last time, upset and insulted by Job's warning. He ignored Job's great confession that his Redeemer lives and instead described the fate of the wicked once more. The joy of the wicked is short. Though he rises to the heavens, he perishes like dung and flies away like a dream. He savors evil like something sweet under his tongue, but it turns to cobra venom inside him. He swallows wealth, and God makes him vomit it up, because he crushed the poor and seized their houses. God's anger rains on him, weapons pierce him, unfanned fire consumes him, and heaven and earth rise against him. Zophar's words about sin's bitter end and God's judgment on greed are strong and largely true, but they did not describe Job, and Zophar left without ever hearing Job's faith.

Chapter 20 Study Questions

1. Why did Zophar say he had to speak? (20:2-3)

2. What great statement of Job's did Zophar ignore? (19:25)

3. What does Zophar say about the joy of the wicked? (20:5)

4. What pictures does Zophar use for how quickly the wicked disappear? (20:7-9)

5. Describe Zophar's picture of evil as something sweet in the mouth. What happens to it? (20:12-14)

6. What sins does Zophar say the wicked man committed? (20:19-20)

7. How does Job's description of himself in 29:12-16 answer Zophar's charge?

8. Zophar never responded to Job's faith. How can we make sure we really hear what a suffering person is saying?

9. Zophar's picture of sin as sweet at first and poison later is true. Is there a sin in your life that seems sweet but you know will turn bitter? What do you need to do about it?

10. God cares deeply about how the poor are treated. What is one way you could show care for the poor or the powerless this month?

Chapter 21: Job Answers: The Wicked Often Prosper

Scripture

21:1-16 And Job answered and said, "Listen, listen to my speech, and let this be your consolations. Bear with me, and I, I will speak, and after I have spoken, you may mock. As for me, ***is*** my complaint to man? And if ***so***, why should my spirit not be short? Turn to me and be appalled, and put ***your*** hand over ***your*** mouth. And if I remember, and I am dismayed, and shuddering takes hold of my flesh. Why do the wicked live, grow old, also become mighty ***in*** strength? Their offspring ***is*** established before them, with them, and their descendants before their eyes. Their houses ***are*** peace, without fear, and the rod of God ***is*** not on them. His bull breeds and does not fail; his cow calves and does not miscarry. They send forth their young boys like the flock, and their children leap about. They lift ***their voices*** with tambourine and lyre, and rejoice at the sound of a flute. They complete their days in the good, and in a moment they go down ***to*** Sheol. And they say to God, 'Depart from us, and the knowledge of Your ways we do not desire. What ***is*** the Almighty, that we should serve Him? And what will we gain if we entreat Him?' Look, their prosperity ***is*** not in their hand; the counsel of the wicked is far from me.

21:17-34 How often is the lamp of the wicked extinguished, and their calamity comes on them? ***How often*** does He apportion pains in His anger? ***How often*** are they like straw before a wind, and like chaff ***that*** a storm-wind has stolen away? God stores up his wickedness for his sons. Let Him repay to him, and he will know. Let his eyes see his ruin, and let him drink from the rage of the Almighty. For what ***is*** his pleasure in his household after him, and the number of his months has been cut off? Will ***anyone*** teach God knowledge? And He judges the exalted ***ones***. This ***one*** will die in his very completeness, all of him at ease and quiet. His pails are full ***of*** milk, and the marrow of his bones is watered. And this ***one*** will die with a bitter soul, and he has not eaten of the good. Together they will lie down on ***the*** dust, and the maggot will cover over them. Look, I know your thoughts, and the schemes ***by which*** you do violence against me. For you say, 'Where ***is*** the house of the noble ***man***? And where ***is*** the tent of the dwelling places of the wicked?' Have you not asked those who pass by the road? And their signs do you not recognize, that the evil ***man*** is spared for a day of calamity? For a day of furies they are brought forth. Who will declare his way to his face? And what he has done, who will repay to him? And he, to the graves he will be borne, and over ***the*** tomb he will keep watch. The clods of the valley will be sweet to him, and after him every man will draw along, and before him ***there is*** no number. And how will you comfort me ***with*** vanity? And ***in*** your answers unfaithfulness remains."

Chapter 21 Preview

Job answers Zophar and closes the second round of speeches. For two rounds his friends have said the same thing: the wicked always come to a quick and terrible end. In this chapter Job takes their claim head on. Just look around, he says. Why do the wicked live on, grow old and become powerful? Their children grow up around them, their homes are safe, their cattle breed, their children dance, and they die in peace. They even tell God to leave them alone, and nothing happens to them.

Job admits that this troubles him deeply. He asks how often the lamp of the wicked really goes out. He points out that one man dies at ease and full of strength, and another dies bitter and poor, and both lie down in the dust together. Ask any traveler, Job says, and he will tell you that the wicked are often spared, and buried with honor. So the friends' comfort is empty, and their answers are false. Job is right about what he sees. What he does not yet see clearly is the final judgment that sets every account straight.

Chapter 21 Study

21:1-3 *And Job answered and said, "Listen, listen to my speech, and let this be your consolations. Bear with me, and I, I will speak, and after I have spoken, you may mock.*

"And Job answered and said." Job now answers Zophar's second speech. This is the last speech of the second round.

"Listen, listen to my speech, and let this be your consolations." Eliphaz had asked if the "consolations of God" were too little for Job (15:11). Job turns it around. If you want to comfort me, the best thing you can do is listen. Really listen. That would be more comfort than all your speeches.

"Bear with me, and I, I will speak, and after I have spoken, you may mock." Job asks for patience. Let me finish, he says, and then go ahead and mock me if you want. There is a bit of bitter humor in that last line.

21:4-6 *As for me, **is** my complaint to man? And if **so**, why should my spirit not be short? Turn to me and be appalled, and put **your** hand over **your** mouth. And if I remember, and I am dismayed, and shuddering takes hold of my flesh.*

"As for me, is my complaint to man?" Job is not complaining to his friends. His complaint is with God. "And if so, why should my spirit not be short?" If he has a case with God that God is not answering, is it any wonder he is impatient?

"Turn to me and be appalled, and put your hand over your mouth." Look at me, Job says. Look at what has happened to me, and be stunned into silence. Putting the hand over the mouth was a sign of shock or awe. In the end Job himself will put his hand over his mouth before God (40:4).

"And if I remember, and I am dismayed, and shuddering takes hold of my flesh." When Job thinks about what he is about to say, he shudders. It disturbs him deeply that the world does not work the way his friends say it does.

21:7-9 *Why do the wicked live, grow old, also become mighty **in** strength? Their offspring **is** established before them, with them, and their descendants before their eyes. Their houses **are** peace, without fear, and the rod of God **is** not on them.*

Here is Job's great question: "Why do the wicked live, grow old, also become mighty in strength?" Zophar had said the joy of the wicked is short (20:5). Job says: that is not what I see. I see wicked men who live long lives and grow in power.

This is not a question only Job asked. Jeremiah asked, "Why does the way of the wicked prosper?" (Jeremiah 12:1). Asaph said, "I was jealous of the boasters, as I saw the peace of the wicked" (Psalm 73:3). God's people have always struggled with this.

"Their offspring is established before them, with them, and their descendants before their eyes." Bildad had said the wicked have no children left (18:19). Job says many of them have their children and grandchildren all around them. You can almost hear the pain in this line from a man whose own children were dead.

"Their houses are peace, without fear, and the rod of God is not on them." Eliphaz said the wicked live in constant fear (15:21). Job says many of them live in peace, and God's rod of punishment never seems to touch them.

21:10-13 *His bull breeds and does not fail; his cow calves and does not miscarry. They send forth their young boys like the flock, and their children leap about. They lift **their voices** with tambourine and lyre, and rejoice at the sound of a flute. They complete their days in the good, and in a moment they go down **to** Sheol.*

Job paints a picture of a wicked man's prosperous life. "His bull breeds and does not fail; his cow calves and does not miscarry." His herds grow and grow. Job's own herds had been stolen and killed.

"They send forth their young boys like the flock, and their children leap about." Their children are as many as a flock of lambs, and they dance and play. "They lift their voices with tambourine and lyre, and rejoice at the sound of a flute." Their homes are full of music and celebration.

"They complete their days in the good, and in a moment they go down to Sheol." They spend their lives in good things, and then die quickly and peacefully, without a long, painful illness. Job, by contrast, was dying slowly in agony.

Job is not exaggerating. Anyone who has lived long enough has seen people who mocked God and seemed to have an easy life and a peaceful death. Job is honest about it. His friends were not.

21:14-16 *And they say to God, 'Depart from us, and the knowledge of Your ways we do not desire. What **is** the Almighty, that we should serve Him? And what will we gain if we entreat Him?' Look, their prosperity **is** not in their hand; the counsel of the wicked is far from me.*

"And they say to God," and their words are, "Depart from us, and the knowledge of Your ways we do not desire." This is what makes it so hard to understand. These men do not just happen to prosper while being wicked. They openly reject God. "What is the Almighty, that we should serve Him? And what will we gain if we entreat Him?" They see no profit in prayer or in serving God.

Notice what they are saying. They will not serve God because there is nothing in it for them. That is Satan's charge in reverse. Satan said Job served God only for what he got (1:9). These wicked men refuse to serve God because they think they get nothing. Both views think of God only in terms of profit. Job is the one who served God when there was nothing in it for him.

"Look, their prosperity is not in their hand; the counsel of the wicked is far from me." Job adds two things. First, the wicked do not control their own good fortune. It is in God's hand, not theirs. Second, Job wants nothing to do with their way of thinking. Even though they prosper, he will not join them. Job's faith is not for sale. Eliphaz will repeat these exact words, "the counsel of the wicked is far from me," in his next speech (22:18).

21:17-18 *How often is the lamp of the wicked extinguished, and their calamity comes on them? **How often** does He apportion pains in His anger? **How often** are they like straw before a wind, and like chaff **that** a storm-wind has stolen away?*

"How often is the lamp of the wicked extinguished, and their calamity comes on them?" Bildad had said the lamp of the wicked goes out (18:5-6). Job asks: really? How often? "How often does He apportion pains in His anger?"

"How often are they like straw before a wind, and like chaff that a storm-wind has stolen away?" Psalm 1:4 says the wicked are like chaff that the wind drives away. Job believes that is true in the end. But he asks how often we actually see it happen in this life. Not as often as his friends claim.

21:19-21 *God stores up his wickedness for his sons. Let Him repay to him, and he will know. Let his eyes see his ruin, and let him drink from the rage of the Almighty. For what **is** his pleasure in his household after him, and the number of his months has been cut off?*

Job now answers an argument the friends might make. "God stores up his wickedness for his sons." They might say: maybe the wicked man himself does not suffer, but God punishes his children. Eliphaz and Bildad had both hinted at that (5:4; 18:19).

Job says that is not enough. "Let Him repay to him, and he will know." The wicked man himself should feel it. "Let his eyes see his ruin, and let him drink from the rage of the Almighty." Why should only his children pay?

"For what is his pleasure in his household after him, and the number of his months has been cut off?" Once a wicked man is dead, what does he care what happens to his family? He is gone. Punishing his children does not touch him. Later, God's Law taught that each person dies for his own sin, and children are not put to death for their fathers' sins (Deuteronomy 24:16; Ezekiel 18:20).

21:22-26 *Will **anyone** teach God knowledge? And He judges the exalted **ones**. This **one** will die in his very completeness, all of him at ease and quiet. His pails are full **of** milk, and the marrow of his bones is watered. And this **one** will die with a bitter soul, and he has not eaten of the good. Together they will lie down on **the** dust, and the maggot will cover over them.*

"Will anyone teach God knowledge? And He judges the exalted ones." Job is saying: I am not trying to teach God how to run the world. He is the Judge even of the highest beings. But we should not pretend to understand His ways better than we do.

Then Job gives two examples. "This one will die in his very completeness, all of him at ease and quiet." One man dies in full strength and comfort. "His pails are full of milk, and the marrow of his bones is watered." He is well fed and healthy to the end.

"And this one will die with a bitter soul, and he has not eaten of the good." Another man dies bitter and poor, never having enjoyed good things.

"Together they will lie down on the dust, and the maggot will cover over them." In the end, both lie in the same dirt, and the worms cover them both. You cannot tell from how a man lived or died whether he was righteous or wicked. Ecclesiastes makes the same point (Ecclesiastes 9:2-3). The friends' rule, that you can read a man's goodness from his prosperity, simply does not hold.

21:27-30 *Look, I know your thoughts, and the schemes **by which** you do violence against me. For you say, 'Where **is** the house of the noble **man**? And where **is** the tent of the dwelling places of the wicked?' Have you not asked those who pass by the road? And their signs do you not recognize, that the evil **man** is spared for a day of calamity? For a day of furies they are brought forth.*

"Look, I know your thoughts, and the schemes by which you do violence against me." Job knows where his friends are going with all their talk about the wicked. They are aiming at him.

"For you say, 'Where is the house of the noble man? And where is the tent of the dwelling places of the wicked?'" The friends were asking: Where is the rich man's house now? It is gone. That proves he was wicked. They meant Job's house.

"Have you not asked those who pass by the road? And their signs do you not recognize." Job says: Ask any traveler. People who have seen the world know better. "That the evil man is spared for a day of calamity? For a day of furies they are brought forth." Travelers will tell you that the wicked are often spared when disaster strikes. The day of disaster comes, and they come through it.

Here Job's words may also hint at something deeper. "Spared for a day of calamity" can also be read to mean that the wicked are kept for a day of calamity still to come. Either way, Job's point is that the friends' theory does not fit what people actually see.

21:31-33 *Who will declare his way to his face? And what he has done, who will repay to him? And he, to the graves he will be borne, and over **the** tomb he will keep watch. The clods of the valley will be sweet to him, and after him every man will draw along, and before him **there is** no number.*

"Who will declare his way to his face? And what he has done, who will repay to him?" No one dares to confront the powerful wicked man about his sins, and no one pays him back.

"And he, to the graves he will be borne, and over the tomb he will keep watch." He is carried to his grave with honor, and a guard is set over his tomb, or his monument stands watch over it. "The clods of the valley will be sweet to him." Even the dirt of his grave rests lightly on him. "And after him every man will draw along, and before him there is no number." Crowds follow in his funeral procession, and countless people have gone the same way before him.

This is a hard truth. Many wicked people are buried with great honor, and their funerals are full of praise. If this life were all there is, it would seem that wickedness pays.

But this life is not all there is. Job does not yet see it clearly here, but the rest of Scripture shows that every account will be settled. "It is appointed to men to die once, and after this judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). Asaph struggled with the prosperity of the wicked "until I went into the sanctuaries of God; then I discerned their end" (Psalm 73:17). Jesus told of a rich man who lived in luxury and a poor man named Lazarus who lay at his gate. After death, Abraham told the rich man, "remember that you received your good things in your lifetime, and Lazarus likewise the bad things; but now he is comforted, and you are in anguish" (Luke 16:25). God's justice is sure. It is not always quick, and it is not always seen in this life. Peter says God's patience gives people time to repent (2 Peter 3:9).

21:34 *And how will you comfort me **with** vanity? And **in** your answers unfaithfulness remains."*

"And how will you comfort me with vanity?" Vanity means emptiness, breath, nothing. Job says their comfort is hollow. "And in your answers unfaithfulness remains." Their answers are not just wrong. They are unfaithful to the truth, and unfaithful to him as a friend.

Job is right. And this is the main lesson of the second round. The friends' theory, that God always punishes the wicked and rewards the righteous right away in this life, is not true to what we see in the world, and it is not true to Scripture. God is just, but His justice works on a larger scale than one lifetime. When we try to fit every suffering into a neat formula, we end up being unfaithful comforters. When we hold on to God's justice in the long run, as Job does, we can be honest about the injustice we see now, and still trust Him.

Chapter 21 Summary

Job answered Zophar and closed the second round. He asked his friends simply to listen, which would be the best comfort they could give. Then he took on their claim that the wicked always come to a quick end. Why, he asked, do the wicked live long, grow powerful, see their children around them, live without fear, prosper in their herds, rejoice with music and die in peace, even though they tell God to depart from them? Job would have nothing to do with their counsel. He asked how often the lamp of the wicked really goes out, and said it is not enough for God to punish their children. He showed that one man dies at ease and another in bitterness, and both lie in the same dust. Travelers know the wicked are often spared and buried with honor. So his friends' comfort was empty and their answers unfaithful. The rest of Scripture shows that God will settle every account at the final judgment.

I used to struggle with seeing people who reject God seem to have an easy life. Not anymore. I cannot worry about something I cannot control or understand. Job 21 leaves the final accounting with God, and that is where it belongs.

Chapter 21 Study Questions

1. What did Job say would be the best consolation his friends could give him? (21:2)

2. What question did Job ask in verse 7? Who else in Scripture asked the same thing? (Jeremiah 12:1; Psalm 73:3)

3. How did Job describe the life of the wicked in verses 8-13?

4. What do the wicked say to God, and why? (21:14-15) How is that like Satan's charge in 1:9, turned around?

5. What did Job say about the counsel of the wicked, even though they prosper? (21:16)

6. Why did Job say it is not enough for God to punish a wicked man's children? (21:19-21)

7. What point did Job make with the two men who die in verses 23-26?

8. How do Hebrews 9:27, Psalm 73:17 and Luke 16:25 answer the problem Job raises in this chapter?

9. Have you ever struggled with seeing people who reject God seem to have an easy life? How does this chapter help you?

10. Job said "Listen, listen to my speech, and let this be your consolations." Who in your life needs you to listen more than you talk?

Chapter 22: Eliphaz's Third Speech

Scripture

22:1-11 And Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said, "Will a man be of use to God? For a wise ***man*** will be of use to himself. ***Is it*** a pleasure to the Almighty that you are righteous, or profit that you make your ways blameless? Is it from your fear ***of Him*** that He reproves you, ***that*** He enters with you into judgment? ***Is*** not your evil great, and ***is there*** no end to your iniquities? For you take pledges from your brothers without cause, and you strip off the garments of the naked. You have not given water to the weary to drink, and from the hungry you have withheld bread. And the man of arm, the land ***is*** his, and the honored ***one*** dwells in it. You have sent widows away empty, and the arms of the fatherless have been crushed. Therefore snares ***are*** all around you, and sudden dread terrifies you, or darkness, ***so that*** you do not see, and an abundance of water covers you.

22:12-20 ***Is*** not God ***in*** the height of ***the*** heavens? And look at the top of the stars, that they are high! And you say, 'What does God know? Through thick darkness will He judge? Clouds ***are*** a hiding place for Him, and He does not see; and He walks about on the circle of ***the*** heavens.' Will you keep the path of old, which men of wickedness have trodden, who were snatched away, and ***was*** not ***their*** time; a river was poured out ***on*** their foundation, who were saying to God, 'Depart from us!' and what will the Almighty do to them? And He filled their houses ***with*** good; and the counsel of the wicked is far from me. The righteous see ***it*** and rejoice, and the innocent mocks at them, 'Surely our adversary has been destroyed, and fire has consumed their abundance.'

22:21-30 Be reconciled, please, with Him, and be at peace; by them good will come to you. Accept, please, instruction from His mouth, and put His words in your heart. If you return to the Almighty, you will be built up; ***if*** you remove injustice from your tent, and put gold on the dust, and Ophir ***gold*** among the rock of the wadis, then the Almighty will be your gold, and silver of heaps for you. For then you will take delight in the Almighty, and you will lift up your face to God. You will pray to Him, and He will hear you, and you will pay your vows. And you will decree a matter, and it will be established for you, and on your ways light will shine. When they bring ***you*** low, and you say, '***There is*** lifting up!' then He will save the lowly of eyes. He will deliver ***one who is*** not innocent, and he will be delivered by the cleanness of your hands."

Chapter 22 Preview

Eliphaz speaks for the third and last time, and this is the harshest speech any of the friends gives. In his first speech he hinted. In his second he warned. Now he simply accuses. Job had just shown that the wicked often prosper (chapter 21). Eliphaz does not answer that point. Instead he says Job must be a great sinner, and he names the sins: taking pledges from his brothers for nothing, stripping the naked, refusing water to the weary and bread to the hungry, sending widows away empty and crushing the fatherless. Not one of these charges is true. Eliphaz has no evidence. He has a theory, and the theory needs Job to be guilty.

Then Eliphaz twists Job's words to make it sound as if Job thinks God cannot see through the clouds. He ends with a call to repent that is one of the most beautiful passages in the friends' speeches: return to the Almighty, and He will be your gold; you will pray, and He will hear you. Those words are true in themselves. But they were aimed at the wrong man for the wrong reason. And the last verse holds a surprise Eliphaz could never have guessed. The man with clean hands who delivers others by his prayer would turn out to be Job, praying for Eliphaz (42:8).

Chapter 22 Study

22:1 *And Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said,*

"And Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said." This is the start of the third round of speeches. Eliphaz, the oldest and most respected of the three friends, leads off again, as he did in chapters 4 and 15. This round will be short. Eliphaz speaks, Job answers, Bildad gives only a few lines (chapter 25), and Zophar does not speak at all. The friends are running out of things to say, because they have only one idea and Job has answered it.

22:2-4 *"Will a man be of use to God? For a wise* ***man*** *will be of use to himself.* ***Is it*** *a pleasure to the Almighty that you are righteous, or profit that you make your ways blameless? Is it from your fear* ***of Him*** *that He reproves you,* ***that*** *He enters with you into judgment?*

"Will a man be of use to God? For a wise man will be of use to himself." Eliphaz begins with a question about what man can give to God. A man cannot add anything to God. Even a wise man's wisdom only helps himself.

"Is it a pleasure to the Almighty that you are righteous, or profit that you make your ways blameless?" There is truth here. God does not need us. He is not made richer when we do right. Elihu will say something similar (35:7), and Paul says God is not served by human hands "as needing anything" (Acts 17:25). But Eliphaz uses this truth in a cold way. He means that Job's goodness makes no difference to God, so God has no reason to treat him kindly. The book itself shows the opposite. In chapter 1 the LORD took pleasure in Job and spoke of him with joy: "Have you set your heart on My servant Job?" (1:8). God does not need our righteousness, but He delights in it.

"Is it from your fear of Him that He reproves you, that He enters with you into judgment?" Eliphaz asks: do you think God is punishing you because you fear Him? Of course not, he says. No one is punished for being godly. So it must be for your sin. Eliphaz could not imagine what we know from chapters 1 and 2. In a real sense, Job was suffering precisely because he feared God. God pointed to Job's faith, and Satan attacked it.

22:5-9 ***Is*** *not your evil great, and* ***is there*** *no end to your iniquities? For you take pledges from your brothers without cause, and you strip off the garments of the naked. You have not given water to the weary to drink, and from the hungry you have withheld bread. And the man of arm, the land* ***is*** *his, and the honored* ***one*** *dwells in it. You have sent widows away empty, and the arms of the fatherless have been crushed.*

"Is not your evil great, and is there no end to your iniquities?" Here Eliphaz says outright what he had only hinted before. Your sin is great. It has no end.

Then he lists the sins. "For you take pledges from your brothers without cause, and you strip off the garments of the naked." A pledge was something a poor man gave as security for a loan, often his cloak. Later the Law of Moses said a cloak taken as a pledge had to be returned before night, because it was the poor man's blanket (Exodus 22:26-27). Eliphaz says Job took pledges for no reason and left people without clothes.

"You have not given water to the weary to drink, and from the hungry you have withheld bread." In the desert lands where these men lived, refusing water to a tired traveler was a terrible cruelty.

"And the man of arm, the land is his, and the honored one dwells in it." "The man of arm" means the man of power. Eliphaz may mean that Job thought the land belonged to the strong, and used his power to take what he wanted. Or he may be describing Job himself as the powerful man who owned the land and favored the important people.

"You have sent widows away empty, and the arms of the fatherless have been crushed." Widows and orphans had no one to defend them. To turn them away was to crush the weakest people in the land.

Where did Eliphaz get these charges? Nowhere. He did not see Job do any of this. He worked backward from Job's suffering. Great suffering, he reasoned, must mean great sin, and for a rich man the most likely sins were greed and cruelty to the poor. So he named them. This is what a false theory does. It begins by explaining a man's pain, and it ends by inventing crimes to fit.

And the charges were false. The narrator called Job "blameless and upright" (1:1). God said there was "none like him on the earth" (1:8; 2:3). Job will soon describe how he actually lived: he rescued the poor who cried for help and the fatherless, he made the widow's heart sing, he was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame, and a father to the needy (29:12-16). In chapter 31 he will call down curses on himself if he ever refused the poor, let a widow's eyes fail, ate his bread alone, or let anyone go without clothing (31:16-22). Eliphaz accused Job of the very sins Job had spent his life fighting.

Have you ever been accused of something you did not do, by someone who had already made up his mind? It is one of the most painful things a person can face, and it is worse when it comes from a friend who claims to speak for God. Jesus faced it at His trial, where "many were bearing false testimony against Him" (Mark 14:56). If you have been falsely accused, God knows the truth. If you are tempted to accuse someone because the facts would fit your theory, stop. Scripture says a matter must be established by witnesses (Deuteronomy 19:15), not by guesses.

22:10-11 *Therefore snares **are** all around you, and sudden dread terrifies you, or darkness, **so that** you do not see, and an abundance of water covers you.*

"Therefore snares are all around you, and sudden dread terrifies you, or darkness, so that you do not see, and an abundance of water covers you." Eliphaz draws his conclusion. Because of these sins, Job is caught in traps, filled with terror, lost in darkness and drowning in a flood. Bildad had used the same pictures of the wicked man (18:7-11). Eliphaz says Job's own troubles fit that picture exactly, so he must be that man.

The logic sounds tight, but it is a circle. Job suffers, so he must be wicked. Job is wicked, so of course he suffers. There is no room in it for anything God might be doing that Eliphaz cannot see.

22:12-14 ***Is** not God **in** the height of **the** heavens? And look at the top of the stars, that they are high! And you say, 'What does God know? Through thick darkness will He judge? Clouds **are** a hiding place for Him, and He does not see; and He walks about on the circle of **the** heavens.'*

"Is not God in the height of the heavens? And look at the top of the stars, that they are high!" Eliphaz now speaks of God's greatness. God is above the highest stars. That is true.

But then he puts words in Job's mouth. "And you say, 'What does God know? Through thick darkness will He judge? Clouds are a hiding place for Him, and He does not see; and He walks about on the circle of the heavens.'" Eliphaz claims Job thinks God is so far away that He cannot see what happens on earth, so Job thought he could sin and get away with it.

Job never said that. Job said the opposite. His complaint was that God sees him all too well, that God watches him and will not look away even long enough for him to swallow (7:19-20; 10:4-6; 14:16). What Job struggled with was not whether God sees, but why God, who sees everything, was silent. Eliphaz took Job's words about the wicked prospering in chapter 21 and turned them into something Job had never said. We should be careful not to do this to others, especially in an argument. It is easy to answer what we think someone meant, instead of what they actually said.

"The circle of the heavens" means the dome or vault of the sky as it appears from the earth. Isaiah uses a similar picture of God sitting above "the circle of the earth" (Isaiah 40:22).

22:15-18 *Will you keep the path of old, which men of wickedness have trodden, who were snatched away, and **it was** not **their** time; a river was poured out **on** their foundation, who were saying to God, 'Depart from us!' and what will the Almighty do to them? And He filled their houses **with** good; and the counsel of the wicked is far from me.*

"Will you keep the path of old, which men of wickedness have trodden?" Eliphaz warns Job not to follow the road of wicked men of long ago. "Who were snatched away, and it was not their time; a river was poured out on their foundation." They died before their time, and a flood washed away the ground under them. Many teachers think Eliphaz is thinking of the people who died in Noah's flood (Genesis 6-7). If Job lived in the days of the patriarchs, that event would be part of the history his people knew.

"Who were saying to God, 'Depart from us!' and what will the Almighty do to them?" These are almost the very words Job had used to describe the wicked who prosper (21:14-15). Eliphaz turns them back on Job.

"And He filled their houses with good; and the counsel of the wicked is far from me." Eliphaz admits that God had given these men good things. Then he repeats Job's own words from 21:16, "the counsel of the wicked is far from me." Job had said it to separate himself from the wicked. Eliphaz says it to separate himself from Job. It is a sharp, cold echo.

22:19-20 *The righteous see **it** and rejoice, and the innocent mocks at them, 'Surely our adversary has been destroyed, and fire has consumed their abundance.'*

"The righteous see it and rejoice, and the innocent mocks at them." When the wicked are destroyed, the righteous are glad that God's justice has been done. Scripture does speak of the righteous rejoicing when God judges evil (Psalm 58:10; Revelation 18:20). "Surely our adversary has been destroyed, and fire has consumed their abundance."

But think of what this meant to Job. Fire from heaven had burned up his sheep (1:16). Eliphaz is saying that righteous people who see Job's ruin should rejoice over it. That is cruel, and it is the very opposite of what Scripture teaches about the suffering of others. "When your enemy falls, do not rejoice" (Proverbs 24:17), and Job himself says he never rejoiced at the ruin of a man who hated him (31:29).

22:21-22 *Be reconciled, please, with Him, and be at peace; by them good will come to you. Accept, please, instruction from His mouth, and put His words in your heart.*

Now Eliphaz turns to a call to repent. "Be reconciled, please, with Him, and be at peace; by them good will come to you." Make peace with God, and good things will come back to you.

"Accept, please, instruction from His mouth, and put His words in your heart." This is good advice for anyone. We should receive God's teaching and store His words in our hearts (Psalm 119:11).

What is wrong, then? The words are true, but they are aimed wrongly. Eliphaz means: confess the sins I have just listed, and God will restore you. But Job had not committed them. If Job had done what Eliphaz asked, he would have confessed to lies. He would have agreed with Satan's charge that he served God only for what he got, by repenting in order to get his blessings back. Job's integrity would not let him do that (27:5-6).

22:23-25 *If you return to the Almighty, you will be built up; **if** you remove injustice from your tent, and put gold on the dust, and Ophir **gold** among the rock of the wadis, then the Almighty will be your gold, and silver of heaps for you.*

"If you return to the Almighty, you will be built up; if you remove injustice from your tent." "Return" is the Hebrew word shub, the common Old Testament word for repentance, turning back to God. Eliphaz still assumes there is injustice in Job's tent.

"And put gold on the dust, and Ophir gold among the rock of the wadis." Ophir was a land famous for fine gold (1 Kings 9:28; Psalm 45:9). A wadi is a desert stream bed that is dry most of the year. Eliphaz says: throw your gold away like dust and gravel. Stop loving it. He still thinks Job's sin was greed.

"Then the Almighty will be your gold, and silver of heaps for you." This is a beautiful line, and it is true. God Himself is a better treasure than any gold. The psalmist says, "Whom have I in the heavens? And with You I desire nothing on the earth" (Psalm 73:25). Jesus told us to store up treasure in heaven (Matthew 6:19-21). The irony is that Job had already proved this was true of him. He lost all his gold in one day, and he still blessed the name of the LORD (1:21). Job was the one man in the book who had already shown that God was worth more to him than his wealth.

22:26-28 *For then you will take delight in the Almighty, and you will lift up your face to God. You will pray to Him, and He will hear you, and you will pay your vows. And you will decree a matter, and it will be established for you, and on your ways light will shine.*

"For then you will take delight in the Almighty, and you will lift up your face to God." To lift up the face was to come before God without shame. "You will pray to Him, and He will hear you, and you will pay your vows." Job had been crying out to God and hearing nothing. Eliphaz says God will hear him if he repents. "And you will decree a matter, and it will be established for you, and on your ways light will shine."

These are real blessings, and God does give them to those who walk with Him. Prayer heard, a clear conscience before God, light on the path: every believer knows something of this. But Eliphaz made it a bargain. Repent, and the blessings come back. Faith that turns to God only to get the blessings back is the faith Satan said Job had (1:9-11). True faith seeks God Himself.

22:29-30 *When they bring **you** low, and you say, '**There is** lifting up!' then He will save the lowly of eyes. He will deliver **one who is** not innocent, and he will be delivered by the cleanness of your hands."*

"When they bring you low, and you say, 'There is lifting up!' then He will save the lowly of eyes." When others are brought low, the humble man can say, "There is lifting up," and God will save the humble. "The lowly of eyes" means the humble, the one who does not look down on others with proud eyes. James says God gives grace to the humble (James 4:6).

"He will deliver one who is not innocent, and he will be delivered by the cleanness of your hands." This last verse is remarkable. Eliphaz says that a righteous man's prayers can even rescue a guilty person. He means that if Job repents, his clean hands will help others.

Eliphaz had no idea how true his words would be, or for whom. At the end of the book the LORD's anger burns against Eliphaz and his two friends, and He tells them to go to Job: "and Job My servant shall pray for you" (42:8). Eliphaz was the one who was not innocent. Job was the one with clean hands. And Eliphaz was spared by the prayer of the very man he had falsely accused. God has a way of turning our own words back on us.

This is a picture of something greater. Christ, the truly innocent One, prays for the guilty. "if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous One" (1 John 2:1). We are the ones who are not innocent. We are delivered, not by our own cleanness, but by His.

Chapter 22 Summary

Eliphaz opened the third round with his harshest speech. He said a man's righteousness gives God no profit, and that God would not punish Job for fearing Him, so Job's sin must be great. Then he invented specific charges: taking pledges without cause, stripping the naked, refusing water and bread, sending widows away empty and crushing the fatherless. None of it was true, as the opening chapters and Job's own defense in chapters 29 and 31 show. Eliphaz twisted Job's words to claim Job thought God could not see, and warned him against the path of the wicked who were swept away. He ended with a beautiful call to return to the Almighty, who would be Job's gold, hear his prayers and shine light on his way. Those words were true in themselves but aimed at the wrong man for the wrong reason. In the end, Job's clean hands would deliver Eliphaz himself (42:8).

Chapter 22 Study Questions

1. What did Eliphaz say about whether a man's righteousness profits God? (22:2-3) How does 1:8 show God's delight in Job?

2. What specific sins did Eliphaz charge Job with in verses 5-9?

3. How do 1:1, 29:12-16 and 31:16-22 show these charges were false?

4. What words did Eliphaz put in Job's mouth in verses 13-14? What had Job actually said about God seeing him? (7:19-20; 14:16)

5. Whose words did Eliphaz repeat in verse 18? (21:16)

6. What did Eliphaz say the Almighty would be to Job if he returned to Him? (22:25)

7. What did Eliphaz say about the cleanness of a man's hands in verse 30, and how did that come true in 42:8?

8. Why would it have been wrong for Job to confess the sins Eliphaz listed in order to get his blessings back?

9. Have you ever been falsely accused, or have you ever accused someone based on a guess? What does Deuteronomy 19:15 teach us about that?

10. Eliphaz said, "the Almighty will be your gold." Is God your greatest treasure? What would show that He is?

Chapter 23: Job Longs to Find God

Scripture

23:1-17 And Job answered and said, "Even today my complaint ***is*** rebellion; my hand is heavy on my groaning. Oh that I knew, and I would find Him; I would come to His place! Let me set in order a case before Him, and let me fill my mouth ***with*** arguments. I want to know the words ***with which*** He would answer me, and understand what He would say to me. Would He contend with me in the greatness of power? No, surely He would pay ***attention*** to me. There an upright ***man*** would be reasoning with Him, and I would deliver ***myself*** forever from my Judge. Look, I go forward, and He is not ***there***; and backward, and I do not perceive Him; ***to the*** left when He works, and I do not view ***Him***; He turns ***to the*** right, and I do not see ***Him***. For He knows the way with me; He has tested me; like the gold I will come forth. My foot has held to His step; His way I have kept, and I have not turned aside. The commandment of His lips, and I have not departed ***from it***; more than my portion I have treasured up the words of His mouth. And He ***is*** in one ***mind***, and who will turn Him back? And ***what*** His soul has desired, and He has done. For He completes my portion, and many like these ***are*** with Him. Therefore I am terrified before Him; I consider, and I am in dread of Him. And God has made my heart faint, and the Almighty has terrified me. For I have not been destroyed before darkness, and from my face gloom covers.

Chapter 23 Preview

Job does not answer Eliphaz's false charges directly. He has answered them before, and he will answer them fully in chapter 31. Instead, he turns again to the One he really wants to speak with. "Oh that I knew, and I would find Him; I would come to His place!" Job wants to lay his case before God and hear God's answer. He is sure that if he could only reach God, God would listen to him, and an upright man would be cleared.

But he cannot find Him. He looks forward and backward, left and right, and God is not there. Then, in the middle of that darkness, Job says one of the great sentences of faith in the Bible: "For He knows the way with me; He has tested me; like the gold I will come forth." Job cannot see God, but God sees him. He has kept God's way and treasured His words more than his food. Yet he still trembles before God, who does what He pleases, and the darkness has not gone away. This chapter shows faith and fear living side by side in the same honest heart.

Chapter 23 Study

23:1-2 *And Job answered and said, "Even today my complaint **is** rebellion; my hand is heavy on my groaning.*

"And Job answered and said." Job answers Eliphaz's third speech. This answer runs through chapter 24.

"Even today my complaint is rebellion; my hand is heavy on my groaning." "Even today" means that after all the speeches, nothing has changed. Job's complaint is still bitter. The word

translated "rebellion" can also mean bitterness. Job knows his friends see his complaint as rebellion against God. "My hand is heavy on my groaning" may mean that Job is pressing down on his groans, trying to hold them back, and still they come. Or it may be read as God's hand being heavy on him, more than his groans can tell. Either way, Job's pain is deeper than his words.

23:3-5 *Oh that I knew, and I would find Him; I would come to His place! Let me set in order a case before Him, and let me fill my mouth **with** arguments. I want to know the words **with which** He would answer me, and understand what He would say to me.*

"Oh that I knew, and I would find Him; I would come to His place!" This is the cry of Job's heart. He does not want an argument with his friends. He wants God. If he only knew where God was, he would go straight to His dwelling place.

"Let me set in order a case before Him, and let me fill my mouth with arguments." Job pictures himself in a courtroom. He would lay out his case carefully, the way a man prepares his defense before a judge.

"I want to know the words with which He would answer me, and understand what He would say to me." Notice this. Job does not only want to talk. He wants to listen. He wants to hear what God would say. That is a mark of real faith. The friends talked about God. Job wanted to hear from God.

Many believers know this feeling. In grief or in long trouble, prayer can feel like speaking into an empty room. We want to know where God is and what He is saying. Job shows us that it is not a sin to long for that. "As a deer pants for channels of water, so my soul pants for You, God" (Psalm 42:1). The longing itself is a kind of prayer.

23:6-7 *Would He contend with me in the greatness of power? No, surely He would pay **attention** to me. There an upright **man** would be reasoning with Him, and I would deliver **myself** forever from my Judge.*

"Would He contend with me in the greatness of power? No, surely He would pay attention to me." Earlier Job feared that God would overwhelm him with His power and he would not be able to speak (9:32-35; 13:21). Now he is more confident. He believes that if he could reach God, God would not crush him. He would listen.

"There an upright man would be reasoning with Him, and I would deliver myself forever from my judge." Job believes that in God's presence the truth would come out. An upright man could reason with God, and Job would be cleared for good.

Was Job right to think this? In part. Job was right that God is fair and would hear an upright man. But he was wrong to think he could stand before God and argue his case as an equal. When God finally did speak, Job did not argue at all. He put his hand over his mouth (40:4). Job's confidence in God's fairness was true faith. His confidence that he could win the argument was not.

23:8-9 *Look, I go forward, and He is not **there**; and backward, and I do not perceive Him; **to the** left when He works, and I do not view **Him**; He turns **to the** right, and I do not see **Him**.*

"Look, I go forward, and He is not there; and backward, and I do not perceive Him." In Hebrew thought, "forward" was east, the direction a man faced at sunrise, and "backward" was west. "To the left when He works, and I do not view Him; He turns to the right, and I do not see Him." The left was north, and the right was south.

Job has looked in every direction, and God is nowhere to be found. This is the opposite of Psalm 139, where David says there is nowhere he can go to escape God's presence. Both are true. God is everywhere, but there are seasons when we cannot feel Him or see what He is doing. Job is not denying that God is present. He is saying he cannot find Him. Isaiah says, "Truly You are a God who hides Himself" (Isaiah 45:15). Sometimes God's people walk in the dark.

23:10 *For He knows the way with me; He has tested me; like the gold I will come forth.*

"For He knows the way with me; He has tested me; like the gold I will come forth."

This verse is the turning point of the chapter. In verses 8 and 9 Job could not see God anywhere. Now he says, "For He knows." I cannot find Him, but He knows exactly where I am. "The way with me" means the road I am on, the path I walk, everything about my life. Job cannot see God's path, but God sees his.

This is one of the great comforts of the Christian life. When we cannot see God, He still sees us. "The LORD knows the way of the righteous" (Psalm 1:6). Hagar, alone in the wilderness, called the LORD "a God of seeing" (Genesis 16:13). Jesus said the Father knows when a sparrow falls, and that the hairs of our heads are all numbered (Matthew 10:29-30). We do not have to understand our road for it to be known.

"He has tested me." The word means to examine, to try by testing, the way a refiner tests metal. Job does not say this testing is punishment. He sees, at least in part, what his friends never saw: his suffering is a test, not a sentence. We know from chapters 1 and 2 that he was right. Satan said Job's faith was fake. God allowed the test to show that it was real.

"Like the gold I will come forth." To refine gold, a refiner heated it in a fire until it melted. The dross, the impurities, rose to the top and were skimmed off. What was left was pure gold. The fire did not destroy the gold. It proved it and made it purer. Job believes that when God's testing is done, he will come out of the fire like pure gold.

Notice what Job does not say. He does not say he will come forth rich again, or healthy again. He says he will come forth like gold, proved and pure. His hope is not mainly in getting his old life back. It is in being found true.

The New Testament uses the same picture. Peter writes to believers who were suffering: "so that the testing of your faith, much more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire, may be found for praise and honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:7). Our faith is worth more than gold. God allows it to be tested, not to destroy it, but to prove it and to

bring glory to Christ when He comes. Malachi pictures the LORD sitting as "a refiner and purifier of silver" (Malachi 3:3). A refiner sits close to the fire and watches. He does not leave the metal in a moment longer than it needs.

James also says the testing of our faith produces endurance (James 1:2-4), and he points to Job as the example: "You have heard of the endurance of Job, and you have seen the outcome of the Lord, that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful" (James 5:11). Job did come forth like gold. In chapter 42 God called him "My servant" four times and told the friends that Job had spoken rightly.

What does this mean for you? If you are in the fire right now, you may not be able to see God anywhere. You may not know why this is happening. You may not know how long it will last. Job did not know either. But you can know what Job knew: God knows the way you are on. The fire is not out of His control. And for those who belong to Him, the fire does not destroy. It proves.

This is not a promise that every trial will end quickly, or that we will understand it in this life. Some believers go through the fire and do not come out of it until they see Christ. But they still come forth as gold. "For the momentary lightness of our affliction is producing for us, excessively to excess, an eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4:17).

23:11-12 *My foot has held to His step; His way I have kept, and I have not turned aside. The commandment of His lips, and I have not departed **from it**; more than my portion I have treasured up the words of His mouth.*

Job explains why he is confident he will come forth as gold. "My foot has held to His step; His way I have kept, and I have not turned aside." Job has walked in God's footsteps. He has stayed on God's road. He has not wandered off.

"The commandment of His lips, and I have not departed from it; more than my portion I have treasured up the words of His mouth." "My portion" here means his daily share of food. Job valued God's words more than his daily bread. He did not have a Bible as we do. He lived long before the Law of Moses. But God had spoken, and Job had stored up every word he knew from God like a treasure.

This is not Job boasting that he never sinned. Job has already said that no man is pure before God (9:2; 14:4). He is saying that the friends' charges are false. He has not turned away from God. His heart has been set on God's word.

Jesus said, "Man will not live by bread alone, but by every word coming out through the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4), quoting Deuteronomy 8:3. Jeremiah said, "Your words were found, and I ate them" (Jeremiah 15:16). Do we treasure God's Word more than our food? Most of us would never skip a meal for a week. How many of us skip God's Word for a week without noticing?

23:13-14 *And He **is** in one **mind**, and who will turn Him back? And **what** His soul has desired, and He has done. For He completes my portion, and many like these **are** with Him.*

Now Job's thoughts turn. "And He is in one mind, and who will turn Him back?" God is unchanging and unstoppable. No one can make Him change His mind. "And what His soul has desired, and He has done." God does what He wills.

"For He completes my portion, and many like these are with Him." God will finish what He has planned for Job. And He has many such plans. Job's suffering is part of something God is carrying out, and Job cannot stop it.

This is true, and it is a comfort to believers. God's purposes do not fail. Paul says God works "all things according to the counsel of His will" (Ephesians 1:11). But to Job at this moment, it is frightening. If God has decided on this suffering and no one can turn Him back, what hope does Job have of changing it?

23:15-17 *Therefore I am terrified before Him; I consider, and I am in dread of Him. And God has made my heart faint, and the Almighty has terrified me. For I have not been destroyed before darkness, and from my face gloom covers.*

"Therefore I am terrified before Him; I consider, and I am in dread of Him." Job has just spoken one of the strongest statements of faith in the book, and now he admits he is terrified. That is honest. Faith does not always remove fear. Job trusts God, and he is afraid of God, both at the same time.

"And God has made my heart faint, and the Almighty has terrified me." Job sees God's hand behind his suffering, and it makes his heart weak.

"For I have not been destroyed before darkness, and from my face gloom covers." This last line is hard to translate. In the SLB it reads that Job has not been destroyed by the darkness, even though gloom covers his face. It may mean that the darkness itself is not what terrifies Job most. What terrifies him is God. Or it may mean that Job is still alive and still speaking, even though darkness covers him. Some versions read it to mean that Job is not silenced by the darkness. Job may be overwhelmed, but he has not gone silent. He is still crying out.

That may be the best way to end this chapter. Job cannot find God. He is afraid. Darkness covers his face. But he has not stopped talking to God. He has not walked away. In the dark, he still says, "He knows the way with me" (23:10). That is faith, even when it trembles.

Chapter 23 Summary

Job answered Eliphaz by turning again to God. His complaint was still bitter, and he longed to find God, lay his case before Him and hear His answer. He believed God would not crush him but would listen, and an upright man would be cleared. But Job looked east and west, north and south, and could not find God. Then he declared, "For He knows the way with me; He has tested me; like the gold I will come forth." Job saw his suffering as a test, not a punishment, and believed he would come out of it proved and pure, as gold comes out of the refiner's fire. He had kept God's

way and treasured God's words more than his daily food. Yet he trembled before God, who does whatever He wills, and admitted that darkness still covered him. Faith and fear lived side by side in Job's honest heart.

Chapter 23 Study Questions

1. What did Job most want, according to verse 3?

2. What did Job want to hear from God? (23:5)

3. What did Job believe God would do if he could reach Him? (23:6-7)

4. In which directions did Job look for God, and what did he find? (23:8-9)

5. What three things did Job say in verse 10?

6. How does 1 Peter 1:7 use the same picture of gold and fire? What is being tested, and why?

7. What did Job treasure more than his daily food? (23:12) How does Matthew 4:4 say the same thing?

8. How could Job say "He knows the way with me" and also "I am terrified before Him" in the same speech? Is it possible to trust God and be afraid at the same time?

9. Have you ever gone through a season when you could not find God? What helped you hold on?

10. What fire are you in right now, or what fire has God brought you through? How does knowing "He knows the way with me" change how you face it?

Chapter 24: Job Asks Why God Delays Judgment

Scripture

24:1-12 Why are times not stored up by the Almighty, and those who know Him do not see His days? They move back boundaries; they seize flocks and pasture ***them***. They drive away the donkey of the fatherless; they take the ox of the widow as a pledge. They thrust the needy aside from the path; the poor of the earth are made to hide together. Look, ***as*** wild donkeys in the wilderness they go forth to their work, seeking for prey; the desert plain ***is*** food for him, for the children. In the field they harvest his fodder, and they glean the vineyard of the wicked. They spend the night naked, without clothing, and ***there is*** no covering in the cold. They are wet from the rain of the mountains, and for lack of shelter they embrace the rock. They tear away the fatherless from the breast, and on the poor they take pledges. They go about naked, without clothing, and hungry they carry a sheaf. Between their rows they press out oil; they tread winepresses, and they thirst. From the city men groan, and the soul of the wounded cries for help, and God does not charge ***it as*** folly.

24:13-25 They are among those who rebel against ***the*** light; they do not recognize its ways, and they do not dwell in its paths. At the light the murderer rises; he kills the poor and the needy, and in the night he is like the thief. And the eye of the adulterer watches for twilight, saying, 'No eye will observe me,' and he puts a covering ***on his*** face. In the darkness he digs into houses; by day they seal themselves up; they do not know light. For morning ***is*** deep darkness to them together, for he is acquainted with the terrors of deep darkness. He ***is*** swift on the face of the waters; their portion is cursed in the land; he does not turn ***by*** the way of vineyards. Drought and also heat snatch away the waters of snow; Sheol ***those who*** have sinned. The womb forgets him; the maggot sucks sweetly on him; he is no longer remembered, and injustice is broken like the tree. He feeds on the barren ***woman who*** does not give birth, and he does not do good to the widow. And He draws along the mighty by His power; He rises, and ***one*** does not trust in life. He gives security to him, and he leans ***on it***; and His eyes ***are*** on their ways. They are exalted a little ***while***, and he is not; and they are brought low; like everyone they are gathered up, and like the head of grain they wither. And if not then, who will prove me a liar and make my speech into nothing?"

Chapter 24 Preview

Job goes on with his answer to Eliphaz. In chapter 23 he spoke of his own pain. Now he looks out at the world and asks a bigger question: "Why are times not stored up by the Almighty, and those who know Him do not see His days?" If God is the Judge, why does He not set days for judgment that His people can see? Then Job describes what goes on in the world while God seems to wait. Powerful men move boundary stones and steal flocks. They take the orphan's donkey and the widow's ox. The poor are pushed off the road and live like wild donkeys in the desert, cold, wet and hungry, harvesting other men's fields while their own children starve. In the city the wounded cry out, "and God does not charge it as folly."

Then Job turns to the men who love the dark: the murderer, the adulterer and the thief, who work by night and fear the morning. The last part of the chapter describes the end of the wicked in

words that sound like the friends' own speeches, and Bible teachers read it in different ways. Job closes with a challenge: if this is not so, who can prove him a liar? This is one of the most honest chapters in the Bible about injustice in the world. Job does not explain it away. He brings it to God.

Chapter 24 Study

24:1 *Why are times not stored up by the Almighty, and those who know Him do not see His days?*

"Why are times not stored up by the Almighty, and those who know Him do not see His days?" Job's answer to Eliphaz continues without a break from chapter 23. "Times" means set times of judgment. "His days" means days when God acts to judge. Job asks: why does God not set fixed days of reckoning? Why do those who know and love God never get to see Him step in and put things right?

This is a question many believers ask. We know God is just. Why does He wait so long? Why do the righteous have to watch evil go on, year after year?

Job is not denying God's justice. He is asking about God's timing. Scripture gives part of the answer. God's patience gives the wicked time to repent: "The Lord is not slow concerning the promise, as some consider slowness, but is patient toward us, not wishing any to perish, but all to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). And God has set a day: "God will judge the righteous and the wicked, for there is a time for every matter" (Ecclesiastes 3:17). Job could not yet see that day. We can see it more clearly, in Christ, who will judge the world (Acts 17:31).

24:2-4 *They move back boundaries; they seize flocks and pasture **them**. They drive away the donkey of the fatherless; they take the ox of the widow as a pledge. They thrust the needy aside from the path; the poor of the earth are made to hide together.*

Job now describes what the powerful do while God seems silent. "They move back boundaries; they seize flocks and pasture them." In the ancient world, land was marked by boundary stones. To move one was to steal a neighbor's land quietly. The Law of Moses later forbade it: "You shall not move back the boundary of your neighbor" (Deuteronomy 19:14). These men steal a man's flock and then graze it openly as their own.

"They drive away the donkey of the fatherless; they take the ox of the widow as a pledge." The orphan has only one donkey. The widow has only one ox to plow her field. These men take them. Notice that these are the very sins Eliphaz falsely accused Job of committing (22:6-9). Job agrees that such sins are wicked. His point is that the people who really do them often go unpunished.

"They thrust the needy aside from the path; the poor of the earth are made to hide together." The poor are shoved off the road and must hide from those who prey on them.

24:5-8 *Look, **as** wild donkeys in the wilderness they go forth to their work, seeking for prey; the desert plain **is** food for him, for the children. In the field they harvest his fodder, and they glean the vineyard of the wicked. They spend the night naked, without clothing, and **there is** no covering in the cold. They are wet from the rain of the mountains, and for lack of shelter they embrace the rock.*

Now Job turns from the oppressors to the oppressed. "Look, as wild donkeys in the wilderness they go forth to their work, seeking for prey." The poor are driven out like wild donkeys that must roam the desert for food. "The desert plain is food for him, for the children." They scrape what they can from the wasteland to feed their children.

"In the field they harvest his fodder, and they glean the vineyard of the wicked." They work in a rich man's fields and vineyards, harvesting for someone else, getting only scraps for themselves.

"They spend the night naked, without clothing, and there is no covering in the cold." "They are wet from the rain of the mountains, and for lack of shelter they embrace the rock." They have no proper clothes and no home. They huddle against the rocks in the rain.

Job sees the poor clearly, and he feels for them. This is the same man who will say, "I was a father to the needy" (29:16). Some readers today think the Bible has little to say about the poor. Job 24 shows otherwise. God's Word sees the homeless man shivering by the rock.

24:9-12 *They tear away the fatherless from the breast, and on the poor they take pledges. They go about naked, without clothing, and hungry they carry a sheaf. Between their rows they press out oil; they tread winepresses, and they thirst. From the city men groan, and the soul of the wounded cries for help, and God does not charge **it as** folly.*

"They tear away the fatherless from the breast, and on the poor they take pledges." The oppressors seize a nursing child from its mother, probably to sell the child as a slave to pay a debt. They take pledges from people who have nothing.

"They go about naked, without clothing, and hungry they carry a sheaf." Think of that. The poor carry sheaves of grain, but they are hungry. "Between their rows they press out oil; they tread winepresses, and they thirst." They press olives and grapes for the rich, and they have nothing to drink. They are surrounded by food and drink that is not theirs.

"From the city men groan, and the soul of the wounded cries for help, and God does not charge it as folly." This is the hardest line in the chapter. In the city, the dying groan and the wounded cry out, and God does not seem to treat it as wrong. He does not seem to step in.

Job is saying out loud what many people feel. If God is just, why does He let this go on? It is a hard question, and Job does not soften it. We should not soften it either. But we should also read the rest of Scripture. God does hear the cries of the poor. The Law said that if a widow or orphan was mistreated and cried out, "I will surely hear his cry" (Exodus 22:23). James says the cries of underpaid workers "have entered into the ears of the Lord of armies" (James 5:4). God hears. He does not always act when we want Him to, but He has not stopped listening, and He will judge.

24:13-17 *They are among those who rebel against **the** light; they do not recognize its ways, and they do not dwell in its paths. At the light the murderer rises; he kills the poor and the needy, and in the night he is like the thief. And the eye of the adulterer watches for twilight, saying, 'No eye will observe me,' and he puts a covering **on his** face. In the darkness he digs into houses; by day they seal themselves up; they do not know light. For morning **is** deep darkness to them together, for he is acquainted with the terrors of deep darkness.*

Next Job describes a different kind of wicked man. "They are among those who rebel against the light; they do not recognize its ways, and they do not dwell in its paths." These people hate the light because it exposes what they do.

"At the light the murderer rises; he kills the poor and the needy, and in the night he is like the thief." He rises before dawn to kill, and by night he steals.

"And the eye of the adulterer watches for twilight, saying, 'No eye will observe me,' and he puts a covering on his face." The adulterer waits for dusk and hides his face so no one will know him. Proverbs paints the same picture of the young man who goes to the adulteress "in the twilight" (Proverbs 7:9).

"In the darkness he digs into houses; by day they seal themselves up; they do not know light." In those days many houses had walls of mud brick, and a thief could dig through them at night. By day these men hide.

"For morning is deep darkness to them together, for he is acquainted with the terrors of deep darkness." For most people, morning brings relief. For these men, morning is what they dread, because it might expose them. The night is their friend.

Jesus said the same: "men loved the darkness rather than the Light; for their works were evil" and "everyone who practices wicked things hates the Light" (John 3:19-20). Sin loves to hide. The adulterer says, "No eye will observe me." But God's eye sees. "And there is no creature hidden before Him" (Hebrews 4:13).

24:18-20 *He **is** swift on the face of the waters; their portion is cursed in the land; he does not turn **by** the way of vineyards. Drought and also heat snatch away the waters of snow; Sheol **those who** have sinned. The womb forgets him; the maggot sucks sweetly on him; he is no longer remembered, and injustice is broken like the tree.*

Now the chapter takes a turn that has puzzled Bible teachers for a long time. "He is swift on the face of the waters; their portion is cursed in the land; he does not turn by the way of vineyards." The wicked man is like something carried swiftly away on the surface of a stream. His land is cursed. He no longer walks the road to the vineyards.

"Drought and also heat snatch away the waters of snow; Sheol those who have sinned." As heat dries up melted snow, so Sheol, the grave, snatches away sinners.

"The womb forgets him; the maggot sucks sweetly on him; he is no longer remembered, and injustice is broken like the tree." Even his own mother forgets him. Worms feed on him. His memory is gone, and his wickedness is broken like a fallen tree.

This sounds a great deal like what the friends had been saying: the wicked are quickly cut off. But Job has been arguing that the wicked often prosper and die in peace (21:7-13). So how do we read these verses? Bible teachers give several answers.

Some believe Job is quoting his friends here, giving their view in their own words before he answers it. Hebrew writing had no quotation marks, so this is possible, and some English versions add words like "You say" at verse 18.

Others believe Job is saying what he really believes will happen in the end. He has never denied that God judges the wicked. He has only denied that it always happens quickly, or that suffering always proves guilt. Job may be saying: yes, the wicked will be cut off in the end, like snow in the heat, but they are allowed to prosper for a while first. Verse 24 seems to fit this reading: "They are exalted a little while, and he is not."

Still others think that some of these verses were moved out of place long ago and were first part of the friends' speeches, perhaps a missing third speech of Zophar.

This study takes the text as it stands, as Job's words, and read that way the second reading fits best. Job believes God will judge the wicked. His complaint is not that God never judges, but that He seems to wait so long while the poor suffer.

24:21-23 *He feeds on the barren **woman who** does not give birth, and he does not do good to the widow. And He draws along the mighty by His power; He rises, and **one** does not trust in life. He gives security to him, and he leans **on it**; and His eyes **are** on their ways.*

"He feeds on the barren woman who does not give birth, and he does not do good to the widow." The wicked man preys on the childless woman, who has no son to protect her, and he never shows kindness to the widow.

"And He draws along the mighty by His power; He rises, and one does not trust in life." "He" with a capital letter is God. God drags off the mighty by His power. When God rises up against a man, that man cannot be sure of living another day.

"He gives security to him, and he leans on it; and His eyes are on their ways." God may give the wicked a time of safety, and they lean on it as if it will last. But God's eyes are on everything they do. This is an important line. God's patience is not blindness. He lets the wicked feel secure for a time, but He sees them the whole while.

That is what Asaph learned in Psalm 73. He was troubled by the prosperity of the wicked "until I went into the sanctuaries of God; then I discerned their end. Surely You set them on slippery places" (Psalm 73:17-18). Their security is real for a time, but it stands on slippery ground.

24:24 *They are exalted a little **while**, and he is not; and they are brought low; like everyone they are gathered up, and like the head of grain they wither.*

"They are exalted a little while, and he is not; and they are brought low; like everyone they are gathered up, and like the head of grain they wither." The wicked rise high for a little while, and then they are gone. They are brought low and gathered up in death like everyone else, cut off like ripe heads of grain at harvest.

This verse is the key to how Job sees the wicked. They are not always cut off early, as the friends claimed. They often rise high. But it is only "a little while." In the end they die like everyone, and God judges.

Paul warns those who take God's patience for granted: "do you despise the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?" (Romans 2:4). If God's judgment seems slow, it is not because He does not care. It is mercy, giving time to turn.

24:25 *And if not then, who will prove me a liar and make my speech into nothing?"*

"And if not then, who will prove me a liar and make my speech into nothing?" Job ends with a challenge. If what I have said is not true, prove me wrong. Who can show that the wicked do not prosper for a time, or that the poor are not crushed while God waits? No one can, because everyone has seen it.

The friends did not take up the challenge. Bildad's answer in the next chapter is only six verses long, and it does not touch what Job has said. Job's honesty about the world had silenced them. Sometimes the most faithful thing a believer can do is to tell the truth about what he sees, bring it to God, and refuse to accept easy answers.

Chapter 24 Summary

Job continued his answer by asking why God does not set times of judgment that His people can see. He described how the powerful move boundary stones, steal flocks, take the orphan's donkey and the widow's ox, and push the poor aside. He described the poor living like wild donkeys in the desert, cold and wet, harvesting food and pressing oil and wine for others while they go hungry and thirsty, and the wounded crying out in the city while God seems not to act. He described the murderer, the adulterer and the thief who love the darkness and fear the morning. Then he spoke of the end of the wicked, who are exalted a little while and then cut off like grain. Teachers read verses 18-24 in different ways, but taken as Job's words, they show that he believed God would judge in the end, even though He waits. Job closed by challenging anyone to prove him wrong.

Chapter 24 Study Questions

1. What question did Job ask in verse 1?

2. What did the wicked do to the fatherless and the widow in verses 2-4? How do these compare to Eliphaz's charges against Job in 22:6-9?

3. How did Job describe the life of the poor in verses 5-11?

4. What did Job say about God in verse 12?

5. What three kinds of men did Job describe in verses 13-17, and why do they love the darkness?

6. What did Job say about the security of the wicked and God's eyes in verse 23?

7. What did Job say in verse 24 about how long the wicked are exalted?

8. How do 2 Peter 3:9 and Romans 2:4 help explain why God sometimes waits to judge?

9. Have you ever struggled with seeing injustice go on and God not seem to act? What did you do with that struggle?

10. Job saw the poor clearly and cared for them. Who are the poor and helpless around you, and what is one way you could help them this week?

Chapter 25: Bildad's Third Speech

Scripture

25:1-6 And Bildad the Shuhite answered and said, "Dominion and dread ***are*** with Him; He makes peace in His heights. Is there a number to His troops? And on whom does His light not rise? And how can man be righteous with God? And how can one born of a woman be pure? Look, even to the moon, and it does not shine, and the stars are not pure in His eyes; how much less man, a maggot, and a son of man, a worm!"

Chapter 25 Preview

This is the shortest speech in the book. Bildad speaks only six verses, and it is the last thing any of the three friends will say. He does not answer Job's question about why the wicked prosper. He does not repeat the charges Eliphaz made. He simply speaks of God's greatness and man's smallness. God rules over all, His armies cannot be counted, and His light rises on everyone. How can a man be righteous before God? Even the moon and stars are not pure in His sight, so how much less man, who is a maggot and a worm.

What Bildad says about God is true. What he says about man is partly true and partly cruel. And it is not an answer to anything Job has asked. The friends have run out of words. After this, Zophar does not speak at all, and the three friends fall silent until the LORD speaks to them in chapter 42.

Chapter 25 Study

25:1 *And Bildad the Shuhite answered and said,*

"And Bildad the Shuhite answered and said." Bildad spoke in chapters 8 and 18. This is his third speech, and it is very short.

In the first two rounds, each of the three friends spoke and Job answered each one. In this third round, Eliphaz has spoken (chapter 22), and now Bildad speaks only briefly. Zophar, who should come next, never speaks. Why? Scripture does not tell us. Most likely the friends simply had nothing left to say. They had one idea, that suffering always comes from sin, and Job had answered it every time. When an argument has no more to give, it often grows shorter and louder, or it falls silent. Here it does both.

Some Bible teachers think that part of Job's speech in chapters 26 and 27 was first spoken by Bildad or Zophar, and that the order of the speeches was mixed up long ago when the book was copied. They point out that a few passages in chapters 24 and 27 sound more like the friends than like Job. But there is no ancient copy of Job that has a different order, and the passages can be read as Job's own words. I take the text as it stands. The silence of Zophar is part of the story: the friends' case has run dry.

25:2-3 *"Dominion and dread **are** with Him; He makes peace in His heights. Is there a number to His troops? And on whom does His light not rise?*

"Dominion and dread are with Him; He makes peace in His heights." God rules over everything, and all creation stands in awe of Him. "He makes peace in His heights" means that in heaven, where God rules, all is order and peace under His command. Some think Bildad is thinking of God putting down rebellion in the heavens, bringing order where there was none.

"Is there a number to His troops? And on whom does His light not rise?" God's armies, the angels and the stars, cannot be counted. Isaiah says God brings out the stars by number and calls them all by name (Isaiah 40:26). And His light rises on everyone. Jesus said the Father makes His sun rise on the evil and the good (Matthew 5:45).

All of this is true, and it is beautiful. But Job had never denied it. Job himself had spoken of God's power more fully than Bildad (9:4-10; 12:13-25). Bildad is telling Job what he already knows.

25:4 *And how can man be righteous with God? And how can one born of a woman be pure?*

"And how can man be righteous with God? And how can one born of a woman be pure?"

This is the heart of Bildad's speech, and it is the same question that has been asked several times in the book. Eliphaz asked it in his vision (4:17) and again in 15:14. Job himself asked it: "how can man be righteous with God?" (9:2). Bildad now uses almost the same words.

It is a true and important question. No human being is pure before a holy God. Paul says, "all sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Job knew this. He never claimed to be sinless. He claimed to be innocent of the charges his friends made, which is a different thing.

But what is the answer to Bildad's question? Bildad does not give one. He only uses the question to make man feel small. The Bible does give an answer, and it is the gospel. Man cannot make himself righteous before God. But God can declare him righteous. Paul goes on, "being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24). And again, "having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). The answer to "How can man be righteous with God?" is not that he can't, but that God has made a way, through the Redeemer Job longed for (19:25).

Job, like Abraham, was right with God by faith. God called him "blameless and upright" (1:1, 8), not because he had never sinned, but because he trusted God and walked with Him, offering sacrifices for sin (1:5).

25:5-6 *Look, even to the moon, and it does not shine, and the stars are not pure in His eyes; how much less man, a maggot, and a son of man, a worm!"*

"Look, even to the moon, and it does not shine, and the stars are not pure in His eyes." Compared to God's glory, even the moon seems dark, and the stars seem dim and unclean. Eliphaz had said the same thing about the heavens and the angels (4:18; 15:15).

"How much less man, a maggot, and a son of man, a worm!" If the moon and stars are not pure before God, what is man? A maggot. A worm.

Is this true? In one sense, yes. Compared to God, we are very small. David, in the psalm that Jesus quoted from the cross, said, "I am a worm and not a man" (Psalm 22:6). God Himself calls Israel "worm of Jacob" in Isaiah 41:14, but notice how He says it: "Do not be afraid, worm of Jacob, men of Israel; I will help you, declares the LORD, and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel." When God calls His people small, He follows it with a promise of help.

Bildad does not. He calls man a maggot and stops. And think of the man he is saying it to. Job is sitting in the ashes with worms in his sores (7:5). Job had called the maggot his mother and his sister (17:14). Bildad's words land on a man who already felt like a worm. That is not comfort. It is one more blow.

There is a true humility that comes from seeing God's greatness. Isaiah saw the Lord and said, "Woe to me!" (Isaiah 6:5). Job will say something like that in 42:6. But true humility before God always leads to grace, not to despair. Bildad gave Job the first half of the truth without the second. When we speak to people who are hurting, we should never stop at telling them they are small. We must go on to say that God is near, and that He helps the small.

Chapter 25 Summary

Bildad gave the last and shortest speech of the three friends. He spoke of God's dominion and the awe He inspires, His countless armies, and His light that rises on all. Then he asked how a man can be righteous before God or one born of a woman be pure, since even the moon and stars are not pure in His sight, and man is only a maggot and a worm. What Bildad said about God was true, but he did not answer anything Job had said, and he spoke of man's smallness to a suffering man without any word of grace. The question "How can man be righteous with God?" is answered in the gospel: we are justified freely by God's grace through the redemption in Christ Jesus. After this speech, Zophar did not speak, and the friends fell silent.

Chapter 25 Study Questions

1. How long is Bildad's third speech compared to his earlier ones (chapters 8 and 18)? Which friend does not speak at all in the third round?

2. What did Bildad say about God in verses 2-3?

3. What question did Bildad ask in verse 4? Where else in Job is the same question asked? (4:17; 9:2; 15:14)

4. What did Bildad compare man to in verse 6?

5. Why were Bildad's words in verse 6 especially painful for Job? (7:5)

6. How do Romans 3:23-24 and 5:1 answer Bildad's question in verse 4?

7. How does God speak to His people in Isaiah 41:14 when He calls them a worm? How is that different from Bildad?

8. Why do you think the friends ran out of things to say?

9. Has seeing God's greatness ever made you feel small? Did it lead you to despair, or to grace?

10. When you speak to someone who is hurting, how can you make sure you do not stop at half the truth?

Chapter 26: Job Answers Bildad: The Greatness of God

Scripture

26:1-14 And Job answered and said, "How you have helped ***him who has*** no power! ***How*** you have saved the arm ***that has*** no strength! How you have counseled ***him who has*** no wisdom, and made known sound wisdom in abundance! With whom have you declared words? And whose breath has gone out from you? The shades are made to tremble beneath the waters, and those who dwell in them. Sheol ***is*** naked before Him, and ***there is*** no covering for Abaddon. He stretches out the north over formlessness; He hangs the earth on nothing. He binds up waters in His clouds, and the cloud is not split open under them. He encloses the face of the throne; He spreads His cloud over it. He has drawn a circle, a limit, on the face of the waters, to the end of light with darkness. The pillars of ***the*** heavens tremble, and they are astonished at His rebuke. By His power He stirred up the sea, and by His understanding He shattered Rahab. By His breath the heavens ***are*** clearness; His hand pierced the fleeing serpent. Look, these ***are*** the ends of His ways, and what a whisper of a word we hear of Him! And the thunder of His mighty deeds, who will understand?"

Chapter 26 Preview

Job answers Bildad's short speech with sharp words. What help have you given to a man with no strength? What wisdom have you given to a man who needs it? Whose spirit was speaking through you? Bildad had spoken of God's greatness to put Job in his place. Now Job shows that he knows God's greatness far better than Bildad does.

In one of the most beautiful passages in the book, Job describes God's power over the world of the dead, over the earth He hangs on nothing, over the clouds that hold the rain, over the boundary of the sea, the pillars of heaven, and the proud powers of the deep. Then he says something that should humble every one of us: all of this is only "the ends of His ways." It is only a whisper of who God is. If this is the whisper, who could ever understand the thunder of His power?

Chapter 26 Study

26:1-4 *And Job answered and said, "How you have helped **him who has** no power! **How** you have saved the arm **that has** no strength! How you have counseled **him who has** no wisdom, and made known sound wisdom in abundance! With whom have you declared words? And whose breath has gone out from you?*

"And Job answered and said." Job now answers Bildad. His answer runs through chapter 31, with a new start at 27:1 and again at 29:1.

"How you have helped him who has no power! How you have saved the arm that has no strength!" Job speaks with bitter irony. Bildad, you have been such a help to a weak man like me! Of course, he means the opposite. Bildad had not helped at all.

"How you have counseled him who has no wisdom, and made known sound wisdom in abundance!" Bildad thought Job needed wisdom. Job says, with an edge in his voice, What a lot of wisdom you have given me! In six verses Bildad had told Job only what he already knew.

"With whom have you declared words? And whose breath has gone out from you?" Who are you speaking to? Do you think I need to be told that God is great? And whose spirit is speaking through you? Is it God's, or only your own? Eliphaz had claimed a spirit spoke to him in the night (4:15-16). Job asks where the friends' words are really coming from.

This is a fair question for anyone who claims to speak for God. Is it God's Word we are giving, or our own opinion with God's name on it? Words that do not help the weak, and that do not come from God's Spirit, are empty no matter how wise they sound.

26:5-6 *The shades are made to tremble beneath the waters, and those who dwell in them. Sheol **is** naked before Him, and **there is** no covering for Abaddon.*

Now Job begins to speak of God's greatness himself, and he goes deeper than Bildad did. Bildad spoke of the heavens. Job begins with the depths.

"The shades are made to tremble beneath the waters, and those who dwell in them." The "shades" are the spirits of the dead. In the Hebrew picture of the world, the realm of the dead lay deep below the earth and the seas. Job says even the dead tremble before God. His power reaches places no living man can go.

"Sheol is naked before Him, and there is no covering for Abaddon." Sheol is the Hebrew name for the place of the dead. Abaddon means destruction, and here it is another name for the same place. Nothing is hidden from God, not even the grave. Proverbs says the same: "Sheol and Abaddon are before the LORD" (Proverbs 15:11). In Revelation, Abaddon is the name of the angel of the abyss (Revelation 9:11).

This matters for Job. He has been longing for death and has wondered what lies beyond it (3:13-19; 14:13-14). Here he says that the world of the dead is not outside God's rule. It lies open before Him. Death does not take us out of God's sight. For the believer, it takes us into His presence (2 Corinthians 5:8).

26:7 *He stretches out the north over formlessness; He hangs the earth on nothing.*

"He stretches out the north over formlessness; He hangs the earth on nothing."

"The north" may mean the northern sky, which seems to turn around a fixed point, or the high mountains of the north where many ancient peoples pictured the gods living. "Formlessness" is the Hebrew word tohu, the same word used in Genesis 1:2, where the earth was "formlessness and emptiness." God stretches out the sky over empty space.

"He hangs the earth on nothing." This is a remarkable line. Many ancient peoples believed the earth rested on something: pillars, or a great animal, or the back of a giant. Job says it hangs on nothing. God holds it in place by His own power.

We should be careful not to make Job into a modern scientist. He was speaking in poetry about God's power. But it is striking that his words fit what we now know: the earth does hang in space, held by forces God set in place. The New Testament tells us who holds it there. Christ is "upholding all things by the word of His power" (Hebrews 1:3), and "in Him all things hold together" (Colossians 1:17).

26:8-10 *He binds up waters in His clouds, and the cloud is not split open under them. He encloses the face of the throne; He spreads His cloud over it. He has drawn a circle, a limit, on the face of the waters, to the end of light with darkness.*

"He binds up waters in His clouds, and the cloud is not split open under them." Think about a cloud. It holds tons of water, and yet it floats. It does not burst open and pour out all at once. Job sees God's hand in that. God wraps up the rain in the clouds like water in a skin bottle.

"He encloses the face of the throne; He spreads His cloud over it." God hides His throne behind the clouds. We cannot see Him, but He is there. Many versions read this as God covering the face of the full moon with clouds. The Hebrew words for "throne" and "full moon" are very close. Either way, God controls what we can and cannot see in the sky.

"He has drawn a circle, a limit, on the face of the waters, to the end of light with darkness." God set a boundary for the sea. From the shore, the horizon looks like a circle where the sea meets the sky, and where light meets darkness at the edge of the world. Proverbs speaks of God setting "for the sea its limit" (Proverbs 8:29), and the LORD will say the same thing to Job from the storm (38:8-11).

26:11-13 *The pillars of **the** heavens tremble, and they are astonished at His rebuke. By His power He stirred up the sea, and by His understanding He shattered Rahab. By His breath the heavens **are** clearness; His hand pierced the fleeing serpent.*

"The pillars of the heavens tremble, and they are astonished at His rebuke." The "pillars of the heavens" are probably the great mountains that seem to hold up the sky. When God speaks in thunder and earthquake, even they shake.

"By His power He stirred up the sea, and by His understanding He shattered Rahab." The sea in the Bible often stands for chaos and danger. God rules it. Rahab here is not the woman of Jericho in Joshua 2. It is a different Hebrew word meaning pride or storming. In Scripture it is used as a name for a great power of the sea that God crushed, and also as a name for Egypt (Psalm 87:4; Isaiah 30:7). Psalm 89:10 says, "You crushed Rahab like one slain."

"By His breath the heavens are clearness; His hand pierced the fleeing serpent." God blows away the storm clouds and the sky is clear again. And His hand pierced "the fleeing serpent." Isaiah uses the same words for Leviathan, "Leviathan the fleeing serpent," whom the LORD will slay in the last day (Isaiah 27:1).

What are we to make of Rahab and the serpent? The nations around Israel told myths about gods who fought sea monsters to create the world. Some scholars think Job and the prophets borrowed those stories. I do not believe the Bible teaches those myths. When the Bible uses these names, it

is using pictures that people of that day knew, to say that the true God has no rivals. The sea, the storm and every proud power, whether in nature or among nations or in the spiritual world, are under His hand. He does not struggle to win. He rebukes, and they are shattered. Many Bible teachers also see in the serpent a picture of Satan, "the ancient serpent" (Revelation 12:9), whom God will finally crush.

26:14 *Look, these **are** the ends of His ways, and what a whisper of a word we hear of Him! And the thunder of His mighty deeds, who will understand?"*

"Look, these are the ends of His ways, and what a whisper of a word we hear of Him! And the thunder of His mighty deeds, who will understand?"

This is one of the great verses in Job. After describing the dead trembling, the earth hanging on nothing, the clouds holding the rain, the sea held at its limit, the mountains shaking and the proud powers crushed, Job says: and all of this is only the edges. "The ends of His ways" means the outer fringe, the hem of His garment. What we see of God in creation is only a whisper.

If all of creation is only a whisper of God's power, what would His thunder be like? Who could understand it? Job is saying that God is far greater than anything we could ever describe. Bildad thought he could sum God up in six verses. Job says no one can sum Him up at all.

This should change the way we think about God. We often make God small in our minds. We think of Him as if He were a slightly bigger version of ourselves. But the God who made the stars and holds the earth in space is beyond anything we can imagine. Paul ended his great explanation of the gospel with the same kind of awe: "O depth of riches and of wisdom and of knowledge of God!" (Romans 11:33).

And yet this great God speaks. Job heard only a whisper. In a few chapters he will hear God speak out of the storm. And in the fullness of time God spoke to us most clearly of all, "in a Son" (Hebrews 1:2). The God whose thunder no one can understand came near to us in Jesus, so that we could know Him.

Chapter 26 Summary

Job answered Bildad with irony, asking what help or wisdom Bildad had given to a weak man, and whose spirit was speaking through him. Then Job described God's greatness more fully than Bildad had. The spirits of the dead tremble before God, and Sheol and Abaddon lie naked before Him. He stretches out the sky over empty space and hangs the earth on nothing. He binds the rain in the clouds, hides His throne, and draws the boundary of the sea. The pillars of heaven tremble at His rebuke, and by His power He stirs the sea, shatters Rahab, clears the heavens and pierces the fleeing serpent. And all of this, Job said, is only the edges of His ways, a whisper of who He is. No one can understand the thunder of His power. That great God has spoken to us in His Son.

Chapter 26 Study Questions

1. What did Job say, with irony, about the help Bildad had given him? (26:2-3)

2. What did Job ask about where Bildad's words were coming from? (26:4)

3. What did Job say about Sheol and Abaddon before God? (26:6)

4. What does God hang the earth on, according to verse 7? How do Hebrews 1:3 and Colossians 1:17 tell us who holds it?

5. What does God do with the clouds and the sea in verses 8-10?

6. What did Job say God did to the sea, Rahab and the fleeing serpent? (26:12-13)

7. What did Job call everything he had described in verse 14?

8. If creation is only a whisper of God's power, what does that tell you about how great He is?

9. In what ways do you tend to make God small in your mind?

10. Job knew God's greatness and still suffered. How can knowing how great God is help you trust Him in your own trouble?

Chapter 27: Job Holds Fast to His Integrity

Scripture

27:1-12 And Job again took up his discourse and said, "***As*** God lives, ***who*** has taken away my right, and the Almighty, ***who*** has made my soul bitter, for all the while my breath ***is*** in me, and the spirit of God ***is*** in my nostrils, my lips will not speak injustice, and my tongue will not utter deceit. Far be it from me that I should declare you right; until I expire I will not put away my integrity from me. I have held fast to my righteousness, and I will not let it go; my heart will not reproach ***me*** for any of my days. Let my enemy be like the wicked, and the one who rises up against me like the unjust. For what ***is*** the hope of the godless when He cuts ***him*** off, when God takes away his life? Will God hear his cry when distress comes on him? Or will he take delight in the Almighty? Will he call on God at all times? I will instruct you in the hand of God; what ***is*** with the Almighty I will not hide. Look, you, all of you, have seen ***it***; and why ***is*** this, ***that*** you become vain ***with*** vanity?

27:13-23 This ***is*** the portion of a wicked man with God, and the inheritance of ruthless ***men***, ***which*** they receive from the Almighty. If his sons multiply, ***it is*** for the sword, and his descendants will not be satisfied ***with*** bread. His survivors will be buried by death, and his widows will not weep. Though he heaps up silver like the dust, and prepares clothing like the clay, he may prepare ***it***, and the righteous will wear ***it***, and the innocent will divide the silver. He has built his house like the moth, and like a booth ***that*** a watchman has made. He lies down rich, and he will not be gathered; he opens his eyes, and he is not. Terrors overtake him like the waters; at night a storm-wind steals him away. An east wind lifts him up, and he goes, and it whirls him away from his place. And it throws ***itself*** at him and does not spare; from its hand he surely flees. ***One*** claps their hands at him, and hisses at him from his place.

Chapter 27 Preview

Job "again took up his discourse." Zophar does not speak, so Job goes on. He begins with an oath, swearing by the living God that as long as he has breath, he will not lie, and he will not admit to sins he did not commit. "Until I expire I will not put away my integrity from me." This is the very thing Satan said Job would give up (1:11; 2:5), and the very thing Job's wife told him to let go (2:9). Job holds on.

Then Job speaks of the end of the wicked. What hope does a godless man have when God takes his life? Will God hear him when trouble comes? Job describes how the wicked man's children fall by the sword, his silver ends up with the righteous, his house is as flimsy as a moth's cocoon, and terrors sweep him away in the night. These words sound like the friends' speeches, and teachers read them in different ways. Read as Job's words, they show that Job never stopped believing God judges the wicked. What he denied was that his own suffering proved he was one of them.

Chapter 27 Study

27:1 *And Job again took up his discourse and said,*

"And Job again took up his discourse and said." "Discourse" here is the Hebrew word mashal, which can mean a proverb, a wise saying, or a formal speech. Job is now making a solemn, formal statement. It is the third round, and the friends have nothing more to say. Zophar's turn has come and gone in silence. So Job speaks again. This phrase comes again in 29:1, marking the start of Job's final defense.

27:2-4 *"**As** God lives, **who** has taken away my right, and the Almighty, **who** has made my soul bitter, for all the while my breath **is** in me, and the spirit of God **is** in my nostrils, my lips will not speak injustice, and my tongue will not utter deceit.*

"As God lives, who has taken away my right, and the Almighty, who has made my soul bitter." Job takes an oath. "As God lives" was the strongest way to swear that something was true. Notice the strange tension. Job swears by the very God who he says has taken away his right and made his soul bitter. He feels God has wronged him, yet God is still the One he swears by. He has not turned to any other god. He has not given up on the living God.

"For all the while my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils." Job knows that his life is God's gift. God breathed the breath of life into man (Genesis 2:7). As long as that breath is in him, he makes this vow.

"My lips will not speak injustice, and my tongue will not utter deceit." Job will not lie. And the lie the friends wanted from him was a confession of sins he had not committed. To say he had sinned in those ways when he had not would be deceit.

This is an important lesson. Sometimes people think the humble thing is to admit to anything, just to keep the peace. But false confession is not humility. It is lying. Job would rather suffer than lie, even if the lie would make his friends happy.

27:5-6 *Far be it from me that I should declare you right; until I expire I will not put away my integrity from me. I have held fast to my righteousness, and I will not let it go; my heart will not reproach **me** for any of my days.*

"Far be it from me that I should declare you right; until I expire I will not put away my integrity from me." Job will not agree with his friends that he is a wicked man. He will not say they are right when they are wrong.

"Integrity" is the key word of the whole book. In chapter 2 the LORD said, "he is still holding fast to his integrity" (2:3). Job's wife asked him, "Are you still holding fast to your integrity? Curse God and die" (2:9). Now, after all the speeches, Job says it himself: until I die, I will not let go of my integrity. Satan had said Job's faith would break. It has bent, and it has cried out, but it has not broken.

"I have held fast to my righteousness, and I will not let it go; my heart will not reproach me for any of my days." Job's conscience is clear. He does not mean he has never sinned. He has offered sacrifices for sin (1:5), and he has said that no one is pure before God (14:4). He means that his heart does not accuse him of the things his friends charge him with. He has walked with God honestly.

Peter says believers should keep "a good conscience, so that in that in which they speak against you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame" (1 Peter 3:16). A clear conscience does not keep people from accusing us. But it lets us stand firm when they do.

Still, we will see that Job's holding fast to his righteousness had a danger in it. Elihu was angry because Job "justified himself more than God" (32:2), and the LORD will ask Job, "Will you condemn Me so that you may be justified?" (40:8). Job was right not to confess false sins. But in defending himself, he came close to accusing God. That is where he will need to repent (42:6).

27:7-10 *Let my enemy be like the wicked, and the one who rises up against me like the unjust. For what **is** the hope of the godless when He cuts **him** off, when God takes away his life? Will God hear his cry when distress comes on him? Or will he take delight in the Almighty? Will he call on God at all times?*

"Let my enemy be like the wicked, and the one who rises up against me like the unjust." This is a strong statement. Job says: the friends have treated me as the wicked man. But they are the ones in the wrong, and let my accusers be treated like the wicked. In that culture, to falsely accuse someone of a crime was to deserve the punishment of that crime (Deuteronomy 19:16-19).

"For what is the hope of the godless when He cuts him off, when God takes away his life?" Here is why Job will not take the path of the godless. When death comes, the godless man has no hope. "Godless" means one who does not fear God, a hypocrite. Bildad had said the hope of the godless perishes (8:13). Job agrees.

"Will God hear his cry when distress comes on him? Or will he take delight in the Almighty? Will he call on God at all times?" The godless man only calls on God when he is in trouble, and then God does not hear. He takes no delight in God. He does not pray at all times.

This is a powerful point when we remember Job's own life. Job has been crying out to God the whole book. He calls on God at all times. Even in his anger, he talks to God, not about Him behind His back. That is what a godless man does not do. Job's constant prayer, even his bitter prayer, is evidence that he is not godless. Satan said that if Job lost everything, he would curse God. Instead, Job never stopped calling on Him.

27:11-12 *I will instruct you in the hand of God; what **is** with the Almighty I will not hide. Look, you, all of you, have seen **it**; and why **is** this, **that** you become vain **with** vanity?*

"I will instruct you in the hand of God; what is with the Almighty I will not hide." Job now says he will teach his friends about God's ways. They had been lecturing him. Now he will teach them.

"Look, you, all of you, have seen it; and why is this, that you become vain with vanity?" You have all seen how God deals with the wicked. So why have you filled your speeches with empty nonsense? "Vain with vanity" means empty talk, as empty as breath.

What has Job seen that they have also seen? The next verses tell us.

27:13-15 *This **is** the portion of a wicked man with God, and the inheritance of ruthless **men**, **which** they receive from the Almighty. If his sons multiply, **it is** for the sword, and his descendants will not be satisfied **with** bread. His survivors will be buried by death, and his widows will not weep.*

"This is the portion of a wicked man with God, and the inheritance of ruthless men, which they receive from the Almighty." Job describes what God has in store for the wicked. These words are very close to Zophar's words at the end of his second speech: "This is the portion of a wicked man from God" (20:29).

"If his sons multiply, it is for the sword, and his descendants will not be satisfied with bread." His children may be many, but they will die in war or go hungry.

"His survivors will be buried by death, and his widows will not weep." Those of his family who survive the sword will die of disease, perhaps plague, which in those days was often called "death." His widows will not even mourn for him. Perhaps they will be glad he is gone, or too broken to weep.

How do we read verses 13-23? They sound so much like the friends that, as in chapter 24, Bible teachers have read them in different ways. Some think this is the missing third speech of Zophar, which was moved by mistake into Job's speech long ago. Others think Job is repeating his friends' view to show that he knows it, before answering it. But the simplest reading, taking the text as it stands, is that these are Job's own words. Job has never said God does not punish the wicked. In chapter 21 he said the wicked often prosper for a long time, but he never said they escape God. Here he says what they will receive in the end, "with God." The difference between Job and his friends was never about whether God judges the wicked. It was about whether every sufferer is wicked.

27:16-19 *Though he heaps up silver like the dust, and prepares clothing like the clay, he may prepare **it**, and the righteous will wear **it**, and the innocent will divide the silver. He has built his house like the moth, and like a booth **that** a watchman has made. He lies down rich, and he will not be gathered; he opens his eyes, and he is not.*

"Though he heaps up silver like the dust, and prepares clothing like the clay, he may prepare it, and the righteous will wear it, and the innocent will divide the silver." In those days wealth was often stored as silver and fine clothing. The wicked man piles them up like dirt. But in the end, someone else gets them. Proverbs says, "the wealth of a sinner is stored up for the righteous" (Proverbs 13:22).

"He has built his house like the moth, and like a booth that a watchman has made." A moth's cocoon is fragile. A watchman's booth was a rough shelter of branches put up in a field at harvest

time and left to fall apart afterward. The wicked man thinks his house is strong, but it will not last.

"He lies down rich, and he will not be gathered; he opens his eyes, and he is not." He goes to bed rich, and when he wakes up, his wealth is gone, or he himself is gone. "He will not be gathered" may mean he will not be gathered to his fathers in an honored burial.

Jesus told a parable about a rich man who built bigger barns and said he could take life easy. "But God said to him, 'Fool! This night they are demanding your soul from you; and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?'" (Luke 12:20). Wealth gathered without God is like a moth's house. It does not last the night.

27:20-23 *Terrors overtake him like the waters; at night a storm-wind steals him away. An east wind lifts him up, and he goes, and it whirls him away from his place. And it throws **itself** at him and does not spare; from its hand he surely flees. **One** claps their hands at him, and hisses at him from his place.*

"Terrors overtake him like the waters; at night a storm-wind steals him away." Sudden terror sweeps over him like a flash flood. A storm carries him off in the night.

"An east wind lifts him up, and he goes, and it whirls him away from his place." The east wind was the hot, dry wind off the desert. It could wither crops in a day. Here it sweeps the wicked man away from his place, and he is never seen there again.

"And it throws itself at him and does not spare; from its hand he surely flees." The storm hurls itself at him without mercy, and he tries desperately to run.

"One claps their hands at him, and hisses at him from his place." Clapping and hissing were signs of scorn. When the wicked man falls, people mock him. Lamentations uses the same signs for those who mocked Jerusalem when it fell (Lamentations 2:15).

It is worth remembering that a great wind had struck the house where Job's children were feasting (1:19). Job knew what a storm could do better than anyone. Yet he does not say that the storm that killed his children proves he was wicked. He knows the wicked will face God's storm in the end, and he knows that he himself is not wicked. Both things are true. The friends could only hold one of them.

For us, the lesson is that God's judgment on the wicked is sure, even if it is slow. And the only safe place from that storm is in Christ, who took the storm of God's judgment on Himself at the cross for all who trust Him (Romans 5:9).

Chapter 27 Summary

Job took up his discourse again when Zophar did not speak. He swore by the living God, who he felt had taken away his right, that as long as he had breath he would not speak deceit or admit to sins he had not committed. Until he died, he would not let go of his integrity, and his heart did not accuse him. Job said the godless have no hope when God takes their life, and God does not hear

them in distress, because they never delight in God or call on Him at all times. Then Job described the portion of the wicked: their children fall to the sword, their silver goes to the righteous, their house is as flimsy as a moth's, and terrors and the east wind sweep them away while people clap and hiss at them. Teachers read these verses in different ways, but as Job's words they show that he always believed God judges the wicked in the end. He only denied that his own suffering proved he was wicked.

Chapter 27 Study Questions

1. By whom did Job swear in verse 2, and what did he say God had done to him?

2. What did Job promise his lips and tongue would not do? (27:4)

3. What did Job say he would not put away until he died? (27:5) Where else in Job is the word "integrity" used? (2:3, 9)

4. What did Job say about his heart and conscience in verse 6? How does 1 Peter 3:16 speak of a good conscience?

5. What three questions did Job ask about the godless man in verses 8-10?

6. What happens to the wicked man's silver and clothing, according to verses 16-17?

7. What did Job compare the wicked man's house to in verse 18? How does Jesus' parable in Luke 12:16-21 teach the same lesson?

8. Why would it have been wrong for Job to confess sins he had not committed just to satisfy his friends?

9. Job kept calling on God, even in his anger. Do you call on God at all times, or only when you are in trouble?

10. What does it mean for you to "hold fast" to your integrity when others misunderstand or accuse you?

Chapter 28: Where Can Wisdom Be Found?

Scripture

28:1-11 For there is a mine for the silver, and a place for the gold ***which*** they refine. Iron is taken from ***the*** dust, and stone is poured out ***as*** copper. He puts an end to the darkness, and to every outermost limit he is searching out the stone of gloom and deep darkness. He breaks open a shaft away from ***where*** the sojourner ***is***; the ones forgotten by ***the*** foot, they hang down, away from mortals they swing. The earth, from it comes forth bread, and under it is turned over like fire. Its stones ***are*** a place of sapphire, and dusts of gold ***belong*** to it. A path ***which*** the bird of prey does not know, and the eye of the falcon has not caught sight of it. The sons of pride have not trodden it; the fierce lion has not passed over it. He stretches out his hand on the flint; he overturns mountains from ***the*** root. He splits open channels in the rocks, and his eye sees every precious thing. He binds up rivers from weeping, and the hidden thing he brings out to light.

28:12-28 And the wisdom, from where will it be found? And where ***is*** this, the place of understanding? A mortal does not know its value, and it is not found in the land of the living. The deep says, 'It ***is*** not in me,' and the sea says, 'It ***is*** not with me.' Fine gold will not be given in its place, and silver will not be weighed out ***as*** its price. It will not be valued with the gold of Ophir, with precious onyx and sapphire. Gold and glass will not compare with it, and its exchange ***is not*** a vessel of pure gold. Corals and crystal will not be mentioned, and the price of wisdom ***is*** above pearls. The topaz of Cush will not compare with it; it will not be valued with pure gold. And the wisdom, from where does it come? And where ***is*** this, the place of understanding? And it has been concealed from the eyes of every living ***thing***, and from the birds of the heavens it has been hidden. Abaddon and death say, 'With our ears we have heard a report of it.' God understands its way, and He knows its place. For He looks to the ends of the earth; He sees under all the heavens, to make a weight for the wind, and He has measured out the waters by measure. When He made a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunders, then He saw it and recounted it; He established it, and also He searched it out. And He said to mankind, 'Look, the fear of the Lord, that ***is*** wisdom, and to turn aside from evil ***is*** understanding.'"

Chapter 28 Preview

After all the arguing, the book pauses for a poem. The tone changes completely. There is no anger, no accusation and no complaint. Instead there is a quiet, beautiful question: where can wisdom be found? Men are very clever at finding hidden things. They dig mines deep into the earth, cut shafts where no traveler goes, and hang on ropes in the dark to bring up silver, gold, iron, copper and sapphires. No bird or lion has ever seen the paths miners travel. Man can bring hidden things to light.

But wisdom is another matter. No one knows where it lives. The deep says it is not there, and the sea says it is not with them. It cannot be bought with gold, silver, onyx, coral, crystal or pearls. Even death has only heard a rumor of it. Only God knows the way to wisdom, because He made the world and set the weight of the wind and the path of the lightning. And He has told mankind where it is found: "Look, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn aside from evil is

understanding." This chapter is the hinge of the book. The friends thought they had wisdom. Job has been searching for it. Here we are told where it really is.

Chapter 28 Study

28:1-2 *For there is a mine for the silver, and a place for the gold **which** they refine. Iron is taken from **the** dust, and stone is poured out **as** copper.*

Who is speaking in chapter 28? The chapter is part of the speech Job began in 27:1, and nothing in the text marks a new speaker. So it is most natural to read it as Job's words. But it is so different in tone from the rest of his speeches that many teachers believe it is a pause in the story, a poem from the author of the book that steps back and sums up the whole debate before Job's last defense and the speeches of Elihu and the LORD. Either way, it is God's Word, and its message is clear.

"For there is a mine for the silver, and a place for the gold which they refine." The poem begins with mining. Men know where to find silver. They know where gold is found and how to refine it.

"Iron is taken from the dust, and stone is poured out as copper." Iron is dug from the ground. Copper ore is melted down in a furnace until the metal pours out. Ancient people were skilled miners. The Sinai peninsula and the Arabah, south of the Dead Sea, had copper mines worked long before the days of Moses.

28:3-4 *He puts an end to the darkness, and to every outermost limit he is searching out the stone of gloom and deep darkness. He breaks open a shaft away from **where** the sojourner **is**; the ones forgotten by **the** foot, they hang down, away from mortals they swing.*

"He puts an end to the darkness, and to every outermost limit he is searching out the stone of gloom and deep darkness." "He" here is the miner. He carries a lamp into the earth, pushing back the darkness. He searches to the farthest limits of the mine for ore hidden in the blackness.

"He breaks open a shaft away from where the sojourner is; the ones forgotten by the foot, they hang down, away from mortals they swing." The miner cuts a shaft far from where people travel. Then the miners are let down on ropes, hanging and swinging in the dark, far from other people, "forgotten by the foot," in places no one walks.

This is a picture of human skill and daring. People will go to great lengths, and great danger, to find something valuable.

28:5-6 *The earth, from it comes forth bread, and under it is turned over like fire. Its stones **are** a place of sapphire, and dusts of gold **belong** to it.*

"The earth, from it comes forth bread, and under it is turned over like fire." On top of the earth, farmers grow grain for bread. Underneath, the miners turn the earth upside down, perhaps with fire, which was used to heat rock so it would crack. Or the poet may be thinking of the heat deep in the earth. The same ground that feeds us on top hides treasure below.

"Its stones are a place of sapphire, and dusts of gold belong to it." Deep in the rocks are precious stones and specks of gold. The word translated sapphire may mean the blue stone we call lapis lazuli, which often has flecks of gold in it.

28:7-8 *A path **which** the bird of prey does not know, and the eye of the falcon has not caught sight of it. The sons of pride have not trodden it; the fierce lion has not passed over it.*

"A path which the bird of prey does not know, and the eye of the falcon has not caught sight of it." Birds of prey have the sharpest eyes in creation. A falcon can spot a mouse from high in the sky. But no bird has ever seen the paths deep under the earth where miners go.

"The sons of pride have not trodden it; the fierce lion has not passed over it." "The sons of pride" are the proud, strong beasts. The lion, the king of beasts, has never walked those tunnels. Man goes where no animal can.

28:9-11 *He stretches out his hand on the flint; he overturns mountains from **the** root. He splits open channels in the rocks, and his eye sees every precious thing. He binds up rivers from weeping, and the hidden thing he brings out to light.*

"He stretches out his hand on the flint; he overturns mountains from the root." The miner attacks the hardest rock. He tunnels under mountains and brings them down.

"He splits open channels in the rocks, and his eye sees every precious thing." He cuts tunnels through the rock, and his eye spots every gem.

"He binds up rivers from weeping, and the hidden thing he brings out to light." He dams up the underground streams that drip and trickle into the mine, so he can keep working. And he brings what was hidden out into the light.

The point of verses 1 to 11 is this: man is amazing. He can find almost anything. He can dig to the roots of mountains and bring up treasure that no eagle or lion has ever seen. That is still true today. Men have walked on the moon, split the atom, and mapped the human body down to its smallest parts. But the next verse asks a question all our skill cannot answer.

28:12-14 *And the wisdom, from where will it be found? And where **is** this, the place of understanding? A mortal does not know its value, and it is not found in the land of the living. The deep says, 'It **is** not in me,' and the sea says, 'It **is** not with me.'*

"And the wisdom, from where will it be found? And where is this, the place of understanding?" This is the question of the whole chapter, and it is the question of the whole book of Job. Man can find gold. Can he find wisdom?

Wisdom in the Bible is not just knowing a lot of facts. It is the skill of living rightly, of seeing life as God sees it and knowing how to walk in it. Job and his friends have been arguing about wisdom for twenty-four chapters. Each one thinks he has it. Who really does?

"A mortal does not know its value, and it is not found in the land of the living." Man does not even know what wisdom is worth, and he cannot find it anywhere on earth by searching.

"The deep says, 'It is not in me,' and the sea says, 'It is not with me.'" The poet pictures the great deep and the sea speaking. Search the bottom of the ocean, and you will not find wisdom there.

28:15-19 *Fine gold will not be given in its place, and silver will not be weighed out* ***as*** *its price. It will not be valued with the gold of Ophir, with precious onyx and sapphire. Gold and glass will not compare with it, and its exchange* ***is not*** *a vessel of pure gold. Corals and crystal will not be mentioned, and the price of wisdom* ***is*** *above pearls. The topaz of Cush will not compare with it; it will not be valued with pure gold.*

Now the poem says that wisdom cannot be bought.

"Fine gold will not be given in its place, and silver will not be weighed out as its price." In those days there were no coins. Silver was weighed out on scales to pay for things. But no amount of silver will buy wisdom.

"It will not be valued with the gold of Ophir, with precious onyx and sapphire." Ophir was famous for the finest gold. "Gold and glass will not compare with it, and its exchange is not a vessel of pure gold." In the ancient world, glass was rare and costly, a luxury item.

"Corals and crystal will not be mentioned, and the price of wisdom is above pearls." "The topaz of Cush will not compare with it; it will not be valued with pure gold." Cush was the land south of Egypt, where Ethiopia and Sudan are now.

The poet lists the most precious things known to man, one after another, and says none of them can compare with wisdom. Proverbs says the same: "wisdom is better than jewels, and all desires do not compare with her" (Proverbs 8:11), and "To acquire wisdom, how much better than gold!" (Proverbs 16:16).

Job had been one of the richest men in the East (1:3). He knew what gold could buy. And he had lost it all. Here the book reminds us that he never lost the thing that matters most, because wisdom was never something gold could buy.

28:20-22 *And the wisdom, from where does it come? And where* ***is*** *this, the place of understanding? And it has been concealed from the eyes of every living* ***thing****, and from the birds of the heavens it has been hidden. Abaddon and death say, 'With our ears we have heard a report of it.'*

"And the wisdom, from where does it come? And where is this, the place of understanding?" The question comes back, like a refrain in a song (compare 28:12). If man cannot find it and cannot buy it, where does it come from?

"And it has been concealed from the eyes of every living thing, and from the birds of the heavens it has been hidden." No creature can see it, not even the birds who see everything from above.

"Abaddon and death say, 'With our ears we have heard a report of it.'" Abaddon is destruction, the place of the dead (26:6). Death says it has only heard a rumor of wisdom. Some think this means the dead know more than the living, since they have passed beyond this world, yet even they have only heard about it. Wisdom is not found by dying either.

28:23-24 *God understands its way, and He knows its place. For He looks to the ends of the earth; He sees under all the heavens,*

"God understands its way, and He knows its place." Here is the answer. Man cannot find wisdom by digging or buying it. The sea does not have it. Death does not have it. Only God knows where it is.

"For He looks to the ends of the earth; He sees under all the heavens." God sees everything. Nothing is hidden from Him. The miner sees "every precious thing" in his little tunnel (28:10). God sees every corner of the whole universe.

This is a humbling truth. Wisdom is not something we can reach by our own cleverness. It is God's. If we are to have it, it must come from Him. James says, "if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask from God, who gives to all generously and does not reproach, and it will be given to him" (James 1:5).

28:25-27 *to make a weight for the wind, and He has measured out the waters by measure. When He made a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunders, then He saw it and recounted it; He established it, and also He searched it out.*

"To make a weight for the wind, and He has measured out the waters by measure." When God made the world, He set the weight and force of the wind and measured out the oceans and the rain. The poet sees God as a master builder, measuring and weighing everything.

"When He made a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunders." God set laws for the rain and paths for the lightning. The world is not chaos. It runs by God's decrees.

"Then He saw it and recounted it; He established it, and also He searched it out." When God made the world, He saw wisdom, declared it, set it in place, and searched it through. Wisdom was with God at creation. It is built into the way He made the world. Proverbs 8 says that wisdom was beside God when He set the heavens in place and marked out the foundations of the earth (Proverbs 8:27-31).

The New Testament takes this further. The wisdom that was with God at creation is fully revealed in Jesus Christ. Paul says Christ is "the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:24), and that in Him "all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge are hidden" (Colossians 2:3). Christ "became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption" (1 Corinthians 1:30). The wisdom that no miner could dig up and no rich man could buy has come to us in a Person.

28:28 *And He said to mankind, 'Look, the fear of the Lord, that **is** wisdom, and to turn aside from evil **is** understanding.'"*

"And He said to mankind, 'Look, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn aside from evil is understanding.'"

This is the climax of the chapter, and one of the key verses of the whole book. Let us take it slowly.

"And He said to mankind." Wisdom in its fullness belongs to God alone. Man cannot search out all of it. But God has not left us with nothing. He has spoken. He has told mankind what wisdom is for us. We will not understand all of God's ways. Job never learned why he suffered. But we can know what God requires of us. "The hidden things belong to the LORD our God, and the revealed things belong to us and to our sons forever" (Deuteronomy 29:29).

"Look, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom." "The Lord" here is the Hebrew word Adonai, meaning Lord or Master. It is the only place in Job where that word is used for God. The fear of the Lord is not a cringing terror, as if God were a cruel master. It is a deep reverence and awe that takes God seriously, honors Him above all, trusts Him, and obeys Him. It is the attitude of a creature who knows who his Creator is. This same truth runs through the wisdom books of the Bible. "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge" (Proverbs 1:7). "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom" (Psalm 111:10). Ecclesiastes ends with it: "fear God and keep His commandments, for this is all of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

"And to turn aside from evil is understanding." Wisdom is not only an attitude of the heart. It shows in how we live. The one who fears God turns away from evil. Proverbs says it the same way: "fear the LORD and turn aside from evil" (Proverbs 3:7).

Now notice something wonderful. These are the very words used to describe Job at the beginning of the book. Job was "fearing God and turning aside from evil" (1:1, 8; 2:3). By God's own definition, Job was a wise man. He had the very thing the miners could not dig up and the rich could not buy. He did not have the answers to his questions. He did not know why he was suffering. But he had wisdom, because he feared God and turned from evil.

The friends thought wisdom meant having an explanation for everything. They thought they knew exactly why Job was suffering, and they were wrong. Job had no explanation, and he was the one God called wise. Wisdom is not having all the answers. Wisdom is fearing God when you don't have the answers.

What does this mean for us? You may be in a season where nothing makes sense. You may be asking "Why?" and hearing no answer. God may never tell you why in this life. But He has told you what wisdom is. Fear Him. Trust Him. Turn away from evil. That is the path of wisdom, even in the dark. And for us who live after the cross, the fear of the Lord leads us to Christ, who is God's wisdom and our Redeemer.

Chapter 28 Summary

Chapter 28 is a poem on wisdom that pauses the debate. It describes how men dig deep mines, cut shafts where no traveler goes, hang on ropes in the dark, and bring up silver, gold, iron, copper and precious stones from paths no falcon or lion has seen. But wisdom cannot be found that way. The deep and the sea do not have it. It cannot be bought with gold, silver, onyx, coral, crystal, pearls or topaz. It is hidden from every living thing, and even death has only heard a report of it. Only God knows the way to wisdom, because He set the weight of the wind, measured the waters, and made decrees for the rain and the lightning. And He has told mankind what wisdom is: "the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn aside from evil is understanding." These are the very words used to describe Job in chapter 1. Wisdom is not having every answer. It is fearing God when we do not have the answers. In the New Testament, that wisdom is revealed in Christ.

Chapter 28 Study Questions

1. What do miners search for and find in verses 1-11?

2. What creatures have never seen the paths of the miners? (28:7-8)

3. What question is asked in verses 12 and 20?

4. What things does the poem say cannot buy wisdom? (28:15-19)

5. Who alone knows the way to wisdom, and why? (28:23-27)

6. What did God tell mankind wisdom is? (28:28)

7. Compare 28:28 with 1:1. What does this tell you about Job?

8. How do 1 Corinthians 1:30 and Colossians 2:3 show us where God's wisdom is found?

9. Why do you think people search so hard for gold and so little for wisdom? Where do you see that in your own life?

10. What would it look like for you to live in "the fear of the Lord" and "to turn aside from evil" (28:28) in a situation where you do not understand what God is doing?

Chapter 29: Job Remembers His Former Days

Scripture

29:1-13 And Job again took up his discourse and said, "Who will make me like the months of long ago, like the days ***when*** God watched over me, when He made His lamp shine over my head, ***and*** by His light I walked ***through*** darkness; just as I was in the days of my prime, when the intimate counsel of God ***was*** over my tent; when the Almighty ***was*** still with me, ***and*** my lads ***were*** around me; when my steps were bathed in curds, and the rock beside me poured out streams of oil; when I went out ***to*** the gate by the town, ***and*** in the public square I prepared my seat! The young men saw me and hid themselves, and the aged rose ***and*** stood. Princes held back words, and they laid a hand on their mouth. The voice of nobles was hidden, and their tongue stuck to their palate. For an ear heard, and it called me blessed; and an eye saw, and it bore witness to me, that I rescued the afflicted who cried for help, and the fatherless and ***him who had*** no helper. The blessing of one about to perish came on me, and I made the heart of a widow sing for joy.

29:14-25 I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; my justice ***was*** like a robe and a turban. I was eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame ***was*** I. I ***was*** a father to the needy, and the case ***of one whom*** I did not know, I investigated it. And I broke the jaws of the unrighteous, and from his teeth I threw out the prey. And I said, 'With my nest I will expire, and like the sand I will multiply days. My root ***is*** opened to ***the*** waters, and ***the*** dew will lodge on my branches. My glory ***is*** new with me, and my bow in my hand will be renewed.' To me they listened, and they waited, and they were silent for my counsel. After my word they did not speak again, and my speech dropped on them. And they waited for me like the rain, and they opened their mouth wide for ***the*** spring rain. I laughed to them, ***when*** they did not believe, and the light of my face they did not cast down. I chose their way, and I sat ***as*** chief, and I dwelt like a king among the troops, as ***one who*** comforts mourners.

Chapter 29 Preview

Job begins his final defense. It runs for three chapters, and it is the last thing he says until the LORD speaks. In chapter 29 he looks back. In chapter 30 he looks at his present misery. In chapter 31 he swears an oath that he is innocent. Here Job remembers the days when God watched over him and His lamp shone on his head, when the Almighty was still with him and his children were around him.

Job also remembers the honor he had in his town. When he came to the city gate, young men stepped aside, old men stood up, and princes stopped talking. Why did they honor him? Not because he was rich, but because of how he used his place. He rescued the poor and the fatherless, made the widow's heart sing, was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame, a father to the needy, and he broke the jaws of the wicked. This chapter answers Eliphaz's false charges (22:6-9) point by point. It also shows us what a godly man of influence looks like.

Chapter 29 Study

29:1-3 *And Job again took up his discourse and said, "Who will make me like the months of long ago, like the days **when** God watched over me, when He made His lamp shine over my head, **and** by His light I walked **through** darkness;*

"And Job again took up his discourse and said." As in 27:1, these words mark a new, formal speech. This is Job's closing statement in his case.

"Who will make me like the months of long ago, like the days when God watched over me." Job's first longing is not for his wealth. It is for God's nearness. He misses the days when he knew God was watching over him and keeping him safe. Satan had said God put a hedge around Job (1:10). Job felt that hedge, and now he feels it is gone.

"When He made His lamp shine over my head, and by His light I walked through darkness." Job remembers God's favor as a lamp over his head, lighting his way. Even when there was darkness around him, God's light showed him the path. David said, "For You, You light my lamp; the LORD my God illumines my darkness" (Psalm 18:28).

29:4-6 *just as I was in the days of my prime, when the intimate counsel of God **was** over my tent; when the Almighty **was** still with me, **and** my lads **were** around me; when my steps were bathed in curds, and the rock beside me poured out streams of oil;*

"Just as I was in the days of my prime, when the intimate counsel of God was over my tent." "My prime" means the strong years of his life. "The intimate counsel of God" means God's close friendship. The same word is used in Psalm 25:14, where the secret counsel of the LORD is with those who fear Him. Job felt that God was a friend in his home.

"When the Almighty was still with me, and my lads were around me." "My lads" are his children. This is one of the most painful lines in the book. Job's ten children are gone (1:18-19). He remembers them around him, and the memory hurts. Anyone who has lost a child or a spouse knows how sharp a memory like this can be.

"When my steps were bathed in curds, and the rock beside me poured out streams of oil." Curds were a rich milk food like yogurt or butter. Job had so many cattle that it was as if he waded in it. Olive oil was poured out from the oil press beside him, as if the rocks themselves flowed with it. These are pictures of rich blessing.

Job is honest here about grief. He does not pretend he does not miss the good days. It is not a sin to remember with longing. The psalmist remembered how he used to go with the crowd to the house of God, and it made his soul pour out (Psalm 42:4). But Ecclesiastes also warns us not to live in the past, asking why the former days were better (Ecclesiastes 7:10). Memory can be a comfort, or it can become a place where we get stuck. Job will move forward, but only after God meets him.

29:7-10 *when I went out **to** the gate by the town, **and** in the public square I prepared my seat! The young men saw me and hid themselves, and the aged rose **and** stood. Princes held back words, and they laid a hand on their mouth. The voice of nobles was hidden, and their tongue stuck to their palate.*

Now Job remembers his place in the community. "When I went out to the gate by the town, and in the public square I prepared my seat." In ancient towns, the city gate was where the elders sat to judge cases and make decisions (Ruth 4:1-2). Job had a seat of honor there. He was a leader and a judge.

"The young men saw me and hid themselves, and the aged rose and stood." Young men stepped back out of respect. Even the old men, who were usually the ones honored, stood up when Job arrived.

"Princes held back words, and they laid a hand on their mouth." "The voice of nobles was hidden, and their tongue stuck to their palate." Even princes and nobles stopped talking when Job came to speak. They waited to hear what he would say.

Compare this with what Job's life was like now. Little boys mocked him (19:18). The respect was gone. Job is not boasting. He is showing how far he has fallen.

29:11-13 *For an ear heard, and it called me blessed; and an eye saw, and it bore witness to me, that I rescued the afflicted who cried for help, and the fatherless and **him who had** no helper. The blessing of one about to perish came on me, and I made the heart of a widow sing for joy.*

"For an ear heard, and it called me blessed; and an eye saw, and it bore witness to me." Everyone who heard of Job or saw him spoke well of him. Why?

"That I rescued the afflicted who cried for help, and the fatherless and him who had no helper." Here is the reason for Job's honor. He did not use his power to take from the poor, as Eliphaz claimed (22:6-9). He used it to rescue them. When the poor cried out, Job answered. When an orphan had no one to help him, Job helped.

"The blessing of one about to perish came on me, and I made the heart of a widow sing for joy." People near death, from hunger or sickness or injustice, blessed Job because he saved them. Widows, who often had no one to protect them, sang for joy because of what Job did for them. Eliphaz said Job sent widows away empty (22:9). Job says he made them sing.

This is the kind of religion God loves. James says, "Religion pure and undefiled before the God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their tribulation" (James 1:27).

29:14-17 *I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; my justice **was** like a robe and a turban. I was eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame **was** I. I **was** a father to the needy, and the case **of one whom** I did not know, I investigated it. And I broke the jaws of the unrighteous, and from his teeth I threw out the prey.*

"I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; my justice was like a robe and a turban." Job did not just do right now and then. He wore righteousness like clothing. It was what people saw when they looked at him. A robe and a turban were the clothes of a judge or leader. Job's fairness was his badge of office.

"I was eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame was I." He guided the blind and carried the lame. Whatever someone lacked, Job tried to supply.

"I was a father to the needy, and the case of one whom I did not know, I investigated it." Job was like a father to the poor. And when a stranger came with a case, someone Job did not know and who could do nothing for him, Job looked into it carefully. He did not just help his friends. He made sure justice was done for strangers too.

"And I broke the jaws of the unrighteous, and from his teeth I threw out the prey." Job did not only show kindness. He also stood up to the wicked. When a cruel man had his teeth in a victim, Job broke his jaws and pulled the victim free. Real love for the weak sometimes means confronting the strong.

Job's life is a picture of what Jesus would do perfectly. Jesus said He was anointed "to preach the gospel to the poor" and to set free the oppressed (Luke 4:18). He opened the eyes of the blind and made the lame walk. And He tells us that what we do for the least of His brothers, we do for Him (Matthew 25:40).

29:18-20 *And I said, 'With my nest I will expire, and like the sand I will multiply days. My root **is** opened to **the** waters, and **the** dew will lodge on my branches. My glory **is** new with me, and my bow in my hand will be renewed.'*

"And I said." Job tells what he used to say to himself: "With my nest I will expire, and like the sand I will multiply days." In those good days, Job expected to die peacefully at home, in his nest, surrounded by family, after a life as long as the grains of sand are many. Some versions read it as the phoenix here, because the Hebrew word for "sand" can also be the name of a bird of legend. The SLB reads "sand," and that fits the many verses that use the sand for great number.

"My root is opened to the waters, and the dew will lodge on my branches." He felt like a tree planted by water, with dew on its branches every morning. Psalm 1 uses the same picture of the righteous man (Psalm 1:3).

"My glory is new with me, and my bow in my hand will be renewed." His honor was always fresh, and his strength, pictured as a bow, was always renewed.

Was it wrong for Job to expect this? Not exactly. God often does bless those who walk with Him. But Job had come to assume that the good would last. Like his friends, he may have thought that a

righteous life would always bring a peaceful old age. His suffering shattered that assumption. Paul tells the rich not to set their hope "on the uncertainty of riches, but in the living God" (1 Timothy 6:17). Our security is in God, not in our circumstances.

29:21-25 *To me they listened, and they waited, and they were silent for my counsel. After my word they did not speak again, and my speech dropped on them. And they waited for me like the rain, and they opened their mouth wide for* ***the*** *spring rain. I laughed to them,* ***when*** *they did not believe, and the light of my face they did not cast down. I chose their way, and I sat* ***as*** *chief, and I dwelt like a king among the troops, as* ***one who*** *comforts mourners.*

Job goes back to his days at the gate. "To me they listened, and they waited, and they were silent for my counsel." "After my word they did not speak again, and my speech dropped on them." When Job gave advice, people listened in silence. After he spoke, there was nothing more to say. His words fell on them gently like rain.

"And they waited for me like the rain, and they opened their mouth wide for the spring rain." In a dry land, farmers longed for the spring rain. People longed for Job's words the same way. Contrast this with his friends, who would not listen to him at all.

"I laughed to them, when they did not believe, and the light of my face they did not cast down." When people were discouraged and could not believe things would get better, Job smiled at them and encouraged them. His cheerful face lifted them up.

"I chose their way, and I sat as chief, and I dwelt like a king among the troops, as one who comforts mourners." Job led them like a chief, like a king among his army. And notice the last phrase: he was "as one who comforts mourners." Job had been the comforter. Now he is the mourner, and no one comforts him. His three friends came "to comfort him" (2:11), and they failed.

Here is the lesson for us. Job's greatness was not his money. It was his compassion. He used his position to lift up the poor, defend the helpless and comfort the grieving. That is what God's people are called to do with whatever He has given us. Paul says God "comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those in every affliction" (2 Corinthians 1:4). If you have been comforted by God, you have something to give.

Chapter 29 Summary

Job began his final defense by looking back. He longed for the days when God watched over him, His lamp shone on his head, God's friendship was over his tent, and his children were around him. He remembered his honor at the city gate, where young men stepped aside, old men stood, and princes fell silent. People honored him because he rescued the poor and the fatherless, made widows sing for joy, wore righteousness like a robe, was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame, a father to the needy, and investigated the cases of strangers. He broke the jaws of the wicked and pulled their prey from their teeth. He had expected a long life and a peaceful death at home. People waited for his words like rain, and he lived like a king among them, comforting mourners. This chapter answers Eliphaz's false charges and shows what godly influence looks like.

Chapter 29 Study Questions

1. What did Job miss most about his former days? (29:2-5)

2. What does the line "my lads were around me" tell us about Job's grief? (29:5; 1:18-19)

3. How did people respond when Job came to the city gate? (29:7-10)

4. Why did people bless Job, according to verses 12-13?

5. How do verses 12-17 answer Eliphaz's charges in 22:6-9?

6. What did Job do for the blind, the lame, the needy and strangers? (29:15-16)

7. What did Job expect his life would be like in old age? (29:18-20) How does 1 Timothy 6:17 warn us about where we put our hope?

8. Job said he was "as one who comforts mourners" (29:25). How does 2 Corinthians 1:4 say God prepares us to comfort others?

9. Do you have memories of better days that are painful to think about? How can you bring those memories to God?

10. Job used his influence to help the poor and defend the weak. What influence has God given you, and how could you use it for others?

Chapter 30: Job's Present Humiliation

Scripture

30:1-15 And now they have laughed at me, those younger than I in days, whose fathers I rejected to put with the dogs of my flock. Also the strength of their hands, why ***is it*** to me? On them vigor has perished. In poverty and in hunger ***they are*** barren, the ones who gnaw the dry region, the yesterday of ruin and desolation, the ones who pluck mallow among ***the*** bushes, and the root of broom plants ***is*** their food. From ***the*** community they are driven away; they shout over them as ***over*** the thief, to dwell on the slope of wadis, ***in*** holes of ***the*** ground and ***in*** rocks. Between bushes they bray; under nettles they are joined together. Sons of a fool, also sons without a name, they have been scourged from the land. And now I have become their taunt song, and I have become a byword to them. They abhor me; they are distant from me, and from my face they have not withheld spittle. For He has loosened my cord and afflicted me, and they have sent away the halter from before me. On ***my*** right a brood arises; they have sent away my feet, and they have piled up against me the paths of their disaster. They have torn down my pathway; they promote my destruction; ***there is*** no helper for them. Like a wide breach they come; under the devastation they have rolled themselves ***in***. Sudden terrors have been turned on me; it pursues my dignity like the wind, and my salvation has passed away like a cloud.

30:16-31 And now my soul pours itself out on me; days of affliction seize me. Night has pierced my bones from on me, and my gnawing ***pains*** do not lie down. By ***the*** greatness of strength my clothing disguises itself; like the mouth of my tunic it girds me. He has thrown me into the mud, and I have become like dust and ashes. I cry for help to You, and You do not answer me; I have stood, and You consider me. You have changed Yourself into ***one*** cruel to me; with the might of Your hand You are hostile to me. You lift me up to the wind; You make me ride, and You dissolve me ***and my*** sound wisdom. For I know ***that*** You will bring me back ***to*** death, and ***to*** the house of appointed meeting for every living ***thing***. Surely against a heap of ruins one does not stretch out a hand, if in his disaster ***there is*** a cry for help to them. Did I not weep for ***the one who was*** hard of day? Was my soul ***not*** grieved for the needy? For I waited for good, and evil came; and I waited for light, and darkness came. My inward parts have been made to boil, and they have not been still; days of affliction have confronted me. Darkened I have gone about, without ***the*** sun; I have stood up in the assembly; I cry for help. I have become a brother to jackals, and a companion to daughters of the ostrich. My skin has become black from on me, and my bone has burned from heat. And my lyre has become mourning, and my flute the sound of those who weep.

Chapter 30 Preview

Chapter 29 began with "Who will make me like the months of long ago." Chapter 30 begins with "And now." Job turns from what he was to what he is. The men who used to honor him are gone, and in their place he is mocked by the lowest people in the land, outcasts who lived in holes in the ground and were driven out of town like thieves. They make up songs about him and spit in his face.

Then Job turns from men to God, and this is one of the darkest passages in the book. His soul pours out. Pain gnaws at his bones all night. God has thrown him into the mud. "I cry for help to You, and You do not answer me." Job says God has become cruel to him and is carrying him away to death. He waited for good, and evil came; for light, and darkness came. His skin has turned black, and his lyre plays only songs of mourning. This chapter is hard to read. But it is in the Bible because God wants us to know that He hears even prayers like these.

Chapter 30 Study

30:1 *And now they have laughed at me, those younger than I in days, whose fathers I rejected to put with the dogs of my flock.*

"And now they have laughed at me, those younger than I in days, whose fathers I rejected to put with the dogs of my flock." "And now" is the turning point from chapter 29. Young men once stepped aside for Job (29:8). Now young men laugh at him.

Job describes them strongly. He would not have trusted their fathers even to help the sheepdogs watch his flocks. These words sound harsh to us. But we should understand what Job is saying. He is not looking down on the poor. We just saw how he cared for them (29:12-16). The men he describes here were known to be worthless and wicked, men no one could trust. The point is how far Job has fallen. The lowest men in the land, men who were not fit to work with his dogs, now mock him.

30:2-8 *Also the strength of their hands, why **is it** to me? On them vigor has perished. In poverty and in hunger **they are** barren, the ones who gnaw the dry region, the yesterday of ruin and desolation, the ones who pluck mallow among **the** bushes, and the root of broom plants **is** their food. From **the** community they are driven away; they shout over them as **over** the thief, to dwell on the slope of wadis, **in** holes of **the** ground and **in** rocks. Between bushes they bray; under nettles they are joined together. Sons of a fool, also sons without a name, they have been scourged from the land.*

"Also the strength of their hands, why is it to me? On them vigor has perished." These men were too weak and worn out to be of any use as workers.

"In poverty and in hunger they are barren, the ones who gnaw the dry region, the yesterday of ruin and desolation." They lived in the desert, gnawing on whatever they could find. "The ones who pluck mallow among the bushes, and the root of broom plants is their food." Mallow is a salty desert plant. The root of the broom bush is bitter. Only the most desperate would eat them.

"From the community they are driven away; they shout over them as over the thief." These men had been driven out of town. People shouted after them as they would after a thief. "To dwell on the slope of wadis, in holes of the ground and in rocks." They lived in caves and holes in the sides of dry stream beds.

"Between bushes they bray; under nettles they are joined together." They brayed like wild donkeys among the bushes and huddled together under thorny weeds. "Sons of a fool, also sons

without a name, they have been scourged from the land." They were the sons of fools, nameless men, whipped out of the land.

Why does Job describe them in such detail? To show how low he has sunk. Even these men, the outcasts of the outcasts, now look down on him.

30:9-11 *And now I have become their taunt song, and I have become a byword to them. They abhor me; they are distant from me, and from my face they have not withheld spittle. For He has loosened my cord and afflicted me, and they have sent away the halter from before me.*

"And now I have become their taunt song, and I have become a byword to them." They make up mocking songs about Job. His name has become a joke.

"They abhor me; they are distant from me, and from my face they have not withheld spittle." They keep their distance as if he were disgusting, and they spit in his face. In that culture, spitting in someone's face was one of the worst insults possible.

"For He has loosened my cord and afflicted me, and they have sent away the halter from before me." "He" is God. Job says God has loosened his cord. This may mean the cord of his tent, so that his life has collapsed, or the string of his bow, so that his strength is gone. Because God has brought him low, these men have thrown off all restraint. Like a horse with no bridle, they do whatever they want to him.

Read these verses and think of Jesus. Isaiah said of the Servant of the LORD, "He was despised and rejected by men" (Isaiah 53:3), and the Servant said, "I did not hide My face from humiliations and spitting" (Isaiah 50:6). At His trial, they spit on Jesus and struck Him (Matthew 27:30). Job's humiliation gives us a picture of what our Lord would suffer. The difference is that Jesus endured it willingly, for us.

30:12-15 *On **my** right a brood arises; they have sent away my feet, and they have piled up against me the paths of their disaster. They have torn down my pathway; they promote my destruction; **there is** no helper for them. Like a wide breach they come; under the devastation they have rolled themselves **in**. Sudden terrors have been turned on me; it pursues my dignity like the wind, and my salvation has passed away like a cloud.*

"On my right a brood arises; they have sent away my feet, and they have piled up against me the paths of their disaster." Now Job pictures this rabble as an army. They rise up at his right hand, the place of a man's strength or of an accuser in court. They trip his feet and build siege ramps against him.

"They have torn down my pathway; they promote my destruction; there is no helper for them." They break up his road so he cannot escape. They work for his ruin. "No helper for them" may mean they need no one's help, because Job is so weak. Or it may mean that no one restrains them.

"Like a wide breach they come; under the devastation they have rolled themselves in." They pour in like an army through a broken wall, rolling in over the ruins.

"Sudden terrors have been turned on me; it pursues my dignity like the wind, and my salvation has passed away like a cloud." Terror has turned on Job. His honor has been blown away like the wind. His safety, his "salvation," has vanished like a cloud in the sky.

30:16-19 *And now my soul pours itself out on me; days of affliction seize me. Night has pierced my bones from on me, and my gnawing **pains** do not lie down. By **the** greatness of strength my clothing disguises itself; like the mouth of my tunic it girds me. He has thrown me into the mud, and I have become like dust and ashes.*

Now Job turns from men to his own suffering. "And now my soul pours itself out on me; days of affliction seize me." Job's life feels like water spilling out of him. The days of trouble have grabbed hold of him and will not let go.

"Night has pierced my bones from on me, and my gnawing pains do not lie down." At night the pain gets worse. It feels like something is boring into his bones. The pain gnaws at him and never rests. Anyone who has lived with chronic pain knows how long the nights can be.

"By the greatness of strength my clothing disguises itself; like the mouth of my tunic it girds me." This line is hard to translate. Job may mean that his disease has so changed his body that his clothes no longer fit, or that they stick to his oozing sores and bind him tight like a collar.

"He has thrown me into the mud, and I have become like dust and ashes." Job feels God has thrown him down into the dirt. "Dust and ashes" was a phrase for something worthless. Job is sitting in ashes (2:8). He feels he has become ashes. Abraham used the same words to humble himself before God (Genesis 18:27), and Job will use them again when he repents (42:6).

30:20-23 *I cry for help to You, and You do not answer me; I have stood, and You consider me. You have changed Yourself into **one** cruel to me; with the might of Your hand You are hostile to me. You lift me up to the wind; You make me ride, and You dissolve me **and my** sound wisdom. For I know **that** You will bring me back **to** death, and **to** the house of appointed meeting for every living **thing**.*

"I cry for help to You, and You do not answer me; I have stood, and You consider me." Job now speaks straight to God. He cries for help, and there is no answer. He stands and prays, and God only looks at him, and does nothing.

"You have changed Yourself into one cruel to me; with the might of Your hand You are hostile to me." This is one of the hardest things Job says. He says God has become cruel to him, that God is using His strength against him.

"You lift me up to the wind; You make me ride, and You dissolve me and my sound wisdom." Job feels like a leaf picked up by a storm and tossed around. God makes him ride the wind and then lets him fall apart.

"For I know that You will bring me back to death, and to the house of appointed meeting for every living thing." Job is sure he is going to die. Death is "the house of appointed meeting," the place where every living thing is gathered in the end.

What do we do with words like these? Job is wrong that God has become cruel. God is never cruel. "For He has not afflicted from His heart, and has not grieved the sons of man" (Lamentations 3:33). We know from chapters 1 and 2 that God had limits on Satan's attack, and that He was proud of Job the whole time. Job will later admit that he spoke of things he did not understand (42:3).

But notice two things. First, Job says this to God. He does not walk away from God and complain to others. He brings his bitterest words straight to God's face. That is still prayer. Second, God did not strike Job down for saying it. God was patient with him. He waited, and then He answered.

The psalms are full of prayers like this. "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" (Psalm 22:1). Psalm 88 ends with no hope at all: "my acquaintances are darkness" (Psalm 88:18). God put those prayers in His Word. Jesus Himself prayed the first line of Psalm 22 from the cross (Matthew 27:46). If you are in so much pain that all you can pray is a complaint, pray it to God. He can handle your honesty. He will not leave you there.

If you or someone you love is in this kind of darkness, longing for death, talk to God. Please do not carry this alone. Talk to someone today: a pastor, a doctor, or a crisis line. Job's friends failed him. Do not let that happen to the people God has put near you.

30:24-26 *Surely against a heap of ruins one does not stretch out a hand, if in his disaster **there is** a cry for help to them. Did I not weep for **the one who was** hard of day? Was my soul **not** grieved for the needy? For I waited for good, and evil came; and I waited for light, and darkness came.*

"Surely against a heap of ruins one does not stretch out a hand, if in his disaster there is a cry for help to them." This verse is difficult. Job seems to mean: when a man has fallen into ruin and cries for help, no one strikes him. Surely a ruined man is allowed to cry out. Why then does God keep striking me? Or it may mean that a drowning man stretches out his hand for help, and Job has done the same.

"Did I not weep for the one who was hard of day? Was my soul not grieved for the needy?" Job remembers how he wept for people in hard times. He grieved for the poor. He did for others what no one is doing for him now. Paul says, "weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15). Job did. Now no one weeps with him.

"For I waited for good, and evil came; and I waited for light, and darkness came." Job had lived a good life, and he expected good to follow. Instead disaster came. This is the heart of Job's struggle. His experience did not match what he thought he knew about God. Many of us have felt the same. We pray, we wait, and the opposite of what we hoped for comes. Job's honesty gives us permission to say so to God.

30:27-31 *My inward parts have been made to boil, and they have not been still; days of affliction have confronted me. Darkened I have gone about, without **the** sun; I have stood up in the assembly; I cry for help. I have become a brother to jackals, and a companion to daughters of the ostrich. My skin has become black from on me, and my bone has burned from heat. And my lyre has become mourning, and my flute the sound of those who weep.*

"My inward parts have been made to boil, and they have not been still; days of affliction have confronted me." Job's insides churn with distress. There is no rest.

"Darkened I have gone about, without the sun; I have stood up in the assembly; I cry for help." He walks around blackened, perhaps by grief, perhaps by his disease, and there is no sunshine in his life. He stands up in public, where he once was honored (29:7), and cries for help.

"I have become a brother to jackals, and a companion to daughters of the ostrich." Jackals howl at night in the desert, and ostriches make a mournful cry. Job's cries are like theirs, lonely sounds in empty places.

"My skin has become black from on me, and my bone has burned from heat." His skin has turned dark and is peeling off. His body burns with fever.

"And my lyre has become mourning, and my flute the sound of those who weep." Music used to mean joy. In Job's home there had been feasting and song (1:4). Now his lyre plays only funeral songs.

This is where Job's lament ends. There is no bright turn at the end of the chapter, no sudden hope. Sometimes life is like that for a while. But this is not the end of Job's story. God will speak. Job will see Him. And Job's mourning will be turned to joy (42:10-17). Isaiah says the LORD gives "oil of joy instead of mourning, a mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit" (Isaiah 61:3). If your lyre is playing mourning songs today, it will not always be so for those who trust Him.

Chapter 30 Summary

Job turned from his former days to his present misery. He was mocked by young men whose fathers he would not have set with his sheepdogs, outcasts who lived in holes in the desert and ate bitter roots. They made songs about him, abhorred him and spit in his face, because God had brought him low. They attacked him like an army through a breach in a wall, and his honor and safety vanished like wind and cloud. Pain gnawed his bones at night. God had thrown him into the mud, and he had become like dust and ashes. He cried to God and got no answer, and he said God had become cruel to him and would bring him to death. He had wept for others, but when he waited for good, evil came, and when he waited for light, darkness came. His skin was black, his body burned, and his lyre played only mourning. Job was wrong to say God was cruel, but he brought his pain to God, and God was patient with him.

Chapter 30 Study Questions

1. What phrase begins chapter 30, and how does it contrast with the start of chapter 29? (29:2; 30:1)

2. Who mocked Job, and how did Job describe them? (30:1-8)

3. What did these men do to Job? (30:9-10) How does this give a picture of what Jesus suffered? (Isaiah 50:6; Matthew 27:30)

4. How did Job describe his pain at night? (30:17)

5. What did Job say God had done to him in verses 19-22?

6. What did Job say he used to do for people in trouble? (30:25)

7. What did Job wait for, and what came instead? (30:26)

8. Job said God had become cruel. Why was he wrong, and why do you think God was patient with him? (Lamentations 3:33; 42:3)

9. Have you ever waited for light and had darkness come instead? What did you say to God?

10. Who do you know whose "lyre has become mourning"? How could you weep with them, as Romans 12:15 says?

Chapter 31: Job's Final Oath of Innocence

Scripture

31:1-12 I have made a covenant for my eyes; and how would I look attentively at a virgin? And what ***is*** the portion of God from above, and the inheritance of the Almighty from the heights? ***Is*** not calamity for the unrighteous, and misfortune for the workers of evil? Does He not see my ways, and count all my steps? If I have walked with falsehood, and my foot has hurried to deceit, let Him weigh me in balances of righteousness, and let God know my integrity. If my step has turned aside from the way, and my heart has gone after my eyes, and a blemish has stuck to my hands, let me sow, and let another eat, and let my produce be rooted up. If my heart has been enticed by a woman, and I have lain in wait at the doorway of my neighbor, let my wife grind for another, and let others bow down over her. For that ***is*** wickedness, and that ***is*** an iniquity ***for*** judges. For that ***is*** a fire ***which*** devours as far as Abaddon, and it would root up all my produce.

31:13-23 If I rejected the case of my male servant and my female servant in their complaint with me, and what will I do when God arises? And when He visits, what will I answer Him? Did not He who made me in the belly make him? And did not One fashion us in the womb? If I withheld ***anything*** from the desire of the poor, and caused the eyes of the widow to fail, and ate my morsel alone, and the fatherless did not eat from it (for from my youth he grew up with me as ***with*** a father, and from my mother's womb I guided her); if I saw one perishing for lack of clothing, and no covering for the needy, if his loins did not bless me, and ***if*** he did not warm himself from the fleece of my lambs; if I brandished my hand against the fatherless, because I saw my help in the gate, let my shoulder fall from its shoulder blade, and let my arm be broken from its shaft. For calamity from God ***was*** a dread to me, and because of His majesty I could not ***do so***.

31:24-40 If I have made gold my confidence, and to pure gold I have said, 'My security,' if I rejoiced because my wealth ***was*** great, and because my hand had found much, if I saw the light when it shone, and the moon going ***in*** splendor, and my heart was enticed in secret, and my hand kissed my mouth, that also ***would be*** an iniquity for judgment, for I would have denied God above. If I rejoiced in the disaster of one who hated me, and roused myself when evil found him (and I have not permitted my palate to sin by asking for his life with a curse); if the men of my tent have not said, 'Who will give one ***who*** has not been satisfied from his meat?' The sojourner did not lodge in the street; I opened my doors to the road. If I have covered my transgressions like Adam, by hiding my iniquity in my bosom, because I feared the great multitude, and the contempt of clans dismayed me, and I kept silent ***and*** did not go out ***of the*** door— Who will grant me one listening to me! Look, my mark; let the Almighty answer me! And the document ***that*** the man of my case has written, surely I would carry it on my shoulder; I would bind it on ***as*** crowns for myself. I would tell Him the number of my steps; like a noble I would approach Him. If my land has cried out against me, and its furrows have wept together, if I have eaten its strength without money, and have caused the life of its owners to breathe out, instead of wheat let thorns come forth, and instead of barley foul weeds." The words of Job are finished.

Chapter 31 Preview

This is Job's last speech, and it is a solemn oath. In an ancient court, a man accused of a crime could clear his name by swearing an oath of innocence. He would name the crime and call down a curse on himself if he had done it. That is what Job does here, again and again. "If I have walked with falsehood," he says, then "let Him weigh me." "If my heart has been enticed by a woman," then "let my wife grind for another." If I mistreated my servants, ignored the poor, trusted in gold, worshiped the sun and moon, rejoiced when my enemy fell, or hid my sin like Adam, let these curses fall on me.

The list covers far more than outward crimes. Job speaks of his eyes, his heart, his secret thoughts, the way he treated servants and strangers, and whether he loved his money. It is one of the highest pictures of a godly life in the Old Testament. Then Job signs his name, as it were, and hands his case to God: "let the Almighty answer me!" "The words of Job are finished." From here on, Job is silent until the LORD speaks.

Chapter 31 Study

31:1-4 *I have made a covenant for my eyes; and how would I look attentively at a virgin? And what **is** the portion of God from above, and the inheritance of the Almighty from the heights? **Is** not calamity for the unrighteous, and misfortune for the workers of evil? Does He not see my ways, and count all my steps?*

"I have made a covenant for my eyes; and how would I look attentively at a virgin?" A covenant is a solemn agreement, a binding promise. Job made a promise with his own eyes that he would not look at a young woman with desire. He guarded not only his actions but his eyes.

This is remarkable. Job lived long before Jesus said, "everyone who looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:28). But Job already understood that sin starts in the eyes and the heart. He did not wait until temptation came. He made the decision ahead of time. That is wise for every believer, man or woman. In a world where temptation is a click away, we need a covenant for our eyes as much as Job did.

"And what is the portion of God from above, and the inheritance of the Almighty from the heights? Is not calamity for the unrighteous, and misfortune for the workers of evil?" Why did Job guard his eyes? Because he knew God judges sin. He knew what God gives to the wicked.

"Does He not see my ways, and count all my steps?" Job knew God saw everything he did. That was why he lived carefully. The same truth that frightened Job in his suffering (7:19-20) had kept him pure in his good days.

31:5-8 *If I have walked with falsehood, and my foot has hurried to deceit, let Him weigh me in balances of righteousness, and let God know my integrity. If my step has turned aside from the way, and my heart has gone after my eyes, and a blemish has stuck to my hands, let me sow, and let another eat, and let my produce be rooted up.*

"If I have walked with falsehood, and my foot has hurried to deceit, let Him weigh me in balances of righteousness, and let God know my integrity." Here is the first "if" of the oath. If I have been a liar or a cheat, let God weigh me on honest scales. Job is so sure of his honesty that he asks God to weigh him. He does not fear the scales.

"If my step has turned aside from the way, and my heart has gone after my eyes, and a blemish has stuck to my hands." Job names three ways a man can sin: with his feet, by walking off God's road; with his heart following his eyes, by wanting what he sees; and with his hands, by doing something dirty. John warns of "the lust of the eyes" (1 John 2:16).

"Let me sow, and let another eat, and let my produce be rooted up." Here is the curse. If I have done these things, let my harvest go to someone else, and let my crops be torn up.

31:9-12 *If my heart has been enticed by a woman, and I have lain in wait at the doorway of my neighbor, let my wife grind for another, and let others bow down over her. For that **is** wickedness, and that **is** an iniquity **for** judges. For that **is** a fire **which** devours as far as Abaddon, and it would root up all my produce.*

"If my heart has been enticed by a woman, and I have lain in wait at the doorway of my neighbor." Job now speaks of adultery. If he had ever been lured by another man's wife and waited at her door for her husband to leave, then let the curse come.

"Let my wife grind for another, and let others bow down over her." Grinding grain was the work of a servant. Job says, if I took another man's wife, let my own wife become another man's servant and be taken by others. This is a very strong curse. In those days such a thing could happen to a defeated man's family. Job is saying that if he had dishonored another man's marriage, he would deserve to have his own marriage dishonored.

"For that is wickedness, and that is an iniquity for judges." Adultery was not a small thing. It was a crime that deserved to be judged. "For that is a fire which devours as far as Abaddon, and it would root up all my produce." Adultery is like a fire that burns everything down to the grave. Proverbs says the same: it destroys a man's life (Proverbs 6:27-32). Every pastor has seen what adultery does to a family. It burns down far more than one marriage.

31:13-15 *If I rejected the case of my male servant and my female servant in their complaint with me, and what will I do when God arises? And when He visits, what will I answer Him? Did not He who made me in the belly make him? And did not One fashion us in the womb?*

"If I rejected the case of my male servant and my female servant in their complaint with me." In the ancient world, servants had few rights. A master could ignore their complaints. Job did not. When a servant had a complaint against him, he listened and treated it fairly.

"And what will I do when God arises? And when He visits, what will I answer Him?" Job knew that he would have to answer to God for how he treated his servants.

"Did not He who made me in the belly make him? And did not One fashion us in the womb?" This is one of the most important verses in the chapter. Job says: my servant and I were made by the same God, in the same way, in our mothers' wombs. We are equal before God. My servant is a human being with the same worth as me.

That was an amazing thing to say in the ancient world, where servants were often treated as property. The New Testament says the same. Paul told masters, "grant to the slaves what is righteous and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in the heavens" (Colossians 4:1). Every person, rich or poor, master or servant, of every nation and color, is made by God and bears His image (Genesis 1:27). How we treat those under us shows what we believe about God.

31:16-18 *If I withheld **anything** from the desire of the poor, and caused the eyes of the widow to fail, and ate my morsel alone, and the fatherless did not eat from it (for from my youth he grew up with me as **with** a father, and from my mother's womb I guided her);*

"If I withheld anything from the desire of the poor, and caused the eyes of the widow to fail." Eliphaz had said Job sent widows away empty (22:9). Job swears he never let a widow's eyes grow dim from waiting for help that never came.

"And ate my morsel alone, and the fatherless did not eat from it." Job did not eat while orphans went hungry. He shared his bread.

"For from my youth he grew up with me as with a father, and from my mother's womb I guided her." This verse is in parentheses in the SLB. It means that from his youth, Job had raised orphans as a father would, and all his life he had guided and cared for widows. It was not something he did once. It was the pattern of his whole life.

31:19-23 *if I saw one perishing for lack of clothing, and no covering for the needy, if his loins did not bless me, and **if** he did not warm himself from the fleece of my lambs; if I brandished my hand against the fatherless, because I saw my help in the gate, let my shoulder fall from its shoulder blade, and let my arm be broken from its shaft. For calamity from God **was** a dread to me, and because of His majesty I could not **do so**.*

"If I saw one perishing for lack of clothing, and no covering for the needy, if his loins did not bless me, and if he did not warm himself from the fleece of my lambs." Eliphaz said Job stripped the naked (22:6). Job says he clothed them. When he saw someone shivering, he gave them warm wool clothing from his own flocks, and they blessed him for it.

"If I brandished my hand against the fatherless, because I saw my help in the gate." "The gate" was the town court (29:7). Job had powerful friends there. He could have taken advantage of an orphan, knowing the judges would side with him. He never did.

"Let my shoulder fall from its shoulder blade, and let my arm be broken from its shaft." If I ever raised my arm against an orphan, let that arm be torn off.

"For calamity from God was a dread to me, and because of His majesty I could not do so." Why did Job never abuse his power? Because he feared God. That is wisdom as chapter 28 defined it: "the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn aside from evil is understanding" (28:28). Job lived it. He knew God's majesty, and he could not bring himself to do evil before Him.

31:24-28 *If I have made gold my confidence, and to pure gold I have said, 'My security,' if I rejoiced because my wealth **was** great, and because my hand had found much, if I saw the light when it shone, and the moon going **in** splendor, and my heart was enticed in secret, and my hand kissed my mouth, that also **would be** an iniquity for judgment, for I would have denied God above.*

Now Job turns to sins of the heart that no one else could see. "If I have made gold my confidence, and to pure gold I have said, 'My security,' if I rejoiced because my wealth was great, and because my hand had found much." Job was very rich. But he did not trust in his money. He did not find his security in it, and he did not gloat over it. We know this is true, because when he lost it all in one day, he blessed the name of the LORD (1:21). A man who trusted in his gold could not have done that.

Jesus said, "You are not able to serve God and wealth" (Matthew 6:24). Money is a good servant but a terrible master. The test is not how much we have. The test is where our heart rests.

"If I saw the light when it shone, and the moon going in splendor, and my heart was enticed in secret, and my hand kissed my mouth." In the ancient world, many people worshiped the sun and moon. One way they did it was to kiss their own hand and throw the kiss toward the sky. Job says he never did that, not even secretly. God later warned Israel against worshiping the sun, moon and stars (Deuteronomy 4:19).

"That also would be an iniquity for judgment, for I would have denied God above." To worship the sun or moon would be to deny the God who made them. Job had never turned from the one true God, not even in his heart.

31:29-32 *If I rejoiced in the disaster of one who hated me, and roused myself when evil found him (and I have not permitted my palate to sin by asking for his life with a curse); if the men of my tent have not said, 'Who will give one **who** has not been satisfied from his meat?' The sojourner did not lodge in the street; I opened my doors to the road.*

"If I rejoiced in the disaster of one who hated me, and roused myself when evil found him." Job never celebrated when his enemy fell. Remember that Eliphaz said the righteous rejoice when the wicked are destroyed (22:19). Job is more gracious than Eliphaz.

"And I have not permitted my palate to sin by asking for his life with a curse." Job never even prayed for his enemies to die. This is very close to what Jesus taught: "love your enemies, bless those cursing you" (Matthew 5:44). Job lived that long before Jesus spoke it.

"If the men of my tent have not said, 'Who will give one who has not been satisfied from his meat?'" The men of Job's household could say that no one ever left Job's table hungry. Everyone was fed.

"The sojourner did not lodge in the street; I opened my doors to the road." A sojourner was a traveler or foreigner far from home. Job never let a stranger sleep in the street. His doors were open to anyone on the road. Hebrews says, "Do not forget hospitality, for through this some have entertained angels without knowing it" (Hebrews 13:2), thinking of Abraham (Genesis 18).

31:33-34 *If I have covered my transgressions like Adam, by hiding my iniquity in my bosom, because I feared the great multitude, and the contempt of clans dismayed me, and I kept silent* ***and*** *did not go out* ***of the*** *door—*

"If I have covered my transgressions like Adam, by hiding my iniquity in my bosom." Job refers to the first man. When Adam sinned, he hid from God, and then he tried to cover his sin by blaming Eve (Genesis 3:8-12). Job says he never hid his sins like that. When he did wrong, he did not cover it up. The Hebrew word adam can also simply mean "man," so some read it as men do. Either way, Job is saying he did not hide his sin.

This is a key point. Job never claimed to be sinless. He claimed he never covered up his sin. "He who covers his transgressions will not prosper, and he who confesses and forsakes them will be shown mercy" (Proverbs 28:13). A godly person is not one who never sins, but one who does not hide it from God.

"Because I feared the great multitude, and the contempt of clans dismayed me, and I kept silent and did not go out of the door." Job never hid his sin out of fear of what people would think. He did not stay inside to avoid facing people. He had nothing to hide.

At this point Job breaks off in the middle of a thought. The SLB marks the break with a dash in the verse. The emotion of the moment carries him to his final appeal.

31:35-37 *Who will grant me one listening to me! Look, my mark; let the Almighty answer me! And the document* ***that*** *the man of my case has written, surely I would carry it on my shoulder; I would bind it on* ***as*** *crowns for myself. I would tell Him the number of my steps; like a noble I would approach Him.*

"Who will grant me one listening to me! Look, my mark; let the Almighty answer me!" Job cries out for someone to hear his case. "My mark" is his signature. In Hebrew it is the last letter of the alphabet, taw, which in the old script was shaped like an X or a cross. It was used as a mark to sign a document. Job is saying: here is my signature. I have made my case. I rest it. Now let God answer.

"And the document that the man of my case has written." Job wishes his accuser, his opponent at law, would write down the charges against him. Job had never been told what he was accused of.

"Surely I would carry it on my shoulder; I would bind it on as crowns for myself." Job is so sure of his innocence that he would wear the list of charges proudly, like a crown, because he knows they could not stand.

"I would tell Him the number of my steps; like a noble I would approach Him." Job would give God a full account of his life, every step. He would come before God not cringing like a criminal but standing tall like a prince.

Here Job goes too far. He is right that he is innocent of his friends' charges. But no man can approach the holy God "like a noble," on the strength of his own record. When God does answer, Job will not stand tall. He will say, "I am insignificant" (40:4), and he will repent in dust and ashes (42:6). Paul says the same about his own clear conscience: "For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but the One who examines me is the Lord" (1 Corinthians 4:4). The only way any of us can approach God with confidence is through Christ, who gives us His righteousness (Hebrews 4:16; 2 Corinthians 5:21).

31:38-40 *If my land has cried out against me, and its furrows have wept together, if I have eaten its strength without money, and have caused the life of its owners to breathe out, instead of wheat let thorns come forth, and instead of barley foul weeds." The words of Job are finished.*

"If my land has cried out against me, and its furrows have wept together." Job adds one more oath. If his land could cry out that he had taken it unjustly, or that he had abused it, then let the curse come.

"If I have eaten its strength without money, and have caused the life of its owners to breathe out." If he had taken the crops without paying the workers, or taken land by driving its owners to death, as Ahab did to Naboth (1 Kings 21).

"Instead of wheat let thorns come forth, and instead of barley foul weeds." If I am guilty of this, let my fields grow only thorns and weeds. This is a picture of the curse on the ground after Adam's sin (Genesis 3:17-18).

"The words of Job are finished." This line is not part of Job's speech. It is the writer telling us that Job has said all he will say in his defense. Job has rested his case. Now there will be silence, and then a young man named Elihu will speak, and then, at last, God.

What can we learn from this chapter? Job's oath shows us what a righteous life looks like. It is not just keeping away from big, public sins. It reaches to the eyes, the heart, the treatment of servants and strangers, the love of money, secret worship and how we feel about our enemies. Few of us could swear this oath with a clear conscience. That should humble us. It should also drive us to Christ, who alone lived this life perfectly, and who offers forgiveness for all the ways we fall short (1 John 1:9).

Chapter 31 Summary

Job gave his final defense as an oath of innocence, naming sins and calling curses on himself if he had committed them. He had made a covenant with his eyes not to look on a young woman with desire, knowing that God sees all his ways. He had not walked in falsehood, let his heart follow his eyes, or entered into adultery, which is a fire that burns down to destruction. He had heard his servants' complaints, knowing God made them as He made him. He had not refused the poor, failed the widow, eaten alone while orphans went hungry, left anyone without clothing, or used his power against the fatherless, because he feared God's majesty. He had not trusted in gold, worshiped the sun or moon, rejoiced at his enemy's ruin or cursed him, turned away the hungry or the stranger, or hidden his sin like Adam. He signed his case and called on the Almighty to

answer, wishing to approach Him like a noble. He ended with one more oath about his land, and the words of Job were finished.

Chapter 31 Study Questions

1. What covenant did Job make in verse 1? How does Matthew 5:28 show the same truth?

2. What did Job ask God to do in verse 6?

3. What did Job say about his servants in verses 13-15, and why?

4. List the ways Job helped the poor, widows and orphans in verses 16-21. How do these answer Eliphaz's charges in 22:6-9?

5. What two secret sins of the heart did Job deny in verses 24-28?

6. How did Job treat his enemies and strangers? (31:29-32) How does that compare with Matthew 5:44 and Hebrews 13:2?

7. What did Job say about hiding sin like Adam? (31:33) How does Proverbs 28:13 explain why this matters?

8. Job wanted to approach God "like a noble" (31:37). Why was that going too far? How does a believer approach God with confidence? (Hebrews 4:16)

9. Job made a covenant with his eyes. What decision could you make ahead of time to guard your eyes and your heart?

10. Which part of Job's oath would be hardest for you to swear honestly? What would you need to bring to God about it?

Chapter 32: Elihu Begins to Speak

Scripture

32:1-10 And these three men ceased from answering Job, for he ***was*** righteous in his own eyes. And the anger of Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, from the clan of Ram, burned; against Job his anger burned because he justified himself more than God. And against his three friends his anger burned, because they had not found an answer, and they had condemned Job. And Elihu had waited for Job with words, for they ***were*** older than he in days. And Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of the three men, and his anger burned. And Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite answered and said, "I ***am*** young in days, and you ***are*** aged; therefore I was timid, and I was afraid to tell you my knowledge. I said, 'Let days speak, and let abundance of years make wisdom known.' Surely it ***is*** the spirit in a mortal, and the breath of the Almighty, ***that*** gives them understanding. ***It is*** not the many ***who*** are wise, nor the old ***who*** understand justice. Therefore I say, 'Listen to me; I will tell my knowledge, even I.'

32:11-22 Look, I waited for your words; I gave ear to your understandings, while you searched out words. And I paid attention to you, and look, there was no one rebuking Job, answering his words, from among you. Lest you say, 'We have found wisdom; let God drive him away, not man.' And he has not arranged words against me, and with your words I will not respond to him. They are dismayed; they have not answered again; words have moved away from them. And shall I wait, because they do not speak, because they have stood ***still***, they have not answered again? I will answer, even I, my part; I will tell my knowledge, even I. For I am full of words; the spirit of my belly has constrained me. Look, my belly ***is*** like wine ***that*** is not opened; like new wineskins it will be split open. Let me speak, and let it be relieved for me; let me open my lips and answer. Let me not, please, show partiality to any man, and to man I will not use flattery. For I do not know ***how*** to use flattery; in a little ***while*** my Maker would carry me away.

Chapter 32 Preview

Job has finished, and the three friends have nothing left to say. Then a new voice is heard. A young man named Elihu has been standing by and listening to the whole debate. He has kept quiet because the others were older. But now he is angry, angry at Job for justifying himself more than God, and angry at the three friends because they condemned Job without finding an answer. He cannot hold his words in any longer.

Elihu speaks for six chapters, from 32 to 37, and no one answers him. Chapter 32 is mostly his introduction. He explains why he waited, why he must speak now, and why age alone does not make a man wise: it is the Spirit of God who gives understanding. He promises he will not flatter anyone. Bible teachers have long disagreed about Elihu. Is he a wise young man who prepares the way for God's speeches, or is he a fourth friend who repeats the same mistakes with more words? We will look at both views, and then let his speeches speak for themselves.

Chapter 32 Study

32:1 *And these three men ceased from answering Job, for he **was** righteous in his own eyes.*

"And these three men ceased from answering Job, for he was righteous in his own eyes." The debate is over. The three friends stop talking. Why? Because Job "was righteous in his own eyes." From their point of view, there was no point in arguing with a man who insisted he was innocent. They could not prove their charges, and he would not confess. So they gave up.

That does not mean the friends were right. God Himself said Job was blameless (1:8). But it does point to something real. In defending his innocence, Job had begun to put his own righteousness at the center, and to speak as if God owed him an answer. That is what Elihu will take up.

32:2-5 *And the anger of Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, from the clan of Ram, burned; against Job his anger burned because he justified himself more than God. And against his three friends his anger burned, because they had not found an answer, and they had condemned Job. And Elihu had waited for Job with words, for they **were** older than he in days. And Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of the three men, and his anger burned.*

"And the anger of Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, from the clan of Ram, burned." This is the only speaker in the book whose father and family line are named. Elihu means He is my God. Barachel means "God blesses." Buz was the name of a nephew of Abraham (Genesis 22:21), so Elihu may have come from a people related to Abraham's family. "The clan of Ram" is not known for certain.

"Against Job his anger burned because he justified himself more than God." Elihu's first complaint is against Job. Job had defended himself so strongly that he had made God look unjust. Job was more concerned to be proved right than to see God proved right. This was a fair point, and God will say something like it in 40:8.

"And against his three friends his anger burned, because they had not found an answer, and they had condemned Job." Elihu's second complaint is against the friends. They had condemned Job, but they had never actually answered him. They had no explanation for his suffering except to say he must be guilty, and they could not prove it.

"And Elihu had waited for Job with words, for they were older than he in days." Elihu had been patient. In that culture, the young were expected to let their elders speak first. "And Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of the three men, and his anger burned." When he saw that the older men had nothing left, he could not stay silent.

Notice that the word "anger" or "burned" comes four times in these four verses. Elihu is angry. Whether that anger serves him well or poorly is part of the question about him.

32:6-10 *And Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite answered and said, "I **am** young in days, and you **are** aged; therefore I was timid, and I was afraid to tell you my knowledge. I said, 'Let days speak, and let abundance of years make wisdom known.' Surely it **is** the spirit in a mortal, and the breath of the Almighty, **that** gives them understanding. **It is** not the many **who** are wise, nor the old **who** understand justice. Therefore I say, 'Listen to me; I will tell my knowledge, even I.'*

"And Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite answered and said." His first words are, "I am young in days, and you are aged; therefore I was timid, and I was afraid to tell you my knowledge." Elihu begins humbly, or at least politely. He admits he is young.

"I said, 'Let days speak, and let abundance of years make wisdom known.'" He had thought that older men would have more wisdom. That is usually true. Experience teaches. Scripture honors the old (Leviticus 19:32).

"Surely it is the spirit in a mortal, and the breath of the Almighty, that gives them understanding." But Elihu learned something. Wisdom does not come just from age. It comes from God. The breath of the Almighty gives understanding. This is true. Daniel was a young man when God gave him wisdom beyond the wise men of Babylon (Daniel 1:17-20). Paul told Timothy, "Let no one despise your youth" (1 Timothy 4:12).

"It is not the many who are wise, nor the old who understand justice." Being old, or being in the majority, does not guarantee being right. The three friends were older, and they were three against one, and they were wrong.

"Therefore I say, 'Listen to me; I will tell my knowledge, even I.'" Elihu asks for a hearing.

32:11-14 *Look, I waited for your words; I gave ear to your understandings, while you searched out words. And I paid attention to you, and look, there was no one rebuking Job, answering his words, from among you. Lest you say, 'We have found wisdom; let God drive him away, not man.' And he has not arranged words against me, and with your words I will not respond to him.*

"Look, I waited for your words; I gave ear to your understandings, while you searched out words." Elihu listened carefully the whole time. He heard all their arguments.

"And I paid attention to you, and look, there was no one rebuking Job, answering his words, from among you." In all their speeches, not one of the friends actually answered what Job said. They attacked him, but they did not answer him.

"Lest you say, 'We have found wisdom; let God drive him away, not man.'" Elihu warns the friends not to say they have done their best and only God can deal with Job now. He thinks there is still an answer a man can give.

"And he has not arranged words against me, and with your words I will not respond to him." Job has not argued with Elihu, and Elihu promises not to use the same arguments the friends used. He will take a different approach. Whether he keeps that promise is one of the questions teachers ask about him.

32:15-20 *They are dismayed; they have not answered again; words have moved away from them. And shall I wait, because they do not speak, because they have stood **still**, they have not answered again? I will answer, even I, my part; I will tell my knowledge, even I. For I am full of words; the spirit of my belly has constrained me. Look, my belly **is** like wine **that** is not opened; like new wineskins it will be split open. Let me speak, and let it be relieved for me; let me open my lips and answer.*

Now Elihu turns and speaks about the friends, perhaps to Job or to the onlookers. "They are dismayed; they have not answered again; words have moved away from them." The friends are stunned and silent. They have run out of words.

"And shall I wait, because they do not speak, because they have stood still, they have not answered again?" Should Elihu keep waiting just because they are standing there saying nothing? No.

"I will answer, even I, my part; I will tell my knowledge, even I." Notice how often Elihu says "I" in this chapter. Some readers hear self-importance in that. Others hear a young man working up his courage.

"For I am full of words; the spirit of my belly has constrained me." Elihu feels pressure inside him that he must let out. "Look, my belly is like wine that is not opened; like new wineskins it will be split open." When new wine ferments in a sealed skin, the gas builds up until the skin bursts. Elihu feels like that.

"Let me speak, and let it be relieved for me; let me open my lips and answer." He must speak to find relief. Jeremiah felt something like this when he tried not to speak God's word, and it was "like a burning fire shut up in my bones" (Jeremiah 20:9). Is Elihu's pressure like Jeremiah's, from God? Or is it just a young man's eagerness to have his say? The text does not tell us directly.

32:21-22 *Let me not, please, show partiality to any man, and to man I will not use flattery. For I do not know **how** to use flattery; in a little **while** my Maker would carry me away.*

"Let me not, please, show partiality to any man, and to man I will not use flattery." Elihu promises to be fair. He will not favor anyone because of age or rank, and he will not use flattering titles.

"For I do not know how to use flattery; in a little while my Maker would carry me away." Elihu knows he must answer to God for his words. If he flattered men, God would take him away. That is a good fear to have. Anyone who teaches God's Word should feel it (James 3:1).

Before we go on to Elihu's speeches, it helps to know that Bible teachers read him in two main ways.

Many see Elihu as a helpful voice, sent to prepare Job for God. They point out several things. Elihu is not condemned by God in chapter 42. God rebukes the three friends by name (42:7), but He says nothing against Elihu. Elihu is angry at the friends for condemning Job, and he does not repeat their main charge that Job is being punished for great hidden sin. Instead, he says that God uses suffering to warn, to teach and to keep a man from pride (33:14-30; 36:8-15). That is a new idea in

the book, and it is true. Elihu also speaks of God's greatness in the storm (37), which leads straight into the LORD speaking "from the storm" (38:1). In this view, Elihu is like a forerunner who gets Job ready to hear God.

Others see Elihu as a fourth wrong friend, younger and more long-winded than the others. They point out that he talks a great deal about himself in chapter 32. He promises not to use the friends' arguments, but at times he says things very close to theirs, such as that Job "adds transgression to his sin" (34:37) and "drinks mockery like water" (34:7). When the LORD begins to speak, His first words are, "Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge?" (38:2). Some think that is aimed at Elihu, who had just been speaking, though most take it as aimed at Job, since the next verse speaks to Job directly. In this view, God does not mention Elihu in chapter 42 because his words were not worth answering.

Both views have something to them. I believe the fairest reading is to weigh Elihu's words the way we weigh the friends': hold on to what agrees with the rest of Scripture, and set aside what does not. Elihu says some true and helpful things that the friends never said, especially that suffering can be God's way of teaching and of saving a man from pride. He also is quick to anger and quick to assume the worst about Job's words. God does not commend him or condemn him. We will take his speeches one at a time and say where he is helpful and where he goes too far.

Chapter 32 Summary

When Job finished and the three friends stopped answering because Job was righteous in his own eyes, a young man named Elihu, son of Barachel the Buzite, spoke. He was angry at Job for justifying himself more than God, and angry at the friends because they condemned Job without finding an answer. He had waited because he was young, but he had learned that wisdom comes not from age but from the breath of the Almighty. He had listened to every speech and found that no one had really answered Job. Now he was full of words like new wine about to burst its skin, and he promised to speak without partiality or flattery, knowing his Maker would judge him. Bible teachers see Elihu either as a helpful voice who prepares Job to hear God, or as a fourth friend who goes wrong in his own way. We weigh his words by the rest of Scripture.

Chapter 32 Study Questions

1. Why did the three friends stop answering Job? (32:1)

2. Why was Elihu angry with Job, and why was he angry with the three friends? (32:2-3)

3. Why had Elihu waited to speak? (32:4, 6)

4. Where did Elihu say understanding comes from? (32:8) How does 1 Timothy 4:12 encourage young believers?

5. What had Elihu noticed about the friends' speeches? (32:12)

6. How did Elihu describe the pressure he felt inside? (32:18-20)

7. What did Elihu promise about partiality and flattery, and why? (32:21-22)

8. What are the two main ways Bible teachers understand Elihu? Which reasons do you find most helpful?

9. Have you ever been sure you were right and still been wrong about someone? What did you learn?

10. Elihu said wisdom comes from God's Spirit, not just age. How can older and younger believers learn from one another?

Chapter 33: Elihu: God Speaks to Man

Scripture

33:1-13 And however, please hear my speech, Job, and give ear to all my words. Look, please, I have opened my mouth; my tongue has spoken in my palate. My words ***are*** the uprightness of my heart, and the knowledge of my lips they speak purely. The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life. If you are able, respond to me; arrange ***your words*** before me; take your stand. Look, I ***am*** like you toward God; from clay I also was nipped off. Look, dread of me will not terrify you, and my pressure will not be heavy on you. Surely you have spoken in my ears, and I heard the sound of words: 'I ***am*** pure, without transgression; I ***am*** innocent, and I have no iniquity. Look, He finds occasions against me; He considers me as an enemy to Him. He puts my feet in the stocks; He watches all my paths.' Look, ***in*** this you are not right; I will answer you, for God is greater than a mortal. Why have you contended against Him, that He does not answer all his words?

33:14-33 For God speaks once, and twice, ***yet*** one does not perceive it, in a dream, a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on men, in slumbers on the bed. Then He uncovers the ear of men, and He seals their discipline, to turn man aside ***from his*** deed, and He covers pride from a man. He keeps back his soul from the pit, and his life from passing away by the weapon. And he is rebuked with pain on his bed, and the multitude of his bones ***is*** constant. And his life loathes bread, and his soul the food of desire. His flesh wastes away from sight, and his bones, ***which*** were not seen, are laid bare. And his soul draws near to the pit, and his life to those who bring death. If there is over him an angel, a mediator, one of a thousand, to tell man his uprightness, then He is gracious to him and says, 'Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom.' His flesh has become fresher than ***in*** childhood; he returns to the days of his youth. He prays to God, and He accepts him, and he sees His face with a shout of joy, and He restores to mortal man his righteousness. He looks on men and says, 'I have sinned and perverted ***what was*** upright, and it was not repaid to me.' He has ransomed his soul from passing into the pit, and his life will look on the light. Look, God does all these ***things*** two times, three ***times*** with a man, to bring back his soul from the pit, to be lighted with the light of life. Pay attention, Job; listen to me; keep quiet, and I will speak. If there are words, respond to me; speak, for I desire to justify you. If not, you listen to me; keep quiet, and I will teach you wisdom."

Chapter 33 Preview

Elihu now speaks to Job directly, by name, which none of the three friends ever did. He tells Job not to be afraid of him, because he is only a man made from clay, just like Job. Then he takes up Job's complaint. Job had said he was pure and innocent, and that God was treating him as an enemy and would not answer him. Elihu says Job is wrong about that: God is greater than man, and God does speak, though people often do not notice.

How does God speak? Elihu names two ways. Sometimes He speaks in dreams and visions of the night, to turn a man from his pride. Sometimes He speaks through pain, when a man lies sick on his bed, wasting away and drawing near to death. And then Elihu describes something

wonderful: an angel, a mediator, who stands by the man and says, "Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom." The man is restored, he prays and God accepts him, and he sings of God's mercy. This is the most hopeful thing anyone has said to Job since chapter 2. Elihu offers Job a new way to see his suffering: not as punishment, but as God reaching out to save.

Chapter 33 Study

33:1-4 *And however, please hear my speech, Job, and give ear to all my words. Look, please, I have opened my mouth; my tongue has spoken in my palate. My words **are** the uprightness of my heart, and the knowledge of my lips they speak purely. The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.*

"And however, please hear my speech, Job, and give ear to all my words." Elihu speaks to Job by name. The three friends never once called Job by his name in their speeches. That is a small thing, but it shows that Elihu means to speak to Job as a person.

"Look, please, I have opened my mouth; my tongue has spoken in my palate." Elihu is about to begin.

"My words are the uprightness of my heart, and the knowledge of my lips they speak purely." He promises to speak honestly and sincerely.

"The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life." Elihu reminds Job that he too is a creature, made by God's Spirit and kept alive by His breath, just as Adam was when God breathed into him "the breath of life" (Genesis 2:7). He is claiming no more than that. And yet he also means, as he said in 32:8, that what understanding he has comes from God.

33:5-7 *If you are able, respond to me; arrange **your words** before me; take your stand. Look, I **am** like you toward God; from clay I also was nipped off. Look, dread of me will not terrify you, and my pressure will not be heavy on you.*

"If you are able, respond to me; arrange your words before me; take your stand." Elihu invites Job to answer him. This is a fair debate, man to man.

"Look, I am like you toward God; from clay I also was nipped off." This is a lovely picture. A potter pinches off a piece of clay to make a pot. Elihu says God pinched him off from the same clay as Job. They are equals before God.

"Look, dread of me will not terrify you, and my pressure will not be heavy on you." Job had asked for an arbiter whose terror would not frighten him (9:34; 13:21). Elihu says: I am not God. I am just a man. You do not need to be afraid of me. You can answer me freely.

33:8-11 *Surely you have spoken in my ears, and I heard the sound of words: 'I **am** pure, without transgression; I **am** innocent, and I have no iniquity. Look, He finds occasions against me; He considers me as an enemy to Him. He puts my feet in the stocks; He watches all my paths.'*

"Surely you have spoken in my ears, and I heard the sound of words." Elihu now quotes Job, and he quotes him fairly, summing up what Job said in several places.

"I am pure, without transgression; I am innocent, and I have no iniquity." Job had said something close to this (9:21; 10:7; 16:17; 23:11-12; 27:5-6). He did not claim to be sinless, but he did insist he was innocent of the charges.

"Look, He finds occasions against me; He considers me as an enemy to Him." Job had said this almost word for word: "consider me Your enemy" (13:24), and God "has counted me for Himself as His foes" (19:11).

"He puts my feet in the stocks; He watches all my paths." Job had said this too (13:27).

Elihu has listened well. Unlike Eliphaz, who put words in Job's mouth (22:13), Elihu repeats what Job really said.

33:12-13 *Look, **in** this you are not right; I will answer you, for God is greater than a mortal. Why have you contended against Him, that He does not answer all his words?*

"Look, in this you are not right; I will answer you, for God is greater than a mortal." Here is Elihu's first answer. Job was not right to talk as if God were his enemy and owed him an explanation. God is greater than man. He does not have to explain Himself to us.

"Why have you contended against Him, that He does not answer all his words?" Job's complaint was that God would not answer him (19:7; 30:20). Elihu says: why argue with God because He does not answer you point by point? God is not silent. He speaks in His own ways. You just have not recognized it.

Notice the difference between Elihu and the three friends. The friends said Job was suffering because he had sinned before. Elihu says Job is wrong in how he has spoken about God now, during his suffering. That is a different charge, and a fairer one. God Himself will say something similar (38:2; 40:2, 8).

33:14-18 *For God speaks once, and twice, **yet** one does not perceive it, in a dream, a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on men, in slumbers on the bed. Then He uncovers the ear of men, and He seals their discipline, to turn man aside **from his** deed, and He covers pride from a man. He keeps back his soul from the pit, and his life from passing away by the weapon.*

"For God speaks once, and twice, yet one does not perceive it." God speaks more than once, but people often do not notice.

"In a dream, a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on men, in slumbers on the bed." The first way God speaks is in dreams. Eliphaz had claimed a night vision too (4:13), using some of the same

words. In Old Testament times, God did often speak in dreams: to Abimelech (Genesis 20:3), to Jacob (Genesis 28:12), to Joseph (Genesis 37:5) and to Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar.

"Then He uncovers the ear of men, and He seals their discipline." God opens their ears and stamps His warning on them like a seal on a document.

"To turn man aside from his deed, and He covers pride from a man." Why does God warn people? To turn them away from wrong before they do it, and to keep them from pride. "Covers pride from a man" means God hides pride away from him, keeps it out of his life.

"He keeps back his soul from the pit, and his life from passing away by the weapon." "The pit" is the grave. The "weapon" is something like a spear or arrow. God warns a man so that he will not die in his sin.

This is a new and important idea. God's warnings are acts of mercy. He speaks to save, not to destroy. Today God speaks to us fully and finally in His Son and in His written Word (Hebrews 1:1-2; 2 Timothy 3:16-17). We do not need to wait for a dream to know His will. But His purpose is the same: to turn us from sin and pride and keep us from the pit.

33:19-22 *And he is rebuked with pain on his bed, and the multitude of his bones **is** constant. And his life loathes bread, and his soul the food of desire. His flesh wastes away from sight, and his bones, **which** were not seen, are laid bare. And his soul draws near to the pit, and his life to those who bring death.*

Now Elihu describes the second way God speaks: through pain. "And he is rebuked with pain on his bed, and the multitude of his bones is constant." A man lies sick in bed, and the ache in his bones never stops. Elihu says this pain is a "rebuke," a correction from God.

"And his life loathes bread, and his soul the food of desire." He cannot eat. Even his favorite food makes him sick.

"His flesh wastes away from sight, and his bones, which were not seen, are laid bare." He grows so thin that his bones stick out.

"And his soul draws near to the pit, and his life to those who bring death." He is near death. "Those who bring death" may be angels of death, or simply the forces of death.

This is a picture of Job. Elihu is describing exactly what Job is going through (7:5; 19:20; 30:17, 30). And his point is that God may be speaking to Job through it, not to punish him for some past crime, but to teach him and save him from pride.

Is this true? Yes, it can be. Scripture teaches that God uses suffering to discipline and train His children. "For whom the Lord loves He disciplines" (Hebrews 12:6). "It was good for me that I was afflicted, so that I may learn Your statutes" (Psalm 119:71). Paul was given a thorn in the flesh "so that I might not be exalted above measure" (2 Corinthians 12:7). Discipline here means training, not punishment. A coach disciplines an athlete to make him strong.

But Elihu does not know the whole story either. He does not know about Satan's challenge in chapters 1 and 2. Job's suffering was not mainly discipline for pride. It was a test of whether he would trust God for nothing. Still, Elihu is closer to the truth than the friends were. God did use Job's suffering to bring him to a deeper humility and a deeper knowledge of Him (42:5-6).

33:23-24 *If there is over him an angel, a mediator, one of a thousand, to tell man his uprightness, then He is gracious to him and says, 'Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom.'*

"If there is over him an angel, a mediator, one of a thousand, to tell man his uprightness."

This verse is one of the most hopeful in the book. Elihu says: when a man is dying, there may be an angel, a messenger, standing over him. The Hebrew word mal'ak means messenger, and it is the usual word for an angel. This messenger is "a mediator," one who stands between God and man and speaks for him. He is "one of a thousand," a rare one, one in a thousand. And his work is "to tell man his uprightness," to show the man the right way, or to declare what is right for him.

Job had longed for exactly this. He cried, "There is no arbiter between us, who might lay his hand on the two of us" (9:33). He said his witness was in heaven (16:19). He said his Redeemer lives (19:25). Elihu now says there may be such a mediator.

"Then He is gracious to him and says, 'Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom.'" God is gracious. He commands that the man be saved from death. And the reason is, "I have found a ransom." A ransom is a price paid to set someone free. In the Law, a ransom could be paid to save a life that would otherwise be lost (Exodus 21:30; 30:12). Elihu does not say what the ransom is. He only says God has found it.

Who is this mediator, and what is the ransom? Elihu does not tell us, and we should be careful not to say more than the text says. Some teachers think Elihu means an angel who intercedes for a sick man. Some think he means the man's own repentance. Others think it is a general picture of God providing a way of escape.

But Christians reading this verse cannot help seeing a picture of Christ. Paul says, "there is one God, and one mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all" (1 Timothy 2:5-6). Jesus said He came "to give His life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). Job longed for a mediator, and Elihu spoke of one who would find a ransom. I believe God let these words point ahead to the Mediator He would one day send, who did not merely find a ransom but became the ransom Himself. This is a picture, not a prophecy the New Testament quotes. But it is a beautiful one. The man who was going down to the pit is set free, because Someone stood between him and God and a price was paid.

33:25-28 *His flesh has become fresher than **in** childhood; he returns to the days of his youth. He prays to God, and He accepts him, and he sees His face with a shout of joy, and He restores to mortal man his righteousness. He looks on men and says, 'I have sinned and perverted **what was** upright, and it was not repaid to me.' He has ransomed his soul from passing into the pit, and his life will look on the light.*

"His flesh has become fresher than in childhood; he returns to the days of his youth." The sick man is healed. His body becomes as fresh as a child's. Think of Naaman, whose flesh became like the flesh of a little child when God healed him (2 Kings 5:14).

"He prays to God, and He accepts him, and he sees His face with a shout of joy, and He restores to mortal man his righteousness." The man prays, and God receives him. He sees God's face, which means he knows God's favor again, and he shouts for joy. God restores him to a right standing.

"He looks on men and says, 'I have sinned and perverted what was upright, and it was not repaid to me.'" The restored man tells others what happened. He admits he sinned, and he praises God that he was not paid back as his sin deserved. This is the testimony of every forgiven sinner. "He has not done to us according to our sins," the psalmist says (Psalm 103:10).

"He has ransomed his soul from passing into the pit, and his life will look on the light." God has redeemed him from death, and he will live to see the light. This happened to Job in a way. God restored him, and Job saw God (42:5).

33:29-30 *Look, God does all these **things** two times, three **times** with a man, to bring back his soul from the pit, to be lighted with the light of life.*

"Look, God does all these things two times, three times with a man." God is patient. He warns again and again, through dreams and through pain.

"To bring back his soul from the pit, to be lighted with the light of life." God's goal in all of it is to save. He wants to bring the man back from death so that he can live in the light. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. The one following Me will certainly not walk in the darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12).

This is Elihu's best gift to Job. Job had seen his suffering only as God's hostility. Elihu says it may be God's mercy, God working to bring Job back into the light. That is not the whole answer. But it is a true and hopeful part of it.

33:31-33 *Pay attention, Job; listen to me; keep quiet, and I will speak. If there are words, respond to me; speak, for I desire to justify you. If not, you listen to me; keep quiet, and I will teach you wisdom."*

"Pay attention, Job; listen to me; keep quiet, and I will speak." Elihu asks Job to listen.

"If there are words, respond to me; speak, for I desire to justify you." This is an important line. Elihu says he wants to see Job cleared. He is not trying to condemn Job, as the friends were. He would be glad if Job could answer him.

"If not, you listen to me; keep quiet, and I will teach you wisdom." If Job has no answer, he should listen, and Elihu will teach him. Job does not answer. Whether that is because Elihu was right or because Job saw no point is not said.

Chapter 33 Summary

Elihu spoke to Job by name and told him not to fear, since he too was made from clay. He fairly quoted Job's claims to be pure and his complaint that God treated him as an enemy. Elihu said Job was not right in this, because God is greater than man and does speak, though people do not perceive it. God speaks in dreams to turn a man from pride and keep him from the pit, and He speaks through pain, when a man lies wasting away near death. Then, if there is an angel, a mediator, one of a thousand, God is gracious and says, "Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom." The man is restored, prays, sees God's face with joy, and confesses that he sinned and was not repaid as he deserved. God does this again and again to bring a soul back to the light of life. This is a picture of Christ, the one Mediator who gave Himself as a ransom. Elihu said he wanted to justify Job, and called him to listen.

Chapter 33 Study Questions

1. How did Elihu address Job differently from the three friends? (33:1)

2. What did Elihu say about himself and Job in verses 6-7?

3. What did Elihu say Job had claimed? (33:9-11) Did he quote Job fairly?

4. What was Elihu's first answer to Job? (33:12-13)

5. What two ways did Elihu say God speaks to man? (33:14-22)

6. Why does God warn and discipline people, according to verses 17-18 and 30?

7. What did the mediator do, and what did God say He had found? (33:23-24)

8. How do 1 Timothy 2:5-6 and Mark 10:45 help us see a picture of Christ in these verses?

9. Has God ever used pain or hardship to teach you something or turn you from pride? What did you learn?

10. The restored man said, "I have sinned and perverted what was upright, and it was not repaid to me" (33:27). How does it feel to know God has not treated you as your sins deserve? Who could you tell about it?

Chapter 34: Elihu Defends God's Justice

Scripture

34:1-15 And Elihu answered and said, "Hear my words, you wise ***men***, and give ear to me, you who know. For the ear tests words, and the palate tastes to eat. Let us choose justice for ourselves; let us know among ourselves what ***is*** good. For Job has said, 'I am righteous, and God has taken away my right. Concerning my right, should I lie? My arrow ***is*** incurable without transgression.' Who ***is*** a man like Job, ***who*** drinks mockery like water, and travels in company with workers of evil, and walks with men of wickedness? For he has said, 'It does not profit a man when he delights himself with God.' Therefore, men of heart, listen to me: far be it from God ***to do*** wickedness, and ***from*** the Almighty ***to do*** unrighteousness. For the work of a man He repays to him, and according to the way of a man He causes him to find ***it***. Truly also, God does not act wickedly, and the Almighty does not pervert justice. Who appointed the earth to Him? And who set the whole world ***in place***? If He sets His heart on him, ***and*** gathers to Himself his spirit and his breath, all flesh would expire together, and mankind would return to dust.

34:16-37 And if ***you have*** understanding, hear this; give ear to the sound of my words. Will even one who hates justice govern? And will you condemn the righteous, mighty ***One***? Is ***it fitting*** to say to a king, 'Worthless one,' ***and*** to nobles, 'Wicked'? ***How much less to Him*** who does not show partiality to princes, and does not regard the rich before the poor, for all of them ***are*** the work of His hands. ***In*** a moment they die, and ***at*** the middle of the night a people are shaken and pass away, and they remove the mighty, not by a hand. For His eyes ***are*** on the ways of a man, and He sees all his steps. There is no darkness, and there is no deep darkness, for the workers of evil to hide themselves there. For He does not set ***it*** again on a man to go to God in judgment. He breaks the mighty without inquiry, and He sets others in their place. Therefore He knows their deeds, and He overturns ***them in the*** night, and they are crushed. As wicked ***men*** He strikes them in the place of those who see, because they turned aside from after Him, and they did not consider any of His ways, so as to cause the outcry of the poor to come to Him; and He hears the outcry of the afflicted. And ***when*** He keeps quiet, who will condemn? And ***when*** He hides ***His*** face, who will see Him? And ***He is*** over a nation and over a man alike, from the reigning of a godless man, from ***being*** snares of a people. For has anyone said to God, 'I have borne ***punishment***; I will not act corruptly. Apart from ***what*** I see, You teach me; if I have done unrighteousness, I will not do ***it*** again'? Should He repay it from with you, because you have rejected ***it***? For you must choose, and not I; and what you know, speak. Men of heart will say to me, and a wise man who listens to me, 'Job speaks without knowledge, and his words ***are*** without insight.' Oh that Job were tested to the end, because of ***his*** answers among men of evil! For he adds transgression to his sin; he claps ***his hands*** among us, and he multiplies his words to God."

Chapter 34 Preview

In his second speech, Elihu turns to the wise men listening, and perhaps to the three friends, and asks them to judge Job's words with him. He quotes Job as saying, "I am righteous, and God has taken away my right," and "It does not profit a man when he delights himself with God." Elihu

says that is going too far. The heart of this chapter is one great truth: "far be it from God to do wickedness." The Almighty never perverts justice.

Elihu gives his reasons. God made the world and keeps every breath in it; if He took back His Spirit, all flesh would die. A God who hated justice could not rule. He shows no favor to kings or the rich, He sees every step a man takes, and no darkness can hide the wicked from Him. He hears the cry of the poor. Elihu is right about God, and these are some of the strongest words on God's justice in the Bible. But at the end he turns hard on Job, wishing that Job would be tested to the end and saying that he "adds transgression to his sin." Here Elihu sounds much like the friends he criticized.

Chapter 34 Study

34:1-4 *And Elihu answered and said, "Hear my words, you wise **men**, and give ear to me, you who know. For the ear tests words, and the palate tastes to eat. Let us choose justice for ourselves; let us know among ourselves what **is** good.*

"And Elihu answered and said." This begins Elihu's second speech. No one answered his first, so he goes on.

"Hear my words, you wise men, and give ear to me, you who know." Elihu speaks to a wider group now. These may be the three friends, or other wise men who had gathered to listen. He asks them to join him in judging Job's words.

"For the ear tests words, and the palate tastes to eat." Job had said nearly the same thing (12:11). Just as the tongue tastes food to tell if it is good, the ear tests words to see if they are true. Elihu invites them to taste what Job has said.

"Let us choose justice for ourselves; let us know among ourselves what is good." Let us decide together what is right. This is a good principle. God's people are to test what they hear (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

34:5-6 *For Job has said, 'I am righteous, and God has taken away my right. Concerning my right, should I lie? My arrow **is** incurable without transgression.'*

"For Job has said." Then Elihu quotes him: "I am righteous, and God has taken away my right." Job had said both things (13:18; 27:2). He claimed to be in the right, and he said God had taken away his justice.

"Concerning my right, should I lie? My arrow is incurable without transgression." Job had said he would not lie by confessing sins he had not done (27:4-6). And he had said that God's arrows were in him (6:4), giving him a wound that would not heal, though he had not sinned.

Elihu quotes Job fairly here. Job really did say that God had taken away his right. And that is the problem Elihu sees. Job had stood up for his innocence so strongly that he ended up accusing God of injustice. If Job is right, then God must be wrong. Elihu will not accept that.

34:7-9 *Who **is** a man like Job, **who** drinks mockery like water, and travels in company with workers of evil, and walks with men of wickedness? For he has said, 'It does not profit a man when he delights himself with God.'*

"Who is a man like Job, who drinks mockery like water?" Elihu means that Job loves to mock and scorn, and drinks it in as easily as water. This is harsh. Job had mocked his friends at times (12:2; 26:2-3), but he was also the one being mocked.

"And travels in company with workers of evil, and walks with men of wickedness?" Here Elihu goes too far. He says Job keeps company with evil men. He does not mean Job actually walked with criminals. He means that Job's words put him in the same camp as the wicked, because he talks as they do. But this is very close to what the friends said, and it was not true of Job's life.

"For he has said, 'It does not profit a man when he delights himself with God.'" Did Job say that? Not in those words. Job said that God destroys the blameless and the wicked alike (9:22), and he described the wicked asking what profit there is in prayer (21:15). But Job himself never stopped delighting in God or praying to Him. Elihu has taken Job's description of how things look and treated it as Job's own belief. That is not quite fair.

34:10-12 *Therefore, men of heart, listen to me: far be it from God **to do** wickedness, and **from** the Almighty **to do** unrighteousness. For the work of a man He repays to him, and according to the way of a man He causes him to find **it**. Truly also, God does not act wickedly, and the Almighty does not pervert justice.*

"Therefore, men of heart, listen to me: far be it from God to do wickedness, and from the Almighty to do unrighteousness." "Men of heart" means men of understanding. Here is Elihu's main point, and it is absolutely true. God never does wrong. It is unthinkable.

"For the work of a man He repays to him, and according to the way of a man He causes him to find it." God gives each person what his deeds deserve. That is true in the end, at the final judgment (Romans 2:6; Revelation 20:12). The friends' mistake was to say it always happens right away, in this life. Elihu does not say exactly when.

"Truly also, God does not act wickedly, and the Almighty does not pervert justice." Elihu says it again for emphasis. Abraham said it long before: "Will not the Judge of all the earth do justice?" (Genesis 18:25). Moses sang, "all His ways are justice; a God of faithfulness and without injustice, righteous and upright is He" (Deuteronomy 32:4).

This is the truth we must hold on to when life makes no sense. We may not understand what God is doing. We may feel, as Job did, that He has wronged us. But God cannot do wrong. If something looks unjust, it is because we do not see all of it. Paul asks, "Is there unrighteousness with God? May it not be!" (Romans 9:14).

34:13-15 *Who appointed the earth to Him? And who set the whole world **in place**? If He sets His heart on him, **and** gathers to Himself his spirit and his breath, all flesh would expire together, and mankind would return to dust.*

"Who appointed the earth to Him? And who set the whole world in place?" No one put God in charge of the world. He owns it because He made it. He does not answer to anyone above Him.

"If He sets His heart on him, and gathers to Himself his spirit and his breath, all flesh would expire together, and mankind would return to dust." If God decided to take back the breath He gave, every living thing would die at once and turn back into dust. "You withdraw their breath; they die, and to their dust they return" (Psalm 104:29).

Why does Elihu say this? Because it shows God's goodness. Every breath we take is a gift. If God were cruel or unjust, He could end all life in a moment. Instead, He keeps us alive day after day. The fact that the world still exists is proof that God is good and does not delight in destroying. A God who keeps giving breath to people who rebel against Him is not an unjust God.

34:16-20 *And if **you have** understanding, hear this; give ear to the sound of my words. Will even one who hates justice govern? And will you condemn the righteous, mighty **One**? Is **it fitting** to say to a king, 'Worthless one,' **and** to nobles, 'Wicked'? **How much less to Him** who does not show partiality to princes, and does not regard the rich before the poor, for all of them **are** the work of His hands. **In** a moment they die, and **at** the middle of the night a people are shaken and pass away, and they remove the mighty, not by a hand.*

"And if you have understanding, hear this; give ear to the sound of my words." Now Elihu speaks to Job directly.

"Will even one who hates justice govern? And will you condemn the righteous, mighty One?" Can someone who hates justice rule the world? Of course not. The world would fall apart. The fact that God rules shows He loves justice. So how can Job condemn Him?

"Is it fitting to say to a king, 'Worthless one,' and to nobles, 'Wicked'? How much less to Him who does not show partiality to princes, and does not regard the rich before the poor, for all of them are the work of His hands." God is not impressed by rank. No one would call a king worthless to his face, yet God judges kings and nobles without favor. He treats the rich and the poor the same, because He made them all. Peter said, "God is not one who shows partiality" (Acts 10:34). Job himself had said that he and his servant were made by the same God (31:15).

"In a moment they die, and at the middle of the night a people are shaken and pass away, and they remove the mighty, not by a hand." God can bring down the powerful in an instant, in the middle of the night, without any human hand. Think of the firstborn of Egypt at midnight (Exodus 12:29), or Sennacherib's army struck down in one night (2 Kings 19:35).

34:21-25 *For His eyes **are** on the ways of a man, and He sees all his steps. There is no darkness, and there is no deep darkness, for the workers of evil to hide themselves there. For He does not set **it** again on a man to go to God in judgment. He breaks the mighty without inquiry, and He sets others in their place. Therefore He knows their deeds, and He overturns **them in the** night, and they are crushed.*

"For His eyes are on the ways of a man, and He sees all his steps." God sees everything. "In every place are the eyes of the LORD, watching evil ones and good ones" (Proverbs 15:3).

"There is no darkness, and there is no deep darkness, for the workers of evil to hide themselves there." The adulterer and the thief of chapter 24 thought the dark would hide them (24:13-17). It does not hide them from God.

"For He does not set it again on a man to go to God in judgment." God does not need to set a court date for a man to come before Him, as Job wanted (23:3-7). He already knows everything. He does not need a hearing to find out the facts.

"He breaks the mighty without inquiry, and He sets others in their place." God does not need to investigate. He knows, and He acts. He removes one ruler and puts another in his place. "He removes kings and sets up kings" (Daniel 2:21).

"Therefore He knows their deeds, and He overturns them in the night, and they are crushed." Because God knows, He judges.

This answers Job's complaint in part. Job had wanted to bring God to court, to set out his case and hear God's answer. Elihu says that God does not work that way. He is not a judge who needs evidence presented to Him. He sees and knows all, always.

34:26-30 *As wicked **men** He strikes them in the place of those who see, because they turned aside from after Him, and they did not consider any of His ways, so as to cause the outcry of the poor to come to Him; and He hears the outcry of the afflicted. And **when** He keeps quiet, who will condemn? And **when** He hides **His** face, who will see Him? And **He is** over a nation and over a man alike, from the reigning of a godless man, from **being** snares of a people.*

"As wicked men He strikes them in the place of those who see." God sometimes judges the wicked publicly, where everyone can see. "Because they turned aside from after Him, and they did not consider any of His ways, so as to cause the outcry of the poor to come to Him; and He hears the outcry of the afflicted." The wicked oppressed the poor, and the cry of the poor went up to God, and God heard it. Job had said the cry of the wounded went up and God did not seem to act (24:12). Elihu says God does hear.

"And when He keeps quiet, who will condemn? And when He hides His face, who will see Him?" This is an important answer to Job. Job's great complaint was God's silence. Elihu says: if God chooses to be quiet, who has the right to condemn Him for it? If He hides His face, who can make Him show it? God's silence is His own right. It does not mean He is unjust.

"And He is over a nation and over a man alike, from the reigning of a godless man, from being snares of a people." God rules over whole nations and single persons alike. He removes godless rulers so they will not trap the people in sin.

34:31-33 *For has anyone said to God, 'I have borne **punishment**; I will not act corruptly. Apart from **what** I see, You teach me; if I have done unrighteousness, I will not do **it** again'? Should He repay it from with you, because you have rejected **it**? For you must choose, and not I; and what you know, speak.*

"For has anyone said to God, 'I have borne punishment; I will not act corruptly. Apart from what I see, You teach me; if I have done unrighteousness, I will not do it again'?" These verses are hard to translate, but Elihu seems to be giving Job the words he ought to say to God. He should say: I have suffered; I will not sin. Teach me what I cannot see. If I have done wrong, I will not do it again. This is a humble prayer. It does not confess crimes Job did not commit. It asks God to show him what he cannot see. That is a prayer any of us can pray. "Search me, God, and know my heart" (Psalm 139:23).

"Should He repay it from with you, because you have rejected it? For you must choose, and not I; and what you know, speak." Elihu asks: should God reward you on your terms, because you reject His way? You must decide, Job, not me. Tell us what you know.

34:34-37 *Men of heart will say to me, and a wise man who listens to me, 'Job speaks without knowledge, and his words **are** without insight.' Oh that Job were tested to the end, because of **his** answers among men of evil! For he adds transgression to his sin; he claps **his hands** among us, and he multiplies his words to God."*

"Men of heart will say to me, and a wise man who listens to me, 'Job speaks without knowledge, and his words are without insight.'" Elihu says that any sensible person would agree with him: Job has spoken without knowing what he is talking about. Interestingly, God will say something very much like this: "Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge?" (38:2). And Job will admit it (42:3). So on this point, Elihu is right.

"Oh that Job were tested to the end, because of his answers among men of evil!" But here Elihu becomes harsh. He wishes Job's testing would go on to the very end, because Job answers like a wicked man. That is a cruel thing to wish on a man who has lost everything. Elihu does not know that Job's test was ordered in heaven, or that God was proud of him. This is where many readers feel Elihu sounds like a fourth friend.

"For he adds transgression to his sin; he claps his hands among us, and he multiplies his words to God." Elihu says Job's words have added rebellion to whatever sin he had. Clapping the hands was a sign of scorn (27:23). Job mocks, and he piles up words against God.

There is some truth in what Elihu says. Job had said too much. But Elihu says it without mercy. The LORD will correct Job too, but in a very different way. He will not wish Job's suffering to continue. He will speak to Job, show him His glory, and then restore him.

We can learn from both sides of Elihu. He was right to defend God's justice with all his heart. We should do the same. But he was wrong to forget mercy. When we defend God's truth, we must not forget God's kindness. Truth spoken without love becomes a club. Paul says to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15).

Chapter 34 Summary

Elihu called on the wise men to test Job's words with him. He quoted Job as saying he was righteous and that God had taken away his right, and that it does not profit a man to delight in God. Elihu went too far in saying Job drinks mockery like water and walks with evil men. But his main point was true: far be it from God to do wickedness; the Almighty does not pervert justice. God made the world and keeps every breath; if He withdrew His Spirit, all flesh would die. A God who hated justice could not rule. He shows no favor to kings or the rich, sees every step, leaves no darkness for the wicked to hide in, needs no court hearing, breaks the mighty, and hears the cry of the afflicted. When He is silent, who can condemn Him? Elihu suggested a humble prayer for Job, and said Job spoke without knowledge, which God would later confirm. But he ended harshly, wishing Job were tested to the end and saying he added transgression to his sin.

Chapter 34 Study Questions

1. To whom did Elihu speak at the start of this chapter, and what did he ask them to do? (34:2-4)

2. What two things did Elihu quote Job as saying in verses 5-6? Had Job said them? (13:18; 27:2)

3. What harsh things did Elihu say about Job in verses 7-8? Were they fair?

4. What is Elihu's main point in verses 10-12?

5. What would happen if God took back His spirit and breath? (34:14-15) What does that show about God?

6. How does God treat kings, nobles, the rich and the poor? (34:18-19)

7. What did Elihu say about God's silence in verse 29?

8. What prayer did Elihu suggest Job could pray? (34:31-32) How is it like Psalm 139:23?

9. Elihu was right about God's justice but harsh toward Job. Why is it important to speak the truth in love? (Ephesians 4:15)

10. When something in your life seems unfair, how can you hold on to the truth that "the Almighty does not pervert justice"?

Chapter 35: Elihu: What Man's Righteousness Means to God

Scripture

35:1-16 And Elihu answered and said, "Do you consider this to be justice? You have said, 'My righteousness ***is*** more than God's.' For you say, 'What will it profit you? What will I gain ***more*** than from my sin?' I will respond to you ***with*** words, and your friends with you. Look at the heavens and see, and observe the clouds; they are higher than you. If you have sinned, what do you do against Him? And ***if*** your transgressions are many, what do you do to Him? If you are righteous, what do you give to Him? Or what does He receive from your hand? Your wickedness for a man like yourself, and your righteousness for a son of man. Because of the multitude of oppressions they cry out; they cry for help because of the arm of the great. And no one says, 'Where ***is*** God my Maker, who gives songs in the night, who teaches us more than the animals of the earth, and makes us wiser than the birds of the heavens?' There they cry out, and He does not answer, because of the pride of evil ***men***. Surely God does not hear emptiness, and the Almighty does not observe it. How much less when you say ***that*** you do not observe Him, ***that*** the case ***is*** before Him, and you must wait for Him! And now, because His anger has not punished, and He does not greatly know folly, and Job opens his mouth ***with*** vapor; he multiplies words without knowledge."

Chapter 35 Preview

Elihu's third speech is short. He takes up two more things Job had said, or seemed to say. First, Job seemed to claim that his righteousness was greater than God's, and that it did him no good to stay away from sin. Elihu answers by pointing to the sky. Look at the clouds, he says. They are far above you. In the same way, God is far above anything man does. Our sin cannot hurt Him, and our goodness does not make Him richer. Our sin and our goodness mostly affect other people.

Second, Job had complained that God does not answer when people cry out. Elihu says that many people cry out only because they are in pain, not because they are seeking God. No one says, "Where is God my Maker, who gives songs in the night?" God does not answer empty cries that come from pride. And if God does not answer Job, Elihu says, it may be because Job has spoken too much without knowledge. Elihu says some true things here, and some things that miss what Job really meant. His best line is a beautiful one: God "gives songs in the night."

Chapter 35 Study

35:1-3 *And Elihu answered and said, "Do you consider this to be justice? You have said, 'My righteousness **is** more than God's.' For you say, 'What will it profit you? What will I gain **more** than from my sin?'*

"And Elihu answered and said." This is Elihu's third speech. Again, no one has answered him.

"Do you consider this to be justice? You have said, 'My righteousness is more than God's.'" Job never said these exact words. But Elihu thinks this is where Job's words lead. If Job is right and innocent, and God has taken away his right (27:2), then Job is claiming to be more just than God. That is the danger Elihu sees. The LORD will ask Job the same question: "Will you condemn Me so that you may be justified?" (40:8).

"For you say, 'What will it profit you? What will I gain more than from my sin?'" Elihu takes Job to be saying: what good has it done me to be righteous? I would be no worse off if I had sinned. Job had said things close to this. He said God destroys the blameless and the wicked alike (9:22), and that he waited for good and evil came (30:26). But Job never actually turned from righteousness. He only struggled to understand why it had not protected him.

Many believers have felt this way. We try to follow God, and things go badly. We watch people who ignore God do well. We start to ask what the use is. Psalm 73 tells of a man who said, "Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure" (Psalm 73:13). He felt that way until he went into God's sanctuary and saw the end of the wicked. The feeling is real, but it is not the truth. Following God is never in vain.

35:4-8 *I will respond to you **with** words, and your friends with you. Look at the heavens and see, and observe the clouds; they are higher than you. If you have sinned, what do you do against Him? And **if** your transgressions are many, what do you do to Him? If you are righteous, what do you give to Him? Or what does He receive from your hand? Your wickedness **is** for a man like yourself, and your righteousness for a son of man.*

"I will respond to you with words, and your friends with you." Elihu will answer Job, and also the friends who could not answer him.

"Look at the heavens and see, and observe the clouds; they are higher than you." Elihu tells Job to look up. The sky and the clouds are far above him. And God is higher still.

"If you have sinned, what do you do against Him? And if your transgressions are many, what do you do to Him? If you are righteous, what do you give to Him? Or what does He receive from your hand?" God is so far above us that our sin does not harm Him, and our righteousness does not make Him richer. He does not need anything from us. Eliphaz had said something similar (22:2-3). Paul asks, "who has first given to Him, and it will be repaid to him?" (Romans 11:35). No one can put God in his debt.

"Your wickedness is for a man like yourself, and your righteousness for a son of man." Our sin hurts other people, and our goodness helps other people. It is human beings who feel the effects of what we do.

What should we make of this? It is true that God does not need us. He was complete before the world began. We cannot make Him richer or poorer. Job cannot demand a reward from God as if he had earned it. Jesus taught the same humility. When we have done everything God commands, we are to say, "We are unworthy slaves, for we have done what we were obligated to do" (Luke 17:10).

But this is only part of the truth. God may not need our righteousness, but He cares about it. He delights in it. He grieves over sin. In chapter 1 God took pleasure in Job (1:8). Genesis says that man's wickedness grieved God's heart (Genesis 6:6). Our sin does not hurt God the way a blow hurts a man. But God is not cold and distant either. He loves His people, and what we do matters to Him. Elihu's picture of a God high above the clouds, untouched by what men do, is not the whole picture. It needs the God of chapter 1, who said, "Have you set your heart on My servant Job?" (1:8)

35:9-11 *Because of the multitude of oppressions they cry out; they cry for help because of the arm of the great. And no one says, 'Where **is** God my Maker, who gives songs in the night, who teaches us more than the animals of the earth, and makes us wiser than the birds of the heavens?'*

Now Elihu turns to Job's complaint that God does not answer the cries of the suffering (24:12; 30:20). "Because of the multitude of oppressions they cry out; they cry for help because of the arm of the great." People who are oppressed by the powerful cry out for help. That is natural.

"And no one says, 'Where is God my Maker, who gives songs in the night, who teaches us more than the animals of the earth, and makes us wiser than the birds of the heavens?'" Here is Elihu's point. Many people cry out because they hurt, but they do not turn to God Himself. They want relief, but they do not seek their Maker. Even animals cry out when they are in pain. But man was made to know God, who teaches him more than the animals and makes him wiser than the birds. A cry for relief is not the same as a prayer that seeks God.

"Who gives songs in the night." This is one of the loveliest phrases in Job. Night is the time of darkness, fear and trouble. God gives His people songs even then. The psalmist said, "in the night His song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life" (Psalm 42:8). Paul and Silas, beaten and locked in stocks in a prison at Philippi, "about midnight" were "praying" and "singing hymns to God" (Acts 16:25). They did not sing because things were good. They sang because God was with them.

Have you ever known a song in the night? Many believers have found that God's presence is sweetest in their darkest hours. A hymn comes to mind in a hospital room. A verse sings itself in your heart at the graveside. That is God, our Maker, giving songs in the night.

35:12-13 *There they cry out, and He does not answer, because of the pride of evil **men**. Surely God does not hear emptiness, and the Almighty does not observe it.*

"There they cry out, and He does not answer, because of the pride of evil men." Why does God not answer some cries? Because they come from proud, evil hearts. The wicked cry out for help, but they do not humble themselves. They want God to fix their problem, but they do not want God.

"Surely God does not hear emptiness, and the Almighty does not observe it." God does not answer empty prayers, cries that have no faith and no humility in them. Isaiah said, "your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear" (Isaiah 59:2). James says, "You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly" (James 4:3).

This is true. But we must be careful how we use it. Elihu seems to be hinting that Job's prayers have not been answered because they were empty or proud. That was not fair. Job's prayers were

not empty. They were full of pain and some bitterness, but they were addressed to God, and they sought God Himself (23:3). God did answer Job, in His own time. Not every unanswered prayer is a sign of pride. Sometimes God is silent for reasons we cannot see, as He was in chapters 1 and 2.

35:14-16 *How much less when you say **that** you do not observe Him, **that** the case **is** before Him, and you must wait for Him! And now, because His anger has not punished, and He does not greatly know folly, and Job opens his mouth **with** vapor; he multiplies words without knowledge."*

"How much less when you say that you do not observe Him, that the case is before Him, and you must wait for Him!" Job had said he could not see God (23:8-9), that his case was laid out before God (13:18; 23:4), and that he was waiting for God to answer. Elihu says: if God does not answer proud cries, how much less will He answer you when you talk like this, as if God were on trial and you were waiting for Him to show up in court?

And yet Elihu's own words carry a hidden comfort. "The case is before Him, and you must wait for Him." That is exactly right. Job's case was before God, and the right thing to do was to wait for Him. "Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage" (Psalm 27:14). Job did wait, and God did come.

"And now, because His anger has not punished, and He does not greatly know folly." Elihu seems to say that Job has taken God's patience for weakness. Because God has not struck Job down for his bold words, Job thinks God does not notice his folly. The line is hard to translate, and it is not complete in itself. It runs on into the next verse.

"And Job opens his mouth with vapor; he multiplies words without knowledge." "Vapor" means emptiness, breath. Elihu says Job's words are empty and many, spoken without knowledge.

Here again, Elihu says something the LORD will also say. "Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge?" (38:2). Job will admit it: "I have told, and I did not understand" (42:3). So Elihu is right that Job had said too much. But God will correct Job very differently from the way Elihu did. Elihu called Job's words empty. God will show Job His glory, and Job will fall silent on his own.

Chapter 35 Summary

In his third speech, Elihu took up Job's apparent claim that his righteousness was more than God's and that it did him no good to avoid sin. He told Job to look at the clouds high above him. God is higher still, so man's sin cannot harm Him and man's righteousness cannot enrich Him; our sin and goodness mostly affect other people. That is true, though incomplete, since God delights in righteousness and grieves over sin. Then Elihu answered Job's complaint that God does not answer the suffering. Many cry out because of oppression, but no one says, "Where is God my Maker, who gives songs in the night?" God does not answer empty, proud cries. Elihu said Job should wait for God, since his case was before Him, and he charged Job with multiplying words without knowledge, a charge God would also make in 38:2.

Chapter 35 Study Questions

1. What did Elihu say Job had claimed about his righteousness? (35:2) How does 40:8 show God raising the same issue?

2. What question did Elihu say Job was asking in verse 3? Have you ever felt the same way? (Psalm 73:13)

3. What did Elihu tell Job to look at, and why? (35:5)

4. According to Elihu, who is affected by our sin and our righteousness? (35:6-8)

5. Why did Elihu say God does not answer some cries? (35:9-13)

6. What does it mean that God "gives songs in the night"? (35:10) How did Paul and Silas show this in Acts 16:25?

7. What did Elihu say about Job's case and waiting for God? (35:14) How does Psalm 27:14 encourage us to wait?

8. Elihu was right that God does not need us. Why is it also true that what we do matters to God? (1:8; Genesis 6:6)

9. Has God ever given you a song in the night? What was it?

10. Is there a difference between crying out to God for relief and seeking God Himself? How can you seek Him, and not only His help, this week?

Chapter 36: Elihu Exalts God's Greatness

Scripture

36:1-16 And Elihu added and said, "Wait for me a little, and I will show you, for ***there are*** still words for God. I will carry my knowledge from afar, and to my Maker I will ascribe righteousness. For truly my words ***are*** not falsehood; one complete in knowledge ***is*** with you. Look, God ***is*** mighty, and He does not reject; ***He is*** mighty ***in*** strength of heart. He does not keep the wicked alive, and He gives the justice of the afflicted. He does not withdraw His eyes from the righteous, and with kings on the throne, and He has seated them forever, and they are exalted. And if they ***are*** bound in fetters, they are caught in cords of affliction, and He tells them their work and their transgressions, that they were behaving proudly. And He uncovers their ear to discipline, and He says that they shall turn back from wickedness. If they hear and serve ***Him***, they will finish their days in good, and their years in pleasant things. And if they do not hear, they will pass away by the weapon, and they will expire without knowledge. And the godless of heart lay up anger; they do not cry for help when He has bound them. Their soul dies in youth, and their life among the cult prostitutes. He rescues the afflicted by his affliction, and He uncovers their ear by oppression. And also He has lured you from the mouth of distress ***to*** a broad place, ***where there is*** no constraint under it; and the quietness of your table was full of fatness.

36:17-33 And you are full of the judgment of the wicked; judgment and justice take hold ***of you***. For ***beware of*** rage, lest it entice you into mockery; and let not the greatness of the ransom turn you aside. Will your riches set ***things*** in order, ***so that you are*** not in distress, and all the efforts of strength? Do not long for the night, for peoples to go up in their place. Take heed; do not turn to wickedness, for this you have chosen rather than affliction. Look, God is exalted in His power; who ***is*** a teacher like Him? Who has appointed His way for Him? And who has said, 'You have done unrighteousness'? Remember that you should magnify His work, of which men have sung. All mankind has looked on it; man gazes from afar. Look, God ***is*** great, and we do not know ***Him***; the number of His years—and ***there is*** no searching ***it out***. For He draws up drops of water; they distill rain into its mist, which the skies pour down; they drip on mankind abundantly. Also, can anyone understand the spreadings of ***the*** thick cloud, the crashings of His pavilion? Look, He spreads His light over it, and He covers the roots of the sea. For by them He judges peoples; He gives food in abundance. Over ***His*** palms He covers ***the*** light, and He commands it against the one it strikes. Its roar tells about Him; the livestock also, concerning what comes up.

Chapter 36 Preview

Elihu begins his fourth and last speech, which runs through chapter 37. He says he still has words to speak on God's behalf, and he wants to ascribe righteousness to his Maker. His theme is that God is mighty, but He does not despise anyone. He watches over the righteous. When they are caught in affliction, He uses it to show them their pride and open their ears to His teaching. If they listen, they will spend their days in good things. If they will not, they perish. "He rescues the afflicted by his affliction."

Elihu then warns Job not to let anger draw him into mockery, and not to long for the night of death. Then his speech rises into praise. God is exalted in His power; who is a teacher like Him? God is great, and we do not know Him. Elihu points to the rain, the clouds and the thunder, and as he speaks, it seems a storm is gathering. He is describing the very storm from which the LORD will soon speak.

Chapter 36 Study

36:1-4 *And Elihu added and said, "Wait for me a little, and I will show you, for **there are** still words for God. I will carry my knowledge from afar, and to my Maker I will ascribe righteousness. For truly my words **are** not falsehood; one complete in knowledge **is** with you.*

"And Elihu added and said." Elihu goes on. This is his last speech, through 37:24.

"Wait for me a little, and I will show you, for there are still words for God." Elihu asks for a little more patience. He has more to say on God's behalf.

"I will carry my knowledge from afar, and to my Maker I will ascribe righteousness." Elihu will bring knowledge from far and wide, and his goal is to show that God is righteous. That is a good goal. Every believer should want to defend God's good name.

"For truly my words are not falsehood; one complete in knowledge is with you." This line is bold. Elihu seems to call himself "complete in knowledge." Some readers think that shows his pride. Others think he means only that his words are sincere and well thought out. It is interesting that the same phrase is used of God in 37:16, "the One complete in knowledge." Whatever Elihu meant, only God is truly complete in knowledge. The best of us know only in part (1 Corinthians 13:12).

36:5-7 *Look, God **is** mighty, and He does not reject; **He is** mighty **in** strength of heart. He does not keep the wicked alive, and He gives the justice of the afflicted. He does not withdraw His eyes from the righteous, and with kings on the throne, and He has seated them forever, and they are exalted.*

"Look, God is mighty, and He does not reject; He is mighty in strength of heart." God is all-powerful, but He does not look down on anyone or throw anyone away. This is a beautiful truth. Great men often despise small people. God is the greatest of all, and He despises no one. Jesus said, "the one coming to Me I will certainly not cast out" (John 6:37).

"He does not keep the wicked alive, and He gives the justice of the afflicted." In the end God does not let the wicked go on forever, and He makes sure the afflicted get justice.

"He does not withdraw His eyes from the righteous, and with kings on the throne, and He has seated them forever, and they are exalted." God never takes His eyes off the righteous. He lifts them up and seats them with kings. Hannah sang the same thing: God raises the poor from the dust to sit with nobles (1 Samuel 2:8).

Job had felt that God's eyes were on him only to find fault (7:17-20; 10:14). Elihu says God's eyes are on the righteous for their good. That was what Job had lost sight of in his pain. In chapter 1 God's eyes were on Job, and He was pleased with him (1:8).

36:8-12 *And if they **are** bound in fetters, they are caught in cords of affliction, and He tells them their work and their transgressions, that they were behaving proudly. And He uncovers their ear to discipline, and He says that they shall turn back from wickedness. If they hear and serve **Him**, they will finish their days in good, and their years in pleasant things. And if they do not hear, they will pass away by the weapon, and they will expire without knowledge.*

"And if they are bound in fetters, they are caught in cords of affliction." What if a righteous person ends up in chains, tied up by trouble? Elihu is thinking of suffering like Job's.

"And He tells them their work and their transgressions, that they were behaving proudly." God uses the suffering to show them their sins, especially pride. Many of us have found that it is in hard times that God shows us what is really in our hearts.

"And He uncovers their ear to discipline, and He says that they shall turn back from wickedness." God opens their ears to His correction and calls them to turn away from sin. Elihu said the same thing in 33:16.

"If they hear and serve Him, they will finish their days in good, and their years in pleasant things." If they listen and obey, God will bless them again. In a way this did come true for Job (42:10-17).

"And if they do not hear, they will pass away by the weapon, and they will expire without knowledge." If they refuse, they will die without ever learning what God was trying to teach them.

This is Elihu's main teaching, and it is a step beyond the friends. The friends said suffering means you are being punished for sin. Elihu says suffering can be God's way of teaching and correcting, of saving you from pride before it destroys you. The difference is important. Punishment looks back at what you did. Discipline looks ahead to what you will become. Hebrews says God disciplines us "for our benefit, so that we may share His holiness" (Hebrews 12:10).

Still, Elihu assumes that Job must have some pride God is correcting. He does not know that the main reason for Job's suffering was a test in heaven. So his answer, though truer than the friends', is still not the whole answer.

36:13-15 *And the godless of heart lay up anger; they do not cry for help when He has bound them. Their soul dies in youth, and their life among the cult prostitutes. He rescues the afflicted by his affliction, and He uncovers their ear by oppression.*

"And the godless of heart lay up anger; they do not cry for help when He has bound them." The godless respond to trouble very differently. Instead of crying out to God, they store up anger against Him. They grow bitter and refuse to turn to Him.

"Their soul dies in youth, and their life among the cult prostitutes." They die young, and in shame. The cult prostitutes were people who served in pagan temples as part of false worship. To die "among" them means to die in the shameful company of the most degraded. It is a picture of a wasted life.

Notice the contrast. Job did cry out to God, again and again. He did not store up anger against God and turn away. His very complaints were prayers. So by Elihu's own standard, Job was not one of the godless.

"He rescues the afflicted by his affliction, and He uncovers their ear by oppression." This is the key verse of the chapter. God rescues the afflicted, not only from affliction, but by it. He uses the very suffering to save them. Through trouble, He opens their ears.

That is a hard truth, but a precious one. Many believers can say with the psalmist, "It was good for me that I was afflicted, so that I may learn Your statutes" (Psalm 119:71). We would never choose suffering. But God can use it to rescue us from things worse than suffering: pride, self-reliance, and a shallow faith.

36:16-21 *And also He has lured you from the mouth of distress **to** a broad place, **where there is** no constraint under it; and the quietness of your table was full of fatness. And you are full of the judgment of the wicked; judgment and justice take hold **of you**. For **beware of** rage, lest it entice you into mockery; and let not the greatness of the ransom turn you aside. Will your riches set **things** in order, **so that you are** not in distress, and all the efforts of strength? Do not long for the night, for peoples to go up in their place. Take heed; do not turn to wickedness, for this you have chosen rather than affliction.*

Now Elihu applies this to Job. "And also He has lured you from the mouth of distress to a broad place, where there is no constraint under it; and the quietness of your table was full of fatness." God wants to draw Job out of the narrow place of distress into a wide, open place, a place of freedom, with a table full of rich food. David said, "He brought me out into a broad place; He set me free, for He delighted in me" (Psalm 18:19). Elihu is holding out hope to Job.

"And you are full of the judgment of the wicked; judgment and justice take hold of you." But Job is so full of talk about the judgment of the wicked, and of his own case, that judgment has taken hold of him. He is caught up in arguing about justice.

"For beware of rage, lest it entice you into mockery; and let not the greatness of the ransom turn you aside." Elihu warns Job not to let anger lead him to mock God. And he should not let the greatness of the price, the size of his suffering, turn him away from God. "Ransom" here is the same word as in 33:24. It may mean the price Job is paying in suffering, or a bribe, something Job thinks could buy his way out.

"Will your riches set things in order, so that you are not in distress, and all the efforts of strength?" Riches and strength cannot save Job now. Only God can.

"Do not long for the night, for peoples to go up in their place." Job had longed for death again and again (3:20-22; 6:8-9; 7:15). Elihu tells him not to long for the night of death, when whole peoples are taken from their place. This is good counsel. Longing for death is not the way out. God has a purpose for Job's life still.

"Take heed; do not turn to wickedness, for this you have chosen rather than affliction." Be careful not to turn to sin as an escape from suffering. Elihu thinks Job is in danger of choosing rebellion over patient suffering.

If you are in a time when death seems better than life, please hear this. God has not finished with you. Job did not die in the ashes. God met him there and brought him into a broad place. Talk to God. Please do not carry this alone. Talk to someone today: a pastor, a doctor, or a crisis line.

36:22-25 *Look, God is exalted in His power; who **is** a teacher like Him? Who has appointed His way for Him? And who has said, 'You have done unrighteousness'? Remember that you should magnify His work, of which men have sung. All mankind has looked on it; man gazes from afar.*

Now Elihu begins to praise God. "Look, God is exalted in His power; who is a teacher like Him?" God is high above all in power. And He is the greatest teacher of all. Elihu has been saying that God teaches through suffering. Now he says no one teaches like God.

"Who has appointed His way for Him? And who has said, 'You have done unrighteousness'?" No one tells God what to do. And no one has the right to accuse Him of doing wrong. That was the line Job had come close to crossing.

"Remember that you should magnify His work, of which men have sung." Instead of arguing with God, Job should praise His works, as people have always done in song.

"All mankind has looked on it; man gazes from afar." Everyone has seen God's works in creation, though they see them only from a distance. Paul says God's eternal power and divine nature are "clearly seen" in the things He made (Romans 1:20).

36:26-28 *Look, God **is** great, and we do not know **Him**; the number of His years—and **there is** no searching **it out**. For He draws up drops of water; they distill rain into its mist, which the skies pour down; they drip on mankind abundantly.*

"Look, God is great, and we do not know Him." God is so great that we cannot fully know Him. "The number of His years" cannot be searched out. God is eternal. He had no beginning, and He will have no end. We cannot count His years.

"For He draws up drops of water; they distill rain into its mist, which the skies pour down; they drip on mankind abundantly." Elihu describes the water cycle. God draws up drops of water into the sky. They form mist and clouds. Then the clouds pour down rain on people in abundance.

It is a simple, beautiful picture. Every rain shower is God's work. Paul told the people of Lystra that God "did not leave Himself without witness, doing good, giving us rains from heaven and fruitful seasons" (Acts 14:17). The next time it rains, remember who sends it.

36:29-33 *Also, can anyone understand the spreadings of **the** thick cloud, the crashings of His pavilion? Look, He spreads His light over it, and He covers the roots of the sea. For by them He judges peoples; He gives food in abundance. Over **His** palms He covers **the** light, and He commands it against the one it strikes. Its roar tells about Him; the livestock also, concerning what comes up.*

"Also, can anyone understand the spreadings of the thick cloud, the crashings of His pavilion?" Who can understand how storm clouds spread across the sky, or the thunder that crashes from God's pavilion? A pavilion is a tent. Elihu pictures the storm clouds as God's tent, and the thunder as the noise from it.

"Look, He spreads His light over it, and He covers the roots of the sea." God scatters His lightning across the sky, and He covers the depths of the sea.

"For by them He judges peoples; He gives food in abundance." God uses the storms in two ways. By them He can bring judgment, as in floods and destructive storms. And by them He gives rain for the crops and food in abundance. The same rain that floods can also feed.

"Over His palms He covers the light, and He commands it against the one it strikes." Elihu pictures God holding the lightning in His hands and aiming it where He wills.

"Its roar tells about Him; the livestock also, concerning what comes up." The thunder speaks of God. Even the cattle sense that a storm is coming.

It seems that as Elihu speaks, a real storm is rising. He will go on describing it in the next chapter, and his heart will tremble. Out of that storm, the LORD will speak (38:1).

Chapter 36 Summary

Elihu began his last speech, saying he had more words for God and wanted to ascribe righteousness to his Maker. God is mighty and rejects no one; He gives justice to the afflicted and never takes His eyes off the righteous. When they are bound by affliction, He shows them their pride, opens their ears to discipline and calls them to turn from wickedness; if they listen, they will be blessed, and if not, they will perish. The godless store up anger, but God "rescues the afflicted by his affliction." Elihu said God wanted to bring Job out into a broad place, and warned him not to let anger lead to mockery, not to long for the night of death, and not to turn to wickedness. Then he praised God: exalted in power, the greatest teacher, great beyond our knowing, eternal, sending rain, spreading the clouds, aiming the lightning and speaking in the thunder. A storm seemed to be rising as he spoke.

Chapter 36 Study Questions

1. What did Elihu want to ascribe to his Maker? (36:3)

2. What did Elihu say about God's might and whether He rejects anyone? (36:5) How does John 6:37 say the same thing?

3. Where are God's eyes, according to verse 7? How is that different from what Job had felt? (7:17-20)

4. What does God do when the righteous are caught in affliction? (36:8-10)

5. How do the godless respond to affliction, and how is that different from Job? (36:13)

6. What does it mean that God "rescues the afflicted by his affliction"? (36:15) How does Hebrews 12:10 explain the purpose of God's discipline?

7. What did Elihu warn Job not to do in verses 18-21?

8. What did Elihu say about God's greatness and the rain in verses 26-28?

9. Has God ever used a hard time to show you something about your heart? What did you learn?

10. Elihu said God wanted to bring Job into "a broad place." What narrow place are you in right now, and how can you trust God to bring you out?

Chapter 37: Elihu: God's Majesty in the Storm

Scripture

37:1-13 Also at this my heart trembles, and it leaps from its place. Listen, listen to the raging of His voice, and the rumbling ***that*** goes out from His mouth. Under all the heavens He lets it loose, and His light to the corners of the earth. After it a voice roars; He thunders with the voice of His majesty, and He does not hold them back when His voice is heard. God thunders with His voice wondrously, doing great things, and we do not know ***them***. For to the snow He says, 'Fall ***on the*** earth,' and ***to*** the shower of rain, and the shower of the rains of His strength. He puts a seal on the hand of every man, for all the men of His work to know ***it***. And the animal goes into a lair, and it dwells in its dens. From the chamber comes the storm wind, and from the scattering winds, cold. From the breath of God He gives ice, and the breadth of the waters ***is*** in constraint. Also with moisture He burdens the thick cloud; He scatters the cloud of His light. And it is turning round about by His guidance, for them to do all that He commands them over the face of the world, on the earth. Whether for a rod, or for His land, or for steadfast love, He causes it to arrive.

37:14-24 Give ear to this, Job; stand still and consider the wonders of God. Do you know when God lays ***His charge*** on them, and makes the light of His cloud shine forth? Do you know about the balancings of the thick cloud, the wondrous works of the One complete in knowledge, you whose garments ***are*** hot when the earth is still from the south? Will you, with Him, spread out the skies, strong like a cast mirror? Make known to us what we shall say to Him; we cannot set ***our words*** in order because of darkness. Will it be recounted to Him that I would speak? Or has a man said that he would be swallowed up? And now they do not see the light; it ***is*** bright in the skies, and ***the*** wind has passed by and has cleansed them. From the north gold comes; on God ***is*** awesome majesty. The Almighty—we have not found Him; ***He is*** great in power, and justice and abundance of righteousness He does not violate. Therefore men fear Him; He does not regard any of the wise of heart."

Chapter 37 Preview

Elihu finishes his speech as a storm rolls in. His heart pounds as the thunder crashes. "Listen, listen to the raging of His voice." He describes the lightning flashing to the ends of the earth, the thunder that follows, the snow and the rain, the animals going into their dens, the cold wind and the ice. All of it happens at God's command. Whether for correction, for the land, or for steadfast love, God sends it where He wills.

Then Elihu turns to Job with a string of questions. Do you know how God sets the clouds in place? Can you spread out the sky like God? We cannot even find words to speak to Him, because of our darkness. Elihu ends where wisdom always ends: the Almighty is great in power and perfect in justice, "therefore men fear Him." These questions are like a preview of what is coming. In the next chapter, the LORD Himself will speak out of the storm, and He will ask Job questions of His own.

Chapter 37 Study

37:1-5 *Also at this my heart trembles, and it leaps from its place. Listen, listen to the raging of His voice, and the rumbling **that** goes out from His mouth. Under all the heavens He lets it loose, and His light to the corners of the earth. After it a voice roars; He thunders with the voice of His majesty, and He does not hold them back when His voice is heard. God thunders with His voice wondrously, doing great things, and we do not know **them**.*

"Also at this my heart trembles, and it leaps from its place." Elihu's heart is pounding. It seems a real storm has come up while he speaks. The thunder and lightning make him tremble.

"Listen, listen to the raging of His voice, and the rumbling that goes out from His mouth." The thunder is like God's voice. Psalm 29 says the same: "The voice of the LORD is over the waters; the God of glory thunders" (Psalm 29:3). When God came down on Mount Sinai, there "were thunders and lightnings and a heavy cloud on the mountain, and the sound of a ram's horn very strong; and all the people who were in the camp trembled" (Exodus 19:16).

"Under all the heavens He lets it loose, and His light to the corners of the earth." The lightning flashes from one end of the sky to the other.

"After it a voice roars; He thunders with the voice of His majesty, and He does not hold them back when His voice is heard." First comes the flash, then the roar of thunder. God does not hold back the lightning bolts once His voice is heard.

"God thunders with His voice wondrously, doing great things, and we do not know them." God's works are wonderful and beyond our understanding. This is Elihu's theme, and it is the theme God will take up in chapters 38 to 41. We do not understand even the weather. How can we expect to understand everything God does?

37:6-8 *For to the snow He says, 'Fall **on the** earth,' and **to** the shower of rain, and the shower of the rains of His strength. He puts a seal on the hand of every man, for all the men of His work to know **it**. And the animal goes into a lair, and it dwells in its dens.*

"For to the snow He says, 'Fall on the earth,' and to the shower of rain, and the shower of the rains of His strength." God commands the snow and the rain, and they obey. He speaks, and they fall.

"He puts a seal on the hand of every man, for all the men of His work to know it." When heavy snow and rain come, men cannot work in their fields. God "puts a seal on" their hands. It is as if He stops all work so that people will stop and know that He is God. A snowstorm that shuts down a city is a reminder that we are not in control.

"And the animal goes into a lair, and it dwells in its dens." The wild animals take shelter. Even they know the storm is from a power greater than them.

37:9-13 *From the chamber comes the storm wind, and from the scattering winds, cold. From the breath of God He gives ice, and the breadth of the waters* ***is*** *in constraint. Also with moisture He burdens the thick cloud; He scatters the cloud of His light. And it is turning round about by His guidance, for them to do all that He commands them over the face of the world, on the earth. Whether for a rod, or for His land, or for steadfast love, He causes it to arrive.*

"From the chamber comes the storm wind, and from the scattering winds, cold." Elihu pictures the storm wind coming out of a storeroom. The cold comes on the winds that scatter the clouds. The LORD will soon ask Job if he has entered the storehouses of the snow and hail (38:22).

"From the breath of God He gives ice, and the breadth of the waters is in constraint." When God breathes, the water freezes. Wide waters are locked up in ice.

"Also with moisture He burdens the thick cloud; He scatters the cloud of His light." God loads the clouds with water, and He scatters the lightning clouds across the sky.

"And it is turning round about by His guidance, for them to do all that He commands them over the face of the world, on the earth." The clouds swirl around under God's direction. They go wherever He sends them and do what He commands. The weather is not random. It is guided by God.

"Whether for a rod, or for His land, or for steadfast love, He causes it to arrive." This is a key verse. God sends the storms and the rain for different purposes. Sometimes it is "for a rod," to correct or judge. Sometimes it is "for His land," simply to water the earth He made. And sometimes it is "for steadfast love," the Hebrew word hesed, God's loyal, covenant love, to bless His people.

This is an important answer to the friends. They thought every hardship was "a rod," a punishment. Elihu says God has different purposes. The same storm can serve different ends. The same is true of our trials. Some are correction. Some simply belong to life in a world God governs. And some are sent out of love, to bless us in ways we cannot yet see. We cannot always tell which is which. But we can trust the God who sends them.

37:14-16 *Give ear to this, Job; stand still and consider the wonders of God. Do you know when God lays* ***His charge*** *on them, and makes the light of His cloud shine forth? Do you know about the balancings of the thick cloud, the wondrous works of the One complete in knowledge,*

"Give ear to this, Job; stand still and consider the wonders of God." Elihu speaks to Job by name again. Stop and think. Stop arguing and look at what God does.

This is good advice for all of us. When life is hard, we tend to run in circles, thinking about our problems. Sometimes the best thing we can do is "stand still and consider the wonders of God." Look up. Watch the storm. See how great God is. Our problems do not shrink, but they look different next to Him.

"Do you know when God lays His charge on them, and makes the light of His cloud shine forth?" Do you know how God commands the clouds and makes the lightning flash?

"Do you know about the balancings of the thick cloud, the wondrous works of the One complete in knowledge?" Clouds hold huge amounts of water, yet they float, balanced in the air. Who knows how? Only God, "the One complete in knowledge." Elihu called himself "one complete in knowledge" in 36:4. Here he gives that title where it truly belongs, to God.

These are the kind of questions the LORD will ask Job in chapter 38. Elihu has set the stage.

37:17-18 *you whose garments **are** hot when the earth is still from the south? Will you, with Him, spread out the skies, strong like a cast mirror?*

"You whose garments are hot when the earth is still from the south." In the hot season, when the south wind blows from the desert, the air is still and heavy, and your clothes feel hot on you. Elihu asks: you cannot even keep yourself cool. How can you understand God's ways?

"Will you, with Him, spread out the skies, strong like a cast mirror?" In those days, mirrors were made of polished bronze. Elihu pictures the sky as a great bronze mirror, hard and shining. Did Job help God stretch it out? Of course not. This is poetry describing how the sky looks to us, especially in the heat of a cloudless summer day.

37:19-20 *Make known to us what we shall say to Him; we cannot set **our words** in order because of darkness. Will it be recounted to Him that I would speak? Or has a man said that he would be swallowed up?*

"Make known to us what we shall say to Him; we cannot set our words in order because of darkness." Elihu says, with some irony: Job, since you want to argue with God, tell us what to say to Him. We cannot even put our words in order, because we are in the dark. We do not know enough.

This is true. Job had wanted to "set in order a case" before God (23:4). Elihu says no one can do that, because we are in darkness compared to Him.

"Will it be recounted to Him that I would speak? Or has a man said that he would be swallowed up?" Should anyone send word to God that he wants to speak to Him? Would any man ask to be swallowed up? To demand a hearing with God is like asking to be destroyed. Elihu means that no man can stand before God's majesty. Job had said he would approach God "like a noble" (31:37). Elihu warns that this is far too bold.

37:21-22 *And now they do not see the light; it **is** bright in the skies, and **the** wind has passed by and has cleansed them. From the north gold comes; on God **is** awesome majesty.*

"And now they do not see the light; it is bright in the skies, and the wind has passed by and has cleansed them." Men cannot look straight at the sun when the wind has blown away the clouds and the sky is clear. The light is too bright.

"From the north gold comes; on God is awesome majesty." "Gold" here may mean golden light or splendor, the brightness that appears in the north as the storm clears. Some think it refers to gold

mined in the north. Either way, Elihu's point is the second line: God is clothed in awesome majesty.

If we cannot look at the sun, how could we look at God? Paul says God dwells "in unapproachable light, whom no one of men has seen or is able to see" (1 Timothy 6:16). That is why Job's demand to see God and argue his case was so bold. And yet, wonderfully, God will come to Job. Job will say, "now my eye has seen You" (42:5).

37:23-24 *The Almighty—we have not found Him; **He is** great in power, and justice and abundance of righteousness He does not violate. Therefore men fear Him; He does not regard any of the wise of heart."*

"The Almighty." Then Elihu says of Him, "we have not found Him; He is great in power, and justice and abundance of righteousness He does not violate." We cannot find the Almighty. We cannot track Him down and bring Him to court. He is beyond our reach. But we can know this about Him: He is great in power, and He never violates justice or righteousness. He is never unjust.

These two truths together are the answer to Job's struggle. God is far beyond us, so we cannot understand all He does. But God is perfectly just, so we can trust Him even when we do not understand. Job had held on to the first and nearly let go of the second. Elihu reminds him of both.

"Therefore men fear Him; He does not regard any of the wise of heart." Because God is so great and so just, the right response is to fear Him, to stand in awe and reverence. "He does not regard any of the wise of heart" means that God is not impressed by people who think they are wise. Those who are wise in their own eyes get nowhere with God.

Elihu ends where chapter 28 ended: "the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom" (28:28). The wise man is not the one who has all the answers. He is the one who fears God.

Now, what about Elihu as a whole? He has spoken for six chapters. He has said true and important things: God is just, God speaks through dreams and through pain, God disciplines to save, God gives songs in the night, God rescues the afflicted by their affliction, and God is too great for us to understand. He has also been harsh and too sure of himself at times. But his last words point Job in the right direction: look at God's majesty, and fear Him.

And then, suddenly, the storm Elihu has been describing becomes the place where God speaks. "And the LORD answered Job from the storm" (38:1). Elihu had said, "we have not found Him." But God was about to find Job.

Chapter 37 Summary

Elihu finished his speech as a storm came up. His heart trembled at the thunder, the voice of God's majesty, and the lightning that flashed to the ends of the earth. God commands the snow and rain, stopping men's work and sending animals to their dens. The storm wind, the cold and the ice come at His breath, and the clouds go wherever He guides them, whether for a rod of correction, for His land, or for steadfast love. Elihu called Job to stand still and consider God's wonders,

asking whether he knew how God balances the clouds, or could spread out the skies like a bronze mirror. No one can set his words in order before God because of our darkness, and no one can look at the sun, much less at God's awesome majesty. The Almighty is beyond our finding, great in power and perfect in justice, so men should fear Him. Then the LORD spoke from the storm.

I stand still and consider God's wonders all the time, especially when I am out in His creation. Elihu told Job to stop and look. Creation still preaches if we stop long enough to listen.

Chapter 37 Study Questions

1. How did Elihu feel as the storm came up? (37:1-2)

2. What does God say to the snow and the rain? (37:6) What happens to men and animals when the storm comes? (37:7-8)

3. What three purposes did Elihu say God has for sending the storms? (37:13)

4. How does verse 13 answer the friends' idea that every hardship is a punishment?

5. What did Elihu tell Job to do in verse 14?

6. What questions did Elihu ask Job in verses 15-18?

7. What did Elihu say about God's power and justice in verse 23? Why do both truths matter for Job?

8. What did Elihu say is the right response to God in verse 24? How does it connect to 28:28?

9. When was the last time you stood still and considered the wonders of God? What did you see?

10. Elihu said God sends storms "for a rod, or for His land, or for steadfast love." How does that change the way you look at a hard time in your own life?

Chapter 38: The LORD Answers Job From the Storm

Scripture

38:1-15 And the LORD answered Job from the storm, and He said, "Who ***is*** this ***who*** darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up your loins now like a man, and I will ask you, and you make ***it*** known to Me. Where were you when I founded the earth? Tell ***Me***, if you know understanding. Who set its measurements, if you know? Or who stretched a measuring line on it? On what were its bases sunk? Or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? And ***who*** shut in the sea with doors, when it burst forth ***and*** came out from the womb, when I made ***the*** cloud its clothing, and thick darkness its swaddling band, and I broke My boundary on it, and set a bar and doors, and I said, 'As far as here you shall come, and you shall not add; and here ***one*** shall set ***a limit*** against the pride of your waves'? Have you, since your days ***began***, commanded ***the*** morning? Have you made the dawn know its place, to take hold of the corners of the earth, and the wicked be shaken out of it? It is changed like the clay of a seal, and they stand out like clothing. And from the wicked their light is withheld, and the uplifted arm is broken.

38:16-30 Have you gone to the springs of the sea, and have you walked about in the recesses of the deep? Have the gates of death been revealed to you, and have you seen the gates of deep darkness? Have you understood the broad spaces of the earth? Tell ***Me***, if you know all of it. Where ***is*** this, the way ***where*** light dwells? And darkness, where ***is*** this, its place, that you should take it to its territory, and that you should discern the paths of its house? You know, for then you were born, and the number of your days ***is*** many! Have you gone into the storehouses of the snow, and have you seen the storehouses of the hail, which I have kept back for a time of distress, for a day of battle and war? Where ***is*** this, the way ***where*** light is divided, ***where*** the east wind scatters over the earth? Who has divided a channel for the flood, and a way for the thunderbolt of the thunders, to bring rain on a land ***where there is*** no man, a wilderness ***where there is*** no man in it, to satisfy devastation and desolation, and to make the going forth of vegetation sprout? Does the rain have a father? Or who has fathered the drops of dew? From whose womb did the ice come forth? And the frost of the heavens, who has given birth to it? Like stone the waters hide themselves, and the face of the deep is seized.

38:31-41 Can you bind the bonds of the Pleiades, or loosen the cords of Orion? Can you lead out Mazzaroth in its season, and guide the Bear with her young ones? Do you know the statutes of the heavens? Can you set its rule over the earth? Can you lift up your voice to the thick cloud, so that an abundance of water covers you? Can you send out lightnings, so that they go and say to you, 'Here we ***are***'? Who has put wisdom in the inner parts? Or who has given understanding to the mind? Who can count the skies by wisdom? And the waterskins of the heavens, who can make ***them*** lie down, when the dust flows into a mass, and the clods stick together? Can you hunt prey for the lion, or fill the appetite of the young lions, when they crouch in the dens, ***and*** remain in the thicket for lying in wait? Who prepares for the raven its food, when its young ones cry for help to God, ***and*** wander about without food?

Chapter 38 Preview

At last, God speaks. For thirty-five chapters Job has cried out for God to answer him, and the friends and Elihu have spoken for God. Now the LORD Himself speaks to Job out of the storm. This is the moment the whole book has been building toward.

But God does not answer the way Job expected. He does not explain Job's suffering. He never mentions Satan or the test in heaven. He does not list Job's sins, because Job was not suffering for his sins. Instead, God asks Job questions, more than seventy of them in these four chapters. Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Who shut in the sea? Have you commanded the morning, walked in the depths of the sea, seen the gates of death, or entered the storehouses of the snow? Can you bind the stars, send the lightning, or feed the lion and the raven? The questions are not meant to crush Job. They are meant to show him who God is. And when Job sees who God is, his questions about why are answered in a way no explanation could answer them.

Chapter 38 Study

38:1 *And the LORD answered Job from the storm, and He said,*

"And the LORD answered Job from the storm, and He said."

Notice the name. In the speeches of chapters 3 to 37, Job and his friends mostly called God "God" (El or Eloah) or "the Almighty" (Shaddai). Here, for the first time since the opening chapters, the narrator uses God's personal covenant name, the LORD, Yahweh. The God who speaks is not a distant power. He is the LORD who called Job "My servant" in chapter 1.

"Answered Job." God answers Job, not the friends and not Elihu. Job is the one who had been crying out to Him. Job had said, "let the Almighty answer me!" (31:35). Now He does. God hears our cries, even when He is slow to answer.

"From the storm." The storm Elihu was describing (37:1-5) becomes the place of God's voice. In Scripture, God often speaks out of storm, fire and cloud: at Sinai (Exodus 19:16-19), to Elijah after the wind and the earthquake (1 Kings 19:11-12), and in Ezekiel's vision (Ezekiel 1:4). The storm shows His power and majesty. A great wind had killed Job's children (1:19). Now, out of a storm, the LORD speaks to Job in mercy.

38:2-3 *"Who **is** this **who** darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up your loins now like a man, and I will ask you, and you make **it** known to Me.*

"Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge?"

God's first words are a question. "Counsel" here means God's plan, His wise purpose. Job had been talking about God's ways without knowing them, and his words had darkened God's plan instead of making it clearer. He had said God was cruel (30:21), that God had wronged him (19:6), and that God was his enemy (13:24; 19:11). Those words were "without knowledge." Job did not know about chapters 1 and 2. He did not know what God was doing.

Some teachers think these words are aimed at Elihu, who had just been speaking. But verse 3 is clearly spoken to Job, and Job himself repeats this question and answers it about himself (42:3). So God is speaking to Job.

Notice that God does not call Job wicked. He does not accuse him of the sins the friends named. He says Job spoke without knowledge. That is a much smaller charge, and it was true.

"Gird up your loins now like a man, and I will ask you, and you make it known to Me." In those days men wore long robes. To gird up the loins meant to tuck the robe into the belt so you could run, work or fight. It means: get ready, brace yourself. Job had wanted to question God (13:22; 23:4-5). Now God says: stand up like a man, and I will question you. Job had wanted to be the one asking. God turns it around.

This is not cruel. God is treating Job as a man, someone worth talking to. He does not strike Job down. He engages him.

38:4-7 *Where were you when I founded the earth? Tell **Me**, if you know understanding. Who set its measurements, if you know? Or who stretched a measuring line on it? On what were its bases sunk? Or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?*

"Where were you when I founded the earth? Tell Me, if you know understanding." This is the first of God's great questions. Where were you when I made the world? Job was not there. No man was there. Only God knows how it was done.

"Who set its measurements, if you know? Or who stretched a measuring line on it?" God pictures Himself as a builder laying out a building. He measured the earth and stretched out the measuring line, as a builder does before laying a foundation.

"On what were its bases sunk? Or who laid its cornerstone." The cornerstone was the first and most important stone in a building. It set the lines for all the rest. Who laid the cornerstone of the world? God did.

"When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." When God made the earth, the angels, "the sons of God," shouted for joy. These are the same "sons of God" who came before the LORD in chapter 1 (1:6; 2:1). This verse shows they are heavenly beings who were present at creation. "The morning stars" may be another name for the angels, or the stars themselves, pictured in poetry as joining the song.

Think about this. Creation was a celebration. Heaven sang when God made the world. Job's world had become a place of mourning (30:31). God takes him back to the beginning, when the whole universe rang with joy at what God had made.

And there is a word here for us. The One who laid the cornerstone of the world also laid the cornerstone of our salvation. The New Testament tells us that all things were created through the Son (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16). And Christ Himself is the cornerstone God laid in Zion, so that "the one who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame" (1 Peter 2:6).

38:8-11 *And **who** shut in the sea with doors, when it burst forth **and** came out from the womb, when I made **the** cloud its clothing, and thick darkness its swaddling band, and I broke My boundary on it, and set a bar and doors, and I said, 'As far as here you shall come, and you shall not add; and here **one** shall set **a limit** against the pride of your waves'?*

"And who shut in the sea with doors, when it burst forth and came out from the womb." God now speaks of the sea. In the ancient world the sea was the picture of chaos and danger. God pictures its birth like a baby bursting from the womb.

"When I made the cloud its clothing, and thick darkness its swaddling band." A newborn was wrapped in swaddling cloths. God wrapped the newborn sea in clouds and darkness. This is a tender picture. The mighty sea is like a baby in God's hands.

"And I broke My boundary on it, and set a bar and doors, and I said, 'As far as here you shall come, and you shall not add; and here one shall set a limit against the pride of your waves'?" God set limits for the sea. He told it how far it could go. The proud waves crash on the shore, but they cannot go past the line God drew. Jeremiah says God "appointed the sand as a boundary for the sea" (Jeremiah 5:22).

What does this have to do with Job? Everything. Job's suffering had felt like a flood with no limits. But God sets limits on the sea, and He set limits on Satan too. "only against him do not stretch out your hand" (1:12). "only guard his life" (2:6). The forces that seemed to overwhelm Job were on a leash in God's hand. They could go "as far as here," and no farther.

When Jesus stilled the storm on the Sea of Galilee, His disciples asked, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?" (Mark 4:41). The answer is in Job 38. Only the LORD rules the sea. Jesus did what only God can do.

38:12-15 *Have you, since your days **began**, commanded **the** morning? Have you made the dawn know its place, to take hold of the corners of the earth, and the wicked be shaken out of it? It is changed like the clay of a seal, and they stand out like clothing. And from the wicked their light is withheld, and the uplifted arm is broken.*

"Have you, since your days began, commanded the morning? Have you made the dawn know its place." Have you ever told the sun to rise? Every morning God commands the dawn, and it comes.

"To take hold of the corners of the earth, and the wicked be shaken out of it?" The dawn is pictured as grabbing the edges of the earth like a blanket and shaking out the wicked, the way you shake crumbs from a cloth. The wicked love the darkness (24:13-17). When morning comes, they scatter.

"It is changed like the clay of a seal, and they stand out like clothing." At night the earth has no shape or color. When morning comes, the shapes of hills and valleys appear, like the design pressed into clay by a seal, and the landscape stands out in color like a fine garment.

"And from the wicked their light is withheld, and the uplifted arm is broken." For the wicked, the night is their "light," their time to work. The dawn takes it away. The arm raised to strike is broken.

Here God answers part of Job's complaint about the wicked (chapter 24). Job asked why God does not judge them. God says: every morning I limit the wicked. You do not see all that I do to hold back evil.

38:16-18 *Have you gone to the springs of the sea, and have you walked about in the recesses of the deep? Have the gates of death been revealed to you, and have you seen the gates of deep darkness? Have you understood the broad spaces of the earth? Tell **Me**, if you know all of it.*

"Have you gone to the springs of the sea, and have you walked about in the recesses of the deep?" Have you been to the bottom of the ocean? No man in Job's day had. Even today, most of the deep sea has never been seen by human eyes. God knows every part of it.

"Have the gates of death been revealed to you, and have you seen the gates of deep darkness?" Job had spoken often about death and the grave (3:13-19; 10:21-22; 17:13-16). He thought he knew what lay beyond. God asks: have you seen the gates of death? Only God knows what is on the other side. Jesus, after His resurrection, said, "I have the keys of Hades and of Death" (Revelation 1:18).

"Have you understood the broad spaces of the earth? Tell Me, if you know all of it." Do you even know how big the earth is? Tell Me, if you know.

38:19-21 *Where **is** this, the way **where** light dwells? And darkness, where **is** this, its place, that you should take it to its territory, and that you should discern the paths of its house? You know, for then you were born, and the number of your days **is** many!*

"Where is this, the way where light dwells? And darkness, where is this, its place, that you should take it to its territory, and that you should discern the paths of its house?" God pictures light and darkness as having homes. Do you know where light lives? Could you lead darkness back home to bed?

"You know, for then you were born, and the number of your days is many!" Here God uses gentle irony. Of course you know, Job, since you were born before the light, and you are so very old! It is not mockery meant to wound. It is the kind of irony a father might use with a son who thinks he knows more than he does. It makes the point plainly: Job is a creature, born just a few years ago. God is eternal.

38:22-24 *Have you gone into the storehouses of the snow, and have you seen the storehouses of the hail, which I have kept back for a time of distress, for a day of battle and war? Where **is** this, the way **where** light is divided, **where** the east wind scatters over the earth?*

"Have you gone into the storehouses of the snow, and have you seen the storehouses of the hail, which I have kept back for a time of distress, for a day of battle and war?" God pictures the snow and hail stored up in warehouses, ready to be used when He chooses. God has used hail as a weapon before. He sent hail on Egypt (Exodus 9:23-26), and He threw down great hailstones on

the armies that fought Israel in Joshua's day (Joshua 10:11). Revelation speaks of great hail in the last judgments (Revelation 16:21).

"Where is this, the way where light is divided, where the east wind scatters over the earth?" Do you know how light spreads out across the earth, or where the east wind comes from?

38:25-27 *Who has divided a channel for the flood, and a way for the thunderbolt of the thunders, to bring rain on a land* ***where there is*** *no man, a wilderness* ***where there is*** *no man in it, to satisfy devastation and desolation, and to make the going forth of vegetation sprout?*

"Who has divided a channel for the flood, and a way for the thunderbolt of the thunders, to bring rain on a land where there is no man, a wilderness where there is no man in it." God cuts channels in the sky for the rain and paths for the lightning. And here is something remarkable: He sends rain on places where no one lives.

"To satisfy devastation and desolation, and to make the going forth of vegetation sprout?" God waters the empty desert so the grass can grow, even where no human will ever see it.

Why would God send rain where there are no people? Because the world is not only about us. God cares for the desert, the grass and the wild places for their own sake. They are His. This is humbling. Job, like most of us, had seen the world mainly in terms of how it treated him. God shows him a much bigger world, where God is at work in places Job will never see. If God cares for the grass in an empty wilderness, will He not care for Job?

38:28-30 *Does the rain have a father? Or who has fathered the drops of dew? From whose womb did the ice come forth? And the frost of the heavens, who has given birth to it? Like stone the waters hide themselves, and the face of the deep is seized.*

"Does the rain have a father? Or who has fathered the drops of dew? From whose womb did the ice come forth? And the frost of the heavens, who has given birth to it?" Where does rain come from? Who gives birth to ice and frost? The answer is God. He is the Father of all of it.

"Like stone the waters hide themselves, and the face of the deep is seized." When water freezes, it becomes hard like stone. Even the surface of the deep can be locked in ice. For people living in a warm land, ice was a wonder.

38:31-33 *Can you bind the bonds of the Pleiades, or loosen the cords of Orion? Can you lead out Mazzaroth in its season, and guide the Bear with her young ones? Do you know the statutes of the heavens? Can you set its rule over the earth?*

"Can you bind the bonds of the Pleiades, or loosen the cords of Orion?" Now God turns to the stars. The Pleiades are a cluster of stars, and Orion is the great hunter in the sky. Job had mentioned them himself (9:9). Can you tie the Pleiades together, or untie Orion's belt? Amos says it is the LORD who made "the Pleiades and Orion" (Amos 5:8).

"Can you lead out Mazzaroth in its season, and guide the Bear with her young ones?" Mazzaroth may be the constellations of the zodiac, or a particular star group. The Bear with her cubs is

probably the Big Dipper and the stars near it. Can you lead the stars out each night in their seasons? God does. "He counts the number of the stars; to all of them He calls names" (Psalm 147:4).

"Do you know the statutes of the heavens? Can you set its rule over the earth?" The heavens run by God's laws. The seasons, the tides, the movement of the stars all follow His statutes. Do you know them? Can you make them rule the earth?

This does not mean that the stars control our lives. Scripture forbids reading the stars to tell the future (Deuteronomy 18:10-12; Isaiah 47:13-14). It means God set the heavens in order, and they follow His laws.

38:34-38 *Can you lift up your voice to the thick cloud, so that an abundance of water covers you? Can you send out lightnings, so that they go and say to you, 'Here we **are**'? Who has put wisdom in the inner parts? Or who has given understanding to the mind? Who can count the skies by wisdom? And the waterskins of the heavens, who can make **them** lie down, when the dust flows into a mass, and the clods stick together?*

"Can you lift up your voice to the thick cloud, so that an abundance of water covers you?" Can you shout at a cloud and make it rain? "Can you send out lightnings, so that they go and say to you, 'Here we are'?" Can you call lightning, and have it report to you like a servant? God can.

"Who has put wisdom in the inner parts? Or who has given understanding to the mind?" Who gave man his mind and his ability to think? God did. Even the wisdom Job has, he received from God. Some versions read this verse as speaking of birds that seem to know when weather is coming, such as the ibis or the rooster. The words are hard to translate. Either way, all wisdom comes from God.

"Who can count the skies by wisdom? And the waterskins of the heavens, who can make them lie down, when the dust flows into a mass, and the clods stick together?" The clouds are like waterskins. Who can tip them over to pour out rain on the dry, cracked ground, so that the dust turns to mud and the clods stick together? Only God.

38:39-41 *Can you hunt prey for the lion, or fill the appetite of the young lions, when they crouch in the dens, **and** remain in the thicket for lying in wait? Who prepares for the raven its food, when its young ones cry for help to God, **and** wander about without food?*

Now God turns from the heavens to the animals, and this will carry on through chapter 39.

"Can you hunt prey for the lion, or fill the appetite of the young lions, when they crouch in the dens, and remain in the thicket for lying in wait?" Can you feed the lions? God does. He provides food for the fiercest hunters.

"Who prepares for the raven its food, when its young ones cry for help to God, and wander about without food?" The raven was an unclean bird under the Law (Leviticus 11:15), a scavenger no one valued. Yet God feeds it. When its young cry out, they "cry for help to God," and He hears them.

Do you see what God is showing Job? Job had cried for help, and he felt God did not hear (19:7; 30:20). But God hears even the cry of a baby raven. Jesus took this very picture: "Consider the ravens, that they neither sow nor reap; they have no storeroom nor barn, and God feeds them. How much more valuable are you than the birds!" (Luke 12:24).

That is the heart of this chapter. God did not answer Job's question "Why?" He answered a deeper question: "Who?" Who is in charge of the world? Who sets the limits on the sea? Who commands the morning, the snow and the stars? Who feeds the lion and the raven? The LORD does. And if He rules all of that with wisdom and care, then Job can trust Him with his suffering, even without knowing why.

This is the answer for us too. We will not always know why. But we can know Who. And the God who made the stars and feeds the ravens is the same God who sent His Son to die for us. "He who indeed did not spare His own Son, but handed Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32).

Chapter 38 Summary

At last the LORD answered Job out of the storm. He did not explain Job's suffering or mention Satan, and He did not accuse Job of the friends' charges. He asked who was darkening His counsel by words without knowledge, and told Job to brace himself like a man to answer. Then God asked: Where were you when I founded the earth, measured it and laid its cornerstone, while the morning stars sang and the sons of God shouted for joy? Who shut in the sea, wrapped it like a baby and set its limits? Have you commanded the morning to shake out the wicked, walked in the depths of the sea, or seen the gates of death? Do you know where light and darkness live, or have you seen the storehouses of snow and hail? Who sends rain on the empty desert, fathers the dew and gives birth to the ice? Can you bind the Pleiades, loosen Orion, guide the Bear, or command the clouds and lightning? Who gave wisdom to the mind? Can you feed the lion, or the young ravens that cry to God? God answered not "why" but "Who," showing Job that the One who rules all creation with wisdom and care can be trusted.

Chapter 38 Study Questions

1. How did the LORD answer Job, and why is the name "the LORD" important here? (38:1)

2. What was God's first question to Job? (38:2) What did it mean, and how did Job later answer it? (42:3)

3. What did God ask Job about the foundation of the earth? Who sang and shouted for joy at creation? (38:4-7)

4. How did God describe the birth of the sea and the limits He set for it? (38:8-11) How does 1:12 and 2:6 show God setting limits on Satan?

5. What does the morning do to the wicked? (38:12-15)

6. Why does God send rain on a land where there is no man? (38:25-27) What does that tell us about God?

7. What did God ask about the Pleiades, Orion and the Bear? (38:31-33)

8. What does God do for the lion and the raven? (38:39-41) How did Jesus use the ravens in Luke 12:24?

9. God answered Job not with "why" but with "Who." How does knowing who God is help you when you do not know why something is happening?

10. Which of God's questions in this chapter speaks to you most, and why?

Chapter 39: The LORD and the Wild Creatures

Scripture

39:1-18 Do you know the time of the bearing of the mountain goats of the rock? Do you watch the giving birth of the does? Can you count the months ***that*** they fulfill, and do you know the time of their bearing? They kneel down; they bring forth their young; they send away their labor pains. Their young become strong; they grow in the open field; they go forth and do not return to them. Who let the wild donkey go free? And the fetters of the wild ass, who loosened ***them***, whose home I appointed the desert plain, and its dwelling places the salt land? It laughs at the tumult of the town; it does not hear the shoutings of the driver. It explores the mountains ***as*** its pasture, and it searches after every green thing. Is the wild ox willing to serve you? Or will it spend the night at your feeding trough? Can you bind the wild ox in the furrow ***with*** its rope? Or will it harrow the valleys behind you? Will you trust in it because its strength ***is*** great, and will you leave your toil to it? Will you believe in it, that it will bring back your seed, and gather ***it to*** your threshing floor? The wing of the ostriches flaps joyously; ***but is it*** the pinion of the stork, and ***its*** plumage? For she abandons her eggs to the earth, and on the dust she keeps ***them*** warm, and she has forgotten that a foot may crush them, and the animal of the field may trample them. She treats her young roughly, as ***if they were*** not hers; her labor ***is*** in vain, without dread, because God has made her forget wisdom, and He has not given her a share in understanding. At the time she lifts herself on high, she laughs at the horse and at its rider.

39:19-30 Do you give the horse strength? Do you clothe its neck ***with*** a mane? Do you make it leap like the locust? The majesty of its snorting ***is*** terror. They paw in the valley, and it rejoices in strength; it goes out to meet the weapons. It laughs at dread, and it is not dismayed; and it does not turn back from before the sword. On it the quiver rattles, the flame of the spear and the javelin. With shaking and turmoil it swallows the ground, and it does not stand firm at the sound of the horn. As often as the horn ***sounds***, it says, 'Aha!' And from afar it smells the battle, the thunder of the commanders, and the battle cry. Is it by your understanding ***that*** the hawk soars, ***that*** it spreads its wings toward the south? Or is it at your mouth ***that*** the eagle mounts up, and that it sets its nest on high? It dwells ***on*** the rock and spends the night on the tooth of the rock and the stronghold. From there it spies out food; its eyes look from afar. And its young ones suck up blood; and where the slain ***are***, there it ***is***."

Chapter 39 Preview

The LORD goes on speaking to Job from the storm. In chapter 38 He began with the lion and the raven. Now He takes Job on a tour of the wild animals: the mountain goats giving birth in the high rocks where no man watches, the wild donkey that roams free and laughs at the noise of the town, the wild ox that will never pull a plow for any man, the ostrich that leaves her eggs in the sand and yet outruns a horse, the war horse that charges into battle and laughs at fear, and the hawk and eagle that soar and nest on the cliffs.

None of these animals serves man. None of them needs Job. Most of them live where Job will never go. Yet God knows when each one gives birth, sets each one free, gives each one its strength

and its strange ways. The point is plain. The world is far bigger, wilder and more wonderful than Job ever imagined, and God rules all of it with wisdom and care. If Job cannot understand the ways of a goat or an ostrich, how can he expect to understand all of God's ways with him?

Chapter 39 Study

39:1-4 *Do you know the time of the bearing of the mountain goats of the rock? Do you watch the giving birth of the does? Can you count the months **that** they fulfill, and do you know the time of their bearing? They kneel down; they bring forth their young; they send away their labor pains. Their young become strong; they grow in the open field; they go forth and do not return to them.*

"Do you know the time of the bearing of the mountain goats of the rock? Do you watch the giving birth of the does?" The mountain goats, or ibex, live high in the rocky cliffs, far from people. In Job's day no one had ever seen them give birth. God asks: do you know when they bear their young? Have you watched over the deer as they give birth?

"Can you count the months that they fulfill, and do you know the time of their bearing?" Do you know how long they carry their young? God does. He watches over each one.

"They kneel down; they bring forth their young; they send away their labor pains." The does crouch down and give birth, and their pains are over. No midwife helps them. God does.

"Their young become strong; they grow in the open field; they go forth and do not return to them." The young grow strong in the wild and soon go off on their own.

Think of what this meant to Job. Job's own children were gone. He had cursed the day of his own birth (3:3). And here God shows him that He is present at every birth, even of a goat on a cliff where no human eye sees. Jesus said not one sparrow falls "to the ground apart from your Father" (Matthew 10:29). God's care reaches to the smallest and most hidden places. If He watches over the birth of a wild goat, He watched over the births of Job's children, and over their deaths too.

39:5-8 *Who let the wild donkey go free? And the fetters of the wild ass, who loosened **them**, whose home I appointed the desert plain, and its dwelling places the salt land? It laughs at the tumult of the town; it does not hear the shoutings of the driver. It explores the mountains **as** its pasture, and it searches after every green thing.*

"Who let the wild donkey go free? And the fetters of the wild ass, who loosened them." The wild donkey was a fast, tough animal of the desert that no one could tame. God says: I set it free.

"Whose home I appointed the desert plain, and its dwelling places the salt land?" God gave the wild donkey the desert as its home, the empty salt flats where nothing else wants to live.

"It laughs at the tumult of the town; it does not hear the shoutings of the driver." The tame donkey works in the town, carrying loads while its driver shouts at it. The wild donkey laughs at all that. No one drives it.

"It explores the mountains as its pasture, and it searches after every green thing." It roams the hills and finds its own food.

God made some creatures to serve man, and others to be free. The wild donkey is not useless just because it does not work for us. God made it for His own pleasure, and He provides for it. Not everything in God's world exists for our use. That is a humbling thought for people who tend to measure everything by how it serves them.

39:9-12 *Is the wild ox willing to serve you? Or will it spend the night at your feeding trough? Can you bind the wild ox in the furrow* ***with*** *its rope? Or will it harrow the valleys behind you? Will you trust in it because its strength* ***is*** *great, and will you leave your toil to it? Will you believe in it, that it will bring back your seed, and gather* ***it to*** *your threshing floor?*

"Is the wild ox willing to serve you? Or will it spend the night at your feeding trough?" The wild ox was a huge, powerful animal, larger than any tame ox, and now extinct. It could not be tamed. Would it come and sleep in your barn?

"Can you bind the wild ox in the furrow with its rope? Or will it harrow the valleys behind you?" Could you tie it to a plow and make it work your fields? Of course not.

"Will you trust in it because its strength is great, and will you leave your toil to it? Will you believe in it, that it will bring back your seed, and gather it to your threshing floor?" Its strength is enormous, but it is useless to a farmer, because it will not obey. You could never trust it to bring in your harvest.

God made the wild ox strong, and He did not make it for Job. Job cannot control it. That is the point. There are powers in God's world that man cannot tame. Only God rules them.

39:13-18 *The wing of the ostriches flaps joyously;* ***but is it*** *the pinion of the stork, and* ***its*** *plumage? For she abandons her eggs to the earth, and on the dust she keeps* ***them*** *warm, and she has forgotten that a foot may crush them, and the animal of the field may trample them. She treats her young roughly, as* ***if they were*** *not hers; her labor* ***is*** *in vain, without dread, because God has made her forget wisdom, and He has not given her a share in understanding. At the time she lifts herself on high, she laughs at the horse and at its rider.*

"The wing of the ostriches flaps joyously; but is it the pinion of the stork, and its plumage?" The ostrich flaps her wings proudly, but she cannot fly like the stork. The stork was known for caring for its young. The ostrich, by comparison, seems careless.

"For she abandons her eggs to the earth, and on the dust she keeps them warm, and she has forgotten that a foot may crush them, and the animal of the field may trample them." The ostrich lays her eggs in a shallow hole in the sand and seems to leave them there, where they could be stepped on. To people watching, it looked like she did not care.

"She treats her young roughly, as if they were not hers; her labor is in vain, without dread." She seems harsh with her young, as if they were someone else's. Lamentations uses the ostrich as a picture of cruelty: "cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness" (Lamentations 4:3).

"Because God has made her forget wisdom, and He has not given her a share in understanding." Here is a surprise. God says He made the ostrich this way. He did not give her much wisdom. And yet she survives, and her kind goes on.

"At the time she lifts herself on high, she laughs at the horse and at its rider." For all her foolishness, the ostrich can run faster than a horse. When she gets up and runs, she leaves horse and rider behind.

Why would God include the ostrich? It is almost funny. God made a bird that cannot fly, that seems foolish with her eggs, and yet can outrun a horse. God's world is full of things that do not make sense to us, and yet they work, because God made them. If God has His reasons for the ostrich, He has His reasons for what He allows in Job's life, even when they look foolish or careless from where Job sits.

39:19-22 *Do you give the horse strength? Do you clothe its neck **with** a mane? Do you make it leap like the locust? The majesty of its snorting **is** terror. They paw in the valley, and it rejoices in strength; it goes out to meet the weapons. It laughs at dread, and it is not dismayed; and it does not turn back from before the sword.*

"Do you give the horse strength? Do you clothe its neck with a mane?" Now God describes the war horse, one of the most magnificent animals in the ancient world. Did you give it its power? Did you put the mane on its neck?

"Do you make it leap like the locust? The majesty of its snorting is terror." It leaps forward like a grasshopper, and its snorting strikes fear in the enemy.

"They paw in the valley, and it rejoices in strength; it goes out to meet the weapons." It paws the ground, eager to run. It loves its own strength, and it charges straight toward the enemy's weapons.

"It laughs at dread, and it is not dismayed; and it does not turn back from before the sword." The war horse is not afraid. It laughs at fear.

39:23-25 *On it the quiver rattles, the flame of the spear and the javelin. With shaking and turmoil it swallows the ground, and it does not stand firm at the sound of the horn. As often as the horn **sounds**, it says, 'Aha!' And from afar it smells the battle, the thunder of the commanders, and the battle cry.*

"On it the quiver rattles, the flame of the spear and the javelin." The rider's arrows rattle in their quiver, and spears flash like flame in the sun.

"With shaking and turmoil it swallows the ground, and it does not stand firm at the sound of the horn." It gallops so fast it seems to swallow up the ground. When the trumpet sounds, it cannot stand still.

"As often as the horn sounds, it says, 'Aha!' And from afar it smells the battle, the thunder of the commanders, and the battle cry." When the trumpet calls, the horse snorts, ready to go. It can smell the battle from far off and hears the shouting of the commanders.

God did not make Job's courage. He did make the horse's. And the courage of the war horse is a gift from God. But Scripture also warns us not to trust in that strength: "The horse is a deception for salvation" (Psalm 33:17), and "A horse is prepared for a day of battle, and the victory belongs to the LORD" (Proverbs 21:31). The strongest things in creation still depend on the One who made them.

39:26-30 *Is it by your understanding **that** the hawk soars, **that** it spreads its wings toward the south? Or is it at your mouth **that** the eagle mounts up, and that it sets its nest on high? It dwells **on** the rock and spends the night on the tooth of the rock and the stronghold. From there it spies out food; its eyes look from afar. And its young ones suck up blood; and where the slain **are**, there it **is**."*

"Is it by your understanding that the hawk soars, that it spreads its wings toward the south?" Some hawks fly south each year when the seasons change. Who taught them to do that? Not Job. God put that knowledge in them.

"Or is it at your mouth that the eagle mounts up, and that it sets its nest on high?" Did the eagle fly up at your command? Did you tell it to build its nest high on the cliffs?

"It dwells on the rock and spends the night on the tooth of the rock and the stronghold." The eagle lives on the highest crags, a jagged "tooth" of rock that no enemy can reach.

"From there it spies out food; its eyes look from afar." From that height, it spots its prey a great distance away.

"And its young ones suck up blood; and where the slain are, there it is." The eagle, or vulture, feeds its young on flesh. Wherever there are dead bodies, it appears. Jesus used a similar saying: "wherever the carcass may be, there the vultures will be gathered together" (Matthew 24:28).

This last picture is not pretty. God's world includes death. The lion hunts, the eagle feeds on the slain. God does not hide that from Job. Creation is not a gentle garden now. It is a world under the curse, where death is real (Romans 8:20-22). But even there, God provides, and nothing happens outside His rule.

Now step back and look at the whole chapter. God has shown Job the goat, the deer, the wild donkey, the wild ox, the ostrich, the horse, the hawk and the eagle. What does it all mean?

First, God knows and cares for every creature, even those no human ever sees. "How many are Your works, LORD! In wisdom You have made all of them" (Psalm 104:24).

Second, Job cannot control or even understand most of these creatures. They live by God's design, not his.

Third, God is not explaining Job's suffering. He is showing Job His world. And in showing His world, He shows Himself: wise, powerful, caring, free, and far beyond Job's understanding.

God did not answer Job's question, but He answered Job's need. Job needed to see God. And now he is beginning to.

Chapter 39 Summary

The LORD continued His questions with a tour of the wild animals. Do you know when the mountain goats and deer give birth in the wild, or how long they carry their young? Who set the wild donkey free to roam the desert and laugh at the town? Will the wild ox serve you or plow your field? The ostrich flaps her wings and leaves her eggs in the sand, because God did not give her wisdom, yet she outruns the horse. Did you give the war horse its strength and mane, so that it laughs at fear and charges into battle at the sound of the horn? Is it by your wisdom that the hawk flies south and the eagle nests on the cliffs, spying out food from afar? None of these creatures serves Job, and most live where he never goes, yet God knows, provides for and rules every one. God was not explaining Job's suffering. He was showing Job His world, and in it, Himself.

Chapter 39 Study Questions

1. What did God ask Job about the mountain goats and the deer? (39:1-4)

2. Where does the wild donkey live, and how is it different from a tame donkey? (39:5-8)

3. Why could Job not use the wild ox on his farm? (39:9-12)

4. What strange things did God say about the ostrich? (39:13-18)

5. How did God describe the war horse? (39:19-25) What do Psalm 33:17 and Proverbs 21:31 warn about trusting in it?

6. What did God ask about the hawk and the eagle? (39:26-30)

7. Why do you think God showed Job animals that do not serve man at all?

8. Matthew 10:29 says not a sparrow falls apart from the Father. How does God's care for the wild goats encourage you?

9. Which of the animals in this chapter shows you something about God that you had not thought of before?

10. God showed Job His world instead of explaining his suffering. When you are hurting, how could spending time looking at God's creation help you?

Chapter 40: Job's Reply and Behemoth

Scripture

40:1-14 And the LORD answered Job, and He said, "Will a faultfinder contend with the Almighty? Let the one who rebukes God answer it." And Job answered the LORD, and he said, "Look, I am insignificant; what shall I reply to You? I have put my hand on my mouth. Once I have spoken, and I will not answer; and twice, and I will not add ***more***." And the LORD answered Job from the storm, and He said, "Gird up your loins now like a man; I will ask you, and you make ***it*** known to Me. Will you even annul My justice? Will you condemn Me so that you may be justified? And do you have an arm like God? And can you thunder with a voice like His? Adorn yourself now ***with*** majesty and dignity, and clothe yourself ***with*** splendor and honor. Scatter the outbursts of your anger, and see every proud one, and bring him low. See every proud one ***and*** humble him, and tread down the wicked in their place. Hide them in the dust together; bind their faces in the hidden place. And I also will praise you, for your right hand can save you.

40:15-24 Look now, Behemoth, which I made with you; it eats grass like the ox. Look now, its strength ***is*** in its loins, and its power in the muscles of its belly. It sways its tail like a cedar; the sinews of its thighs are intertwined. Its bones ***are*** tubes of bronze; its limbs ***are*** like a rod of iron. It ***is*** the first of the ways of God; the One who made it, let Him bring near His sword. For the mountains bring it produce, and every animal of the field plays there. Under the lotus plants it lies, in the hiding place of ***the*** reed and ***the*** swamp. The lotus plants cover it ***as*** its shade; the poplars of the wadi surround it. Look, the river is violent, ***yet*** it is not alarmed; it is confident though ***the*** Jordan bursts forth to its mouth. By its eyes will anyone take it? With snares will anyone pierce ***its*** nose?

Chapter 40 Preview

The LORD pauses and gives Job a chance to answer. "Will a faultfinder contend with the Almighty?" Job, who had longed to argue his case before God, now has nothing to say. "Look, I am insignificant; what shall I reply to You? I have put my hand on my mouth." He has spoken once, even twice, and he will say no more.

But God is not finished. He speaks again from the storm, and this time He goes to the heart of the matter. "Will you even annul My justice? Will you condemn Me so that you may be justified?" Job had been so set on proving his own innocence that he had come close to calling God unjust. God invites Job to put on majesty and humble every proud man in the world, if he can. If he can do that, God says, then I will admit that your own right hand can save you. Then God points to Behemoth, a huge and powerful creature that God made, as He made Job. Only its Maker can approach it with a sword. If Job cannot master Behemoth, how can he stand against the One who made it?

Chapter 40 Study

40:1-2 *And the LORD answered Job, and He said, "Will a faultfinder contend with the Almighty? Let the one who rebukes God answer it."*

"And the LORD answered Job, and He said." The LORD has finished His first round of questions (38:1-39:30). Now He speaks again, briefly, to give Job a chance to respond.

"Will a faultfinder contend with the Almighty? Let the one who rebukes God answer it." A faultfinder is someone who finds fault, a critic. Job had found fault with God's ways. He had wanted to argue with God in court (13:3; 23:4). Now God says: you wanted to argue. Here I am. Answer Me.

This is not a trap. It is an invitation. God gives Job the chance he asked for. But after seeing God's glory in creation, Job no longer wants to argue.

40:3-5 *And Job answered the LORD, and he said, "Look, I am insignificant; what shall I reply to You? I have put my hand on my mouth. Once I have spoken, and I will not answer; and twice, and I will not add **more**."*

"And Job answered the LORD, and he said." His answer is short: "Look, I am insignificant; what shall I reply to You? I have put my hand on my mouth."

"Insignificant" means small, light, of little weight. In chapter 31 Job said he would approach God "like a noble" (31:37). Now that he stands before God, he feels very small. That is what happens to anyone who truly meets God. Isaiah saw the Lord and said, "Woe to me!" (Isaiah 6:5). John saw the risen Christ and "fell at His feet as dead" (Revelation 1:17).

"What shall I reply to You?" Job, who had so many words, has none. "I have put my hand on my mouth." Putting the hand over the mouth was a sign of silence and awe. Job had told his friends to do this (21:5). Princes had done it before Job (29:9). Now Job does it before God.

"Once I have spoken, and I will not answer; and twice, and I will not add more." Job has said enough. He will not keep talking.

Notice what Job does not say yet. He does not yet say that he was wrong, or that he repents. That will come in chapter 42. Here he simply falls silent. Sometimes silence is the first step of repentance. "Let go, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10). "The LORD is in His holy temple; hush before Him, all the earth!" (Habakkuk 2:20).

40:6-8 *And the LORD answered Job from the storm, and He said, "Gird up your loins now like a man; I will ask you, and you make **it** known to Me. Will you even annul My justice? Will you condemn Me so that you may be justified?*

"And the LORD answered Job from the storm, and He said." God speaks again from the storm. Job's silence is a start, but God wants to take him further.

"Gird up your loins now like a man; I will ask you, and you make it known to Me." The same words as 38:3. Brace yourself. I have more to ask.

"Will you even annul My justice? Will you condemn Me so that you may be justified?"

This is the heart of God's second speech, and it is the real issue between God and Job. Job had insisted that he was innocent. He was right about that. But in insisting on it, he had come to say that God was unjust. He had said God wronged him (19:6), took away his right (27:2), and was cruel to him (30:21). In order for Job to be right, God had to be wrong.

God asks: Is that what you want? To make Me guilty so that you can be innocent? Will you cancel My justice to prove your own?

Here is the lesson. Job did not need to choose between his innocence and God's justice. Both were true. Job was not being punished for sin, and God was not unjust. There was a third thing Job could not see: the test in heaven, and God's purpose in it. When we suffer and do not understand, we are tempted to think either that we must be guilty (the friends' answer) or that God must be unfair (Job's temptation). The right answer is often that there is something we cannot see, and God is still good.

Paul says, "let God be true, and every man a liar" (Romans 3:4). When our understanding and God's goodness seem to clash, it is our understanding that must give way.

40:9-14 *And do you have an arm like God? And can you thunder with a voice like His? Adorn yourself now **with** majesty and dignity, and clothe yourself **with** splendor and honor. Scatter the outbursts of your anger, and see every proud one, and bring him low. See every proud one **and** humble him, and tread down the wicked in their place. Hide them in the dust together; bind their faces in the hidden place. And I also will praise you, for your right hand can save you.*

"And do you have an arm like God? And can you thunder with a voice like His?" If you want to judge God, Job, do you have His power? Can your voice thunder like the storm you just heard?

"Adorn yourself now with majesty and dignity, and clothe yourself with splendor and honor." God invites Job, with gentle irony, to put on God's own royal robes. Go ahead, try being God for a while.

"Scatter the outbursts of your anger, and see every proud one, and bring him low. See every proud one and humble him, and tread down the wicked in their place." Job had complained that God does not punish the wicked (21:7-33; 24:1-25). God says: all right, you do it. Find every proud person in the world and humble him. Crush every wicked man where he stands.

"Hide them in the dust together; bind their faces in the hidden place." Bury them all. Shut them up in the grave.

"And I also will praise you, for your right hand can save you." If you can do that, Job, I will admit that you can save yourself.

The point is clear. Running the world is God's work, not Job's. Judging all the wicked justly, at the right time and in the right way, is beyond any man. Job had thought he could do better. God shows him he could not even begin.

And there is a deeper point in verse 14. Job cannot save himself with his own right hand. No one can. That is why we need a Savior. God's own right hand, His strong arm, has brought salvation. Isaiah says, "His own arm brought salvation to Him" (Isaiah 59:16). In the end, God Himself will humble every proud one and judge the wicked, through His Son (Acts 17:31; Revelation 20:11-15). And He saves, not those whose right hand is strong, but those who humble themselves and trust Him. "Be humbled before the Lord, and He will exalt you" (James 4:10).

40:15-18 *Look now, Behemoth, which I made with you; it eats grass like the ox. Look now, its strength **is** in its loins, and its power in the muscles of its belly. It sways its tail like a cedar; the sinews of its thighs are intertwined. Its bones **are** tubes of bronze; its limbs **are** like a rod of iron.*

"Look now, Behemoth, which I made with you; it eats grass like the ox." Now God points Job to a great creature called Behemoth. The word is the plural of the Hebrew word for beast or cattle, and the plural form gives the sense of the great beast, the beast of beasts. "Which I made with you" means God made it just as He made Job. Job and Behemoth are both God's creatures. For all its size, it eats grass like an ox.

"Look now, its strength is in its loins, and its power in the muscles of its belly." Its body is pure strength.

"It sways its tail like a cedar; the sinews of its thighs are intertwined." Its tail is stiff and strong like a cedar tree, and the muscles of its legs are knotted like cords.

"Its bones are tubes of bronze; its limbs are like a rod of iron." Its bones are as strong as bronze pipes and iron bars.

What was Behemoth? Bible teachers have given several answers.

Many believe Behemoth is the hippopotamus. It eats grass, lives among the reeds and lotus plants in rivers, is enormously strong, and is not alarmed when the river floods. The hippo was well known in Egypt and once lived in other parts of the region, perhaps even along the Jordan valley.

Others believe it is the elephant, the largest land animal, whose trunk might be pictured in the "tail like a cedar" and whose strength is legendary.

Some believe Behemoth was a kind of dinosaur, such as one of the great long-necked plant-eaters. They point out that a hippo's or elephant's tail is small, not "like a cedar," and that God calls Behemoth "the first of the ways of God," the greatest of His land creatures. They believe God is describing an animal that lived in Job's day but is now extinct.

Still others take Behemoth as a poetic picture, drawn from real animals but larger than life, standing for the greatest power on land, the way Leviathan in the next chapter stands for the greatest power of the sea.

What we can say for certain is this: God says He made Behemoth. It is His creature, not a god, not a rival, not a monster from pagan myth. The nations around Israel told stories of gods fighting great beasts. The Bible does not teach those stories. Behemoth is an animal God created, "with you," just as He made Job. And that is the point. If Job stands in awe of a creature, how much more should he stand in awe of its Creator?

40:19-20 *It **is** the first of the ways of God; the One who made it, let Him bring near His sword. For the mountains bring it produce, and every animal of the field plays there.*

"It is the first of the ways of God; the One who made it, let Him bring near His sword." "The first" here means the chief, the greatest. Behemoth is the masterpiece among God's land creatures. And only God, its Maker, can come near it with a sword. No man can master it. Only its Creator can.

"For the mountains bring it produce, and every animal of the field plays there." The hills supply its food, and the other wild animals play nearby without fear. Though it is so powerful, it eats grass and does not hunt them.

40:21-24 *Under the lotus plants it lies, in the hiding place of **the** reed and **the** swamp. The lotus plants cover it **as** its shade; the poplars of the wadi surround it. Look, the river is violent, **yet** it is not alarmed; it is confident though **the** Jordan bursts forth to its mouth. By its eyes will anyone take it? With snares will anyone pierce **its** nose?*

"Under the lotus plants it lies, in the hiding place of the reed and the swamp." Behemoth rests in the shade of lotus plants, hidden in the reeds of the marsh. This fits the hippopotamus well.

"The lotus plants cover it as its shade; the poplars of the wadi surround it." The plants and the trees along the stream bed give it shade.

"Look, the river is violent, yet it is not alarmed; it is confident though the Jordan bursts forth to its mouth." When the river floods and rushes past, Behemoth is not afraid. Even if a river as strong as the Jordan in flood rushed up to its mouth, it would stand calm. The Jordan here may be named as an example of a strong, flooding river.

"By its eyes will anyone take it? With snares will anyone pierce its nose?" Can anyone capture it while it watches? Can anyone put a ring through its nose and lead it away like an ox? No man can.

So God's question to Job is this: If you cannot capture Behemoth, a creature I made alongside you, how can you think to stand against Me, put Me on trial, or run the world in My place? God is not mocking Job. He is helping Job see where he stands: a creature, small and loved, before a Creator who is great beyond all measure.

That is not a place of despair. It is a place of rest. We do not have to run the universe. We do not have to understand everything. God holds Behemoth and the floods and the wicked and our suffering in His hand. We can be small, and trust Him.

Chapter 40 Summary

The LORD asked whether a faultfinder would contend with the Almighty, and gave Job a chance to answer. Job said, "Look, I am insignificant; what shall I reply to You? I have put my hand on my mouth," and that he would say no more. Then the LORD spoke again from the storm, telling Job to brace himself, and asked the central question: "Will you even annul My justice? Will you condemn Me so that you may be justified?" Job had defended his innocence by calling God unjust. God invited Job to put on majesty, humble every proud man and crush the wicked, and said that if he could, his own right hand could save him. Then God pointed to Behemoth, a huge creature He made alongside Job, with strength in its loins, a tail like a cedar and bones like bronze. It is the chief of God's ways, it rests among the lotus and reeds, it is not alarmed by a flood, and no man can capture it. Teachers identify Behemoth as the hippopotamus, the elephant, an extinct creature or a poetic picture, but God says He made it. If Job cannot master a creature, he cannot stand against its Creator.

Chapter 40 Study Questions

1. What did the LORD ask Job in verse 2?

2. How did Job answer, and what did he do with his hand? (40:4-5) How is this different from 31:37?

3. What did God ask Job in verse 8? Why is this the heart of the issue between God and Job?

4. What did God invite Job to do in verses 10-13, and why?

5. What did God say He would admit if Job could do these things? (40:14) Why can no one save himself with his own right hand?

6. How did God describe Behemoth in verses 15-18?

7. What does it mean that Behemoth is "the first of the ways of God"? (40:19)

8. What are the main views of what Behemoth was? What does God say for certain about it? (40:15)

9. Have you ever been tempted to think God was unfair so that you could feel right? What did you do with that?

10. Job put his hand on his mouth before God. When is it time for you to stop talking and simply be quiet before Him?

Chapter 41: Leviathan

Scripture

41:1-11 Can you draw out Leviathan with a fishhook, and with a cord hold down its tongue? Can you put a rush cord in its nose, and pierce its jaw with a hook? Will it multiply supplications to you? Will it speak soft ***words*** to you? Will it make a covenant with you? Will you take it for a slave forever? Will you play with it like the bird, and will you bind it for your girls? Will partners bargain over it? Will they divide it among ***the*** merchants? Can you fill its hide with harpoons, and its head with a fish spear? Put your hand on it; remember the battle; do not do ***it*** again! Look, his hope is proved a lie; is he not thrown down even at the sight of it? No one ***is so*** fierce that he would rouse it; and who ***is*** he ***who*** can take his stand before Me? Who has confronted Me, that I should repay ***him***? Under all the heavens, it ***is*** Mine.

41:12-25 Concerning it I will keep silent ***about*** its limbs, and the matter of ***its*** mighty strength, and the grace of its arrangement. Who has uncovered the face of its clothing? Into the doubling of its bridle who will come? The doors of its face, who has opened ***them***? Around its teeth ***is*** terror. Pride ***is in*** the rows of shields, shut up ***with*** a tight seal. One draws near to one, and air does not come between them. Each is joined to its brother; they grasp one another, and they are not separated. Its sneezings flash forth light, and its eyes ***are*** like the eyelids of ***the*** dawn. Out of its mouth go torches; sparks of fire escape. Out of its nostrils goes forth smoke, like a pot blown upon, and rushes. Its breath kindles coals, and a flame goes forth from its mouth. In its neck strength lodges, and before it dismay dances. The folds of its flesh cling together, cast hard on it; it is not moved. Its heart ***is*** hard like a stone, and hard like a lower millstone. From its rising up the mighty are afraid; from ***its*** crashings they are bewildered.

41:26-34 ***When*** one reaches it ***with*** a sword, it will not stand, ***nor will*** spear, dart, and lance. It counts iron as straw, bronze as rotten wood. The son of the bow does not make it flee; for it the stones of a sling are turned into chaff. The club is regarded like chaff, and it laughs at the shaking of the javelin. Under it ***are*** the sharp points of potsherds; it spreads out a threshing sledge on the mud. It makes the depths boil like the pot; it makes the sea like the ointment pot. Behind it, it makes a path shine; one would think the deep ***to be*** gray hair. On the dust ***there is*** not its likeness, one made without terror. It sees every lofty ***thing***; it ***is*** king over all the sons of pride."

Chapter 41 Preview

The LORD's second speech reaches its high point with a creature even more fearsome than Behemoth. Leviathan lives in the waters. God asks Job: Can you catch it with a fishhook? Will it beg you for mercy or agree to be your slave? Will you keep it as a pet for your daughters? Lay a hand on it once, and you will never forget the battle. No one is fierce enough to stir it up. And then God makes His point: if no one dares to stand before Leviathan, "who is he who can take his stand before Me?" Everything under heaven belongs to God.

Then God describes Leviathan in great detail: its terrible jaws and teeth, its back covered in rows of shields sealed so tight not even air can pass between them, its eyes like the dawn, the fire and

smoke that seem to come from its mouth and nostrils, its heart hard as stone. Swords, spears, arrows and clubs are like straw to it. It leaves a shining wake in the sea. There is nothing like it on earth. It is king over all the proud. Bible teachers differ on what Leviathan was. But God's purpose is clear. If Job cannot stand before a creature, he cannot stand before the Creator, and he does not need to. He can bow.

Chapter 41 Study

41:1-2 *Can you draw out Leviathan with a fishhook, and with a cord hold down its tongue? Can you put a rush cord in its nose, and pierce its jaw with a hook?*

In some Bibles this chapter begins at what is 41:9 here, and the first verses are counted as the end of chapter 40. That is because the Hebrew Bible divides the chapters differently. The SLB follows the English numbering.

"Can you draw out Leviathan with a fishhook, and with a cord hold down its tongue?" Leviathan is mentioned several times in the Old Testament. Job had spoken of "those ready to rouse Leviathan" (3:8). God asks Job: can you catch Leviathan like a fish, with a hook and a line?

"Can you put a rush cord in its nose, and pierce its jaw with a hook?" Fishermen sometimes kept their catch alive by running a cord through the gills or jaw. Can you do that to Leviathan? Of course not.

41:3-7 *Will it multiply supplications to you? Will it speak soft **words** to you? Will it make a covenant with you? Will you take it for a slave forever? Will you play with it like the bird, and will you bind it for your girls? Will partners bargain over it? Will they divide it among **the** merchants? Can you fill its hide with harpoons, and its head with a fish spear?*

"Will it multiply supplications to you? Will it speak soft words to you?" Will Leviathan beg you for mercy and speak gently to you, like a captive pleading for his life?

"Will it make a covenant with you? Will you take it for a slave forever?" Will it sign an agreement to serve you for life, as a servant might? There is a gentle irony here. Job had wanted God to come to terms with him. God asks if Job can even bring Leviathan to terms.

"Will you play with it like the bird, and will you bind it for your girls?" Will you keep it as a pet on a string, like a little bird, for your daughters to play with? Psalm 104:26 says God formed Leviathan "to play" in the sea. God can play with it. Job cannot.

"Will partners bargain over it? Will they divide it among the merchants?" Will fishermen sell it at the market, cut up into pieces?

"Can you fill its hide with harpoons, and its head with a fish spear?" Can you even wound it with your best weapons?

41:8-11 *Put your hand on it; remember the battle; do not do **it** again! Look, his hope is proved a lie; is he not thrown down even at the sight of it? No one **is so** fierce that he would rouse it; and who **is** he **who** can take his stand before Me? Who has confronted Me, that I should repay **him**? Under all the heavens, it **is** Mine.*

"Put your hand on it; remember the battle; do not do it again!" Just try touching it once. You will remember that fight for the rest of your life, and you will never try it again.

"Look, his hope is proved a lie; is he not thrown down even at the sight of it?" Anyone who hopes to capture it will be disappointed. Just seeing it is enough to make a man fall down in fear.

"No one is so fierce that he would rouse it; and who is he who can take his stand before Me?" Here is the point of the whole description. No man is brave enough to wake Leviathan. If you cannot stand before Leviathan, a creature, then who can stand before Me, the One who made it?

Job had wanted to stand before God and argue his case (13:3; 23:3-7; 31:35-37). God says: you cannot even stand before one of My creatures.

"Who has confronted Me, that I should repay him? Under all the heavens, it is Mine." God owes no one anything. Everything under heaven already belongs to Him. Paul points to this truth when he asks, "who has first given to Him, and it will be repaid to him?" (Romans 11:35). No one can put God in his debt. Job could not demand an answer as if God owed it to him. Yet God, who owes nothing, gave Job far more than an answer. He gave Job Himself.

41:12-17 *Concerning it I will keep silent **about** its limbs, and the matter of **its** mighty strength, and the grace of its arrangement. Who has uncovered the face of its clothing? Into the doubling of its bridle who will come? The doors of its face, who has opened **them**? Around its teeth **is** terror. Pride **is in** the rows of shields, shut up **with** a tight seal. One draws near to one, and air does not come between them. Each is joined to its brother; they grasp one another, and they are not separated.*

"Concerning it I will keep silent about its limbs, and the matter of its mighty strength, and the grace of its arrangement." God speaks of Leviathan's limbs, its mighty strength and its fine form. He is proud of this creature, the way an artist is proud of his best work.

"Who has uncovered the face of its clothing? Into the doubling of its bridle who will come?" Who can strip off its outer armor? Who would dare to come near its double row of teeth, as if putting a bridle in its mouth?

"The doors of its face, who has opened them? Around its teeth is terror." "The doors of its face" are its jaws. Who could pry them open? Its teeth are terrifying.

"Pride is in the rows of shields, shut up with a tight seal." Its back is covered with rows of scales like shields, sealed tightly together. "One draws near to one, and air does not come between them. Each is joined to its brother; they grasp one another, and they are not separated." The scales fit so closely that not even air can get between them. No weapon can find a gap.

41:18-21 *Its sneezings flash forth light, and its eyes **are** like the eyelids of **the** dawn. Out of its mouth go torches; sparks of fire escape. Out of its nostrils goes forth smoke, like a pot blown upon, and rushes. Its breath kindles coals, and a flame goes forth from its mouth.*

"Its sneezings flash forth light, and its eyes are like the eyelids of the dawn." When it snorts, the spray shines in the sun like flashes of light. Its eyes glow like the first rays of morning.

"Out of its mouth go torches; sparks of fire escape. Out of its nostrils goes forth smoke, like a pot blown upon, and rushes." Fire seems to come from its mouth, and smoke from its nostrils, like steam from a boiling pot over a fire of rushes.

"Its breath kindles coals, and a flame goes forth from its mouth." Its breath is like a flame that could light coals.

How are we to understand these verses? Some take them as poetic language. When a great sea creature surfaces and blows out its breath, the spray can catch the sunlight like sparks, and on a cool morning its breath can look like smoke. God is describing how fearsome Leviathan appears to a man who sees it. Others believe God is describing a real creature, now extinct, that could actually produce something like fire, as some insects can produce a burning spray. Scripture does not tell us which. Either way, the point is that Leviathan is terrifying beyond anything Job could face.

41:22-25 *In its neck strength lodges, and before it dismay dances. The folds of its flesh cling together, cast hard on it; it is not moved. Its heart **is** hard like a stone, and hard like a lower millstone. From its rising up the mighty are afraid; from **its** crashings they are bewildered.*

"In its neck strength lodges, and before it dismay dances." Its neck is powerful, and terror runs ahead of it wherever it goes.

"The folds of its flesh cling together, cast hard on it; it is not moved." Its flesh is firm, like metal cast in a mold. Nothing can make it budge.

"Its heart is hard like a stone, and hard like a lower millstone." The lower millstone was the hardest stone, the one that took the weight and grinding. Leviathan's heart is like that. It knows no fear and no pity.

"From its rising up the mighty are afraid; from its crashings they are bewildered." When it rises from the water, even the strongest men are afraid. When it thrashes, they are thrown into confusion.

41:26-29 ***When** one reaches it **with** a sword, it will not stand, **nor will** spear, dart, and lance. It counts iron as straw, bronze as rotten wood. The son of the bow does not make it flee; for it the stones of a sling are turned into chaff. The club is regarded like chaff, and it laughs at the shaking of the javelin.*

"When one reaches it with a sword, it will not stand, nor will spear, dart, and lance." No sword or spear can hurt it. They glance off.

"It counts iron as straw, bronze as rotten wood." The strongest metals of Job's day are like straw and rotten wood to it.

"The son of the bow does not make it flee; for it the stones of a sling are turned into chaff." "The son of the bow" is the arrow. Arrows do not frighten it. Stones from a sling are like bits of chaff blowing against it.

"The club is regarded like chaff, and it laughs at the shaking of the javelin." It laughs at the man who raises a club or a javelin against it, just as the war horse laughs at fear (39:22) and the ostrich laughs at the horse (39:18).

41:30-32 *Under it **are** the sharp points of potsherds; it spreads out a threshing sledge on the mud. It makes the depths boil like the pot; it makes the sea like the ointment pot. Behind it, it makes a path shine; one would think the deep **to be** gray hair.*

"Under it are the sharp points of potsherds; it spreads out a threshing sledge on the mud." Its underside is covered with sharp, rough scales like broken pottery. When it drags itself across the mud, it leaves marks like a threshing sledge, a heavy board with sharp stones set in its bottom that was dragged over grain.

"It makes the depths boil like the pot; it makes the sea like the ointment pot." When it moves through the water, the sea churns and foams like a boiling pot of ointment.

"Behind it, it makes a path shine; one would think the deep to be gray hair." It leaves a shining white wake behind it in the water, so that the sea looks like it has white hair.

41:33 *On the dust **there is** not its likeness, one made without terror.*

"On the dust there is not its likeness, one made without terror." There is nothing like it on earth. It was made without fear. "Made" is the key word. God made it. It is not a god. It is a creature.

41:34 *It sees every lofty **thing**; it **is** king over all the sons of pride."*

"It sees every lofty thing; it is king over all the sons of pride." Leviathan looks down on every proud creature, and it is king over them all. "The sons of pride" are the proud beasts (28:8). Leviathan is the proudest of them.

And there God ends His speech. He does not add a lesson. He simply leaves Job looking at the king of the proud, and lets him draw the conclusion. In 40:11-12 God told Job to humble every proud one, if he could. Job cannot even catch the king of the proud. But God made it, rules it and plays with it. God alone is truly King over all.

What was Leviathan? Bible teachers have several views.

Many believe Leviathan is the crocodile. The crocodile lived in the Nile and other rivers of the region. It has rows of armored scales, terrible teeth, a hard underside, and in that day no weapon could easily pierce it. The Egyptians feared and even worshiped it.

Some think of a great whale, or another large sea creature, since Psalm 104:26 places Leviathan in the sea where the ships go.

Some believe Leviathan was a great sea reptile, now extinct, or a creature like a dinosaur. They point to the fire and smoke, the great size, and the fact that God speaks of it as beyond any known animal.

Others take Leviathan as a poetic picture, drawn from real creatures but larger than life, standing for every power of chaos and pride that man cannot control. The Old Testament sometimes uses the name this way. Psalm 74:14 says God "crushed the heads of Leviathan," speaking of His victory over Egypt at the Red Sea. Isaiah 27:1 says that in the last day the LORD will slay "Leviathan the fleeing serpent." Some Bible teachers see in that a picture of Satan, "the ancient serpent" (Revelation 12:9), whom God will finally throw down.

The nations around Israel told myths about a seven-headed sea monster that the gods fought. Some scholars say the Bible borrows those myths. I do not believe the Bible teaches them. In Job 41, Leviathan is not God's rival. God made it (41:33). God plays with it (Psalm 104:26). God owns everything under heaven (41:11). Whatever Leviathan was, it is God's creature, under God's hand.

There is a final lesson for us in Leviathan. Job could not tame the king of pride. Neither can we tame the pride in our own hearts. But God can. And there is a greater Leviathan than any crocodile: Satan, the proud enemy who accused Job in chapters 1 and 2. No man can stand against him in his own strength. But Christ has. "For this purpose the Son of God was revealed, so that He might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8). At the cross He disarmed the rulers and authorities and "triumphed over them" (Colossians 2:15). And "the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet quickly" (Romans 16:20). The God who rules Leviathan rules the devil too, and He has already won.

Chapter 41 Summary

The LORD continued with Leviathan, a creature even more fearsome than Behemoth. Job could not catch it with a hook, lead it by a cord, make it beg for mercy, bind it to serve him, keep it as a pet, sell it at market or wound it with harpoons. One touch, and he would never try again. No one dares to rouse it, so who can stand before God, who owes no one and owns everything under heaven? God described its jaws and terrible teeth, its rows of scales sealed so tight no air passes between them, its eyes like the dawn, the fire and smoke from its mouth and nostrils, its strong neck and stone-hard heart. Swords, spears, arrows, sling stones and clubs are like straw to it. It churns the deep and leaves a white wake. There is nothing like it on earth, and it is king over all the proud. Teachers identify Leviathan as the crocodile, a great sea creature, an extinct reptile, or a poetic picture of chaos and pride, but God made it and rules it. If Job cannot stand before a creature, he cannot stand before the Creator. And the God who rules Leviathan has crushed Satan through Christ.

Chapter 41 Study Questions

1. What did God ask Job about catching Leviathan? (41:1-2)

2. What did God ask about making Leviathan a servant or a pet? (41:3-5) How does Psalm 104:26 show that God can do what Job cannot?

3. What happens to anyone who tries to touch Leviathan? (41:8-9)

4. What question did God ask in verse 10, and what is the point of it?

5. What did God say in verse 11 about what He owes and what He owns? How does Paul use this truth in Romans 11:35?

6. How did God describe Leviathan's scales, eyes, breath and heart? (41:15-24)

7. What did God say about weapons against Leviathan? (41:26-29)

8. What is Leviathan called in verse 34? How does that connect with God's challenge to Job in 40:11-12?

9. What are the main views of what Leviathan was? Why does it matter that God says He made it?

10. Job could not tame the king of pride. What pride in your own heart do you need God to humble? How does Christ's victory over Satan (1 John 3:8; Colossians 2:15) encourage you?

Chapter 42: Job Repents and Is Restored

Scripture

42:1-9 And Job answered the LORD, and he said, "I know that You are able ***to do*** everything, and no purpose is withheld from You. 'Who ***is*** this ***who*** conceals counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have told, and I did not understand, ***things*** too wonderful for me, and I did not know ***them***. 'Listen now, and I will speak; I will ask you, and you make ***it*** known to Me.' By the hearing of the ear I had heard of You, and now my eye has seen You. Therefore I reject ***it***, and I repent on dust and ashes." And it was after the LORD had spoken these words to Job, and the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "My anger has burned against you and against your two friends, for you have not spoken concerning Me ***what is*** right, as My servant Job ***has***. And now, take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, and go to My servant Job, and offer up a burnt offering for yourselves; and Job My servant shall pray for you, for surely his face I will lift up, so as not to do with you ***according to your*** folly; for you have not spoken concerning Me ***what is*** right, as My servant Job ***has***." And Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite ***and*** Zophar the Naamathite went, and they did as the LORD had spoken to them; and the LORD lifted up the face of Job.

42:10-17 And the LORD turned back the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends; and the LORD increased all that ***belonged*** to Job to double. And all his brothers and all his sisters and all who had known him before came to him, and they ate bread with him in his house; and they showed him sympathy and comforted him over all the evil that the LORD had brought on him; and they gave him each one a piece of money, and each one a ring of gold. And the LORD blessed the latter part of Job more than his beginning; and he had fourteen thousand sheep and six thousand camels and a thousand pairs of oxen and a thousand female donkeys. And he had seven sons and three daughters. And he called the name of the first Jemimah, and the name of the second Keziah, and the name of the third Keren-happuch. And women ***as*** beautiful as the daughters of Job were not found in all the land; and their father gave them an inheritance among their brothers. And Job lived after this a hundred and forty years, and he saw his sons and the sons of his sons, four generations. And Job died, old and satisfied with days.

Chapter 42 Preview

Job answers the LORD for the last time, and the poetry gives way to plain story again. Job confesses that God can do anything and no purpose of His can be stopped. He admits that he spoke of things too wonderful for him, things he did not understand. "By the hearing of the ear I had heard of You, and now my eye has seen You." So he takes back his words and repents in dust and ashes. Job is not confessing the hidden sins his friends accused him of. He is repenting of speaking beyond his knowledge and of questioning God's justice.

Then the LORD turns to Eliphaz. His anger burns against the three friends, because they have not spoken what is right about Him, as His servant Job has. They must bring a sacrifice, and Job must pray for them. Job prays for the men who wronged him, and the LORD restores him. He gives Job twice as much as he had before. His family comes to comfort him. He has seven sons and three

daughters again, the most beautiful women in the land. Job lives another 140 years and sees four generations. The man who sat in the ashes dies "old and satisfied with days."

Chapter 42 Study

42:1-2 *And Job answered the LORD, and he said, "I know that You are able **to do** everything, and no purpose is withheld from You.*

"And Job answered the LORD, and he said." This is Job's last speech in the book. It is short, and it is completely different from everything he said before.

"I know that You are able to do everything, and no purpose is withheld from You." Job begins with God, not with himself. God can do anything. No plan of His can be stopped or held back. Job had said something like this before, but with fear and complaint (9:12; 23:13). Now he says it with trust. The same truth that frightened him now comforts him. If God's purposes cannot be stopped, then the purpose God had in Job's suffering will be carried out, and it will be good.

42:3 *'Who **is** this **who** conceals counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have told, and I did not understand, **things** too wonderful for me, and I did not know **them**.*

"'Who is this who conceals counsel without knowledge?'" Job repeats God's first question to him (38:2). He answers it himself. Who is the one who darkened God's plan with ignorant words? I am.

"Therefore I have told, and I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, and I did not know them." Job admits it plainly. He spoke about things he did not understand. He talked about God's ways as if he knew them, and they were far beyond him. "Too wonderful" means beyond his reach, beyond his ability to grasp.

This is the heart of Job's repentance. What was Job's sin? Not the sins his friends named. Not some secret crime. God had said Job was blameless (1:8; 2:3), and nothing in the LORD's speeches accuses Job of the friends' charges. Job's sin was speaking beyond his knowledge. In his pain he had said that God was unjust, cruel and his enemy. He had demanded that God answer him in court, as if God owed him an explanation. He did not know about chapters 1 and 2. He did not know what God was doing. And he spoke as if he did.

Every one of us has done this. When life goes wrong, we are quick to say what God is or is not doing, and why. We judge God by the little we can see. Job's confession is a good one for us to make our own: I spoke of things too wonderful for me.

42:4-5 *'Listen now, and I will speak; I will ask you, and you make **it** known to Me.' By the hearing of the ear I had heard of You, and now my eye has seen You.*

"'Listen now, and I will speak; I will ask you, and you make it known to Me.'" Again Job repeats God's words (38:3; 40:7). God had said this to Job. Job is quoting it back, as if to say: You told me to listen and answer You. I have listened. Here is my answer.

"By the hearing of the ear I had heard of You, and now my eye has seen You."

This is one of the most important verses in the book. Before his suffering, Job knew about God. He had heard of Him. He feared Him and served Him faithfully. But his knowledge was secondhand, like knowing a person only by reputation. Now he has met God. He has "seen" Him.

What did Job see? We are not told that he saw a form. He saw God's glory in the storm and in His works, and he saw God's heart in the fact that God came to him and spoke with him. He saw God as He is: great beyond measure, wise beyond understanding, and caring for every creature He made. And that was enough.

Notice that God never told Job why he suffered. Job never learned about Satan's challenge. But once he saw God, he no longer needed the explanation. Knowing God was better than knowing why.

This is what suffering can do in the life of a believer. It can take us from hearing about God to seeing Him. Many Christians have said that they knew God more deeply in their darkest season than at any other time. Job's longing in 19:26-27, "from my flesh I will see God," had begun to come true. And it will come true fully for all God's people. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God" (Matthew 5:8). "We know that when He is revealed, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is" (1 John 3:2).

42:6 *Therefore I reject **it**, and I repent on dust and ashes."*

"Therefore I reject it, and I repent on dust and ashes."

"I reject it." The SLB supplies "it" because the Hebrew does not say what Job rejects. Many versions read it as Job abhorring or despising himself. Others read it as Job retracting his words, taking them back. The Hebrew word means to reject, refuse or despise. Most likely Job is rejecting what he said, taking back his bold words against God. He may also be rejecting his own proud stance, his demand to be proved right. Either way, he is not saying he is worthless. He is saying he was wrong to speak as he did.

"And I repent on dust and ashes." Job had been sitting in the ashes since chapter 2 (2:8), in grief. Now he sits there in repentance. "Dust and ashes" stands for the lowliness of man before God. Abraham called himself "dust and ashes" when he spoke with the LORD (Genesis 18:27). To repent means to turn, to change one's mind and heart. Job turns from his complaint and accusation and bows before God.

What did Job repent of? Let me say it plainly, because it matters. Job did not repent of the sins his friends accused him of, because he had not committed them. He did not confess that his suffering was punishment, because it was not. He repented of speaking beyond his knowledge, of darkening God's counsel with words, and of condemning God to justify himself (40:8). That is a real sin, and Job owned it fully. But it is not the sin the friends imagined.

This is important for anyone who suffers. God may use suffering to show us something in our hearts that needs to change. But that does not mean the suffering was caused by that sin. Job's suffering came first, for reasons in heaven. His repentance came at the end, for the things he said in the suffering. Do not let anyone tell you that your trouble proves some hidden sin. And do not

be afraid to bring God the things you have said in your pain. He received Job's repentance, and He will receive yours. "A broken and crushed heart, God, You will not despise" (Psalm 51:17).

42:7 *And it was after the LORD had spoken these words to Job, and the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "My anger has burned against you and against your two friends, for you have not spoken concerning Me* ***what is*** *right, as My servant Job* ***has****.*

"And it was after the LORD had spoken these words to Job, and the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite." Now the story is told in plain prose again, as in chapters 1 and 2. The LORD speaks to Eliphaz, the oldest friend and the leader of the three.

"My anger has burned against you and against your two friends, for you have not spoken concerning Me what is right, as My servant Job has."

This is the LORD's verdict on the whole debate, and it is stunning. The friends had defended God. They had spoken of His justice, His greatness and His punishment of the wicked. Job had complained, questioned and even accused God. Yet God says the friends did not speak rightly about Him, and Job did.

How can that be? Let us be fair to both sides.

The friends said many true things about God. But they built all of it on one false idea: that God always rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked in this life, so great suffering must mean great sin. They put God in a box. They made Him a machine who gives out pain and pleasure by a simple rule. And then they used that false picture of God to accuse an innocent man of sins he never committed (22:5-9). In doing that, they misrepresented God. They spoke for Him things He had not said. That is a serious thing. God takes it seriously when people lie about Him, even when they think they are defending Him.

Job, on the other hand, said things he had to repent of. God's words here do not mean that every word Job spoke was right. God had just corrected him (38:2; 40:8), and Job had just repented. But Job was right in the main thing. He refused to say that his suffering proved his guilt, because it did not. He refused to lie about God or about himself to get a neat answer. He told the truth about what he saw in the world: the wicked often prosper and the righteous often suffer (21; 24). He kept speaking to God, not only about Him. He held on to God when he could not understand Him, and he hoped in his Redeemer (19:25). And when God spoke, he humbled himself. Honest faith that wrestles with God is closer to the truth than a tidy theology that slanders Him.

Some teachers also point out that the Hebrew can be read to mean that the friends had not spoken to God what was right. Job spoke to God. The friends only spoke about Him. Both readings make a true point.

Notice also that God calls Job "My servant" four times in these two verses (42:7-8). That is what God called him in chapter 1 (1:8). Satan had said Job would curse God. He did not. God's servant was still His servant at the end. Satan's charge failed.

Elihu is not mentioned. As we saw in chapter 32, teachers read that silence in different ways.

42:8-9 *And now, take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, and go to My servant Job, and offer up a burnt offering for yourselves; and Job My servant shall pray for you, for surely his face I will lift up, so as not to do with you* ***according to your*** *folly; for you have not spoken concerning Me* ***what is*** *right, as My servant Job* ***has****." And Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite* ***and*** *Zophar the Naamathite went, and they did as the LORD had spoken to them; and the LORD lifted up the face of Job.*

"And now, take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, and go to My servant Job, and offer up a burnt offering for yourselves." A burnt offering was a sacrifice wholly burned on the altar, given to God to make atonement for sin, that is, to cover sin and restore a right relationship with God. Seven bulls and seven rams was a large offering, showing the friends' sin was serious. As in 1:5, there is no priest. Job will act as the priest for his friends, as Abraham and the patriarchs did for their families.

"And Job My servant shall pray for you, for surely his face I will lift up, so as not to do with you according to your folly." God will accept Job's prayer for them. To "lift up" his face means to accept him, to show him favor. God will not deal with the friends as their folly deserved, because of Job's prayer.

"For you have not spoken concerning Me what is right, as My servant Job has." God says it a second time for emphasis.

Think of what God was asking of Job. These three men had sat with him for days and torn him down. They had called him wicked, accused him of crimes, and told him his children got what they deserved (8:4). Now God tells them to go to Job, and tells Job to pray for them. Job would have to forgive them.

Eliphaz had said that a guilty man would be "delivered by the cleanness of your hands" (22:30). He never imagined he would be that guilty man, and Job the one with clean hands.

"And Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went, and they did as the LORD had spoken to them; and the LORD lifted up the face of Job." The friends obeyed. They humbled themselves and came to Job. And the LORD accepted Job's prayer.

Here Job is a beautiful picture of Christ. Jesus was falsely accused, mocked and condemned by those around Him, and He prayed for them: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). Today He "is also able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through Him, always living to intercede for them" (Hebrews 7:25). We are like the friends. We have spoken wrongly of God and deserve His anger. But our sacrifice has been offered, and our Intercessor prays for us. God accepts us for His sake.

And Job is a model for us. Jesus told us to "pray for those mistreating you" (Matthew 5:44). Is there someone who hurt you deeply, maybe even someone who claimed to speak for God? Job's healing began when he prayed for the men who wounded him.

42:10-11 *And the LORD turned back the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends; and the LORD increased all that* ***belonged*** *to Job to double. And all his brothers and all his sisters and all who had known him before came to him, and they ate bread with him in his house; and they showed him sympathy and comforted him over all the evil that the LORD had brought on him; and they gave him each one a piece of money, and each one a ring of gold.*

"And the LORD turned back the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends." "Turned back the captivity" means restored his fortunes. Job had been like a prisoner of his suffering. God set him free. And notice when: "when he prayed for his friends." Job's restoration came as he forgave and interceded for others. Forgiveness often opens the door to healing.

"And the LORD increased all that belonged to Job to double." God gave Job twice what he had before.

"And all his brothers and all his sisters and all who had known him before came to him, and they ate bread with him in his house." Job's family and old friends, who had kept away from him (19:13-19), now came back. They ate with him, a sign of fellowship and peace.

"And they showed him sympathy and comforted him over all the evil that the LORD had brought on him." They finally did what the three friends had come to do and failed to do (2:11). Notice the words: "all the evil that the LORD had brought on him." The writer does not say Satan brought it. Satan was the instrument, but God allowed it and was in control of it from the start (1:12; 2:6). Job's family knew that, and so did Job (1:21; 2:10). Scripture never pretends that God is not sovereign over our suffering. But it shows us here that the same God who allowed the trouble also brought the restoration.

"And they gave him each one a piece of money, and each one a ring of gold." These were gifts to help him start again. God often restores us through the kindness of other people.

42:12 *And the LORD blessed the latter part of Job more than his beginning; and he had fourteen thousand sheep and six thousand camels and a thousand pairs of oxen and a thousand female donkeys.*

"And the LORD blessed the latter part of Job more than his beginning." The second half of Job's life was more blessed than the first.

"And he had fourteen thousand sheep and six thousand camels and a thousand pairs of oxen and a thousand female donkeys." Compare these numbers with 1:3: seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred pairs of oxen, five hundred female donkeys. Every number is exactly doubled.

Should we expect God always to restore our losses double in this life? No. That would be the friends' mistake turned upside down, a rule that says the righteous always prosper in the end. God's restoration of Job was a gift of grace, not a payment Job had earned. Many faithful believers suffer and die without seeing their fortunes restored in this life. Hebrews 11 speaks of believers who "did not receive the promise" here, because God had something better (Hebrews 11:39-40).

For those who belong to Christ, the full restoration is still ahead: "the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory about to be revealed to us" (Romans 8:18).

42:13-15 *And he had seven sons and three daughters. And he called the name of the first Jemimah, and the name of the second Keziah, and the name of the third Keren-happuch. And women **as** beautiful as the daughters of Job were not found in all the land; and their father gave them an inheritance among their brothers.*

"And he had seven sons and three daughters." Notice something. Job's livestock was doubled, but his children were not. He had ten children before (1:2), and he had ten again, not twenty.

Many Bible teachers have seen a quiet hope in this. Animals that die are gone. But children are not like cattle. Job's first ten children were not lost forever. In a real sense, Job now had twenty children: ten with him on earth, and ten who had gone before him. Scripture does not tell us about the faith of Job's first children, but Job had prayed for them and offered sacrifices for each one of them (1:5). I believe this detail points to a quiet hope for grieving parents: death does not end a family's story for those who belong to Him. Other teachers see in the ten children only a full family restored and do not read more into the number. David said of his baby son who died, "I am going to him, and he will not return to me" (2 Samuel 12:23), and I believe little children who die are safe with God. Paul says we do not grieve as others do "who have no hope" (1 Thessalonians 4:13), because God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him (1 Thessalonians 4:14).

The new children did not replace the ones Job lost. No child can replace another. Anyone who has lost a child knows that. Job surely carried the memory of his first ten all his life. But God gave him new joy alongside the grief.

"And he called the name of the first Jemimah, and the name of the second Keziah, and the name of the third Keren-happuch." The sons are not named, but the daughters are. Jemimah probably means dove. Keziah is cassia, a sweet-smelling spice like cinnamon. Keren-happuch means horn of eye paint, a small container for the dark makeup women used to beautify their eyes. All three names speak of peace, fragrance and beauty. After years of ashes and sores, Job's home was filled with beauty again.

"And women as beautiful as the daughters of Job were not found in all the land; and their father gave them an inheritance among their brothers." In that time, daughters usually did not inherit when there were sons. Job gave his daughters an inheritance along with their brothers. This shows his generosity and his love for them. It also reminds us of the daughters of Zelophehad, to whom the LORD later gave an inheritance among their father's brothers (Numbers 27:7).

42:16-17 *And Job lived after this a hundred and forty years, and he saw his sons and the sons of his sons, four generations. And Job died, old and satisfied with days.*

"And Job lived after this a hundred and forty years, and he saw his sons and the sons of his sons, four generations." Job lived another 140 years. This fits the long lifespans of the patriarchs, and it

is one of the reasons many believe Job lived around the time of Abraham. Job had wanted to die. Instead, God gave him a long life, and he saw his great-great-grandchildren.

"And Job died, old and satisfied with days." These are the same words used of Isaac (Genesis 35:29), and almost the same as those used of Abraham (Genesis 25:8). Job died full of years, content, at peace. The man who once cursed the day he was born (3:1-3) ended his life satisfied.

James sums up Job's story: "Look, we count blessed those who endure. You have heard of the endurance of Job, and you have seen the outcome of the Lord, that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful" (James 5:11). The endurance of Job was not perfect patience. He complained, questioned and said things he had to take back. But he endured. He never let go of God, and God never let go of him. And "the outcome of the Lord," the way God ended Job's story, shows what God is like: "very compassionate and merciful."

That is the last word of the book of Job for us. We may not know why we suffer. We may not see our losses restored in this life. But we know the outcome of the Lord. He is compassionate and merciful. Our Redeemer lives. And one day, for all who trust in Christ, God "will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death will not be any longer, nor mourning nor crying nor pain" (Revelation 21:4).

Chapter 42 Summary

Job answered the LORD, confessing that God can do anything and no purpose of His can be stopped. He admitted that he had darkened God's counsel and spoken of things too wonderful for him. He had heard of God, but now he had seen Him, so he took back his words and repented in dust and ashes, not for the friends' false charges, but for speaking beyond his knowledge. Then the LORD told Eliphaz that His anger burned against the three friends because they had not spoken what was right about Him, as His servant Job had. They had misrepresented God and accused an innocent man, while Job had spoken honestly to God and held on to Him. They were to offer seven bulls and seven rams, and Job would pray for them. When Job prayed for his friends, the LORD restored his fortunes and doubled all he had. His family came to comfort him. He had seven sons and three daughters again, the most beautiful women in the land, and he gave his daughters an inheritance. He lived another 140 years, saw four generations, and died old and satisfied with days. James says this shows that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.

Chapter 42 Study Questions

1. What did Job confess about God in verse 2?

2. What did Job admit about his own words in verse 3? Whose question was he repeating? (38:2)

3. What is the difference between hearing of God and seeing Him? (42:5)

4. What did Job repent of in verse 6? Why is it important that he did not repent of the friends' charges?

5. Why was the LORD angry with the three friends? (42:7) In what ways had Job spoken what was right, and in what ways had he not?

6. What did God tell the friends to do, and what did He tell Job to do? (42:8) How is this a picture of Christ? (Luke 23:34; Hebrews 7:25)

7. When did the LORD restore Job's fortunes? (42:10) What does that teach us about forgiveness?

8. Compare 42:12-13 with 1:2-3. What was doubled, and what was not? What hope might that give to grieving parents?

9. James 5:11 says the outcome of the Lord shows He is "very compassionate and merciful." Where have you seen God's compassion in the end of a hard season?

10. Job said, "now my eye has seen You." How has God used hard times to help you know Him, not only know about Him? Who needs you to pray for them, as Job prayed for his friends?

Conclusion

Job begins with a good man on the worst day of his life, and it ends with that same man, old and satisfied with days, holding his grandchildren's grandchildren. In between are forty chapters of grief, argument and prayer. Job lost his wealth, his children and his health. His friends told him it was his own fault. He cried out to God again and again, and for a long time heaven was silent. We, the readers, knew what Job never knew: that he was not being punished, that God was proud of him, and that Satan's charge, that Job served God only for what he got, was being proved false by every day Job held on.

As I said at the start of this study, the guiding principle throughout has been to read God's Word plainly, as it is written, and let Scripture explain Scripture. Read that way, Job does not give us a neat answer to the question of why the righteous suffer. It gives us something better. It shows us that suffering is not always punishment, that easy answers can wound, that honest prayer is still prayer, and that God hears it. When the LORD finally spoke from the storm, He did not explain Job's pain. He showed Job who He is, the Maker of the stars and the sea, who feeds the raven and sets the limits of every flood. And Job said, "By the hearing of the ear I had heard of You, and now my eye has seen You" (42:5). Wisdom, the book tells us, is not having every answer. It is "the fear of the Lord" (28:28), trusting God when we do not know why.

I hope this study has done what I set out to do: bring you closer to God, help you grow in your walk with Him, and give you a way to hold on when life does not make sense. If you are in the ashes right now, you are not alone, and your story is not finished. James wrote, "You have heard of the endurance of Job, and you have seen the outcome of the Lord, that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful" (James 5:11). The God of Job is the same God today.

At his lowest point, Job said, "And I, I know that my Redeemer lives, and last He will stand on the dust" (19:25). Job longed for a mediator who could lay his hand on both God and man (9:33), and for a ransom that could deliver a man from the pit (33:24). God has given us both in His Son. Jesus Christ is the one Mediator between God and men, who gave Himself as a ransom for all (1 Timothy 2:5-6). He suffered though He was innocent, prayed for those who wronged Him, died for our sins and rose again. The only thing required of us to spend eternity with God is to receive His Son, Jesus, as our Lord and Savior.

If you haven't yet entered into a relationship with Jesus, or if you want to deepen the one you already have with Him, I invite you to pray this prayer with me:

Lord Jesus, You are the Savior of the world, and You forgive all who come to You. I come before You to confess that I have sinned against You. I have rebelled against You and put myself first above You and all others. I want to have a deep, meaningful relationship with You where I can show others by my demeanor and character that You are first in my life. I am asking for Your forgiveness for all my sins. You died for me on the cross so that I could be forgiven and made right with God. Please help me not forget that You gave Your very life for me. I am asking that You take control of my life and make a new creature out of me and into the person You want me to be. I thank You, Lord, and I love You. Amen.

If you prayed this prayer, tell another believer, ask a pastor about being baptized, and find a church where you can grow and be encouraged, holding on to the Redeemer who lives, as Job did (Job 19:25).

Bibliography

The following source was consulted throughout this study. The commentary reflects my own study and convictions, and any direct quotation from an outside source is identified and cited at the point where it appears.

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