

ANY QUESTION/COMMENTS from this past week's readings?

Notable:

1 Corinthians 14:18

"I thank God that I speak in tongues more than any of you."

Job 16:3-5

"Won't you ever stop blowing hot air? What makes you keep on talking? I could say the same things if you were in my place. I could spout off criticism and shake my head at you. But if it were me, I would encourage you. I would try to take away your grief."

What causes 'overtalk'?

Give some examples (Not having anything to really say. Nervous. Etc.)

What is my initial reaction to others calamity?

(What did they do to contribute to this problem? Getting what they deserve. Poor people. How can I help?)

Job 16:21

"I need someone to mediate between God and me, as a person mediates between friends."

Job 1:20-22

²⁰ Job stood up and tore his robe in grief. Then he shaved his head and fell to the ground to worship. ²¹ He said,

*"I came naked from my mother's womb,
and I will be naked when I leave.
The Lord gave me what I had,
and the Lord has taken it away.
Praise the name of the Lord!"*

²² In all of this, Job did not sin by blaming God.

4:1–5:27 The argument of the first speech of Eliphaz, probably the oldest of the friends who spoke, described Job’s outburst as impious and embarrassing. Many believers mistakenly think that disavowing or suppressing feelings of anguish and grief is essential in order to be pious. However, God never chastised Job for his lament (Job 3:1–26).

Eliphaz argued from his own personal experience that God punishes the wicked and rewards the righteous. He questioned whether any man could be righteous before God (Job 4:12–21). Therefore, he surmised sin must be at the root of Job’s suffering and suggested that Job repent and learn from God, who would then relent and restore him (Job 5:8–27). Although Eliphaz had general truth in some of his words, he was wrong about the reason for Job’s suffering.

4:10–11 The five different references to lion in these verses (lion, fierce lion, young lion, old lion, lioness) illustrate the comprehensiveness of God’s wrath (v. 9).

4:12–16 Eliphaz’s vision is similar to those of other OT prophets in that the vision is not self-initiated, and what is heard prevails over what is seen. However, no OT prophet is ever recorded as receiving a message from “a spirit” (v. 15). The atmosphere surrounding the “disquieting thoughts” is more frightening than awesome (v. 13). God’s later condemnation of Eliphaz is affirmation that this secret whisper was not from God (Job 42:7).

5:1 The desire and need for a mediator recurs (Job 9:33; 16:19, 21). No one can stand before God without a mediator (1 Tim. 2:5).

6:1–7:21 Job’s first reply expresses his longing for an end to his suffering or even life itself. He complained that his friends had not been helpful and had undermined his character as well (Job 4:1–5:27). Job continued to maintain his righteousness. He did not entertain the idea that God had forsaken him but instead wondered why God had chosen him as a target for trouble.

6:4 The arrows of the Almighty (Heb. *Shaddai*, lit. “Almighty” or “All-sufficient One”). Out of the many times this name is used in the OT, most of those usages are in the Book of Job, showing Job’s deep dependence on God to meet all his needs. Some might look at these events as the “fiery darts of the wicked one” (Eph. 6:16), but Job chose to call them “arrows of the Almighty.”

6:8–10 Suicide was never an option, though Job longed for death. Such self-inflicted tragedy would have aborted God’s plan to restore everything doubly in Job’s life. Inherent is the idea that both life and death are in God’s hands (see Gen. 4, Euthanasia; Gen. 9, Sanctity of Life).

6:14 Kindness (Heb. *chesed*, lit. “pity” or “mercy”) suggests loyal love and is usually used to describe God’s steadfast love for His people. Thus Job wondered why his friends’ fear of God would not compel them to be kind to him.

6:15–20 Job compared his friends to the desert streams (Heb. *wadi*) that ran through a rocky valley full of rain or melting snow in the spring but became dry in the summer (see Jer. 15:18). Even caravans have perished because they relied on the dependability of such streams and were caught “high and dry.” This figure illustrates how hopes can be crushed. When Job needed his friends the most, they not only had nothing to give, but they were also abusive and condemning of him.

7:6 The fleeting character of life. An interesting play on words is found here as the Hebrew word for “hope” carries two levels of meaning. Its secondary meaning is “thread.” Thus, both the weaver’s shuttle and Job’s days would come to an end without thread or hope.

Lack of fulfillment in general and unfulfilled dreams in particular (Prov. 13:12) create emotional pain. Even in the presence of devoted love, sensitive areas in a person's life bring pain when "provoked." Hannah provides an illustration (1 Sam. 1:5, 6).

Emotional pain may exhibit itself in weeping, in altered appetite (1 Sam. 1:7), and in changed countenance (1 Sam. 1:18). This inward pain is described by the phrase "heart grieved" (1 Sam. 1:8), "bitterness of soul" (1 Sam. 1:10), and "grief" (1 Sam. 1:16).

Emotional pain is often misunderstood by others (1 Sam. 1:13, 14). Job's grief was harder to bear because his friends misunderstood him. This pain must be "poured out" to the Lord (1 Sam. 1:15), for Christ has "borne our griefs / And carried our sorrows" (Is. 53:4), and He does understand. This pain can be shared with someone He provides who is willing to listen and give support (1 Sam. 1:16, 17). That person needs to be a trusted person who has a "faithful spirit" (Prov. 11:13). God's children are to "bear one another's burdens" (Gal. 6:2). This support provides hope and lifts sadness (1 Sam. 1:18).

A helpful prayer for the person experiencing emotional pain is found in Romans 15:13.

See also Mark 5:2, note; notes on Abuse (Ps. 31); Conflict (Song 5; Matt. 18); Death (1 Cor. 15); Emotions (Ps. 42); Fear (Ps. 27); Grief (Is. 53); Healing (Ps. 13; 133; Eccl. 1; 2 Cor. 5; Gal. 6; James 5); Sorrow (Rev. 21); portrait of Hannah (1 Sam. 1)¹

1 Corinthians 14:18-40

14:18 The apostle apparently had the ability to speak **more** foreign languages than **all** of them. We know that Paul had learned some languages, but here the reference is undoubtedly to his gift of tongues.

14:19 In spite of this superior language ability, Paul says that he **would rather speak five words with his understanding**, that is, so as to be understood, **than ten thousand words in a foreign tongue**. He was not at all interested in using this gift for self-display. His chief aim was to help the people of God. Therefore he determined that when he spoke he would do so in such a way that others would understand him.

The expression **my understanding** is what is known as an "objective genitive." It does not mean what I myself understand, but what others understand when I speak.

Hodge demonstrates that the context here has to do, not with Paul's own understanding of what he spoke in tongues, but of other people's understanding him:

That Paul should give thanks to God that he was more abundantly endowed with the gift of tongues, if that gift consisted in the ability to speak in languages which he himself did not understand, and the use of which, on that assumption, could according to his principle benefit neither himself nor others, is not to be believed. Equally clear is it from this verse that to speak with tongues was not to speak in a state of mental unconsciousness. The common doctrine as to the nature of the gift is the only one consistent with this passage. Paul says that although he could speak in foreign languages more than the Corinthians, he would rather speak five words *with his understanding*, i.e., so as to be intelligible, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue. *In the church*, that is, in the assembly, that I might teach others also (katēcheō) to instruct orally, Gal. 6:6. This shows what is meant by speaking *with the understanding*. It is speaking in such a way as to convey instruction.

14:20 Paul next exhorts the Corinthians against immaturity in their thinking. Children prefer amusement to usefulness, flashy things to stable ones. Paul is saying, "Don't take a childish delight in these spectacular gifts which you use for self-display. There is one sense in which you should be childlike, and that is in the matter of **malice** or evil. But in other matters, you should think with the maturity of men."

14:21 Next the apostle quotes from Isaiah to show that tongues are a sign to *unbelievers* rather than believers. God said that because the children of Israel had rejected His message and had mocked it, He would speak to them through a foreign language (Isa. 28:11). The fulfillment of this took place when the Assyrian invaders came into the land of Israel, and the Israelites heard the Assyrian language being spoken in their midst. This was a sign to them of their rejection of God's word.

14:22 The argument here is that since God intended **tongues as a sign to unbelievers**, the Corinthians should not insist on using them so freely in gatherings of believers. It would be better if they prophesied, since prophesying was a sign for believers and **not for unbelievers**.

¹ Thomas Nelson, I. (1995). *The Woman's Study Bible* (Job 4:1-7:6). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

14:23 If the whole church comes together in one place, and all the Christians speak with tongues without interpretation, what would strangers coming in think about it all? It would not be a testimony to them; rather they would think that the saints were mental cases.

There is an *apparent* contradiction between verse 22 and verses 23–25. In verse 22, we are told that tongues are a sign to unbelievers whereas prophecy is for believers. But in verses 23–25, Paul says that tongues used in the church might only confuse and stumble unbelievers whereas prophecy might help them.

The explanation of the seeming contradiction is this: The unbelievers in verse 22 are those who have rejected the word of God and closed their hearts to the truth. Tongues are a sign of God’s judgment on them, as they were on Israel in the Isaiah passage (v. 21). The unbelievers in verses 23–25 are those who are willing to be taught. They are open to hear the word of God, as is evidenced by their presence in a Christian assembly. If they hear Christians speaking in foreign languages without interpretation, they will be hindered, not helped.

14:24 If strangers enter a meeting where the Christians are prophesying rather than speaking in tongues, the visitors hear and understand what is being said and they are **convinced by all** and **convicted by all**. What the apostle is emphasizing here is that no real conviction of sin is produced unless the listeners understand what is being said. When tongues are being used with no interpretation, then obviously visitors are not helped at all. Those who prophesy would, of course, do it in the language in current use in that area, and as a result listeners would be impressed by what they heard.

14:25 The secrets of a man’s heart are revealed by prophecy. He feels that the speaker is addressing him directly. The Spirit of God works conviction in his soul. **And so, falling down on his face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among these people.**

And so Paul’s point in verses 22–25 is that tongues without interpretation produce no conviction among unbelievers, whereas prophecy does.

14:26 Because of the abuses that had entered the church in connection with the gift of tongues, it was necessary for the Spirit of God to set forth certain regulations to control the use of this gift. In verses 26–28, we have such controls.

What happened when the early church came **together**? It appears from verse 26 that the meetings were very informal and free. There was liberty for the Spirit of God to use the various gifts which He had given to the church. One man, for instance, would read **a psalm**, and then another would set forth some **teaching**. Another would speak in **a foreign tongue**. Another would present **a revelation** which he had received directly from the Lord. Another would interpret the tongue that had already been given. Paul gives tacit approval to this “open meeting” where there was liberty for the Spirit of God to speak through different brothers. But having stated this, he sets forth the first control in the exercise of these gifts. Everything must **be done** with a view to **edification**. Just because a thing is sensational or spectacular does not mean that it has any place in the church. In order to be acceptable, ministry must have the effect of building up the people of God. That is what is meant by **edification**—spiritual growth.

14:27 The second control is that in any one meeting no more than **three** may speak in tongues. **If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three.** There was to be no such thing as a meeting where a multitude of people would arise to show their proficiency in foreign languages.

Next we learn that the two or three who were permitted to speak in tongues in any one meeting must do so **in turn**. That means that they must not speak at the same time, but one after the other. This would avoid the bedlam and disorder of several speaking at once.

The fourth rule is that there must be an **interpreter**. **Let one interpret.** If a man got up to speak in a foreign language, he must first determine that there was someone present to interpret what he was about to say.

14:28 If there was **no interpreter** present, then he must **keep silent in church**. He could sit there and **speak inaudibly to himself and to God** in this foreign language, but he was not permitted to do so publicly.

14:29 Rules for governing the prophetic gift are set forth in verses 29–33a. First of all, **two or three prophets** were to speak and **the others** were to **judge**. No more than **three** were to take part in any one meeting, and the Christians who listened were to determine whether this was truly a divine utterance or whether the man might be a false prophet.

14:30 As we have mentioned previously, a prophet received direct communications from the Lord and revealed them to the church. But it is possible that after giving this revelation, he might go on to preach to the people. So the apostle lays down the rule that if a prophet is speaking and **anything is revealed to another** prophet sitting in the audience, then **the first** is required to stop speaking to make way for the one who has received the latest revelation. The reason, as suggested, is that the longer the first man talks, the more apt he is to speak by his own power rather

than by inspiration. In continued speech there is always the danger of shifting from God's words to one's own words. Revelation is superior to anything else.

14:31 The prophets should be given the opportunity to speak **one by one**. No one prophet should take all the time. In that way, the greatest benefit would result to the church—**all** would be able to **learn** and **all** would **be** exhorted or **encouraged**.

14:32 A very important principle is set forth in verse 32. Reading between the lines, we suspect that the Corinthians had the false idea that the more a man was possessed by the Spirit of God, the less self-control he had. They felt that he was carried away in a state of ecstasy and they contended, according to Godet, that the more spirit, the less intelligence or self-consciousness there would be. To them, a man under the control of the Spirit was in a state of passivity, and could not control his speech, the length of time he spoke, or his actions in general. Such an idea is thoroughly refuted by the passage of Scripture before us. **The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.** That means that he is not carried away without his consent, or against his will. He cannot evade the instructions of this chapter on the pretense that he just couldn't help it. He himself can determine when or how long he should speak.

14:33 For God is not the author of confusion but of peace. In other words, if a meeting is the scene of pandemonium and disorder, then you can be *sure* that the Spirit of God is not in control!

14:34 As is well-known, the verse divisions and even the punctuation of the NT were added centuries after the original manuscripts were written. The last clause of verse 33 makes much greater sense modifying the church practice in verse 34 than a universal truth about the omnipresent God (some Greek Testaments and English translations use this punctuation). For instance, the ASV reads: "As in all the churches of the saints, let the women keep silent in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but let them be in subjection, as also saith the law." The instructions which Paul is giving to the Corinthian saints do not apply to them alone. These are the same instructions that have been addressed to **all the churches of the saints**. The uniform testimony of the NT is that while women have many valuable ministries, it is not given to them to have a public ministry to the whole church. They are entrusted with the unspeakably important work of the home and of raising children. But they are not allowed to speak publicly in the assembly. Theirs is to be a place of submission to the man.

We believe that the expression **as the law also says** has reference to the woman's being submissive to the man. This is clearly taught in the law, which here probably means the Pentateuch primarily. Genesis 3:16, for instance, says "your desire shall be for your husband. And he shall rule over you."

It is often contended that what Paul is forbidding in this verse is for the women to chatter or gossip while the service is going on. However, such an interpretation is untenable. The word here translated speak (*laleō*) did not mean to chatter in Koinē Greek. The same word is used of God in verse 21 of this chapter, and in Hebrews 1:1. It means to speak authoritatively.

14:35 Indeed, women are not permitted to ask questions publicly in the church. **If they want to learn something, they should ask their own husbands at home.** Some women might try to evade the previous prohibition against speaking by asking questions. It is possible to teach by the simple act of questioning others. So this verse closes any such loophole or objection.

If it is asked how this applies to an unmarried woman or a widow, the answer is that the Scriptures do not try to take up each individual case, but merely set forth general principles. If a woman does not have a husband, she could ask her father, her brother, or one of the elders of the church. Actually, this may be translated, "Let them ask their menfolks at home." The basic rule to be remembered is that **it is shameful for women to speak in church.**

14:36 Apparently the Apostle Paul realized that his teaching here would cause considerable contention. How right he was! To meet any arguments, he uses irony in verse 36 by asking: **Or did the word of God come originally from you? Or was it you only that it reached?** In other words, if the Corinthians professed to know more about these matters than the apostle, he would ask them if they, as a church, produced **the word of God**, or if they were the **only** ones who had received it. By their attitude they seemed to set themselves up as an official authority on these matters. But the facts are that no church originated the word of God, and no church has exclusive rights to it.

14:37 In connection with all the foregoing instructions, the apostle here emphasizes that they are not his own ideas or interpretations, but that they **are the commandments of the Lord**, and any man who is **a prophet** of the Lord or who is truly **spiritual** will **acknowledge** that that is the case. This verse is a sufficient answer to those who insist that some of Paul's teachings, especially those concerning women, reflected his own prejudices. These matters are not Paul's private view; they are **the commandments of the Lord.**

14:38 Of course, some would not be willing to accept them as such, and so the apostle adds that **if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant.** If a person refuses to acknowledge the inspiration of these writings and to bow to them obediently, then there is no alternative but for him to continue in his ignorance.

14:39 To sum up the preceding instructions on the exercise of gifts, Paul now tells the **brethren to desire earnestly to prophesy**, but **not to forbid men to speak with tongues**. This verse shows the relative importance of these two gifts—one they were to **desire earnestly**, while the other they were **not** to ban. Prophecy was more valuable than tongues because sinners were convicted through it and saints edified. Tongues without interpretation served no other purpose than to speak to God and to one's self, and to display one's own proficiency with a foreign language, a proficiency that had been given to them by God.

14:40 Paul's final word of admonition is that **all things must be done decently and in order**. It is significant that this control should be placed in this chapter. Down through the years, those who have professed to have the ability to speak in tongues have not been noted for the orderliness of their meetings. Rather, many of their meetings have been scenes of uncontrolled emotion and general confusion.

To summarize, then, the Apostle Paul sets forth the following controls for the use of tongues in the local church:

1. We must not forbid the use of tongues (v. 39).
2. If a man speaks in a tongue, there must be an interpreter (vv. 27c, 28).
3. Not more than three may speak in tongues in any one meeting (v. 27a).
4. They must speak one at a time (v. 27b).
5. What they say must be edifying (v. 26b).
6. The women must be silent (v. 34).
7. Everything must **be done decently and in order** (v. 40).

These are the abiding controls which apply to the church in our day.²

Psalm 37:30-40
Proverbs 21:27

² MacDonald, W. (1995). *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*. (A. Farstad, Ed.) (pp. 1799–1803). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

August 23

Job 8:1-11:20

8:1–22 Bildad’s first speech argued from the tradition of retribution that all suffering is the result of sin (Job 6:1–7:21). He was impatient with Job’s continual pleas of innocence. Though he cruelly used Job’s dead children as examples (Job. 8:4), Bildad claimed that God would restore Job to righteousness if he would only repent. Like Eliphaz, Bildad was mistaken regarding the reasons for Job’s suffering.

8:4 Bildad’s argument that Job’s children were punished for their sin was unjust. Not only was this contrary to the picture already given of Job’s family (Job 1:1–5), but also Job’s godliness, expressed in connection with his calamity, highlighted his undeserved suffering.

9:1 Job’s second reply employed the imagery of a courtroom (vv. 19, 32), referring to God as the Judge (v. 15), to witnesses (Job 10:17), and even to a mediator (Job. 9:33). God’s sovereignty over all creation is uncontested. His ways are unknown and unquestionable. Job complained freely to the Lord, asking why he had been so incessantly and intensely scrutinized. Job recognized that God is the Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer of life. Job’s questions were righteous inquiries directed to the One who knows the answers.

9:9 The stars and heavenly bodies. The “Bear” is the constellation of the Big Dipper in the north. “Orion” is a constellation recognized as the “Hunter’s Belt” in the southern sky. “The Pleiades” is a grouping of stars in the constellation of Taurus (see Amos 5:8), and the phrase “chambers of the south” refer to the hosts of stars in the southern sky. Although pagan cultures worshiped the stars and heavenly bodies, worshipers of *Yahweh* did not confuse the creation with the Creator (see Is. 45:9–13; 55:8, 9).

9:24 The existence of evil and suffering seems to question the character and power of God. On the surface God appears either powerless or indifferent in the face of wickedness. Job, however, knew God to be both all-good and all-powerful, allowing evil and suffering only for a time (Rev. 21:4). God uses even suffering and evil to bring about His greater purposes. This fact countered Bildad’s argument that only the evildoer suffers (Job 8:1–22, especially v. 20).

9:33 A mediator (Heb. *yakach*, lit. “judge or arbiter”) suggests the role of an umpire or one who can arbitrate, negotiate, and help to reconcile two parties rather than one who is in a higher position judging between two parties. Job sensed the huge gap between God and man (v. 32) and intensely longed to restore his relationship with God. This Mediator is later fulfilled in Jesus Christ, who as God and man not only mediates but also forgives (see 1 Tim. 2:5).

10:8–12 Job is the handiwork of God (v. 3; Job 14:15). These verses affirm God’s omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence in His creation and preservation of man (Ps. 139). Job expressed his ideas concerning the formation of life, describing the embryo with an analogy as did the ancients. The analogy between the conception of a person and the making of “cheese” (v. 10, in the Hebrew text a *hapax legomenon* or one-time usage of the word) suggests the pouring of “milk” (semen) into the womb to curdle into a soft “cheese” (an embryo). The “skin and flesh” are outwardly visible clothes forming the exterior, while “bones and sinews” are the framework (v. 11). Job, the creature, reminded the Lord of how tenderly the Creator had created him and how He had not only given him “life” but also sustained that life because of His “favor” (Heb. *chesed*). The reasons God would now allow Job’s destruction are known only to the heart of God (vv. 8, 13).

10:20 Job’s distress was so great that he envisioned relief as God’s ceasing to notice him.

11:1–20 The argument of Zophar’s first speech implied that Job was lying about his righteousness and that God had given Job less punishment than he deserved (vv. 1–6). He suggested that if Job would repent from his sins, God would surely restore him (vv. 13–20). Unlike Eliphaz, who argued from personal revelation (Job 4:1–5:27), and Bildad, who argued from tradition (Job 8:1–22), Zophar spoke from his own simplistic understanding of the world and God. Like the other two friends, he maintained that the wicked, and not the righteous, will always suffer.³

³ Thomas Nelson, I. (1995). *The Woman’s Study Bible* (Job 8:1–11:1). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

1 Corinthians 15:1-28

V. PAUL'S ANSWER TO DENIERS OF THE RESURRECTION (Chap. 15)

This is the great resurrection chapter. Some teachers had entered the church at Corinth, denying the possibility of bodily resurrection. They did not deny the fact of life after death, but probably suggested that we would simply be spirit beings and not have literal bodies. The apostle here gives his classic answer to these denials.

A. Certainty of the Resurrection (15:1–34)

15:1, 2 Paul reminds them of the good news which he had **preached** to them, which they had **received**, and **in which** they now stood. This was not a new doctrine for the Corinthians, but it was necessary that they should be reminded of it at this critical time. It was this **gospel** by which the Corinthians had been **saved**. Then Paul adds the words **if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain**. It was by the gospel of the resurrection that they had been saved—unless, of course, there was no such thing as resurrection, in which case they could not have been saved at all. The **if** in this passage does not express any doubt as to their salvation, nor does it teach that they were saved by holding fast. Rather, Paul is simply stating that if there is no such thing as resurrection, then they weren't saved at all. In other words, those who denied bodily resurrection were launching a frontal attack on the whole truth of the gospel. To Paul, the resurrection was fundamental. Without it there was no Christianity. Thus this verse is a challenge to the Corinthians to hold fast the gospel which they had received in the face of the attacks which were currently being made against it.

15:3 Paul had **delivered to** the Corinthians the message **which** he had **also received** by divine revelation. The first cardinal doctrine of that message was **that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures**. This emphasizes the substitutionary character of the death of Christ. He did not die for His own sins, or as a martyr; He **died for our sins**. He **died** to pay the penalty that **our sins** deserved. This was all **according to the Scriptures**. **The Scriptures** here refer to the OT Scriptures, since the NT was not yet in written form. Did the OT Scriptures actually predict that Christ would die for the sins of the people? The answer is an emphatic “Yes!” Isaiah 53, verses 5 and 6, are sufficient proof of this.

15:4 The burial of Christ was prophesied in Isaiah 53:9, and His resurrection in Psalm 16:9, 10. It is important to notice how Paul emphasizes the testimony of **the Scriptures**. This should always be the test in all matters relating to our faith: “What do the Scriptures say?”

15:5 In verses 5–7, we have a list of those who were eyewitnesses of the resurrection. First of all, the Lord appeared to **Cephas** (Peter). This is very touching indeed. The same faithless disciple who had denied his Lord three times is graciously privileged to have a private appearance of that same Lord in resurrection. Truly, how great is the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ! **Then** the Lord also appeared to **the twelve** disciples. Actually the twelve were not all together at this time, but the expression **the twelve** was used to denote the body of disciples, even though not complete at any one particular moment. It should be stated that not all the appearances which are recorded in the Gospels are mentioned in this list. The Spirit of God selects those resurrection appearances of Christ which are most pertinent for His use.

15:6 The Lord's appearance to **over five hundred brethren** is commonly believed to have taken place in Galilee. At the time Paul wrote, most of these brethren were still living, although some had gone home to be with the Lord. In other words, should anyone wish to contest the truthfulness of what Paul was saying, the witnesses were still alive and could be questioned.

15:7 There is no way of knowing which **James** is referred to here, although most commentators assume him to be the Lord's half-brother. Verse 7 also tells us that the Lord appeared to **all the apostles**.

15:8 Paul next speaks of his own personal acquaintance with the risen Christ. This took place on the road to Damascus, when he saw a great light from heaven and met the glorified Christ face to face. **One born out of due time** means an abortion or an untimely birth. Vine explains it as meaning that in point of time, Paul speaks of himself as inferior to the rest of the apostles, just as an immature birth comes short of a mature one. He uses it as a term of self-reproach in view of his past life as a persecutor of the church.

15:9 As the apostle thinks of the privilege he had of meeting the Savior face to face, he is filled with a spirit of unworthiness. He thinks of how he **persecuted the church of God** and how, in spite of that, the Lord called him to be an apostle. Therefore he bows himself in the dust as **the least of the apostles**, and **not worthy to be called an apostle**.

15:10 He hastens to acknowledge that whatever he now is, he is **by the grace of God**. And he did not accept this grace as a matter of fact. Rather it put him under the deepest obligation, and he labored tirelessly to serve the Christ who saved him. Yet in a very real sense it was not Paul himself, **but the grace of God which was working with him**.

15:11 Now Paul joins himself with the other apostles and states that no matter which of them it was who preached, they were all united in their testimony as to the gospel, and particularly as to the resurrection of Christ.

15:12 In verses 12–19, Paul lists the consequences of the denial of bodily resurrection. First of all, it would mean that Christ Himself has not risen. Paul's logic here is unanswerable. Some were saying that there is no such thing as bodily resurrection. All right, Paul says, if that is the case, then Christ has not risen. Are you Corinthians willing to admit this? Of course they were not. In order to prove the possibility of any fact, all you have to do is to demonstrate that it has already taken place once. To prove the fact of bodily resurrection, Paul is willing to base his case upon the simple fact that **Christ has already been raised from the dead.**

15:13 **But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then obviously Christ is not risen.** Such a conclusion would involve the Corinthians in hopeless gloom and despair.

15:14 **If Christ is not risen, then the preaching of the apostles was empty,** or having no substance. Why was it **empty**? First of all, because the Lord Jesus had promised that He would rise from the dead on the third day. If He did *not* rise at that time, then He was either an imposter or mistaken. In either case, He would not be worthy of trust. Secondly, apart from the resurrection of Christ, there could be no salvation. If the Lord Jesus did not rise from the dead, then there would be no way of knowing that His death had been of any greater value than any other person's. But in raising Him from the dead, God testified to the fact that He was completely satisfied with the redemptive work of Christ.

Obviously, if the apostolic message was false, then **faith** would be **empty** too. There would be no value in trusting a message that was false or empty.

15:15 It would not simply be a matter that the apostles were preaching a false message; actually it would mean that they had been testifying against **God.** They **testified of God that He raised up Christ** from the dead. If God didn't do this, then the apostles had been bringing **false** witness against Him.

15:16 If resurrection is an utter impossibility, then there can be no exception to it. On the other hand, if resurrection had taken place once, for instance in the case of Christ, then it can no longer be thought of as an impossibility.

15:17 **If Christ** has not been raised, the **faith** of believers is **futile** and devoid of power. And there is no forgiveness of **sins.** Thus to reject the resurrection is to reject the value of the work of Christ.

15:18 As for those who had died believing **in Christ,** their case would be absolutely hopeless. If Christ did not rise, then their faith was just a worthless thing. The expression **fallen asleep** refers to the bodies of believers. Sleep is never used of the soul in the NT. The soul of the believer departs to be with Christ at the time of death, while the body is spoken of as sleeping in the grave.

We should also say a word concerning the word **perished.** This word *never* means annihilation or cessation of being. As Vine has pointed out, it is not loss of *being*, but rather loss of *well-being*. It speaks of ruin as far as the purpose for which a person or thing was created.

15:19 If Christ is not risen, then living believers are in as wretched a condition as those who have died. They, too, have been deceived. They **are of all men the most pitiable.** Paul is here doubtless thinking of the sorrows, sufferings, trials, and persecutions to which Christians are exposed. To undergo such afflictions for a false cause would be pathetic indeed.

15:20 The tension is relieved as Paul triumphantly announces the fact of the resurrection of Christ and of the blessed consequences that follow. **But now Christ is risen from the dead, ... the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.** There is a difference in the Scripture between the resurrection *of* the dead and the resurrection *from* the dead. The previous verses have been dealing with the resurrection of the dead. In other words, Paul has been arguing in a general way that the dead do indeed rise. But Christ rose *from* the dead. This means that when He rose, not all the dead rose. In this sense it was a limited resurrection. Every resurrection is a resurrection of the dead, but only that of Christ and of believers is a resurrection *from among* dead people.

15:21 It was **by man** that **death** first **came** into the world. That **man** was Adam. Through his sin, death came upon all men. God sent His Son into the world as a **Man** in order to undo the work of the first man and to raise believers to a state of blessedness such as they could never have known in Adam. Thus it was by the **Man** Christ Jesus that there **came the resurrection of the dead.**

15:22 **Adam** and **Christ** are presented as federal heads. This means that they acted for other people. And all who are related to them are affected by their actions. **All** who are descended from **Adam die. So in Christ all shall be made alive.** This verse has sometimes been taken to teach universal salvation. It is argued that the same ones who die in Adam will be made alive in Christ, and that all will eventually be saved. But that is not what the verse says. The key expressions are **in Adam** and **in Christ.** **All** who are **in Adam die.** **All** who are **in Christ shall be made alive,**

that is, only believers in the Lord Jesus Christ will be raised from the dead to dwell eternally with Him. The **all who shall be made alive** is defined in verse 23 as those who are Christ's at His Coming. It does not include Christ's enemies, for they shall be put under His feet (v. 25), which, as someone has said, is a strange name for heaven.

15:23 Next we have the groups or classes involved in the first resurrection. First is the resurrection of **Christ** Himself. He is spoken of here as **the firstfruits**. Firstfruits were a handful of ripened grain from the harvest field before the actual harvest started. They were a pledge, a guarantee, a foretaste of what was to follow. The expression does not necessarily mean that Christ was the first one to rise. We have instances of resurrection in the OT, and the cases of Lazarus, the widow's son, and Jairus' daughter in the NT. But Christ's resurrection was different from all of these in that, whereas they rose to die again, Christ rose to die no more. He rose to live in the power of an endless life. He rose with a glorified body.

The second class in the first resurrection is described as **those who are Christ's at His coming**. This includes those who will be raised at the time of the Rapture, and also those believers who will die during the Tribulation and will be raised at the end of that time of trouble, when Christ comes back to reign. Just as there are stages in the coming of Christ, so there will be stages in the resurrection of His saints. The first resurrection does not include all who have ever died, but only those who have died with faith in Christ.

Some teach that only those Christians who have been faithful to Christ, or who have been overcomers will be raised at this time, but the Scriptures are very clear in refuting this. All **who are Christ's** will be raised at His coming.

15:24 The expression **then comes the end** refers, we believe, to **the end of the resurrection**. At the close of Christ's Millennial Reign, when He shall have put down all His enemies, there will be the resurrection of the wicked dead. This is the last resurrection ever to take place. All who have ever died in unbelief will stand before the Judgment of the Great White Throne to hear their doom.

After the Millennium and the destruction of Satan (Rev. 20:7–10), the Lord Jesus will deliver **the kingdom to God the Father**. By that time He will have abolished **all rule and all authority and power**. Up to this time the Lord Jesus Christ has been reigning *as the Son of Man*, serving as God's Mediator. At the end of the thousand-year reign, God's purposes on earth will have been perfectly accomplished. All opposition will have been put down and all enemies destroyed. The reign of Christ *as Son of Man* will then give way to the eternal kingdom in heaven. His reign *as Son of God* in heaven will continue forever.

15:25 Verse 25 emphasizes what has just been said, namely, that Christ's reign will continue until every trace of rebellion and enmity has been put down.

15:26 Even during Christ's Millennial Reign, people will continue to die, especially those who openly rebel against the Lord. But at the Judgment of the Great White Throne, **death** and Hades will be cast into the Lake of Fire.

15:27 God has decreed that **all things** shall be **put** under the **feet** of the Lord Jesus. Of course, in putting **all things under Him**, God necessarily excepted Himself. Verse 27 is rather hard to follow because it is not clear to whom each pronoun is referring. We might paraphrase it as follows: "For God has put all things under Christ's feet. But when God says, all things are put under Christ, it is obvious that God is excluded, who put all things under Christ."⁴

Psalm 38:1-22

Proverbs 21:28-29

⁴ MacDonald, W. (1995). *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*. (A. Farstad, Ed.) (pp. 1803–1806). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

August 24

Job 12:1-15:35

12:1-14:22 Job's third reply voiced his impatience with his friends and accused them of thoughtless speculation. Their platitudes could not account for his misery. The sovereign God was responsible, and Job longed to put his case before Him. Job maintained his innocence and was certain of his eventual vindication.

12:9 The hand of the Lord has done this (see Job 1:14-19). The motive or purpose, however, was the cause of speculation by his friends and the source of anguish to Job.

The purpose of pruning is to improve the quality of the roses, not to hurt the bush.
Florence Littauer

HOW TO ENDURE SUFFERING

Wrong Ways	Right Ways
Demand to know WHY.	Be content to know WHO is in charge (Rom. 8:28-30).
Withdraw from God.	Acknowledge that He is with you (Heb. 13:5). Pray all the more (1 Pet. 5:6, 7).
Withdraw from others.	Keep fellowship with believers (Heb. 10:24, 25).
Decide the limits to your own endurance.	Know that God sets and knows your limits (1 Cor. 10:13).
Be impatient with God.	Wait for His perfect timing (Ps. 31:14, 15).
Seek your own remedies (Prov. 14:12).	Trust in the Lord to guide (Prov. 3:5, 6).
Give up to despair.	Wait upon the Lord (Ps. 27).
Delude yourself.	Seek the truth (John 8:32).
Indulge yourself.	Keep pure (1 Pet. 2:11, 12).
Become angry.	Master the anger (James 1:19, 20).
Become depressed (Ps. 73).	Hope in the Lord (Job 13:15).

13:20, 21 Two requests came from Job. He asked God to end his suffering by withdrawing His hand from him and by allowing him to come before the Lord without complete terror. In Job's mind, both these were necessary for a fair hearing.

13:24 The silence of God regarding the possible reasons for his alienated state caused Job's suffering as well as his obvious afflictions. This perceived alienation was more heartbreaking than the loss of his possessions and comforts. Job cherished above all else his relationship with God.

14:13, 14 Job was certainly weary of life, but suicide or euthanasia were not options. God's perfect timing and control of life includes the timing of death as well (see Gen. 4, Euthanasia; Gen. 9, Sanctity of Life).

15:1-35 The argument of Eliphaz's second speech sarcastically accused Job of being a lying hypocrite, claiming once again that no man is pure before God (vv. 1-16). He cited from his own experience that the wicked are those who are punished (vv. 17-35). Eliphaz found it inconceivable that a righteous person would ever endure prolonged suffering. Such must be reserved for the wicked. Thus, Eliphaz could only conclude that Job was a sinner (vv. 2-6).⁵

1 Corinthians 15:29-58

15:28 Even after **all things** have been put in subjection to the Son, He Himself will continue to be **subject to God** forever.

God has made Christ ruler, administrator of all His plans and counsels. All authority and power is put in His hands. There is a time coming when He will render His account of the administration committed to Him. After He has brought everything into subjection, He will hand the kingdom back to the Father. Creation will be brought back to God in a perfect condition. Having accomplished the work of redemption and restoration for which He became Man, He will retain the subordinate place that He took in Incarnation. If He should cease to be man after having brought to pass all that God purposed and designated, the very link that brings God and man together would be gone. (Selected)

15:29 Verse 29 is perhaps one of the most difficult and obscure verses in all the Bible. Many explanations have been offered as to its meaning. For instance, it is contended by some that living believers may be baptized for those who have died without having undergone this rite. Such a meaning is quite foreign to the Scriptures. It is based on a single verse and must be rejected, not having the collective support of other Scripture. Others believe that baptism for the dead means that in baptism we reckon ourselves to have died. This is a possible meaning, but it does not fit in too well with the context.

The interpretation which seems to suit the context best is this: At the time Paul wrote, there was fierce persecution against those who took a public stand for Christ. This persecution was especially vicious at the time of their baptism. It often happened that those who publicly proclaimed their faith in Christ in the waters of baptism were martyred shortly thereafter. But did this stop others from being saved and from taking their place in baptism? Not at all. It seemed as though there were always new replacements coming along to fill up the ranks of those who had been martyred. As they stepped into the waters of baptism, in a very real sense **they** were being **baptized for**, or *in the place of* (Gk. *huper*) the dead. Hence **the dead** here refers to those who died as a result of their bold witness for Christ. Now the apostle's argument here is that it would be foolish to be thus baptized to fill up the ranks of those who had died if there is no such thing as resurrection from the dead. It would be like sending replacement troops to fill up the ranks of an army that is fighting a lost cause. It would be like fighting on in a hopeless situation. **If the dead do not rise at all, why then are they baptized for the dead?**

15:30 And why do we stand in jeopardy every hour? The Apostle Paul was constantly exposed to danger. Because of his fearlessness in preaching Christ, he made enemies wherever he went. Secret plots were hatched against him in an effort to take his life. He could have avoided all this by abandoning his profession of Christ. In fact, it would have been wise for him to abandon it if there was no such thing as resurrection from the dead.

15:31 I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily might be paraphrased: "As surely as I rejoice over you as my children in Christ Jesus, every day of my life I am exposed to death."

15:32 The apostle now recalls the fierce persecution which he encountered **at Ephesus**. We do not believe that he was actually thrown into the arena with wild beasts, but rather that he is speaking here of wicked men as wild **beasts**. Actually, as a Roman citizen, Paul could not have been forced to fight with wild animals. We do not know to what incident he refers. However, the argument is clear that the apostle would have been foolish to engage in such dangerous warfare as he had if he were not assured of resurrection from the dead. Indeed it would have been much wiser for him to adopt the philosophy: "**If the dead do not rise, 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!'**"

We sometimes hear Christians say that if this life were all, then they would still rather be Christians. But Paul disagrees with such an idea. If there were no resurrection, we would be better off to make the most of *this* life. We would live for food, clothing, and pleasure. This would be the only heaven we could look forward to. But since there *is* a resurrection, we dare not spend our lives for these things of passing interest. We must live for "then" and not for "now."

15:33 The Corinthians should **not be deceived** on this score. **Evil company corrupts good habits**. Paul is referring to the false teachers who had come into the church at Corinth, denying the resurrection. The Christians should

⁵ Thomas Nelson, I. (1995). *The Woman's Study Bible* (Job 12:1-15:1). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

realize that it is impossible to associate with **evil** people or evil teachings without being corrupted by them. Evil doctrine inevitably has an effect on one's life. False teachings do not lead to holiness.

15:34 The Corinthians should **awake to righteousness** and **not sin**. They should not be deluded by these evil teachings. **Some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.** This verse is commonly interpreted to mean that there are still men and women who have never heard the gospel story, and that Christians should be ashamed of their failure to evangelize the world. However, while this may be true, we believe that the primary meaning of the passage is that there were men in the fellowship at Corinth who did **not have the knowledge of God**. They were not true believers, but wolves in sheep's clothing, false teachers who had crept in unawares. It was to the **shame** of the Corinthians that these men were allowed to take their place with the Christians and to teach these wicked doctrines. The carelessness which let ungodly people enter the assembly resulted in lowering the congregation's whole moral tone, thus preparing an opening for the intrusion of all kinds of error.

B. Consideration of Objections to the Resurrection (15:35–57)

15:35 In verses 35–49, the apostle goes into greater detail concerning the actual mode of the resurrection. He anticipates two questions which would inevitably arise in the minds of those who questioned the fact of bodily resurrection. The first is: "**How are the dead raised up?**" The second is: "**And with what body do they come?**"

15:36 The first question is answered in verse 36. A common illustration from nature is used to illustrate the possibility of resurrection. A seed must fall into the ground and die before the plant can come forth. It is wonderful indeed to think of the mystery of life that is hidden in every tiny seed. We may dissect the seed and study it under the microscope, but the secret of the life principle remains an unfathomable mystery. All we know is that the seed falls into the ground and from that unlikely beginning there springs forth life from the dead.

15:37 The second question is taken up next. Paul explains that when you **sow** a seed, **you do not sow the plant that shall eventually result, but you sow a bare grain—perhaps wheat or some other grain.** What do we conclude from this? Is the plant the same as the seed? No, the plant is not the same as the seed; however, there is a very vital connection between the two. Without the seed there would have been no plant. Also, the plant derives its features from the seed. So it is in resurrection.

The resurrection body has identity of kind and continuity of substance with that which is sown, but it is purified from corruption, dishonor, and weakness, and made incorrupt, glorious, powerful, and spiritual. It is the same body, but it is sown in one form and raised in another. (Selected)

15:38 **God produces a body** according to the seed that was sown, and **each seed** has its own type of plant as a result. All the factors which determine the size, color, leaf, and flower of the plant are somehow contained in the seed that is sown.

15:39 To illustrate the fact that the glory of the resurrection body will be different from the glory of our present bodies, the Apostle Paul points out that **all flesh is not the same kind**. For instance, there is human **flesh, flesh of animals, flesh of fish, and flesh of birds**. These are distinctly different, and yet they are all flesh. There is similarity without exact duplication.

15:40 And just as there is a difference between the splendor of heavenly **bodies** (the stars, etc.) and bodies which are associated with this earth, so there is a difference between the body of the believer now and the one which he will have after death.

15:41 Even among the celestial bodies themselves, there is a difference of **glory**. For instance, **the sun** is brighter than **the moon, and one star differs from another in** brightness.

Most commentators agree that Paul is still emphasizing that the glory of the resurrection body will be different from the glory of the body which we have on earth at the present time. They do not think that verse 41, for instance, indicates that in heaven there will be differences of glory among believers themselves. However, we tend to agree with Holsten that "the way in which Paul emphasizes the diversities of the heavenly bodies implies the supposition of an analogous difference of glory between the risen." It is clear from other passages of Scripture that we shall not all be identical in heaven. Although all will resemble the Lord Jesus morally, that is, in freedom from sin, it does not follow that we shall all *look* like the Lord Jesus physically. He will be distinctly recognizable as such throughout all eternity. Likewise, we believe that each individual Christian will be a distinct personality recognizable as such. But there will be differences of reward granted at the Judgment Seat of Christ according to one's faithfulness in service. While all will be supremely happy in heaven, some will have greater *capacity* for enjoying heaven. Just as there will be differences of suffering in hell, according to the sins that a man has committed, so there will be differences of enjoyment in heaven, according to what we have done as believers.

15:42 Verses 42–49 show the contrast between what the believer's body is now and what it will be in its eternal state. **The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption.** At the present time, our bodies are subject to

disease and death. When they are placed in the grave, they decompose and return to dust. But it will not be so with the resurrection body. It will no longer be subject to sickness or decay.

15:43 The present body is **sown in dishonor**. There is nothing very majestic or glorious about a dead body. However, this same body will be **raised in glory**. It will be free from wrinkles, scars, the marks of age, overweight, and the traces of sin.

It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. With the coming of old age, **weakness** increases until death itself strips a man of all strength whatever. In eternity, the body will not be subject to these sad limitations, but will be possessed of powers that it does not have at the present time. For instance, the Lord Jesus Christ in resurrection was able to enter a room where the doors were locked.

15:44 It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. Here we must be very careful to emphasize that spiritual does *not* mean nonmaterial. Some people have the idea that in resurrection we will be disembodied spirits. That is not at all the meaning of this passage, nor is it true. We know that the resurrection body of the Lord Jesus was composed of flesh and bones because He said, "A spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have" (Luke 24:39). The difference between a **natural body** and a **spiritual body** is that the former is suited to life here on earth whereas the latter will be suited to life in heaven. The former is usually soul-controlled whereas the latter is spirit-controlled. **A spiritual body** is one that will be truly the servant of the spirit.

God created man spirit, soul, and body. He always mentions the spirit first, because His intention was that the spirit should be in the place of preeminence or dominance. With the entrance of sin, something very strange happened. God's order seems to have been upset, and the result is that man always says "body, soul, and spirit." He has given the body the place which the spirit should have had. In resurrection it will not be so; the spirit will be in the place of control which God originally intended.

15:45 And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. Here again **the first man Adam** is contrasted with the Lord Jesus Christ. God breathed into Adam's nostrils the breath of life and he became a living being (Gen. 2:7). All who are descended from him bear his characteristics. **The last Adam**, the Savior, **became a life-giving spirit** (John 5:21, 26). The difference is that in the first case, Adam *was given* physical life, whereas in the second case Christ *gives* eternal life to others. Erdman explains:

As the descendants of Adam, we are made like him, living souls inhabiting mortal bodies, and bearing the image of an earthly parent. But as the followers of Christ, we are yet to be clothed with immortal bodies and to bear the image of our heavenly Lord.

15:46 The apostle now sets forth a fundamental law in God's universe, namely, **the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual**. This can be understood in several ways. Adam, **the natural** man, came first on the stage of human history; then Jesus, **the spiritual** Man. Second, we are born into the world as **natural** beings; then when we are born again, we become **spiritual** beings. Finally, we first receive **natural** bodies, then in resurrection we will receive **spiritual** bodies.

15:47 The first man was of the earth, made of dust. This means that his origin was **of the earth** and that his characteristics were earthly. He was **made of the dust** of the ground in the first place, and in his life he seemed in a very real sense to be earth-bound. **The second Man is the Lord from heaven.**

15:48 Of the two men mentioned in verse 45, Jesus was the second. He existed from all eternity, but as Man, he came after Adam. He came from heaven, and everything He did and said was **heavenly** and spiritual rather than earthly and soulish.

As it is with these two federal heads, so it is with their followers. Those who are born of Adam inherit his characteristics. Also those who are born of Christ are a **heavenly** people.

15:49 As we have borne the characteristics of Adam as to our natural birth, **we shall also bear the image of** Christ in our resurrection bodies.

15:50 Now the apostle turns to the subject of the transformation that will take place in the bodies of believers, both living and dead, at the time of the Lord's Return. He prefaces his remarks with the statement **that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God**. By this he means that the present body which we have is not suited to **the kingdom of God** in its eternal aspect, that is, our heavenly home. It is also true that **corruption** cannot **inherit incorruption**. In other words, our present bodies which are subject to disease, decay, and decomposition, would not be suited for life in a state where there is no corruption. This raises the problem, then, of how the bodies of living believers can be suited for life in heaven.

15:51 The answer is in the form of a **mystery**. As previously stated, a **mystery** is a truth previously unknown, but now revealed by God to the apostles and made known through them to us.

We shall not all sleep, that is, not all believers will experience death. Some will be alive when the Lord returns. But whether we have died or are still alive, **we shall all be changed**. The truth of resurrection itself is not a mystery, since it appears in the OT, but the fact that not all will die and also the change of living saints at the Lord's Return is something that had never been known before.

15:52 The change will take place instantly, **in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. The last trumpet** here does not mean the end of the world, or even the last trumpet mentioned in Revelation. Rather, it refers to the **trumpet** of God which will sound when Christ comes into the air for His saints (1 Thess. 4:16). When the **trumpet** sounds, **the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed**. What a tremendous moment that will be, when the earth and the sea will yield up the dust of all those who have died trusting in Christ down through the centuries! It is almost impossible for the human mind to take in the magnitude of such an event; yet the humble believer can accept it by faith.

15:53 We believe that verse 53 refers to the two classes of believers at the time of Christ's Return. **This corruptible** refers to those whose bodies have returned to the dust. They will **put on incorruption. This mortal**, on the other hand, refers to those who are still alive in body but are subject to death. Such bodies will **put on immortality**.

15:54 When the dead in Christ are raised and the living changed with them, **then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory"** (Isa. 25:8). How magnificent! C. H. Mackintosh exclaims:

What are death, the grave, and decomposition in the presence of such power as this? Talk of being dead four days as a difficulty! Millions that have been mouldering in the dust for thousands of years shall spring up in a moment into life, immortality and eternal glory, at the voice of that blessed One.

15:55 This verse may well be a taunt song which believers sing as they rise to meet the Lord in the air. It is as if they mock **Death** because for them it has lost its **sting**. They also mock **Hades** because for them *it* has lost the battle to keep them as its own. **Death** holds no terror for them because they know their sins have been forgiven and they stand before God in all the acceptability of His beloved Son.

15:56 **Death** would have no **sting** for anyone if it were not for **sin**. It is the consciousness of sins unconfessed and unforgiven that makes men afraid to die. If we know our sins are forgiven, we can face death with confidence. If, on the other hand, sin is on the conscience, death is terrible—the beginning of eternal punishment.

The strength of sin is the law, that is, **the law** condemns the sinner. It pronounces the doom of all who have failed to obey God's holy precepts. It has been well said that if there were no sin, there would be no death. And if there were no law, there would be no condemnation.

The throne of death rests on two bases: sin, which calls for condemnation, and the law which pronounces it.

Consequently, it is on these two powers that the work of the Deliverer bore.

15:57 Through faith in Him, we have **victory** over death and the grave. Death is robbed of its sting. It is a known fact that when certain insects sting a person, they leave their stinger imbedded in the person's flesh, and being thus robbed of their "sting," they die. In a very real sense death stung itself to death at the cross of **our Lord Jesus Christ**, and now the King of Terrors is robbed of his terror as far as the believer is concerned.

C. Concluding Appeal in Light of the Resurrection (15:58)

In view, then, of the certainty of the resurrection and the fact that faith in Christ is not in vain, the Apostle Paul exhorts his **beloved brethren to be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that their labor is not in vain in the Lord**. The truth of resurrection changes everything. It provides hope and steadfastness, and enables us to go on in the face of overwhelming and difficult circumstances.⁶

Psalm 39:1-13; Proverbs 21:30-31

⁶ MacDonald, W. (1995). *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*. (A. Farstad, Ed.) (pp. 1806–1811). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

August 25

Job 16:1-19:29

16:1 Job's fourth reply bemoaned the fact that his friends had been “miserable comforters” who actually had aggravated his grief rather than relieved it (v. 2). He maintained his righteousness even though still bewildered at being chosen as God's target. Broken and weary, Job saw relief only in death.

16:15 The misery of mourning. Job donned sackcloth or coarse-haired cloth to symbolize the abasement, sorrow, and misery he felt in his humiliation (see Job 1:20). “Head” (lit. “horn”) is used figuratively to denote strength and dignity. Thus, to lay your “head in the dust” indicated the loss of all honor and power and was also a sign of great humiliation, similar to the modern expression of “rubbing your face in the dirt.”

16:19 The heavenly witness or advocate is a reference to God Himself, who testified from heaven of Job's innocence. Job appealed to God for vindication. He had been misjudged by his friends on earth. His prayer was for someone to plead his case. Not until Christ's coming would the heavenly Advocate be revealed (see 1 John 2:1, 2).

18:1 Bildad's second speech elaborated on how the wicked are punished (using a description that parallels Job's own sufferings). He insinuated that Job was suffering because of his sin. His speech was without compassion or hope.

18:8-10 From the world of hunting, six words are used here to describe traps laid to ensnare the wicked man: A net that is primarily an instrument of capture to entangle the feet (v. 8); a snare or netting that forms a false floor over a hidden pit (v. 8); a net that grabs the victim's feet (v. 9); a snare that constricts (v. 9); a noose that catches and raises its victim off the ground (v. 10); and a trap, the term which is inclusive of all these devices (v. 10). Once again the writer revealed not only his literary ability but also his extensive knowledge of hunting.

19:1-29 Job's fifth reply recounted that God had set up his disasters (vv. 7-12) and that everyone had forsaken him (vv. 13-20). Pleading for pity, he yearned for his words to be recorded (vv. 23, 24). Maintaining his righteousness and believing that judgment belongs to God, Job longed for vindication by his Redeemer (vv. 23-29). He warned his friends about their own vulnerability to God's judgment (v. 29).

19:17 The loss of those most dear. In light of the fact that all Job's children were dead (Job 1:18, 19), this reference could be to his own siblings or could be part of the general stereotypical language. The loathsome nature of the diseases afflicting Job had driven away those nearest and dearest to him. The emphasis is on the isolation felt by Job. Rejection from a wife would be the ultimate human tragedy.

HOW TO COMFORT THE SUFFERING

Wrong Ways	Right Ways
Pre-judge a situation.	Empathize with the sufferer (Rom. 12:15).
Have a know-it-all attitude.	Pray for yourself (James 1:5).
Try to solve the problem of the one suffering.	Pray for others (Phil. 4:6, 7).
Assume the cause of suffering is sin.	Listen to the sufferer (James 1:19).
	Consider causes other than the sin of the sufferer (Job 42:7; John 9:2, 3; Heb. 12:5-11).

19:23, 24 Job wanted his words to be recorded forever, as solid evidence would be in a court of law. Job's personal testimony was recorded here more indelibly than on a “rock” with an “iron pen” and “lives and abides forever” in Holy Scripture (1 Pet. 1:23).

19:25 The kinsman-redeemer (Heb. *go'el*) was the closest blood-relative. According to Levitical law, someone who was in debt or taken captive needed the “kinsman-redeemer” to pay his ransom or gain his release. In the OT, this relationship is most poignantly depicted by Boaz, who acted in behalf of Ruth's deceased husband. In the NT, Jesus Christ was the ultimate “Kinsman-Redeemer.” This term was also an OT title for God, who delivered His people from Egyptian bondage. This Redeemer would “stand” as Job's only faithful witness, to argue for his

vindication. Job's sons were dead, and he had been deserted by the rest of his family and friends so that no earthly redeemer was present to defend Job. Job's testimony was sure: He would see God, and God would no longer be hidden from him (Job 9:11; 13:24). The hope of the afterlife was vivid and vital to Job (Job 19:26). Job fully expected to see God with his own eyes, that is, while clothed in his physical body as opposed to a disembodied spiritual state (v. 27).⁷

1 Corinthians 16:1-24

V. PAUL'S FINAL COUNSEL (Chap. 16)

A. Concerning the Collection (16:1-4)

16:1 The first verse of chapter 16 concerns a **collection** which was to be taken up by the church in Corinth and sent to needy **saints** in Jerusalem. The exact cause of their poverty is not known. Some have suggested that it was a result of famine (Acts 11:28-30). Possibly another reason is that those Jews who professed faith in Christ were ostracized and boycotted by their unbelieving relatives, friends, and fellow countrymen. They doubtlessly lost their jobs and in countless ways were subjected to economic pressures designed to force them to give up their profession of faith in Christ. Paul had already **given orders to the churches of Galatia** in connection with this very matter, and he now instructs the Corinthians to respond in the same manner that the Galatian saints had been exhorted to do.

16:2 Although the instructions given in verse 2 were for a specific collection, yet the principles involved are of abiding value. First of all, the laying by of funds was to be done **on the first day of the week**. Here we have a very strong indication that the early Christians no longer regarded the Sabbath or seventh day as an obligatory observance. The Lord had risen on the first day of the week, the Day of Pentecost was on the first day of the week, and the disciples gathered together on the first day of the week to break bread (Acts 20:7). Now they are to **lay something aside** for the saints **on the first day of the week**.

The second important principle is that the instructions concerning the collections were for **each one**. Rich and poor, slave and free, all were to have a part in the sacrifice of giving of their possessions.

Further, this was to be done systematically. **On the first day of the week** they were to **lay something aside, storing up**. It was not to be haphazard, or reserved for special occasions. The gift was to be set aside from other money and devoted to special use as occasion demanded. Their giving was also to be proportionate. This is indicated by the expression **as he may prosper**.

That there be no collections when I come. The Apostle Paul did not want this to be a matter of last-minute arrangement. He realized the serious possibility of giving without due preparation of heart or pocketbook.

16:3 Verses 3 and 4 give us very valuable insight into the care that should be taken with funds that are gathered in a Christian assembly. It is noticeable, first, that the funds were not to be entrusted to any one person. Even Paul himself was not to be the sole recipient. Secondly, we notice that the arrangements as to who would carry the money were not made arbitrarily by the Apostle Paul. Rather, this decision was left to the local assembly. When they selected the messengers, Paul would **send them to Jerusalem**.

16:4 If it was decided that it would be well for the apostle to **go** to Jerusalem **also**, then the local brethren would accompany him there. Notice that he says **"they will go with me"** rather than "I will go with them." Perhaps this is an allusion to Paul's authority as an apostle. Some commentators suggest that the factor that would determine whether or not Paul went would be the size of the gift, but we hardly believe that the great apostle would be guided by such a principle.

B. Concerning His Personal Plans (16:5-9)

16:5 Paul discusses his personal plans in verses 5-9. From Ephesus, where he wrote this letter, he planned to **pass through Macedonia**. Then he hoped to move south to Corinth.

16:6-8 Possibly Paul would **spend the winter with** the saints in Corinth and then they would speed him on his way, **wherever** he would **go** from there. For the present, then, he would not see them en route to Macedonia, but he did look forward to staying with them later for a while, **if the Lord** would so permit. Before leaving Macedonia, Paul expected to **tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost**. It is from verse 8 that we learn that the Epistle was written from Ephesus.

16:9 Paul realized that there was a golden opportunity for serving Christ at that time at Ephesus. At the same time he realized that **there were many adversaries**. What an unchanging picture this verse gives us of Christian service: On the one hand, there are the fields white already to harvest; on the other, there is a sleepless foe who seeks to obstruct, divide, and oppose in every conceivable way!

⁷ Thomas Nelson, I. (1995). *The Woman's Study Bible* (Job 16:1-19:25). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

C. Closing Exhortations and Greetings (16:10–24)

16:10 The apostle adds a word concerning **Timothy**. If this devoted young servant of the Lord came to Corinth, they should receive him **without fear**. Perhaps this means that Timothy was naturally of a timid disposition, and that they should not do anything to intensify this tendency. Perhaps, on the other hand, it means that he should be able to come to them **without any fear** of not being accepted as a servant of the Lord. That the latter is probably the proper meaning is indicated by Paul's words: "**For he does the work of the Lord, as I also do.**"

16:11 Because of Timothy's faithful service for Christ, **no one** should **despise him**. Instead, an earnest effort should be made to **send him on his journey in peace, that he** might return to Paul in due time. The apostle was looking forward to a reunion with Timothy and **with the brethren**.

16:12 Now **concerning ... brother Apollos**, Paul had **strongly urged him to** visit Corinth **with the brethren**. Apollos did not feel that this was God's will for him **at the time**, but he indicated that he would go to Corinth **when he** had the opportunity. Verse 12 is valuable to us in showing the loving spirit that prevailed among the servants of the Lord. Someone has called it a beautiful picture of "unjealous love and respect." It also shows the liberty that prevailed for each servant of the Lord to be guided by the Lord without dictation from any other source. Even the Apostle Paul himself was not authorized to tell Apollos what to do. In this connection Ironside commented: "I would not like to tear this chapter out of my Bible. It helps me to understand God's way of guiding His servants in their ministry for Him."

16:13, 14 Now Paul delivers some pithy exhortations to the saints. They are to **watch** constantly, to **stand fast in the faith**, to **be brave** and to **be strong**. Perhaps Paul is thinking again of the danger of false teachers. The saints are to be on guard all the time. They are not to give up an inch of vital territory. They are to behave with true courage. Finally, they are to **be strong** in the Lord. In **all that they do**, they are to manifest **love**. This will mean lives of devotion to God and to others. It will mean a giving of themselves.

16:15 Next follows an exhortation concerning **the household of Stephanas**. These dear Christians were **the firstfruits of Achaia**, that is, the earliest converts in **Achaia**. Apparently from the time of their conversion, they had addicted **themselves to the ministry** (service) **of the saints**. They set themselves to serve the people of God. **The household of Stephanas** was mentioned previously in 1:16. There Paul states that he baptized that household. Many have insisted that **the household of Stephanas** included infants, and have sought thereby to justify the baptism of babies. However, it seems rather clear from this verse that there were no infants in this household, since it is distinctly stated that they **devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints**.

16:16 The apostle exhorts the Christians to **submit to such, and to everyone who helps in the work and labors**. We learn from the general teaching of the NT that those who set themselves apart for the service of Christ should be shown the loving respect of all the people of God. If this were done more generally, it would prevent a great deal of division and jealousy.

16:17 **The coming of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus** had brought joy to Paul's heart. They **supplied what was lacking on the part** of the Corinthians. This may mean that they showed kindness to the apostle which the Corinthians had neglected to do. Or more probably it means that what the Corinthians were *unable* to do because of their distance from Paul, these men had accomplished.

16:18 They brought news from Corinth to Paul, and conversely they brought back news from the apostle to their home assembly. Again Paul commends them to the loving respect of the local church.

16:19 **The churches of Asia** refers to the congregations in the *province* of Asia (*Asia Minor* today), of which Ephesus was the capital. **Aquila and Priscilla** were apparently living in Ephesus at this time. At one time they had lived in Corinth, and thus were known to the saints there. **Aquila** was a tentmaker by trade, and had worked with Paul in this occupation. The expression **the church that is in their house** gives us a view of the simplicity of assembly life at that time. Christians would gather together in their homes for worship, prayer, and fellowship. Then they would go out to preach the gospel at their work, in the market place, in the local prison, and wherever their lot was cast.

16:20 **All the brethren** in the assembly join in sending their loving greetings to their fellow believers in Corinth. The apostle enjoins his readers to **greet one another with a holy kiss**. At that time, the **kiss** was a common mode of greeting, even among men. A **holy kiss** means a greeting without sham or impurity. In our sex-obsessed society, where perversion is so prevalent, the widespread use of the kiss as a mode of greeting might present serious temptations and lead to gross moral failures. For that reason, the handshake has largely taken the place of the kiss among Christians in English-speaking cultures. Ordinarily we should not allow cultural considerations to excuse us from strict adherence to the words of Scripture. But in a case like this, where literal obedience might lead to sin or even the appearance of evil because of local cultural conditions, we are probably justified in substituting the handshake for the kiss.

16:21 Paul's usual habit was to dictate his letters to one of his co-workers. However, at the end he would take pen in hand, add a few words in his own writing, and then give his characteristic **salutation**. That is what he does at this point.

16:22 Accursed translates the Greek word *anathema*. Those who do **not love the Lord Jesus** are condemned already, but their doom will be manifest at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. A Christian is one who loves the Savior. He loves the Lord Jesus more than anyone or anything in the world. Failure to love God's Son is a crime against God Himself. Ryle comments:

St. Paul allows no way of escape to the man who does not love Christ. He leaves no loophole or excuse. A man may lack clear head-knowledge and yet be saved. He may fail in courage, and be overcome by the fear of man, like Peter. He may fall tremendously, like David, and yet rise again. But if a person does not love Christ he is not in the way of life. The curse is yet upon him. He is on the broad road that leadeth to destruction.

O Lord, come! translates *maranatha*, an Aramaic expression used by the early Christians. If spaced "maran atha" it means "Our Lord has come," and if spaced "marana tha" it means Our **Lord, come!**

16:23 Grace was Paul's favorite theme. He loved to open and end his Letters on this exalted note. It is one of the true marks of his authorship.

16:24 Throughout the entire Epistle we have listened to the heartbeat of this devoted apostle of Christ. We have listened to him as he sought to edify, comfort, exhort, and admonish his children in the faith. There was no doubt of his **love** for them. When they read these closing words, perhaps they would feel ashamed that they had allowed false teachers to come in, questioned Paul's apostleship, and turned away from their original love for him.⁸

Psalm 40:1-10; Proverbs 22:1

⁸ MacDonald, W. (1995). *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*. (A. Farstad, Ed.) (pp. 1811–1814). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

August 26

Job 20:1-22:30

20:1–29 The argument of Zophar’s second speech. He felt compelled to answer Job’s words (Job 19:1–29) and continued to insist that God unfailingly would punish the wicked (Job 20:4–29). Like the other friends, he declared Job’s guilt without considering any other plea or evidence brought before him by Job (vv. 27–29).

21:1–34 Job’s sixth reply refuted the claims of his friends (see Job 20:1–29) by stating that the wicked prosper, live well, and die in peace, even though they mock God. Job considered his friends naive and inexperienced to insist that only the wicked suffer in life. A look at the world is enough evidence that such theological expression is wrong.

21:15 Satan’s intent was to get Job to question the wisdom of trusting God (Job 1:9–11). Here Job mocked the ungodly who question the Almighty.

22:1–30 The argument of Eliphaz’s third speech brutally and bluntly accused Job of outright wrongdoing contrary to anything Job had ever done or stood for (vv. 4–11; contrast Job 29:12–17). Thus judgment was passed, and Job was declared guilty. The only recourse for such a situation was repentance (vv. 21–30). Eliphaz knew some truth but categorically misapplied it. He traced Job’s suffering to Job’s sin.

22:2 Eliphaz questioned how God could benefit from the righteousness of mankind as Job continually asked God why He allowed the righteous to suffer. To think that God needs man for anything would be to ascribe too much significance to man and too little to God. According to Eliphaz, God was interested only in punishing sin (vv. 4, 5; see Job 35:1–16, note).

*I will never see the hand of God in all that happens to me, attributing nothing to individual people,
who are but instruments used by Him in the work of our sanctification.*

Blessed Raphaela Maria⁹

2 Corinthians 1:1-11

A. Salutation (1:1, 2)

1:1 Paul introduces himself at the outset of his letter as **an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God**. It is important that he should strike this note at the very beginning, because there were those in Corinth who raised the question as to whether Paul had ever really been commissioned by the Lord. His answer is that he did not choose the ministry by his own will, neither was he ordained by men, but he had been sent into the work by Christ Jesus through **the will of God**. His call to the apostleship took place on the road to Damascus. It was an unforgettable experience in his life, and it was the consciousness of this divine call that sustained the apostle during many bitter hours. Oftentimes when, in the service of Christ, he was pressed beyond measure, he might well have given up and gone home if he had not had the assurance of a divine call.

The fact that **Timothy** is mentioned in verse 1 does not mean that he helped to compose the Letter. It only signifies that he was with Paul at the time the Epistle was written. Beyond this fact, there is a great deal of uncertainty about Timothy’s movements during this period.

The letter is addressed **to the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in all Achaia**. The expression **church of God** means that it was an assembly of believers belonging to **God**. It was not a heathen assembly, or some nonreligious gathering of people, but a company of born-again Christians, called out from the world to belong to the Lord. Doubtless as Paul wrote these words, he remembered how he had first gone to Corinth and preached the gospel there. Men and women steeped in idolatry and sensuality had trusted Jesus Christ as Lord, and had been saved by His marvelous grace. In spite of all the difficulties that had later come into the assembly at Corinth, the heart of the apostle doubtless rejoiced to think of the mighty change which had come into the lives of these dear people. The letter is addressed not only to Corinth but to **all the saints who are in Achaia**. **Achaia** represented the southern part of Greece; whereas Macedonia, of which we shall also be reading in this Epistle, was the northern section of that same country.

1:2 Grace ... and peace form the lovely salutation that we have come to associate with the beloved Apostle Paul. When he wishes to describe his greatest desires for the people of God, he does not wish for them material things such as silver and gold. He knows only too well that these can quickly vanish. But rather he wishes for them spiritual blessings, such as **grace** and **peace**, which include every good thing that can come to a poor sinner on this side of heaven. Denney says, “Grace is the first and last word of the gospel; and peace—perfect spiritual soundness—is the

⁹ Thomas Nelson, I. (1995). *The Woman’s Study Bible* (Job 20:1–22:2). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

finished work of Christ in the soul.” These blessings flow **from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ**. **God our Father** is the source, and **the Lord Jesus Christ** is the channel. Paul does not hesitate to place **the Lord Jesus Christ** side by side with **God the Father**, because, as a member of the Trinity, **Christ** is equal with the **Father**.

B. The Ministry of Comfort in Suffering (1:3–11)

1:3 From verse 3 through verse 11, the apostle bursts forth into thanksgiving for the **comfort** that has come to him in the midst of his distress and affliction. Undoubtedly, the **comfort** was the good news which Titus had brought to him in Macedonia. The apostle then goes on to show that whether he is afflicted or comforted, all turns out for the eventual good of the believers to whom he ministers. The thanksgiving is addressed to **the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ**. This is the full title of **God** in the NT. No longer is He addressed as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, or the God of Jacob. Now He is **the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ**. This name, incidentally, implies the great truth that the Lord Jesus is both God and Man. God is the *God* of our Lord Jesus Christ; this refers to His relation to **Jesus**, the Son of Man. But God is also the *Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*; this refers to His relationship to Christ, the Son of God. In addition, God is described as **the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort**. It is from Him that all **mercies** and comforts flow.

1:4 In all Paul’s afflictions, he was conscious of God’s comforting presence. Here he gives one of the many reasons why God comforted him. It was so that he in turn might **be able to comfort** others **with the very same comfort with which** he was **comforted by God**. To us, the word “comfort” usually means consolation in time of sorrow. But as it is used in the NT, it has a wider meaning. It refers to the encouragement and exhortation that come to us from one who is beside us in time of need. There is a practical lesson in this verse for us all. We should remember when we are comforted that we should seek to pass on this comfort to others. We should not avoid the sick room or the house of death, but rather fly to the side of any who are in need of our encouragement. We are not comforted to be *comfortable* but to be *comforters*.

1:5 The reason Paul can comfort others is that the comforts of **Christ** are equal to the sufferings that are endured for Him. **The sufferings of Christ** here cannot mean the Savior’s atoning sufferings. These were unique, and no man can share them. But Christians can and do suffer because of their association with the Lord Jesus. They suffer reproach, rejection, hostility, hatred, denial, betrayal, etc. These are spoken of as **the sufferings of Christ** because He endured them when He was on earth, and because He still endures them when the members of His Body experience them. In all our afflictions, He is afflicted (see Isa. 63:9). But Paul’s point here is that there is a rich compensation for all these sufferings, namely, there is a corresponding share in the **consolation of Christ** and this **consolation** is abundantly sufficient.

1:6 The apostle could see good emerging both from his afflictions and his comfort. Both were sanctified by the cross. **If** he was **afflicted, it** resulted in **consolation and salvation** for the saints—not the salvation of their souls, but the strength that would see them through their trials. They would be encouraged and challenged by Paul’s endurance, and would reason that if God could give him grace **to suffer**, He could give them grace too. When Samuel Rutherford found himself in “the cellar of adversity,” as he often did, he began to look around for some of the Lord’s “best wines.” Perhaps he learned to do this from the example of Paul, who always seemed to be able to trace the rainbow through his tears.

The comfort which the apostle received would fill the Corinthians with **consolation** and inspire them to patient endurance as they passed through the same kind of persecution as he did. Only those who have gone through deep testings know how to speak a fitting word to others who are called upon to go through the same. A mother who has lost an only child can better comfort another mother who has just been crushed by that heartache. Or, best of all, a Father who has lost an only Son can best console those who have lost loved ones.

1:7 The apostle now expresses his confidence that just as the Corinthians had known what it was to suffer on behalf of Christ, so they would experience the comforting help of Christ. **Sufferings** never come alone for the Christian. They are always followed by the **consolation** of Christ. We, too, can be confident of this, as Paul was.

The Living Bible paraphrases verses 3–7 as follows:

What a wonderful God we have—He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the source of every mercy, and the one who so wonderfully comforts and strengthens us in our hardships and trials. And why does He do this? So that when others are troubled, needing our sympathy and encouragement, we can pass on to them the same help and comfort God has given us.... In our trouble God has comforted us—and this, too, to help you: to show you from our personal experience how God will tenderly comfort you when you undergo these same sufferings. He will give you the strength to endure.

1:8 Having spoken in general terms of affliction and comfort, Paul now mentions more specifically a severe testing through which he had recently gone. He does not want the Corinthian **brethren to be ignorant** of the **trouble which** befell him **in Asia**. (**Asia** here does not mean the continent, but rather a province in the western section of what is now Asia Minor.) Just what was the **trouble** to which the apostle refers here? Perhaps it refers to the dangerous riot which took place in Ephesus (Acts 19:23–41). Some suggest that it was a deadly sickness, and still others think that it might refer to disheartening news from Corinth. Fortunately, the value and enjoyment of such a passage does not depend on knowing the exact details.

The trouble was, however, so serious that Paul was weighed down greatly, so **beyond** the ordinary natural powers of endurance that he **despaired even of life** itself.

Phillip's paraphrase of this verse is helpful: "At that time we were completely overwhelmed; the burden was more than we could bear; in fact we told ourselves that this was the end."

1:9 The apostle's outlook was so grim that he had the feelings of a man sentenced to **death**. If someone had asked him, "Is it going to be life or death?" he would have had to answer, "Death." God allowed His servant to be brought to this place of extremity in order **that** he would **not trust in** himself **but in** the **God who raises the dead**. The **God who raises the dead** is here used doubtlessly as a synonym for the omnipotent God. One who can raise the dead is the only hope of a man who is doomed to die, as the apostle considered himself to be.

1:10 In the King James tradition (and the majority of manuscripts) Paul is speaking of deliverance in its three tenses: past (**delivered**), present (**does deliver**), and future (**will ... deliver**). If the riot in Ephesus is in view, then Paul refers to the way in which it stopped suddenly and he escaped (Acts 20:1). The apostle knows that the same God who **delivered** him in the past is able to **deliver** him day by day, and **will** continue to **deliver** him until that final, grand moment when he will be completely released from the tribulations and persecutions of this world.

1:11 Here Paul generously assumes that the Corinthian Christians had been praying for him while he was going through this time of deep testing. Actually, many of the believers had become critical of the great apostle, and there could have been a serious question whether they were remembering him before the throne of grace at all. However, he is willing to give them the benefit of the doubt. The expression **the gift granted to us through many** refers to **the gift** of Paul's deliverance which was brought about through the prayers of **many persons**. He sees his escape as a direct result of the intercession of the saints. He says that because many had prayed, **many persons** can now give **thanks** because their prayers were answered.¹⁰

Psalm 40:11-17; Proverbs 22:2-4

¹⁰ MacDonald, W. (1995). *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*. (A. Farstad, Ed.) (pp. 1819–1822). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

August 27

Job 23:1-27:23

23:1 Job's seventh reply still expressed his yearning for an audience with God (vv. 1–7). Though God appeared absent, Job was sure that God knew that he would be tested as true (vv. 8–12). He maintained God's sovereign right to do whatever He wanted but asserted that he had become terrified of God who did not shield him even from "deep darkness" (v. 17). Job then enumerated the many ways the wicked cause the innocent to suffer. He still declared his own innocence and affirmed God's justice in future judgment of the wicked (Job 24:23, 24). Job expressed his confidence in God's ultimate righteousness (Job 24:25).

23:10 He knows the way that I take. Even in the face of so much physical evidence against him, Job was still tenaciously clinging to the belief that God knows and cares. God knew that Job was blameless and that he would arise from this calamity as gold (see 1 Pet. 1:6, 7).

ATTRIBUTES OF GOD: *HE IS SOVEREIGN*

God alone is accountable to no one and is supreme in power, rank, authority, virtues, decrees, and work (Ps. 115:3). Strictly speaking, the title "Sovereign" belongs only to Him (Deut. 4:39).

Everything depends on God (Col. 1:16, 17), but He depends on nothing. Everything came from Him, but He came from nowhere because He has no beginning and no end (Ps. 90:2). He is the "I AM" (Ex. 3:14), the one of a kind (Is. 43:10, 11).

Since all life comes from Him, He rightfully retains ultimate authority (1 Tim. 6:15) and will do what He pleases (Ps. 135:6). He needs counsel from no one, and no one qualifies to give Him counsel (Rom. 9:20). The title "King of Kings" means just that. Even among kings, He is *The King* (Ps. 47:6, 7). This Sovereign One does not make occasional raids into our lives and world events—rather, He is intimately involved in the life of each person (Matt. 10:30) and rules the universe completely and perfectly (Is. 40:21–28).

See also 1 Chr. 29:11–13; Lam. 3:22, note; Rom. 11:33, 34; Eph. 1:11; 1 Tim. 6:15; notes on Attributes of God (Ex. 33; Deut. 4; 32; 2 Chr. 19; Job 42; Ps. 25; 90; 102; 119; Is. 6; 65; Jer. 23; Rom. 2; Eph. 1; 1 John 5); Authority (John 19); Fear of the Lord (Prov. 2); Goddess Religion (Ex. 20); Holiness (Lev. 20); Providence (Eccl. 7)

23:17 This deep darkness must have been the deafening divine silence Job sensed to his questions and situation. What Job feared and dreaded most was not so much his own actual suffering as the disruption of his personal relationship with God and evasive silence from the Creator.

24:1 Specific periods of judgment are suggested by the word "times." Job did not complain that God does not judge; rather his concern was that God's judgment does not come at set times. The lesson for Job was that retribution does not operate on an earthly, human timetable but according to divine will.

24:18–25 The righteous and the wicked. The Hebrew text has been translated in different ways. Some suggest that Job capitulated to his friends' views. On the other hand, just because these words do not sound like Job's views about the wicked does not necessarily mean that they are not his words. Job never claimed that the wicked *always* prosper and *never* receive punishment. He simply questioned why God treated the righteous and the wicked alike.

25:1–6 The argument of Bildad's third speech took a different tactic and asked how any man who is a "maggot" and a "worm" could claim to be righteous before a holy God (v. 6). If what Bildad maintained before was true, namely, that all the wicked suffer, then everyone would be suffering, and no one would experience the prosperous life Bildad claimed belonged to the righteous.

26:1 Job's eighth reply rebuked Bildad for being utterly unhelpful (Job 25:1–6). He then spoke much more eloquently and elaborately of God's ways as being incomprehensible to mankind (vv. 1–14). Job could not agree with the theology of his friends (Job 27:1–6), and he emphatically clung to his integrity and cursed his enemies to futility and punishment—the fate of the wicked.

26:7 An understanding of space that goes beyond the notions of his day is exhibited. The thinking of the day was that the earth was a flat disc surrounded by water (v. 10).

26:14 Job understood that his knowledge of God was limited and dependent on God's revelation of Himself. This view was in contrast to the all-encompassing and certain knowledge of his friends (Deut. 29:29).¹¹

2 Corinthians 1:12-2:11

C. Explanation of Paul's Change of Plans (1:12–2:17)

1:12 The reason Paul feels he can depend on the prayers of the believers is that he has always been straightforward in his dealings with them. He can boast of his integrity toward them, and his conscience bears witness to the fact that his conduct was characterized by **simplicity and godly sincerity**, that is, the transparent genuineness that comes from God. He did not stoop to the methods of **fleshly men**, but acted openly before all with the undeserved strength (**grace**) which **God** supplied. This should have been apparent in a special way to the Corinthians.

1:13 The integrity which characterized his past dealings with the Corinthians is true also of this letter. He is **writing** exactly what he means. There is no need for them to read between the lines. The meaning is on the surface, simple and obvious. It is exactly **what they read or understand**, and he hopes that they will continue to acknowledge it **even to the end**, that is, as long as they live.

1:14 The assembly in Corinth had acknowledged Paul **in part**, that is, some of the believers had acknowledged him but not all. The loyal ones understood these two facts—that they would be proud of him and that he would be proud of them **in the day of the Lord Jesus**. **The day of the Lord Jesus** looks forward particularly to the Judgment Seat of Christ when the service of the redeemed will be evaluated and rewarded. When Paul looked forward to that tribunal, he invariably saw the faces of those who had been saved through his ministry. They would be his joy and crown of rejoicing, and they, in turn, would rejoice that he had been God's instrument to lead them to Christ.

1:15 The expression **in this confidence** means with the **confidence** that they rejoiced in him as a true apostle of Jesus Christ, and as one whose sincerity was above question. He wanted **to come to them** with the assurance of their trust, esteem, and affection. He **intended to come** first to them **before** he went into Macedonia, and then again on the return from Macedonia. They would thus have had a **second benefit** in the sense of two visits rather than one.

1:16 The "second benefit" is further explained by verse 16. As mentioned, the plan was that when Paul left Ephesus he would cross over into Achaia, where Corinth was located, and then travel north into **Macedonia**. After having preached there, he would retrace his steps south to Corinth. He hoped that the Corinthian believers would then help him **on his way to Judea**—probably by their hospitality and prayers, but not by their money, since he later states his determination not to accept funds from them (11:7–10).

1:17 Paul's original plan never came to pass. He journeyed from Ephesus to Troas, and when he did not find Titus, he went directly to Macedonia, omitting Corinth from his itinerary. So here he asks, **"Therefore when I was planning this, did I do it lightly?"** This is probably exactly what his detractors were saying. "Fickle, changeable Paul! He says one thing and does another! Could such a man be a true apostle?" The apostle challenges the Corinthians as to whether he is undependable. When he plans, does he **plan according to** fleshly motives with the result that it is **Yes** one minute and **No** the next? Is he guided simply by considerations of comfort and expediency? Phillips catches the spirit of this verse in his paraphrase: "Because we had to change this plan, does it mean that we are fickle? Do you think I plan with my tongue in my cheek, saying 'Yes' and meaning 'No'?"

1:18 Paul seems to pass from his **word** concerning his travel plans to his preaching. Perhaps his critics were saying that if he was undependable in his ordinary conversation, then his preaching could not be trusted.

1:19 Paul argues that his actions were not untrustworthy because the Savior he preached was the divine, unchangeable One in whom there was no vacillation or changeableness. When he first visited Corinth with **Silvanus and Timothy** (Acts 18:5), they had preached the trustworthy **Son of God**. "The message was not unstable because it concerned **the Son of God** who was not vacillating." The argument is that no one who preaches the Lord Jesus in the Spirit could possibly act the way his critics had accused him. Denney says, "Paul's argument here could have been used by a hypocrite, but no critic could ever have invented it." How could he preach a faithful God and himself be unfaithful to his own word?

1:20 All the promises of God, no matter how many they are, find their fulfillment *in Christ*. All who find **in Him** the fulfillment of God's promises add their **Amen**:

We open our Bibles at a promise, we look up to God, and God says, "You can have all that through Christ." Trusting Christ, we say, "Amen" to God. God speaks through Christ, and we believe in Christ; Christ reaches down and faith stretches up, and every promise of God is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. In and through Him we appropriate and take them to ourselves and say, "Yes, Lord; I trust You." This is the believing yes.

¹¹ Thomas Nelson, I. (1995). *The Woman's Study Bible* (Job 23:1–26:14). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

All of this is **to the glory of God through us**. Denney writes: “He is glorified when it dawns on human souls that He has spoken good concerning them beyond their utmost imaginings, and when that good is seen to be indubitably safe and sure in His Son.”

The two words **through us**, remind the Corinthians that it was **through** the preaching of men like Silvanus, Timothy, and Paul that they had ever come to claim the promises of God in Christ. If the apostle was a fraud, as his enemies charged, then could it be that God had used a cheat and a liar to effect such marvelous results? The answer, of course, is no.

1:21 Paul next shows that the Corinthians and he were all bound in the same bundle of life. **God** had established them in the faith, confirming them **in Christ** by the ministry of the word of God. He had also **anointed** them with **the Spirit**, qualifying, empowering, and teaching them.

1:22 He **also** had **sealed** them and **given** them **the Spirit in their hearts as a guarantee**. Here we have two more ministries of the Holy Spirit. The seal is the mark of ownership and security. **The Spirit** indwelling the believer is the mark that the believer now belongs to God and that he is eternally secure. The seal, of course, is invisible. People do not know that we are Christians by some badge we wear, but only by the evidences of a Spirit-filled life. God has also **given** them **the Spirit in their hearts as a guarantee** or downpayment in pledge that the entire inheritance will follow. When God saves a man, He gives him the indwelling Holy **Spirit**. Just as surely as a man receives **the Spirit**, so surely will he enter into the full inheritance of God. The same kind of blessings which the Holy Spirit makes real in our lives today will be ours in full measure in a day yet future.

1:23 From verse 23 through verse 4 of chapter 2, Paul returns to the charge of vacillation that had been made against him and gives a straightforward explanation of why he did not visit Corinth as planned. Since no man could discern the real inward motives of Paul’s action, he calls **God to witness** to this fact. If the apostle had visited **Corinth** at the time planned, he would have had to deal very firmly with the situation there. He would have had to deliver a personal rebuke to the saints because of their carelessness in tolerating sin in the assembly. It was **to spare** them pain and sadness that Paul delayed his trip **to Corinth**.

1:24 But having said that, the Apostle Paul would not want anyone to think that he was acting as a dictator over the Corinthians. And so he adds here, “**Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are fellow workers for your joy; for by faith you stand.**” It was not that the apostle wanted to lord it **over** their Christian **faith**. He did not want them to think of him as a tyrant. Rather, he and his co-workers were merely helpers of their **joy**, that is, he only wanted to do what would assist them in their Christian pathway and thus add to their enjoyment.

The latter part of verse 24 may also be rendered “for *in* faith you stand *fast*.” That is, there was no need for them to be corrected as to their faith, for in that sphere they stood firm enough. The matters he sought to correct were not matters of doctrine as much as of practical behavior in the church.

2:1 This verse continues the thought from the last two verses of chapter 1. Paul further explains that the reason he did not go to Corinth as planned was that he did not want to cause them the **sorrow** that would inevitably follow a rebuke from him. The words **I determined ... I would not come again to you in sorrow** seems to imply that he had made a sorrowful or painful visit subsequent to the first visit recorded in Acts 18:1–17. Such an interim visit may also be implied in 2 Corinthians 12:14; 13:1.

2:2 If the apostle came to Corinth with a personal rebuke to the Christians, he would of course sadden them. In that case, he too would be saddened because they were the very people to whom he was looking for joy. As Ryrie puts it, “If I hurt you, who will be left to make me glad but sad people? That wouldn’t be any comfort.”

2:3 Rather than cause this mutual **sorrow** through a personal visit, the Apostle Paul decided to write a letter. His hope was that the Letter would accomplish the desired result, that the Corinthians would exercise discipline in connection with the offending brother, and that Paul’s next visit would not be clouded by strained relations between this people he so dearly loved and himself.

Does the letter referred to in the first part of verse 3 refer to the First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, or to some other letter which no longer exists today? Many believe that it could not be 1 Corinthians because of the description in verse 4, that it was written out of much affliction and anguish of heart, and with many tears. Other scholars feel that the description here fits the First Epistle very well. It is possible that Paul wrote a stern letter to Corinth that is no longer available. Presumably he wrote it after the sorrowful visit (2 Cor. 2:1) and appointed Titus to deliver it. Such a letter may be referred to in 2:4, 9; 7:8, 12.

Whichever view is correct, the thought in verse 3 is that Paul **wrote** them as he did so that when he visited them, he would not **have sorrow over** the sadness of those who should give him **joy**. He had confidence that the same things that brought **joy** to him would bring **joy** to them also. In the context, this means that the godly handling of the discipline problem would result in mutual rejoicing.

2:4 In this verse we have keen insight into the heart of a great pastor. Paul was deeply pained by the fact that sin had been tolerated in the assembly at Corinth. It caused him **much affliction and anguish of heart**, and hot **tears** of sorrow flowed down his cheeks. It is obvious that the apostle was more affected by sin in Corinth than the Corinthians themselves were. They should not interpret this letter as an attempt to hurt their feelings, but rather as a proof of his **love** for them. He

hoped that, by his writing, they would have sufficient time to remedy the situation, so that his subsequent visit to them would be a joyful one. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend." We should not resent it if we are counseled or warned in a godly manner. Rather, we should realize that any person who would do this really has an interest in us. Righteous rebuke should be taken as from the Lord, and we should be grateful for it.

2:5 From verse 5 through verse 11, the apostle refers more directly to the incident that had caused the difficulty. Notice the extreme grace and Christian consideration which he shows. Not once does he name the offense or the offender. The expression "**if anyone has caused grief**" may refer to the incestuous man of 1 Corinthians 5:1, or to someone else who had caused trouble in the assembly. We will assume that it refers to the former. Paul did not regard it as a personal offence against himself. It had caused **grief to all the believers to some extent**.

2:6 The believers at Corinth had agreed on disciplinary action for the offender. Apparently they had excommunicated him from the church. As a result of this action, he had become truly repentant and had been restored to the Lord. Now Paul tells the Corinthians that the man's **punishment** has been **sufficient**. They should not needlessly prolong it. In the latter part of the verse, we find the expression **which was inflicted by** "the many" (lit.). Some believe that "the many" means **the majority**. Others insist that it means *all* the members *except* the one disciplined. The latter deny that a **majority** decision is sufficient in church matters. They say that where the Spirit of God is allowed to lead, there should be unanimous action.

2:7, 2:8 Now that the man has become thoroughly repentant, the Corinthians should **forgive and** seek to strengthen **him** by receiving him back into their fellowship. If they do not do this, there is the danger that he might be **swallowed up with too much sorrow**, that is, he might despair of the reality of his forgiveness and go on in constant gloom and discouragement.

The Corinthians could **reaffirm their love to him** by opening wide their arms and receiving him back with joy and tenderness.

2:9 In writing the First Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul had **put the saints to the test**. Here was an opportunity for them to show whether they were **obedient** to the word of the Lord, as ministered to them by the Apostle Paul. He had suggested at that time that they should put the man out of the fellowship of the church. That is exactly what they did, thus proving themselves to be truly **obedient**. Now Paul would have them go one step further, that is, to receive the man back.

2:10 Phillips paraphrases verse 10, "If you will forgive a certain person, rest assured that I forgive him too. Insofar as I had anything personally to forgive, I do forgive him, as before Christ." Paul wants the saints to know that he is thoroughly in fellowship with them as they forgive the repentant offender. If he had had **anything** to forgive, he does **forgive** it for the sake of the Corinthians, and as **in the presence of Christ**.

The emphasis in this letter on church discipline is an index of its importance. Yet it is a subject that is all but neglected in many evangelical churches today. It is another instance where we can profess to believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures, yet refuse to obey them when it suits our purposes.

2:11 Just as there is danger for an assembly if it does not take disciplinary action when called for, so there is a danger of not exercising forgiveness when true repentance has taken place. **Satan** is always ready to step into a situation such as this with his cunning devices. In the first case, he will wreck the testimony of an assembly through tolerated sin, and in the second, he will overwhelm the repentant person with overmuch sorrow, if the assembly does not restore him. If Satan can't destroy by immorality, he will try by the unmeasured sorrow following repentance.

Commenting on the expression "**we are not ignorant of his devices**", J. Sidlow Baxter says:

Satan uses all manner of stratagems to turn souls from the truth: a sieve to "sift" them (Luke 22:31), "devices" to trick (as in our text), "weeds" to "choke" (Matt. 13:22), "wiles" to intrigue (Eph. 6:11), the roaring of a lion to terrify (1 Pet. 5:8), the disguise of an angel to deceive (2 Cor. 11:14) and "snares" to entangle them (2 Tim. 2:26).

2:12 Paul now resumes the subject of his change in plans where he left off in verse 4. He had not gone to Corinth as he previously announced he would. The previous verses explained that his failure to visit Corinth was to avoid doing so in a harsh spirit of rebuke. In verses 12 through 17, Paul tells exactly what did happen to him at this important point in his ministry. As mentioned before, Paul left Ephesus and journeyed **to Troas** in hopes of meeting Titus there and receiving news from Corinth. When he got to Troas, some wonderful **door** of opportunity **opened** out before him **by the Lord** for preaching **Christ's gospel**.

2:13 In spite of this golden opportunity, Paul's **spirit** was troubled. **Titus** was not there to meet him. The burden of the Corinthian church lay heavily on the apostle's heart. Should he stay in Troas and preach the gospel of Christ? Or should he press on into Macedonia? His decision was made; he would cross over into **Macedonia**. One wonders what the reaction of the Corinthians was when they read these words. Did they realize, perhaps with a trifle of shame, that it was *their* behavior which caused such restlessness in the life of the apostle, and which resulted in his having to refuse a wonderful gospel opportunity in order to learn of their spiritual welfare?

2:14 Paul was not defeated. No matter where he went in the service of Christ there was victory. And so he bursts out in thanksgiving: **But thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ**. A.T. Robertson says:

Without a word of explanation, Paul leaps out of the Slough of Despond and sprints like a bird to the heights of joy. He soars aloft like an eagle, with proud scorn of the valley beneath him.

Paul here borrows a figure from the triumphal processions of Roman conquerors. Returning home after glorious victories, they would lead their captives along the streets of the capital. Incense bearers would march along both sides, and the **fragrance** of the incense would permeate the scene. So Paul pictures the Lord marching as a conqueror from Troas to Macedonia, and leading the apostle in His train. Wherever the Lord goes, through His servants, there is victory. **The fragrance of the knowledge** of Christ is diffused through the apostle in every place. F. B. Meyer writes:

Wherever they went men knew Jesus better; the loveliness of the Master's character became more apparent. Men became aware of a subtle fragrance, poured upon the air, which attracted them to the Man of Nazareth.

Thus Paul does not feel that he has suffered a defeat in his warfare with Satan, but the Lord has won a victory and Paul shares it.

2:15 In the triumphal processions to which Paul refers, the fragrance of the incense meant glorious victory to the conquerors, but it spoke of doom for the captives. Thus the apostle notes that the preaching of the gospel has a twofold effect. It signifies one thing **among those who are being saved**, and something altogether different **among those who are perishing**. To those who accept it, it is a pledge of a glorious future; to others it is an omen of doom. But **God** is glorified in either case, for to Him it is **the fragrance** of grace in the one case and of justice in the other. F. B. Meyer states it well:

When, therefore, we are told that we may be to God a sweet savour of Christ, it must be meant that we may so live as to recall to the mind of God what Jesus was in His mortal career. It is as though, as God watches us from day to day, He should see Jesus in us, and be reminded (speaking after the manner of men) of that blessed life which was offered as an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour.

2:16 To the saved, Christians **are the aroma of life leading to life**, but to the perishing, **the aroma of death leading to death**. We are what Phillips calls "the refreshing fragrance of life itself," bringing life to those who believe, but the "deathly smell of doom" to those who refuse to believe. This twofold effect is beautifully illustrated in an incident in the OT. When the ark of God was captured by the Philistines, it caused death and destruction as long as it was among them (1 Sam. 5). But when it was brought back to the house of Obed-Edom, it brought blessing and prosperity for him and for his household (2 Sam. 6:11). As Paul contemplates the tremendous responsibility of preaching the message that has such far-reaching consequences, he cries out, "**And who is sufficient for these things?**"

2:17 The connection between verse 17 and verse 16 is better seen if we supply the words "We are." "Who is sufficient for these things? We are, because we **are not ... peddling the word of God**", etc. (But this still must be understood in conjunction with 3:5 where Paul says that his sufficiency is from God.) The **so many** refers to the Judaizing teachers who sought to turn the Corinthians away from the apostle. What were these men like? Paul says they peddled, huckstered, or made merchandise of **the word of God**. They had mercenary motives. They tried to turn the ministry into a profitable profession. This same word for **peddling** was also used of those who adulterated wine, often by adding to it. And so these false teachers sought to adulterate the word of God by adding their own doctrines to it. They sought, for instance, to mix law and grace.

Paul was not one of those who adulterated or merchandised the word of God. Rather, he could describe his ministry by four significant expressions. The *first* is **as of sincerity**. This means "as of transparency." His ministry was an honest one. There was no trickery or subterfuge in connection with it. Everything was out in the open. Robertson humorously explains the meaning of this expression: "Paul's berries were as good at the bottom as at the top."

Secondly, he describes his service **as from God**. In other words, everything he spoke was **from God**. God was the source of his message, and it was **from God** he derived the strength to carry on. *Then* he adds **in the sight of God**. This means that the apostle served the Lord, conscious of the fact that **God** was always looking down upon him. He had a real sense of responsibility to God and realized that nothing could be hidden from the eye of God. *Then finally* he adds, **we speak ... in Christ**. This means that he spoke in the name of **Christ**, with the authority of **Christ**, and as a spokesman for **Christ**.¹²

Psalm 41:1-13; Proverbs 22:5-6

¹² MacDonald, W. (1995). *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*. (A. Farstad, Ed.) (pp. 1822–1827). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

August 28

Job 28:1-30:31

28:1 Job's monologues began with a discourse on wisdom (vv. 1–28). Wisdom is not found in the creation but in the Creator (vv. 20–28). As if for a court case, Job then presented:

- 1) his past blessed days when he was in obvious favor with God and highly esteemed by men (Job 29:1–25),
- 2) his present time of loss and calamity when even worthless men taunted him (Job 30:1–31), and
- 3) His plaintiff cry for a future audience with the Almighty to present his case (Job 31:1–40).

In recounting his blameless life, Job opened himself to curses if he had misstepped or if he had hidden iniquity in his heart.

28:28 The fear of the Lord. Both Job and his friends claimed wisdom of themselves. Although personified, wisdom is clearly a manifestation of God Himself and not merely something to be obtained. Although we can know and understand many things, we cannot attain to this level of Creator-wisdom. Job knew that true wisdom is not found in human understanding but is from God alone (Prov. 1:7; 9:10).

29:12–17 Job's righteous deeds are in marked contrast to Eliphaz's accusations (Job 22:5–9).

30:11 What God has done to Job is pictured as a loosed bowstring. Without a tight bowstring, the bow is useless and the archer powerless. Job felt useless, defenseless, and aggravated.

30:20–23 Job's afflictions were unbearable and yet bearable because they had been permitted by God, who, in Job's understanding, had suddenly turned against him without reason or disclosure. Job was baffled by the silence of God. The word translated “oppose” (Heb. *satan*, lit. “to act hatefully,” v. 21) is probably a play on words with the name for Satan (Heb. *satan*, lit. “to accuse”; see Job 1:6–12; 2:1–7). Job felt that God was opposing him and acting hatefully toward him even as Satan would. Ironically, Job was accurate in that God had *permitted* Job's adversities, which were conceived and delivered by Satan.

30:31 Job's voice, like the harp and the flute, once sang tunes of joy and happiness, but now rendered dirges and mourning.

31:1–40 Job was desperate to proclaim his own righteousness. He invoked four curses to come upon himself if he was not found innocent (vv. 8, 10, 22, 40). In so doing, his blameless stand before God was all the more bold (vv. 35–37).

31:1 Job was careful not to let lust have a chance by covenanting with his eyes to remain blameless (James 1:14, 15). People fall into sin when they allow their desire to sin to be conceived and grow.

31:9, 10 The sin of adultery, which involved a relationship with another man's wife, was serious because of its damage to the family. This section details sins to which strong men are exposed. Although the words for “grind” (Heb. *tachan*) and “bow down over” (Heb. *kara*.) may suggest the servitude of one to another, the sexual connotations of the context cannot be denied. This curse is particularly humiliating and heinous. Adultery is described as a fire because of the destructiveness of illicit sexual passion (v. 12). For the wife to suffer because of her husband's adultery—a sin committed against her—is entirely comprehensible because of the nature of the family. Certainly this would explain partially Job's determination to avoid adultery.

32:1 The significance of Elihu's speeches is greatly debated among scholars. Elihu was not implicated with the other three friends as having spoken wrongly and as having needed Job's prayers of intercession in the end. Therefore, some say that Elihu added another much needed dimension to the discussion on suffering, balancing out the dogmatic theology of the other three. Yet because of his arrogant tone, moralistic verbosity, and his lapse into accusations similar to the other friends against Job, other scholars do not deem his words as comprehensive or substantive.

Some suggest that Elihu's speech could be a later interpolation into the text because of its relatively inferior poetry when compared with the rest of the book and because there is no mention of him or his words before or after

he speaks. Some consider his speech to be an untimely interruption that detracts from Job's impassioned challenge to God. Others think of the speech as preparation for Job to hear God. God's lack of comment on Elihu's words could be interpreted as either agreement with or indifference toward his words. At any rate, Elihu's speech is considered more positively than the speeches of the other three.

32:6 The argument of Elihu's first speech. Disappointed in what his elders had to say, Elihu claimed to have the Spirit of God (v. 8; Job 33:4) and even perfect knowledge (Job 36:4) to be the "spokesman" that Job has been needing (Job 33:6). He accused Job of unrighteousness for insisting on his own innocence and demanding an answer from God (Job 33:8–22). He affirmed that God would never do anything unrighteous (Job 34:10–12) nor speak to men through their dreams, their afflictions, or even through a mediator.

33:23, 24 The way of God is to bring us back to Himself through repentance. In His grace He may send a "mediator" to help the sinner learn the lesson God wants him to learn and thus to "ransom" him from death. The passage may be pointing the way to the future Messiah-Mediator who truly ransoms, delivers, and redeems (see 1 Tim. 2:5, 6).

34:1 The argument of Elihu's second speech fiercely defended God's right to act sovereignly, a point never debated by Job. He accused Job of speaking in ignorance and rebellion, though God never chastised Job for such attitudes. He accused Job of complaining that there would be no profit to refraining from sin (a statement Satan had hoped to get Job to say, though Job refused). Yet, even if Job were being punished for maintaining his innocence, the question remains as to the nature of the sins for which he was being punished in the first place.

35:1–16 The argument of Elihu's third speech was that Job thought too much of himself when he protested his unjust punishment to God. Elihu claimed that a person's righteousness or unrighteousness affected mainly him and not God (vv. 7, 8). God receives nothing from man's righteousness (see Job 22:2, note). Thus Job's many words are meaningless. But Scripture teaches that while God is dependent on mankind for nothing, He is pleased with obedience (see Job 1:8; 2:3; Matt. 25:21, 23) and grieved by disobedience (see Ps. 78:40; Matt. 25:26, 30). Elihu's theology lacked this basic knowledge of the personal God.

36:1 The argument of Elihu's fourth speech continued to expound the theology of retribution both positively (God blesses the righteous, vv. 5–12) and negatively (God judges the wicked, vv. 13–21). He encouraged Job to listen and learn from God and repent. He ended by expounding about how God speaks in and through His magnificent creation, making Him worthy of our fear and awe. Although essentially Elihu did not say anything new, he did prepare Job for God's speeches.

38:1 God appeared to Job out of the whirlwind. Such both hides and displays his power (compare Ezek. 1:1–4, 26–28). It is an awesome thing to be in the presence of the Lord (Ex. 19:10–25; 33:17–23). God began to ask Job rhetorical questions related to Creator-wisdom that Job could not answer (Job 38:1–3). His questions showed His dominion over the creation of the earth, the sea, time, death, light and darkness, the weather, the heavens, and the animals—both wild and domestic (Job 38:4–39:30). The one who cannot answer these questions about the universe dare not correct the One who planned and maintains it (Job 38:4–7).

That God speaks so much about nature rather than about moral issues is surprising, especially to western readers who have been taught a subtle bias against natural theology, which claims that God is revealed through nature. The Book of Job shows no such aversion. Instead of trying to crush Job with His infinite knowledge and wisdom, God gave him dignity by speaking to him about these things. God's speeches emphasize that if Job can trust God to run the universe, he can trust God to run his life.

38:2, 3 Job showed a lack of understanding when he questioned God. His very words demonstrated a lack of wisdom. God asked the questions of Job.

38:7 The morning stars, perhaps Venus or Mercury, and the "sons of God" or angels together sang in joyful praise at the creation scene. How awesome it would be to hear the whole universe praising the Creator.

38:31–33 Mazzaroth may refer to a particular constellation or star but cannot be identified with certainty. The picture is one of God leading the stars as if on a chain, binding or harnessing them to cross the skies, then loosening them at the journey's end. This figurative language displays God's sovereign power over the heavenlies (see Job 9:9; Amos 5:8).

39:13–18 The ostrich, which was thought to be stupid because of its awkward appearance, displayed God's sovereignty in creation. The ostrich also has a seemingly hazardous way of raising its young. Yet this heaviest of all birds, though unable to fly, can outrun a fast horse.

40:3–5 Job's first response to God. Suddenly aware of his own base position, Job was stunned into silence. However, he did not confess wrongdoing in what he had said.

40:6–41:34 The themes of God's second speech. Job did not dare criticize the judgment of God. Job was not powerful enough to judge the world; he was not even able to contend with two of the most fierce and untamed of God's creatures—behemoth on the land and Leviathan in the sea. Job could not harness God's handiwork (see Job 38:1, note). God's speeches notably did not address any of the issues that Job had been wanting to discuss, nor did they explain why all these adversities had happened to Job. While we might expect God to explain Satan's propositions concerning Job, no such words were offered. Job's greatest need was not to know why things happened but to know Who was in control.

40:15 Behemoth, though unknown, is sometimes identified with the hippopotamus. The language used is both poetic and hyperbolic but nonetheless describes an animal of great strength, which, though feared by man, is used of God for His own purposes.

41:1 Leviathan, a great sea creature, is unknown, but the description seems to fit that of the crocodile. This is not necessarily a mythical creature. "Leviathan" is used symbolically as the object of God's wrath (see Is. 27:1; compare Rev. 12:9). In any case, the point made is that Job, and mankind, cannot control such fearsome creatures. Yet God will use such a beast for His own purposes.

42:1–6 Upon seeing God through the whirlwind, Job was completely humbled, and he repented (Job 38:1). Job finally realized that God, and God alone, runs the universe.

ATTRIBUTES OF GOD: HE IS OMNIPOTENT

God can do anything, and He gets things done. However, He cannot lie (Titus 1:2); He can neither be tempted Himself nor tempt anyone with evil (James 1:13); He cannot be in fellowship with sin (Hab. 1:13). These are not weaknesses or inadequacies but rather are perfections of His power.

God is the source of His own power. Who else can create anything by mere words (Ps. 33:9)! From wonders viewed only by means of high-powered microscopes to those viewed through high-powered telescopes, God's power is on display for all to see (Ps. 19:1–4).

God uses His power for His children to conquer death, to provide salvation; to complete their transformation; to equip them for service; to protect, provide, and preserve them; and to secure our inheritance (Rom. 8:31).

If God were not all-powerful, His mercy would be helpless pity, His justice an empty threat, His knowledge useless information, and His love pure frustration. Ultimate power has been coveted by both angels and mankind, but the throne is occupied (Rev. 4:2, 3), and there is no danger of a dethronement (Ps. 93:2–4). God reigns without rival (Ps. 86:8–10).

See also Gen. 17:1; 18:14; 1 Chr. 29:11–13; Ps. 115:3; 147:4–6; Jer. 32:17; Lam. 3:22, note; Matt. 19:26; Luke 1:37; Rev. 19:6; notes on Attributes of God (Ex. 33; Deut. 4; 32; 2 Chr. 19; Job 23; Ps. 25; 90; 102; 119; Is. 6; 65; Jer. 23; Rom. 2; Eph. 1; 1 John 5); Authority (John 19); Government and Citizenship (Rom. 13); Spiritual Warfare (Neh. 4; Eph. 6)

42:6 Job did not claim to be sinless, but he was in right standing with God. He did not confess alleged overt sins as bringing about his suffering. Yet he did confess his lack of faith in God and his bitterness of attitude during the time of his suffering (vv. 4–6).

42:7 God accused Job's three friends of speaking in a wrong way about Him, His ways, and His reasons for allowing affliction. Although what they said about God was typical theological jargon, it was distorted and incomplete.

42:8 Seven bulls and seven rams was considered an exceptionally large sacrifice for three men, thus indicating how serious their sins were to God (see Ezek. 45:21–25). Although Job's friends did not pray for him, Job was instructed to be their intercessor. This privilege assigned to Job showed God's high regard for him and vindicated Job from the guilt assigned to him by his friends. The words of Job's wife and of the three friends were contrary to the wisdom of God (see Job 28:28; Prov. 9).

42:10 The restoration of a double portion of his losses was a gracious gift from God, not a reward for Job's goodness or restitution owed him.

42:11 The gifts are typical of the patriarchal period and are customarily given after a calamity. However, Job was prosperous because of God, not because of the generosity of his family and friends.

42:7–17 The Lord vindicated Job, who took an active role in restoring his three friends. God did not punish the three friends but offered forgiveness. No complaints were heard from Job.

Without the epilogue, one might get the idea that the greatest result of faith was suffering, which could suggest a sadistic faith in a sadistic God. Suffering itself has no intrinsic value, but it does serve as a testing ground for true identity and beliefs. It is also a "hothouse" for character growth and development. While no one can deny that worship is wonderful when everything is going well, only the broken heart knows a closeness with the Lord that is even more blessed. Yet God will not leave His people broken or bewildered forever. The question is not whether God will reward the righteous and punish the wicked, but *when* He will do it. Whether it happens sooner or later, on earth or in heaven, rewards will indeed be given in God's perfect timing.

Job's Beautiful Daughters

Job's first daughters must have lived a life of privilege and honor among their brothers. They were regularly invited to join their brothers in family feasts, and their father regularly interceded for their sins, known or unknown. However, when Satan began to try Job, all the children were killed as the roof literally crushed them during a banquet. When Job had come through the trials, God restored to him everything he had lost twofold, except for the number of his children. Job was given the same number of children he originally had, seven sons and three daughters. Of the new children Job was given, only the three daughters were mentioned by name. Jemimah means "turtle-dove," a name that was often used of a bride, describing her fine form and lovely voice. Keziah was the name of a fragrant plant, cassia, which was a prized variety of cinnamon. Keren-Happuch was a horn of eye paint, usually black, that was used to draw attention to a woman's eyes. This was probably the equivalent of modern day eyeliner. These daughters were known for their unparalleled beauty.

The naming of the daughters rather than the sons was unusual as was the fact that Job's daughters were given an inheritance along with their brothers. According to Israelite law (Num. 27:1–11; 36:1–13), daughters were allowed to inherit if there were no sons. Thus Job's gift of an inheritance to his daughters is a special act of grace. This inheritance would allow the daughters to remain in the midst of the family with their brothers and to continue the close affectionate relationships that existed among them. Some commentators speculate that such an inheritance was a sign of Job's new great wealth, while others thought it was a sign of a new generosity that came out of his sufferings. Still another has suggested that it was a sign of gratitude for his new family. Certainly throughout his ordeal, **Job had learned to go beyond the letter of the law to the Author of the law, who in the end did not pay Job wages deserved but rewarded Job according to His grace.**

See also Job 1:18; notes on Attributes of God (Ps. 25; Is. 65); Inheritance (Prov. 13)¹³

2 Corinthians 2:12-17

Psalm 42:1-11; Proverbs 22:7

¹³ Thomas Nelson, I. (1995). *The Woman's Study Bible* (Job 28:1–42:11). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

JOB NOTES: The book is one long poem from a Master story teller. Author is not known.

Job: A Suffering Primer

Job give a human voice to suffering.

Job Counters:

God's behavior is always predictable.

He always acts according to certain basic rules/morals/principals and spiritual laws.

“As we read Job, we are challenged to reexamine all of our general statements about God's goodness, power, justice, and love and to consider the ways in which such statements, while true to a point, fail to fully describe God's character.” Wisdom Literature Scott Ellington

Job = Refuses to allow us to reduce God in His sovereignty to a set of rules and guiding principles. We are consistently forced to return to God himself for fresh insights and a deeper relationship.” Wisdom Literature Scott Ellington

Point of Job: God answers with His presence.

Does God 'allow' testing?

Initiate it?

Luke 22:31-32

³¹ “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift each of you like wheat. ³² But I have pleaded in prayer for you, Simon, that your faith should not fail. So when you have repented and turned to me again, strengthen your brothers.”

“The cross makes God the object of undeserved judgment and a participant in all human suffering.”

Wisdom Literature Scott Ellington

Job's Friends: Their motivation is FEAR.

“They are acting, not out of love and concern for Job, but out of their own need for a secure understanding of who God is and how He ALWAYS acts, which has been threatened by the suffering of one who appears to be innocent.” Wisdom Literature Scott Ellington

They reshape the facts to fit their theology of God.

Retributional justice.

Problem of evil.

Innocent suffering.

“evil for which, at times, God appears responsible.”

God responds but does NOT answer with words, His answer is Himself.

You are forever changed when out walk through hard with God.

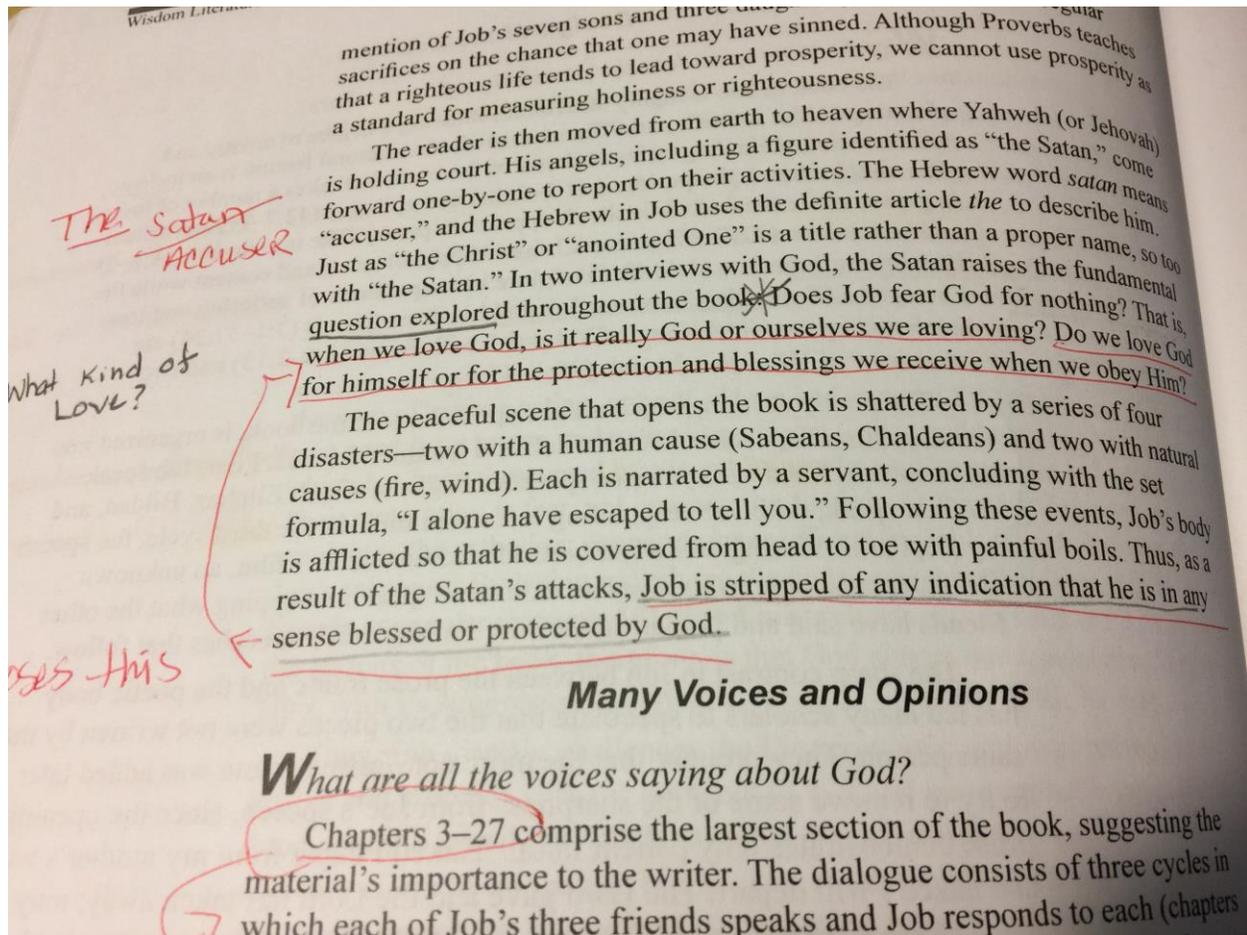
Is this change a choice of two ways or a spectrum?

Acceptance, with God – Denial, away from God

The Satan (basically The Adversary. No name is given to the enemy until the Gospels where the enemy is given the name Satan.).

The Lie: “Goodness cannot survive in the real world of human pain.”

[The Message of JOB. Atkinson, David. The Bible Speaks Today. Inter Varsity Press. Pg. 21]



Job 9:32-33 Messianic??

Job's friends: Not Israelites. Use experience to develop their theology.

Mysterious Elihu: means "He is my God"

"His speeches foreshadow what God will say. He honors God's creation and His creative power. Elihu seeks to remove God from the arena of human critique and judgment. God is above question."

Wisdom Literature Scott Ellington

God accomplishes two things:

1st, He changes the subject. The inference could hardly be plainer: Job and his friends have not only found the wrong answers; they have been asking the wrong questions. 2nd: God enlarges Job's horizon to see his own reasoning in comparison to that of the Creator of the universe.

Job's response in **42:5**

*I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear,
but now my eye sees you; ESV
I had only heard about you before,
but now I have seen you with my own eyes. NLT*

Contemporary culture needs to fit Job into its understanding:

“As heirs of the Enlightenment and representatives of the ‘modern scientific world view’, our normal procedure is to list a series of problems, identify their causes, and then propose solutions based on a scientific analysis of the situation. We normally proceed on the assumption that there must in principle be a solution which proper research can identify and proper techniques can deliver.”

[L. Newbigin, “The Other side of 1984 (World Council of Churches, 1983) pp. 18-19. In ‘The Message of JOB. Atkinson, David. Pg. 13. The Bible Speaks Today. Inter Varsity Press]

This process places humanity at the center of this process. Human understanding is the procurer/conduit of ‘grace’.

S/G

Looking at the problem of Job in a scientific model: Identify what is happening. List all the reasons why it could be happening. Search for clues to which reason is the answer.

“We are forced to rethink our prejudices; rethink our theology; rethink the meaning of pastoral care in the face of injustice and suffering; rethink what we say about God.” [The Message of JOB. Atkinson, David. The Bible Speaks Today. Inter Varsity Press Pg 15]

Why do the innocent suffer? The book of Job does not answer this question. It does, however, show us HOW to live with the unanswered questions that arise within a life of Faith.

What problems arise from people “insisting on treating suffering only as a problem to be solved, rather than being willing to cope with the uncertainty of facing its mystery”?

[The Message of JOB. Atkinson, David. The Bible Speaks Today. Inter Varsity Press. Pg. 16]

Question: Do we also not want to face its misery? Is our reluctance to care and be a part of the misery a motivating factor to place blame for misery on the sin these people did and this is what they deserve?

The Book of JOB: “Where earthly and heavenly realities are placed side by side.”

[The Message of JOB. Atkinson, David. The Bible Speaks Today. Inter Varsity Press. Pg. 16]

Can God still be good and ‘allow’ this type of human misery?

Is not Virtue rewarded and Evil punished? Does disaster have to make sense?

Psalm 1 VS Psalm 42/73

Extrinsic religion VS Intrinsic religion

Extrinsic: God serves as a means for some other end. Blessings. Status. Belonging. Bringing peace.

Intrinsic: God is life. Knowing God is the target of belief.

Why do we serve God? What do we get out of it?

[The Message of JOB. Atkinson, David. The Bible Speaks Today. Inter Varsity Press. Pg. 21]

S/G

What are signs/behaviors/statements that one has adopted an ‘extrinsic’ mindset regarding Faith?

What are signs/behaviors/statements that one has adopted an ‘intrinsic’ mindset regarding Faith?

According to the Book of Job, what definition does it give to The Adversary? To spiritual warfare?

Psalm 1

*Oh, the joys of those who do not
follow the advice of the wicked,
or stand around with sinners,
or join in with mockers.*

² *But they delight in the law of the Lord,
meditating on it day and night.*

³ *They are like trees planted along the riverbank,
bearing fruit each season.*

*Their leaves never wither,
and they prosper in all they do.*

⁴ *But not the wicked!
They are like worthless chaff, scattered by the wind.*

⁵ *They will be condemned at the time of judgment.
Sinners will have no place among the godly.*

⁶ *For the Lord watches over the path of the godly,
but the path of the wicked leads to destruction.*

Psalm 42

For the choir director: A psalm^[a] of the descendants of Korah.

¹ *As the deer longs for streams of water,
so I long for you, O God.*

² *I thirst for God, the living God.
When can I go and stand before him?*

³ *Day and night I have only tears for food,
while my enemies continually taunt me, saying,
“Where is this God of yours?”*

⁴ *My heart is breaking
as I remember how it used to be:
I walked among the crowds of worshipers,
leading a great procession to the house of God,
singing for joy and giving thanks
amid the sound of a great celebration!*

⁵ *Why am I discouraged?
Why is my heart so sad?*

*I will put my hope in God!
I will praise him again—
my Savior and ⁶ my God!*

*Now I am deeply discouraged,
but I will remember you—*

*even from distant Mount Hermon, the source of the
Jordan,*

from the land of Mount Mizar.

⁷ *I hear the tumult of the raging seas
as your waves and surging tides sweep over me.*

⁸ *But each day the Lord pours his unfailing love upon
me,*

*and through each night I sing his songs,
praying to God who gives me life.*

⁹ *“O God my rock,” I cry,
“Why have you forgotten me?*

*Why must I wander around in grief,
oppressed by my enemies?”*

¹⁰ *Their taunts break my bones.
They scoff, “Where is this God of yours?”*

¹¹ *Why am I discouraged?
Why is my heart so sad?*

*I will put my hope in God!
I will praise him again—
my Savior and my God!*

Psalm 73

A psalm of Asaph.

¹ Truly God is good to Israel,
to those whose hearts are pure.
² But as for me, I almost lost my footing.
My feet were slipping, and I was almost gone.
³ For I envied the proud
when I saw them prosper despite their wickedness.
⁴ They seem to live such painless lives;
their bodies are so healthy and strong.
⁵ They don't have troubles like other people;
they're not plagued with problems like everyone
else.
⁶ They wear pride like a jeweled necklace
and clothe themselves with cruelty.
⁷ These fat cats have everything
their hearts could ever wish for!
⁸ They scoff and speak only evil;
in their pride they seek to crush others.
⁹ They boast against the very heavens,
and their words strut throughout the earth.
¹⁰ And so the people are dismayed and confused,
drinking in all their words.
¹¹ "What does God know?" they ask.
"Does the Most High even know what's
happening?"
¹² Look at these wicked people—
enjoying a life of ease while their riches multiply.
¹³ Did I keep my heart pure for nothing?
Did I keep myself innocent for no reason?
¹⁴ I get nothing but trouble all day long;
every morning brings me pain.
¹⁵ If I had really spoken this way to others,
I would have been a traitor to your people.

¹⁶ So I tried to understand why the wicked prosper.
But what a difficult task it is!
¹⁷ Then I went into your sanctuary, O God,
and I finally understood the destiny of the wicked.
¹⁸ Truly, you put them on a slippery path
and send them sliding over the cliff to destruction.
¹⁹ In an instant they are destroyed,
completely swept away by terrors.
²⁰ When you arise, O Lord,
you will laugh at their silly ideas
as a person laughs at dreams in the morning.
²¹ Then I realized that my heart was bitter,
and I was all torn up inside.
²² I was so foolish and ignorant—
I must have seemed like a senseless animal to you.
²³ Yet I still belong to you;
you hold my right hand.
²⁴ You guide me with your counsel,
leading me to a glorious destiny.
²⁵ Whom have I in heaven but you?
I desire you more than anything on earth.
²⁶ My health may fail, and my spirit may grow weak,
but God remains the strength of my heart;
he is mine forever.
²⁷ Those who desert him will perish,
for you destroy those who abandon you.
²⁸ But as for me, how good it is to be near God!
I have made the Sovereign Lord my shelter,
and I will tell everyone about the wonderful things
you do.

Ezekiel 14:14-20 (NLT)

¹⁴ Even if Noah, Daniel, and Job were there, their righteousness would save no one but themselves, says the Sovereign Lord.
¹⁵ "Or suppose I were to send wild animals to invade the country, kill the people, and make the land too desolate and dangerous to pass through. ¹⁶ As surely as I live, says the Sovereign Lord, even if those three men were there, they wouldn't be able to save their own sons or daughters. They alone would be saved, but the land would be made desolate.
¹⁷ "Or suppose I were to bring war against the land, and I sent enemy armies to destroy both people and animals. ¹⁸ As surely as I live, says the Sovereign Lord, even if those three men were there, they wouldn't be able to save their own sons or daughters. They alone would be saved.
¹⁹ "Or suppose I were to pour out my fury by sending an epidemic into the land, and the disease killed people and animals alike. ²⁰ As surely as I live, says the Sovereign Lord, even if Noah, Daniel, and Job were there, they wouldn't be able to save their own sons or daughters. They alone would be saved by their righteousness.

James 5:11 (NLT)

¹¹ We give great honor to those who endure under suffering. For instance, you know about Job, a man of great endurance. You can see how the Lord was kind to him at the end, for the Lord is full of tenderness and mercy.

Why?

Few people have experienced the level of suffering that Job did, yet anyone who has ever tried to make sense of tragedy has struggled with the same question that occupied Job and his friends: “Why?” Job is the timeless story of human beings trying to use their finite understanding to explain calamity. Job and his friends thought bad things happened to bad people as a punishment for their sins.

But the overriding lesson of Job is that we cannot fully understand or explain misfortune because we do not have all the facts. Only God knows the complete answer to the question, “Why?” However, that need not deter us from either intellectual inquiry or attempts to comfort each other in our troubles. If anything, it should drive us to the place where Job ended up—at the feet of God, in humility, worship, and praise.

Job ended up at the feet of God, in humility, worship and praise.

CONTENTS

KEY PEOPLE IN JOB

Job (1:1)

Said to be the greatest of all the people of the East, this man lost everything he had, along with his children and health, when Satan accused God of buying his loyalty.

Job's first family of children (1:13-15)

While they were feasting at the house of their oldest brother, their lives came to a tragic end.

Job's wife (2:9)

Grief-stricken over the loss of her children, this anguished woman counseled her husband to "curse God and die."

Eliphaz (4:1)

This man may have been the oldest of three friends who came to comfort Job in his troubles.

Bildad (8:1)

Job's friend suggested that Job's children must have sinned, because they were killed suddenly.

Zophar (11:1)

This man asserted that Job deserved even more suffering than he was experiencing, because of his supposed wickedness and hypocrisy.

Elihu (32:1)

The most perceptive of Job's counselors, this man was younger than the others.

Job's second family of children (42:13-15)

Ultimately Job was given seven more sons and three more daughters.

Blaming Satan? (1:6)

The Book of Job cautions us against just blaming Satan for the troubles we face. Job and his friends disagree on the exact cause of Job's sufferings, but they all agree that people are morally responsible for the choices they make.

What Job's Friends Did Right (2:13)

Job's friends are remembered more for their condemnation of Job than for their comfort. Still, they started out with good intentions, and their actions serve as a useful pattern for intervening in the midst of a friend's distress.

Why? (7:20-21)

Faced with sudden tragedy, such as the loss of health, wealth, or a loved one, the natural question to ask is: Why? Why did this happen? Why did it happen to me? Why now?

Are You Brokenhearted or Hardhearted? (17:1)

The Bible tells us that God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. It also provides numerous illustrations of people like Job who at times fit into one category or the other.

A New Set of Friends (31:13-23)

Pain is a great leveler, as Job discovered. In the process, he found a whole new set of friends.

Aha! (42:1-6)

Have you ever puzzled long and hard over a difficult problem, only to have a sudden flash of insight? "Aha!" you may have exclaimed with a sense of satisfaction and resolution. Job came to the end of his trials with an "Aha!" experience.

Folly Is Forgivable, but Unacceptable (42:7-8)

Some people think that the only thing that matters in life is sincerity—whether one's heart is in the right place. But truth is just as important as sincerity. God will not accept "folly," or wrong thinking, about His nature and character.

Lasting Scars (42:13)

Job was blessed in his old age with the restoration of his property and a new family. Nevertheless, his trials probably left lasting scars.

AUTHOR AND SETTING

We do not know who wrote the magnificent epic poem of Job. The most we can say is that given what we know about wisdom literature, it is likely that the author was among a class of sages in the ancient world called wise men, or the wise (compare 1 Kin. 4:30-31; Job 34:2; Eccl. 12:11).

These were not the same as the wise men who came to Judea in the time of Herod, seeking the King of the Jews (Matt. 2:1-2). The wise men who produced what we call wisdom literature collected and compiled wise sayings, stories, and examples from history to illustrate fundamental truths about life. This kind of sophisticated intellectual craft can be seen in the elaborate, highly stylized structure and vocabulary of Job.

Little is known of the time and place in which the life of Job took place. The book says that he lived in the land of Uz (Job 1:1), but the exact location of Uz remains unknown. As for a date, the events may have occurred at about the time of Abraham, around 2000 A.D., though the account could have been written later.

WISDOM LITERATURE

The Book of Job illustrates a type of writing that was common in the ancient world, called wisdom literature. These works give instructions about life, either through short, practical truisms such as proverbs, or through longer, more speculative discourses like the ones we see in Job. The books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, and some of the Psalms (1, 19, 37, etc.), are other examples in the Bible of wisdom literature.

The Book of Job shows how complex and profound the issues of speculative wisdom literature can be. Job raises fundamental questions about evil, suffering, justice, the meaning of life, the value of life, and the extent to which human beings can understand God's ways. These questions are universal, and the book is essentially a cosmic drama played out on the stage of one man's experience.

YOU'LL FIND IT IN JOB

- | | |
|--|--------------------|
| All of Job's possessions and his children are taken away from him. | Job 1 |
| Job loses his health. | Job 2:1-8 |
| Job's wife tells him to "curse God and die!" | Job 2:9 |
| Job's fortunes and family are restored to him. | Job 42:7-17 |

Name means: Either “foe” or “hostile one,” or “Where is (my) father?”

Not to be confused with: A son of Issachar (Gen. 46:13), also called Jashub (Num. 26:24; 1 Chr. 7:1).

Home: The land of Uz, possibly located in the region of Edom or Bashan, though no one knows with certainty.

Family: Married to at least one wife (Job 2:9); apparently had numerous brothers and sisters (42:11); father of seven sons and three daughters (1:2) until they were killed by a great wind (1:18–19); later fathered seven more sons and three more daughters whose names are given as Jemimah, Keziah, and Keren-Happuch (42:13–14).

Occupation: Extremely prosperous rancher, said to be “the greatest of all the people of the East” prior to his adversity, as indicated by his 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 pairs of oxen, 500 female donkeys, and numerous servants (1:3); later restored to twice as much wealth (42:10, 12); also acted in the capacity of a justice of the peace for his city (29:7–25) and as a priest for his family (1:5) and friends (42:7–9).

Best known today as: One of Scripture’s primary examples of steadfast, persevering faith in the face of extreme suffering (James 5:11).

People today speak of the “patience of Job.” But Scripture indicates that the outcome of Job’s life tells us something important not only about Job, but about Job’s God. See “The Patience of Job—and the Kindness of God” at Job 1:22.

The Old Testament books of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, and Song of Solomon are written in verse, as are large portions of other books, such as Ecclesiastes and the prophets. These portions of Scripture employ many of the literary devices common to poetry everywhere. But Hebrew poetry is distinguished by its use of parallelism, in which the two lines of each couplet combine to communicate the composer’s meaning. This can occur through a:

Complement, in which the second line completes or parallels the thought introduced in the first line. For example, Job 25:4:

“How then can a man be righteous before God?
Or how can he be pure who is born of a woman?”

Comparison, in which the second line draws a comparison with something in the first line. For example, Prov. 25:18:

“A man who bears false witness against his neighbor
Is like a club, a sword, and a sharp arrow.”

Contrast, in which the second line draws a contrast with or opposes something in the first line. For example, Prov. 22:12:

“The eyes of the Lord preserve knowledge,
But He overthrows the words of the faithless.”

Climax, in which the second line answers or builds upon the first line to heighten the meaning. For example, Ps. 27:1:

“The Lord is my light and my salvation;
Whom shall I fear?”

Sometimes a third line is added to further embellish the thought. For example, Ps. 100:4:

“Enter into His gates with thanksgiving,
And into His courts with praise.
Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.”

Another literary device often used in Hebrew poetry is the acrostic, in which the successive lines of the poem begin with the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. See “An A-B-C Approach to Worship” at Ps. 112:1.

1:1

No one knows the exact location of Job's homeland, the land of Uz (Job 1:1). However, the Bible states or suggests several things about Uz:

It was located in the East (1:3). This probably means somewhere east of the Jordan River (see "The Old Testament Map" at Gen. 13:14-15).

Job's friend Eliphaz came from Teman (Job 2:11), known to be in Edom (see Gen. 36:8; Jer. 49:20). Teman was the grandson of Esau (Gen. 36:11), and the region of Teman probably was named for him. It seems appropriate that Eliphaz was a Temanite, for apparently the Temanites had a reputation for wisdom (Jer. 49:7). ("Temanite" could also refer to Tema in the Arabian Desert; compare Job 6:19.)

Uz was accessible to Sabean raiders (Job 1:15). The Sabaeans were inhabitants of Sheba, probably located in the mountainous region of southwest Arabia (now Yemen; see "The Queen of Sheba and International Trade" at 2 Chr. 9:1).

Uz was also accessible to Chaldean raiders (Job 1:17). Chaldea was the small territory of southern Babylon bordering the head of the Persian Gulf between the Arabian desert and the Euphrates delta. Jeremiah named Uz in a list of kingdoms and peoples including Judah, Egypt, Philistia, Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, Sidon, and others (Jer. 25:17-26).

The Book of Lamentations seems to indicate that Edom and Uz were nearly the same (Lam. 4:21). The parallelism of the Hebrew poetry used (see "Hebrew Poetry" at the Introduction to Job) provides perhaps the strongest indication that Edom and Uz were one and the same, or close to it.

BLAMING SATAN?

1:6 A common view today is that Satan (Job 1:6) is not a real person, but just a mythological way ancient peoples had of explaining evil and suffering. However, the Book of Job does not support that view, nor does the rest of the Bible.

Notice particularly how Satan figures in this book. He appears in the first two chapters, but then completely drops out of the narrative. Most of the rest of the book contains a discussion between Job and four of his friends as they try to make sense of Job's trials. But nothing is heard directly from or about Satan again. The speakers propose numerous suggestions and insights concerning suffering, but they never resort to blaming Satan, or even to mentioning him.

This has important implications for believers today, especially given that we live in a society with an increasingly secular worldview. On the one hand, the Book of Job shows us that Satan does exist and does influence what happens to individuals. In other words, we live in a universe where the supernatural affects day-to-day life. We cannot dismiss the Bible's teaching about angels and demons as nothing but myths from the past.

Yet on the other hand, the Book of Job cautions us against just blaming Satan for the troubles we face. Job and his friends disagree on the exact cause of Job's sufferings, but they all agree that people are morally responsible for the choices they make. Their focus is not so much on Satan as their adversary (see footnote at Job 1:6) as it is on God as their Judge (5:8, 17; 8:3-6; 9:1-3; 11:5-6).

To learn more about Satan, the enemy of God and His people, see the table "Names for Satan in the New Testament" at Rev. 9:11.

DO YOU FEAR GOD FOR NOTHING?

1:9-11 We live in a world of "you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours." For many, this principle of give-and-take extends to their faith. Ask them why they believe in God and they'll reply that it's because of all the wonderful things He has done for them. In effect, their walk with God operates on the basis of reciprocity: He gives to them, and in exchange they follow Him.

Satan accused God of having that kind of relationship with Job. He charged Him with "buying" Job's loyalty by rewarding Job with wealth and security (Job 1:9-10). As Satan accurately pointed out, purchased devotion is suspect because it is liable to vanish the moment the rewards cease (1:11).

However, Satan misjudged Job's character. Stripped of his possessions and struck with the tragic loss of his family, Job nevertheless blessed the name of the Lord and refused to blame God for his troubles (1:21–22). Later, when Satan touched Job's body, he still refused to turn away from God. Should one accept only good from God, and not adversity, he asked (2:9–10)?

Job's integrity was a powerful response to Satan's question, "Does Job fear God for nothing?" (1:9). The answer was *yes*, Job feared God for nothing in return. His devotion was not bought; it was a gift.

Could the same be said of you? Do you follow God because of the "rewards" you believe He has given you? Suppose they were all taken away. Would you still honor Him? Is your commitment to the Lord out of a simple, genuine faith—the kind of steadfast faith that declares, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him" (13:15)?

SUDDEN CALAMITY

1:13–19 Almost by definition, disaster usually strikes suddenly and without warning. Even though people know that earthquakes, famine, accidents, and death are bound to occur, they are still shocked when they do.

The tragedies that claimed Job's possessions and family (Job 1:13–17) came suddenly and without warning. In hindsight, we can guess that Job surely knew of the ever-present risks under which he and his family lived: bands of Sabeen raiders (1:15), lightning (the "fire of God," 1:16), bands of Chaldeans on the prowl for fresh camels (1:17), and windstorms (1:19). Yet even though he must have known that sooner or later he would probably confront dangers like these, Job was still thunderstruck when news of their occurrence reached him (1:20).

In this way Job and his family were like most people, then and now: conscious of risks, but living out their lives in day-to-day routines. Then when calamity strikes, their world is turned upside down.

Jesus warned that the condition at the end of the ages would be similar. People would be going about their routines—eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage—forgetful of the fact that the Lord is returning; no one knows when (Matt. 24:38, 42). Would you be ready to meet the Lord if He were to come today? Jesus urged us as His followers to "be ready" by faithfully going about the responsibilities that He has entrusted to us (24:44–46).

There is no shame in being taken by surprise by natural disasters, as were Job and his family. But is there any excuse for being shocked at the Lord's return, when He has already told us that He is coming?

THE PATIENCE OF JOB—AND THE KINDNESS OF GOD

1:22 Job's devotion to God in the face of overwhelming adversity (Job 1:22) has become proverbial today. People speak of the "patience of Job" to indicate unusual perseverance and longsuffering. Yet Scripture indicates that the outcome of Job's life is a testimony not only to Job's patience, but to God's compassion and mercy (James 5:11).

Some may not see much kindness in God allowing Job to go through the tragic loss of his family, possessions, and health. Given Job's integrity, his sufferings seem unfair. Yet the book itself teaches that none of us knows all that we would need to know to pass judgment on the situation, let alone to challenge God (Job 38:1–3; 42:3).

We cannot say why Job went through what he did, but we do know that God responded with compassion. For example, He limited Satan's attacks (1:12; 2:6); He answered Job (even if His questions went beyond Job's understanding; Job 38–41); He vindicated Job before his friends (42:7–9); and He restored Job's losses (42:12–17). Thus, in response to some of the worst that life had to offer, not only did Job prove himself faithful, his God likewise proved Himself trustworthy and kind.

To help increase your understanding of God, see the articles listed under "Knowing God" in the Themes to Study index in the back matter.

2:1

The term "sons of God" (Job 2:1; compare 1:6; 38:7) refers here to the angels, heavenly beings who are superior to humans in power and intelligence (see "Spiritual Realities Beyond You" at Matt. 8:29). According to the Book of Job, these beings would periodically present themselves before God, though we know little about the gatherings.

It may seem odd to find Satan mentioned as one of the "sons of God." Elsewhere Scripture describes him as an angel who was cast out of heaven for rebelling against God (see "Demons" at

Luke 11:14). Now he seeks to undermine the cause of righteousness in the world. In fact, the name Satan means “adversary.” So in what sense is Satan a “son of God”?

The Hebrew word for “son,” *bar*, can refer not only to an immediate male offspring, but to a member of an entire class or category. For example, the Old Testament speaks of the “sons of Israel” (Ex. 28:9) to refer to the descendants of Israel (Jacob), the Israelites. Likewise, the “sons of Asaph” (1 Chr. 25:1) refers to the temple musicians descended from Asaph, King David’s principal musician.

In Job, the term “sons of God” is a descriptive term meaning “from or made by God,” in the sense that angels, fallen or not, are spirits and inhabit the supernatural realm.

SATAN CAN GO ONLY SO FAR

2:6 Given all the evil and suffering in the world, some people argue that God must not exist, or that if He does exist, He must not be in control. But the Book of Job affirms that not only does God exist, He sets limits on evil. For example, He told Satan that although he was allowed to touch Job’s body, he could not take his life (Job 2:6). Earlier, God had limited Satan’s destructive power to Job’s possessions (1:12).

God’s sovereignty is a comforting thought as we contend with an increasingly chaotic world. God may allow evil in His world, but He does not allow it to take total control. He will permit it to spread only so far before He cuts it back. Ultimately He will do away with all sin and evil and those who promote it, handing over the rule of His perfect creation to His Son, Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:24–28; Phil. 2:9–11).

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God and thereby allowed sin to enter the world, God immediately responded by placing limits on the evil. He refused to let it go unchecked. See “God Limits Evil” at Gen. 3:22–24.

There can be no question that evil and pain pose a massive problem to faith in and obedience toward God. Theology offers no knock-down solution, but the Bible does give us ground to stand on as we try to live in a world where suffering is real. See “Ten Myths about Christianity, Myth #10: Evil and Suffering in the World Proves There Is No God” at Rev. 20:1–10.

Job’s Counselors

2:11 Three friends came to see Job and comfort him in his troubles (Job 2:11). These men were apparently known for their wisdom, for which they were often consulted. The Bible makes a point of saying that they made an appointment to gather together with Job. However, these three “friends” proceeded to indict Job for sin, rebellion against God, and hypocrisy. Find out more about Eliphaz in his profile at Job 4:1, about Bildad at Job 8:1, and about Zophar at Job 11:1.

WHAT JOB’S FRIENDS DID RIGHT

2:13 When we’re facing severe trials and suffering, the last thing we need is a set of “Job’s counselors,” people who only tell us what they think we have done wrong. Rather than having people on our back, we would prefer people who are on our team, pulling for us as we wrestle with our problems.

Unfortunately, Job had to get through his trials without much support. Three of his friends came when they learned of his troubles (Job 2:11), but they are remembered more for their condemnation of Job than for their comfort.

Still, the three friends started out with good intentions. In fact, their actions serve as a useful pattern for intervening in the midst of a friend’s distress. Notice that they:

- came as a group to be with their friend;
- agreed ahead of time that they should come to Job’s aid;
- wanted to mourn with him and comfort him;
- openly wept for him when they could not recognize him in his disfigured body;
- tore their robes in anguish for him, a custom in that day;
- gave Job their silent presence for seven days, willing just to be with him;
- refrained from speaking until Job first began to share his heart with them; and
- listened patiently to Job’s lament and frustration.

As we today seek to comfort people around us who are feeling deep pain and suffering, the initial response of Job's friends can teach us some valuable lessons. Just quietly being with hurting people can be a great help and encouragement to them. God can use our presence in their lives as a gift of His love.

3:25

Job doesn't explain what "the thing I greatly feared" was (Job 3:25). But there was little security in the world in which he lived. The dangers were many:

- diseases that struck livestock and people;
- famine, drought, and crop failure;
- destructive pests such as locusts and worms, and predators such as lions and wolves;
- weather-related calamities such as thunderstorms and lightning, floods, hail, windstorms, and tornadoes;
- bandits, raiders, and foreign invaders; and
- stillbirths and death to women due to complications in labor.

Job had lost his wealth, family, and health due to a number of these perils. The suddenness and enormity of his fall is a reminder that the people of the ancient world lived on the edge, never far from complete ruin. There was little they could do to protect themselves.

For example, the catastrophic loss of Job's wealth points to the fact that there were no banks. Most of Job's riches were on the hoof in the fields, extremely vulnerable to danger and loss.

One way that ancient peoples tried to protect their valuables was to bury them in the ground beneath their tents or houses. See "Banking in the Old Testament" at Deut. 15:2.

4:1 Name means: "God is victorious."

Not to be confused with: A son of Esau who became the father of Amalek (Gen. 36:2, 4, 10–12).

Home: Teman (Job 2:11), a village in Edom (see Gen. 36:8), south of the Dead Sea.

Family: Given his home at Teman, probably an Edomite, descended from Esau.

Occupation: Unknown, but like Job probably a wealthy man according to the standards of the day.

Best known today as: The first named of Job's three friends (Job 2:11), and therefore possibly chief among them and the oldest. Eliphaz gave three addresses in the Book of Job (chs. 4–5, 15, 22) in which he staunchly defended the justice and purity of God. He assumed that Job must have sinned because of the severity of his sufferings. However, Eliphaz tried to reassure Job with the prospect of God's mercy and forgiveness.

WHERE IS YOUR CONFIDENCE?

4:6 Sooner or later, most of us will run into someone who challenges our integrity and may even question our motives. That can be very unsettling, especially if we know that our character is not above reproach.

Job's friend Eliphaz questioned whether Job was as upright and blameless as he liked to think he was (Job 4:6). He argued that Job wouldn't be suffering if his ways were right before God (4:7–11). But Job was confident that his character was aboveboard. He felt certain that whatever the cause of his troubles, it was not that he was in sin.

As you think about your own reputation and character, where is your confidence? "Reverence" and "integrity" (4:6) go hand in hand. Reverence relates to our respect for God and our passion to honor Him with our lives. Integrity relates to our behavior before other people, whether or not they are watching. By approaching every aspect of our lives with this concern for what God thinks and a commitment to live with purity, we can develop confidence in our character.

For help in thinking about and developing your own character, see “An Integrity Inventory” at Ps. 15:2, and the articles listed under the heading “Ethics and Character” in the Themes to Study index in ¹⁴

Introduction to Job

The book of Job explores themes of suffering and righteousness. The central question concerns the motivation behind Job’s faithfulness to Yahweh (Job 1:8–9). Does Job’s trust in God derive from his many God-given blessings or because he values God for being God (1:10–11)? When all of Job’s blessings are stripped away, he questions God about the reason for his suffering. Job wrestles with the conflict of suffering while believing in a just God.

Background

The author of Job is unknown, but the use of the divine name Yahweh (1:6) indicates it was written, or at least edited, by a member of God’s people. Job’s lifestyle reflects those of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Gen 12–50), indicating that it is set during the same time period (circa 2100–2000 BC).

The story is, further, set in the land of Uz (Job 1:1), an unknown location. Lamentations 4:21 mentions both Uz and Edom, suggesting Uz could have been in (or close to) the region Edom, southeast of the Dead Sea. This possibility fits with the hometown of one Job’s friends, Eliphaz the Temanite (e.g., Job 2:11); the book of Jeremiah refers to Teman as a city in Edom whose residents were known for their wisdom (Jer 49:7).

The earliest mention of Job in ancient literature comes in Ezekiel (Ezek 14:14, 20), which was written in the early sixth century BC. This indicates that the story of Job was known, in some form, by this time and was at least circulating as oral tradition. Literary features such as vocabulary suggest the written version of Job came to be after the Jewish exile (538 BC) and before the fourth century BC.

The book of Job functions as a dialogue with the general principles presented in Proverbs and, thus, is part of the wisdom literature genre. However, it also defies the category, containing a mix of prose and poetry, including elements of lament and legal disputation.

Structure

The book opens with a prose prologue (Job 1:1–2:13). Job is depicted as a devout father, husband, and worshiper of Yahweh (1:1–5). The book then shifts to Yahweh presiding over His heavenly council. After He praises Job’s upright behavior, “the *satan*” figure (Hebrew for “the accuser”) asks whether Job’s piety is because of his prosperous circumstances. To test this question, Yahweh permits the *satan* figure to strip Job of all he has (1:6–12). After losing his wealth and children, Job still does not forsake Yahweh (1:13–22). Job then loses his health, but even after this second test, he will not curse Yahweh (2:1–10). At the end of the opening prose section, Job’s friends enter the narrative to console him (2:11–13).

But Job’s friends don’t do much consoling. Instead they argue that Job must have brought his pain on himself. Their ideas are based on a common principle of the time known as *lex talionis* (“an eye for an eye”; compare Exod 21:24). This forces Job to defend himself. The narrative cycles between the poetic speeches of Job and his friends in Job 3–27; this is followed by Job’s hymn to wisdom (Job 28). Job then delivers a final defense (Job 29–31) and is rebuked by a new character, Elihu (Job 32–37).

In the climax of the book Yahweh finally speaks—from the midst of a whirlwind (Job 38–41). But instead of answering Job’s questions, Yahweh articulates His unmatched power. In response, Job acquiesces to God’s sovereignty (42:1–6). The epilogue (42:7–16), which shifts back to prose, describes Job’s redemption: Yahweh blesses Job with abundant wealth and new family, and Job’s friends—now humbled by Yahweh—sacrifice to Yahweh.

Outline

- Prologue: Job’s standing before God and suffering (1:1–2:13)
- Job’s dialogue with his friends (3:1–27:23)
- Job’s discourse on wisdom (28:1–28)
- Monologues from Job and Elihu (29:1–37:24)
- God’s response to Job (38:1–42:6)
- Epilogue: Job’s restoration (42:7–17)

¹⁴ [Word in life study Bible](#). (1996). (electronic ed., Job 1:1–4:6). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

Themes

In their long discussion, Job and his friends wrestle with the paradox of seemingly unjust suffering. Job's cries result in his requesting an advocate before Yahweh and proclaiming with certainty that his redeemer lives and will stand on the earth—lines that point forward to Jesus' role (Job 9:33; 19:25–27; compare 1 John 2:1). Job is prosecuted by the *satan* figure and longs for a defender in the court of Yahweh. While Job is not sinless—no one is (Rom 3:23)—he is blameless in this particular situation (Job 1:7–8). But as Yahweh shows Job, he still has much to learn (38:1–40:2). Job shows that even in grief we can find hope in a deepened relationship with Yahweh (23:10). It is only through Job's sufferings that this is possible (42:4–6). Today—with our advocate, Jesus, in heaven—we face the question behind Job's story: Will we love Yahweh, no matter what?¹⁵

Wisdom Literature

Few parts of the Bible are as theologically rich and yet largely neglected as the Wisdom Literature. While wisdom themes and language appear throughout the Old Testament, they occur in concentrated form in the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job. Today, these books constitute the genre of Wisdom Literature in Protestant Bibles.

Ancient Near Eastern Context

Wisdom literature is not unique to Israel. Comparable literature is found throughout the ancient Near East, particularly in Egypt. However, Old Testament Wisdom Literature is unique in its insistence that wisdom has one source: Yahweh (Prov 3:19).

Wisdom is deeply experiential and concerned with how to live a happy and successful life amid everyday challenges. Thus, wisdom literature appropriately appears throughout the ancient Near East, as various cultures developed their own traditions from lived experiences. In the Bible, the experiential wisdom handed down through generations most obviously appears in the short proverbs or aphorisms found in Proverbs 10–29. Of course, we need to allow Old Testament wisdom to shape how we understand happy and successful. It is clear from Job that in order to gain wisdom, we may have to experience profound suffering. Nevertheless, the Old Testament clearly establishes that wisdom represents the path to blessing.

The Relationship Between Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job

Exploring the unique contribution of Wisdom Literature to the Bible requires an understanding of the relationship between Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job. The book of Proverbs is sometimes labeled “early” or “traditional wisdom.” This is correct in that it serves as the foundation for wisdom theology in the Old Testament and sets out the overarching principles of wisdom (see Prov 1–9). Four categories have been identified as central to Proverbs and thus to Israel's view of wisdom:

1. Wisdom is grounded in the “fear of Yahweh.”
2. Wisdom is concerned with discerning the order built into the creation by Yahweh.
3. Wisdom focuses on discerning God's ways in particular circumstances.
4. Wisdom is grounded in tradition.

Given that Proverbs sets out the Israelite view of wisdom, Job and Ecclesiastes make the most sense when read against its background. These two books primarily focus on the idea that things can (and do) go wrong in life. While Proverbs also acknowledges this fact, it is not the primary focus of the book; rather, Proverbs lays the foundation for Old Testament wisdom by emphasizing proper fear of Yahweh and the relationship between a person's character and everyday consequences.

Proverbs

Proverbs is not a random collection of axioms; it has been carefully edited into a literary whole, moving from the preface to its climax in the vision evoked by the valiant woman. Throughout the work, it covers key themes.

Fear of God

A central and recurring theme throughout the book of Proverbs is that the fear of Yahweh is the beginning of knowledge or wisdom (Prov 1:7, 29; 2:5; 8:13; 10:27; 14:27; 15:16, 33; 16:6; 19:23; 23:17; 31:30). “Fear” is best understood as holy reverence of Yahweh—the redeemer and covenant God who rescued the Israelites from slavery and brought them to Himself (Exod 19:4). Such an attitude toward God represents the beginning of wisdom in two ways: It serves as the foundation on which all true wisdom and knowledge is built, and it is the starting point for the journey of life and exploration of God's world. God created the world by wisdom, and He offers this same wisdom to His people (Prov 3:19; 8:22); gaining wisdom is of surpassing value (Prov 2).

Character—Consequence

¹⁵ Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). *Faithlife Study Bible*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

The preface to Proverbs (Prov 1:2–6) amasses a variety of terms that alerts the reader to the advantages of wisdom. Proverbs 1–9 alternates between speeches of a father to his adolescent son and speeches by Lady Wisdom, all of which emphasize the great value of pursuing and finding wisdom. Verses like Proverbs 3:9–10 indicate that wisdom results in blessing, which can include material prosperity.

Proverbs 1–9 sets out the basic principles of wisdom, central to which is the “character—consequence” theme: Those who seek wisdom and live by it can expect to flourish. God designed the world such that flourishing is a consequence of developed character. These chapters also acknowledge that wisdom involves Yahweh’s discipline and reproof (see Prov 3:11–12). In later sections of the book of Proverbs, there is a greater focus on exceptions to the character—consequence theme. These exceptions are foregrounded, particularly in the “better than” proverbs (e.g., Prov 16:8; 22:1). The writer of Proverbs is well aware that in a fallen world, the wise may end up impoverished.

The Valiant Woman

Proverbs culminates in Proverbs 31 with a rich evocation of lived wisdom by depicting the valiant woman. Proverbs 31:10–31 is an acrostic poem, with each verse beginning with a consecutive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. It is written in the form of a hymn—a literary style normally reserved for God or great warriors. Although there are no references to “religious” activities in her description, she is lauded as one who fears Yahweh (Prov 31:30). Her general manner of living manifests her fear of Yahweh. This shows that Old Testament wisdom did not uphold a sacred/secular dualism that pervades contemporary Christianity. Because God is the Creator, we are called to be wise in all areas of life. Thus, the valiant woman is portrayed as a wife (Prov 31:10–12), homemaker (Prov 31:13–15, 21), businesswoman (she imports food from afar and trades in fabric of the highest quality; Prov 31:14, 24), wine producer (Prov 31:16), and craftsperson (Prov 31:19, 22, 24). In addition, she performs works of charity (Prov 31:20) and teaches wisdom (Prov 31:26).

Ecclesiastes

Both Job and Ecclesiastes deal with suffering. In Ecclesiastes, Qohelet—the Hebrew word for the name of the speaker throughout Ecclesiastes—is suffering more of an intellectual crisis, whereas Job suffers physical and emotional anguish. The narrator of Ecclesiastes introduces Qohelet, a figure gifted with wisdom and wealth. Ecclesiastes 1:2 summarizes Qohelet’s teaching: “Vanity of vanities! All is vanity!”—an expression of despair. A variety of translations for the Hebrew term used here, *hevel*, have been proposed. *Hevel* may be literally rendered as “vapor” or “breath.” In Ecclesiastes, *hevel* seems to hold the metaphorical force of “enigmatic”; Qohelet has found his way into what may be called a “cloud of unknowing,” and he cannot determine whether life has any meaning. His quest for meaning in life, couched in the rhetorical question of Ecclesiastes 1:3—“What does a person gain in all his toil?”—represents a deep existential crisis and profound intellectual suffering.

Scholars are divided into two camps when it comes to the overarching message of Ecclesiastes. It could be a despairing book to which an editor added an epilogue (Eccl 12:9–14) to make the book more acceptable, or the epilogue could indicate that the overall message is positive. Either way, the struggle contained in the book and evoked by Qohelet’s regular conclusions of *hevel* must not be downplayed.

Throughout the book of Ecclesiastes, Qohelet’s *hevel* conclusions appear next to so-called “carpe diem sayings” (e.g., Eccl 2:24–26). These joyful passages do not reflect a despairing hedonism but a typical Old Testament celebration of the goodness of creation. They refer to eating, drinking, and enjoying the pleasures of life. It is best to see these *hevel* and carpe diem phrases as contradictory juxtapositions. No matter what area of life he explores, Qohelet’s method of exploration—which he calls “wisdom” (Eccl 1:13; 2:9)—constantly leads him to his *hevel* conclusion. But each time he reaches this dark point, we find a carpe diem passage juxtaposed.

This juxtaposition of contradictory views forces the reader to look closely at Qohelet’s method of exploration (or epistemology). His wisdom is very different from what Proverbs calls wisdom; whereas wisdom begins with fear of Yahweh in Proverbs, Qohelet seems to rely on reason, observation, and experience—fear of God is only noted in the epilogue (Eccl 12:9–14). If Ecclesiastes was written in the fourth century BC, it is possible that the author was influenced by Greek thought. In the postexilic period, it was difficult for the Jewish people to see what had happened to God’s promises and purposes; in the light of Greek epistemology, Qohelet cannot find meaning anywhere in life. However, the carpe diem passages stem from his Israelite tradition. Even as he keeps coming to his *hevel* conclusions, he cannot deny the truth that life is good and full of things to enjoy. The heart of Ecclesiastes is the tension between these two views.

The final chapters of Ecclesiastes demonstrate how Qohelet’s dilemma is resolved (Eccl 11:7–12:8). The idea of remembering and rejoicing dominate this section and provide the key to the resolution of his crisis. Ecclesiastes 12:1–7 is Qohelet’s equivalent of Proverb’s claim that the fear of Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom. His former epistemology is reversed; it now starts with God as Creator rather than his own experiences, reason, and observations.

This does not detract from the challenges of life, as the epilogue also makes clear, but it provides a foundation for living amid the mysteries of life.

Job

In the book of Job, resolution to suffering also emerges through an encounter with God as Creator (Job 38:1–42:6). Job’s suffering is clearly described; he is stripped of everything important to him and crippled with bad health (Job 1:6–2:10). Initially, he makes a remarkable confession of faith (Job 1:21). He then takes part in conversations with his friends and God before returning to his formerly stated position of faith, now more fully embraced and understood (Job 42:5). Job’s suffering is not resolved intellectually but through a remarkable encounter with God.

While the extent of suffering in Job and Ecclesiastes seems to contradict the character—consequence theme of Proverbs, these books are not really exceptions. Wisdom is not just about technique—it is about the formation of the believer at the deepest levels. This is what we witness in both Job and Ecclesiastes: Suffering is a way God makes His people truly wise.

Wisdom Literature and the Rest of Scripture

Wisdom Literature in the Old Testament insists that creation as a whole comes from God, and that wisdom means seeking God’s ways in all areas of life. Wisdom, with its robust doctrine of creation, is theologically vital for a modern Christian faith that seeks to whole-heartedly serve God. Wisdom Literature also provides an important background for the New Testament, in which Jesus is portrayed as Wisdom incarnate (John 1:1–2). Jesus fulfills all aspects of the Old Testament—wisdom included.

CRAIG G. BARTHOLOMEW¹⁶

Content

The book is framed by a prose prologue and epilogue that tell the story of Job’s calamity and ultimate restoration. The poetic dialogue between Job and his friends debates profound theological issues. This dialogue culminates in speeches from God Himself.

The two genres contained in the book of Job—prose and poetic dialogue—most likely come from different authorial hands and time periods. This has been held since scholarship in the 19th century (Davidson, *Job*, 1884) challenged the traditional idea that the book had been written by Moses.

Prose Prologue and Epilogue

The prose framework tells the story of Job, which is set in patriarchal times when wealth was measured in camels and female donkeys. Job was “blameless and upright” (Job 1:1), feared God, and behaved in a pious manner. The “prologue” describes Job’s children—seven sons and three daughters—and their regular feasting habits. It also describes Job’s practice of sacrificing on their behalf, as well as his own, just in case they had sinned. The scene opens on earth (Job 1:1–5) but then quickly moves to heaven and the heavenly council over which God presides.

In the heavenly scene, “the Satan” (with the definite article, an early forerunner of the later character) is described as one who had been roaming the earth. The question is raised whether piety is for its own sake or whether the desire for prosperity is the real motivation. Job is a test case for this issue, as he is held up by God as an example of true piety. The Satan is permitted by God to take away all his possessions to see how he will react after questioning whether Job’s piety is disinterested.

When he loses all of his wealth and his precious children (their house collapses on them while they were feasting), Job rends his garments and mourns, but he does not turn away from God. He is then subjected to another test in round two of the heavenly debate—the Satan suggests that afflicting Job’s body and making him ill will lead him to curse God. Again Job’s response is a pious one: “Shall we receive the good at the hand of God and not receive the bad?” (Job 2:10). His unnamed wife encourages him to “[c]urse God and die” (Job 2:9), but he does no such thing. Rather he sits in suffering silence on an ash heap, scratching the pus-filled sores that have broken out all over his body (Job 2:7–8).

The prose section ends with three friends arriving to comfort Job. They sit with him for a week in silence. But then the poetic dialogue between Job and these three friends begins and continues for over 30 chapters. At the end of the book, the prose returns in an “epilogue” in which the friends are rebuked for not having “spoken of me what is right” by God in contrast to Job (Job 42:7). Job then intercedes for them by doing a sacrifice. His goods are restored in double quantity. He is given a new family—three beautiful daughters who are named Jemimah, Keziah, and Keren-Happuch. He is also given an inheritance alongside seven more sons. Job is said to have lived a long and fulfilled life in the end—granted longevity and progeny.

Poetic Dialogue

¹⁶ Bartholomew, C. G. (2012, 2016). [Wisdom Literature](#). In *Faithlife Study Bible*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

The poetic material makes up the bulk of the book, consisting of laments by Job (Job 3, 29–31) and dialogue with his friends (Job 4–27). A hymn to wisdom (Job 28) and speeches from the fourth friend, Elihu, (Job 32–37) are considered to be later additions to the main text. This was widely accepted in 20th-century scholarship, with some scholars seeing up to three stages of development of the whole book from the same authorial mind (Snaith, *The Book of Job*) and others putting more emphasis on the role of later compilers to account for the book's disjointedness (Maag, *Hiob: Wandlung und Verarbeitung*). The speeches of God from the whirlwind make up the climax to the book (Job 38–41).

In the dialogue, Job and the friends debate the nature of retributive justice: Is it always true that the righteous are rewarded and the wicked are punished by God? Job's friends—Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar—argue that this principle always holds true, even when the opposite appears to be the case. Job argues that his experience of losing everything has made him question this principle. For him, God has become an enemy rather than a friend. This is reflected in his protesting sentiments throughout his speeches.

There are three rounds of speeches between Job and his friends. Both parties argue their case. In the third round of speeches, those of the friends get considerably shorter, and then the third speaker is surprisingly absent. The third cycle appears to be dislocated, with Job contradicting himself, Bildad giving a very short speech, and Zophar not represented. This has led to various reconstructions (see Gordis, *Book of Job*). It may have been a later scribal error (Hermisson, "Notizen zu Hiob").

This section is followed by the hymn to wisdom, which may have had a separate origin as a liturgical piece in praise of wisdom—perhaps a pause at the end of the dialogue (Westermann, *Structure of the Book of Job*). The hymn to wisdom could belong to either Job or one of his friends. Or, it may have been a separate piece inserted by either the author or a subsequent editor.

Elihu's speeches are often seen as unnecessary to the main plot (Driver and Gray, *Book of Job*), although a minority opinion see it as the climax of the book (e.g., Marshall, *Job and His Comforters*). The fourth friend is not introduced. He is represented as a youth who didn't want to speak out in the presence of older, wiser colleagues. Much of the material is repetition of what has already been discussed in the debate so far, although Elihu does put an emphasis on the elusive nature of God that is new.

This point about the elusive nature of God is taken up when God speaks. He stresses His power and otherness from human beings. Who are humans to judge God or try to limit Him? The speeches include descriptions of wild animals whose ways are known only to God, including that of two mythological beasts—the Leviathan and the Behemoth—overcome by God at creation. God creates and sustains the world in its grandeur and magnificence—how can He be held to account by human principles of justice?

These questions about the relationship between the creator God and human beings give the book its real profundity and theological depth. Job's response is to capitulate in the face of God's words in two separate acknowledgements of his lack of understanding (Job 40:3–5; Job 42:1–6). The experience of the greatness of God seems to have quieted him in his first response; in the second, he humbles himself in dust and ashes. The questions of the justice (or injustice) of God and the problem of unjust human suffering are at the forefront of concern.

Critical Problems

Discussion of how the book came together in relation to authorship and possible editing stages has dominated critical discussion, although modern approaches tend to interpret the book as a unity in its final form.

The book of Job is likely composite, and literary-critical analysis has focused on this issue. The prose section appears to be older. Its style is simple, and it has the nature of a folk tale. It could have circulated orally or had some original short written form (Sellin, *Introduction to the Old Testament*).

The character of Job may or may not be historical. One argument in favor of Job's historicity is that he is mentioned as one of three "righteous men" in Ezek 14:14, 20. This text is from the exile (sixth century BC), well after the patriarchal period in which the prose story is set. It could indicate that the figure of Job was known as a righteous person. That would mean that the protesting Job of the dialogue section was not known at that time, since that section had not yet been written.

The main poetic sections of Job were most likely written after the exile in the sixth century BC, which would have provided a context for raising questions about the suffering of Israel (i.e. the dialogue and God speeches). An author, knowing the original tale, may have decided to create a profound discussion of the issues (Budde, *Das Buch Hiob*). An alternative suggestion is that prose and dialogue existed separately and came together later, with the prose post-dating the dialogue, creating a context for more abstract discussion (Maag, *Hiob: Wandlung und Verarbeitung*).

The book is widely thought to be a reaction to the rather black-and-white worldview of Proverbs, probably an eighth-century BC work, in which the principle of good being rewarded and wickedness being punished is not

questioned (Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom*). This test case of a suffering righteous person may have developed out of a skeptical tradition that challenged these conclusions (Dell, *The Book of Job as Skeptical Literature*). This skeptical tradition developed after the exile. Thus, the book of Job was almost certainly written between the sixth and fourth centuries BC (Perdue, *Wisdom Literature*). But due to a lack of references to events or persons, it is impossible to establish a precise dating.

Following the writing of the main book, there are thought to be further additions of the hymn to wisdom in chapter 28, the Elihu speeches in Job 32–37, and possibly the second speech of God (Job 40–41, suggested by Rowley, *Job*), although that view is now largely rejected. Reading books in their final form without acknowledging possible editing stages has led to an attempt to hold the book together—even to deny later editing at all (e.g., Clines, *The Book of Job*). While past criticism saw the heavenly wager sections (on the grounds of the possible lateness of the development of “the Satan” figure) and the dislocation of the third cycle of speeches as evidence of further editing, modern scholarship tends to reject such views. The book has been seen as having a constructed plot that includes all its parts (Habel, *Job*).

Major Themes

Generally placed within the Wisdom literature, the book of Job has themes of disinterested righteousness, the prosperity of the righteous and the corresponding punishment of the wicked, the relationship between God and humanity, and the justice of God.

The book of Job is traditionally seen as part of the Wisdom literature of the Old Testament, which includes the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes and some wisdom psalms within the canon, and the deuterocanonical Ecclesiasticus and the Wisdom of Solomon. A keynote of these books is their lack of interest in the history of Israel or its key characters, even though some of them (not Job) are attributed to Israel’s wisest king, Solomon. Some have questioned the wisdom label for Job (Dell, *The Book of Job as Skeptical Literature*), arguing that many of the genres are more akin to the Psalms. Verses from psalms are cited by the author of Job, but also parodied in order to convey, through the character of Job, the author’s protest against traditional formulas.

Job is part of the Writings within the Hebrew canon, perhaps with its closest generic links to the Psalms (notably the psalms of lament and some wisdom psalms, such as Psalm 73). Westermann argues for lament being the book’s overall genre (Westermann, *Structure of the Book of Job*). Although it raises the principle of God rewarding good behavior and punishing wicked behavior, as found in other wisdom books, it also overturns the theory throughout much of the dialogue and in the speeches of God. It is only the final epilogue that sees Job restored to prosperity that takes us back to this principle.

The major theme of the prose section is the question of disinterested righteousness: “Does Job fear God for nothing?” asks the Satan figure (Job 1:9). The pious Job of the prologue seems to answer this question in the affirmative—he fears God for nothing and accepts whatever fate comes his way. However, the character of Job changes dramatically in the dialogue section—here, Job becomes impatient (Zuckerman, *Job the Silent*). The issue shifts from whether Job will continue to adhere to God or whether he was right to be punished. However, throughout the book, Job is always concerned with his relationship with God.

As Job tires of his friends’ arguments, he relies more and more on his own inner resources. By the end of the dialogue, in the laments of chaps. 29–31, he is demanding a showdown with God. In chapter 19, he envisions some kind of mediator judging between himself and God. But he then realizes that his position is weak, since God is both judge and prosecutor. In one sense, Job is answered by God in that God appears to him and gives him some kind of response (Rowley, *Job*). However, his questions are not answered directly and he is put in his place: “Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?” asks God (Job 38:2).

God responds to Job with a series of rhetorical questions, which are intended to make Job feel small in God’s presence. The speeches divert attention away from the centrality of human issues of justice and provide a profound account of God’s sustenance of the world—and that which is outside the human experience. The question is raised as to how satisfying an answer would be—to humanity in general and to Job in particular.

The issue of theodicy in Job—whether God’s actions can be understood and His ways justified by human beings—is predominant in the book of Job (see Crenshaw, *Defending God*). This question is relevant to each generation, as humans seek to find answers to the most basic and difficult questions of their existence

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KATHARINE J. DELL

JOB, BOOK OF, CRITICAL ISSUES This article goes into further detail regarding literary analysis, textual issues, dating, composition, the history of interpretation, and theological themes of the book of Job.

Literary Analysis of the Book of Job

The book of Job is one of the most well-known books of the Hebrew Bible. As a tale of a righteous man suffering unjustly as the result of a wager between God and one of his heavenly councilors, it has stirred recipients' and readers' imagination *and* indignation. The book has provoked several artistic and literary responses (e.g., William Blake's 21 illustrations for the book of Job and the 1958 stage play in verse, *J.B.*, by Archibald MacLeish) and several attempts to overcome its offense in antiquity (see especially Testament of Job).

Job 1–2: A Narrative Prologue

Often suspected of being a source used by the book's author, the narrative prologue sets the stage for the speeches that Job and his friends deliver in chapters 3–37. It describes Job's boundless wealth in terms of family and possessions, and his extraordinary piety. Although the text doesn't explicitly claim that Job attributed his wealth to his personal righteousness, the conversation between God and the Satan demonstrates that this is the case, at least as far as the Satan is concerned.

The Satan, who is not the demonic figure of early Judaism and Christianity, but one of God's heavenly councilors, challenges: "Does Job fear God for nothing?" (Job 1:9). To test this proposition, God allows Job to be afflicted mightily. Job justifies God, as he "did not sin or charge God with wrongdoing" (Job 1:22). After the Satan challenges God again, God gives him charge over Job's body so long as he does not slay him (Job 2:1–6). The Satan afflicts Job with oozing sores and bodily suffering so profound that Job is reduced to sitting on his mourner's ash heap, scraping his wounds with a broken shard of pottery, and Job's wife urges him to admit his loss of integrity and "Curse God and die" (Job 2:9). Job vindicates God once more, reminding his wife that God, who gives good freely, is equally just in dealing out bad (Job 2:10). His friends then arrive to mourn with him and sit with him in silence for seven days (Job 2:11–13).

Job 3–37: The Speeches

The speeches begin with Job's opening lament in chapter 3. He mourns the day of his birth and the day of his conception. He yearns that time could be reversed to the moment before he was conceived, or that he had died at birth. Since neither fate befell him, he yearns to die. He concludes his lament with the words, "I have no rest, but trouble comes," a literary foreshadowing of the speeches of Job's friends that follow.

Following this are three cycles of speeches. The first two cycles have matching structures: a friend speaks, and Job responds.

First Cycle of Speeches

Chapters 4–5 (Eliphaz)

Chapter 8 (Bildad)

Chapter 11 (Zophar)

Second Cycle of Speeches

Chapter 15 (Eliphaz)

Chapter 18 (Bildad)

Chapter 20 (Zophar)

Third Cycle of Speeches

Chapter 22 (Eliphaz)

Chapter 25 (Bildad)

Chapter 28 (Wisdom poem)

Chapters 6–7

Chapters 9–10

Chapters 12–14

Chapters 16–17

Chapters 19

Chapters 21

Chapters 23–24

Chapters 26–27

Chapters 29–31

The third cycle of speeches departs from the pattern established in the first two cycles. The text doesn't include an obvious speech from Zophar but presents a wisdom poem in chapter 28 in its place. Also, much of Job's response in

chapters 26–27 sounds more like his friends’ arguments than his own. This leads some to suggest that in Job 26:1–4, Job interrupts Bildad, allowing him to conclude in Job 26:5–14. Then Job speaks again in Job 27:1–6, and Job 27:7–23 provides Zophar’s speech. The wisdom poem is in any case an interruption of the general scheme in the speeches (see further below), and chapters 29–31 offer Job’s final reply to his friends.

The general thrust of the speeches in all three cycles, as well as Elihu’s speeches in 32–37, is consistent: all of them assert that God is just in meting out rewards and punishments according to a person’s good and bad deeds. However, Clines identifies that each of Job’s friends has his own distinctive contribution and perspective (Clines, *Job 1–20*, xl–xlii).

- Eliphaz suggests that Job’s impatience results from a loss of perspective (Job 4:1–6) and then offers an “orthodox” assessment of the situation:
 - God causes no one to suffer innocently but repays humans according to their deeds and misdeeds (Job 4:7–11).
 - Humans are never perfect and therefore must endure some suffering as a result of their sins (Job 4:12–21).
 - Suffering must be seen as God’s means of shaping and teaching the human soul (Job 5:17–27).
- Bildad agrees that God punishes the wicked, asserting that he has seen God cut off sinners altogether (Job 8:4), bringing them to death. Job still lives, indicating that his sin is light.
- Zophar asserts that while people cannot know all that they have done to merit punishment, God does; Job deserves his suffering, he just doesn’t know what God knows and withholds (Job 11:5–6).
- Elihu agrees that God punishes the wicked, but he adds a new dimension to the relationship between God and the act: suffering is not merely retributive, but didactic and revealing as well. It calls the sinner to repent and seek the Lord.

In more than 10 speeches of his own, Job holds scorn for all of these positions and becomes increasingly convinced that God owes him an explanation. He asserts that he is innocent of wrongdoing that would merit his suffering. While he does wish he had never been born (Job 3:3) and that he could die (Job 6:8–13), he eventually boldly asserts his innocence and he calls God to account (e.g., Job 13:1–19), and finally issues a summons to God to appear in court (Job 31:35).

Job 38–41: God Replies to Job

God replies to Job’s challenge first with a list of questions regarding Job’s place in creation, managing it, and making sense of it (Clines, *Job 1–20*, xlv); in each case, Job has no answer. The passage implies that God alone is the maker, manager, and rationalizer of creation. Job cannot expect to understand his suffering within the cosmos; he can only hope to bear it, knowing that God’s ways are simply beyond his understanding.

The Final Exchange between Job and God: Job 42

Repeating his initial retraction in Job 40:3–5, Job replies to God, “I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:6). This saying is somewhat ambiguous, especially in the Hebrew preposition rendered as “in.” Job may be stating that he remains in his position of mourning “upon” dust and ashes, but now as an exercise in disinterested piety, awe, and respect for God simply because God is God. However, he could be asserting that he repents “concerning” dust and ashes; in this case, he could be saying that he acknowledges the lesson God has taught him, or that he decides now to leave his piety behind, maybe in disgust at God’s reply. The phrase may have been intentionally ambiguous.

The concluding verses, Job 42:7–17, are also ambiguous. God commands Job’s friends to hasten in making sacrifice that Job might intercede for them, for they have spoken wrongly, and Job correctly. Job observes their sacrifices and prays for them as God predicted, and God hears Job’s prayer and spares his friends. Then God restores to Job all of his earlier wealth twofold, and provides him with new children to replace the ones he had lost.

Critical Issues in Studying the Book of Job

In addition to the central issue of Job’s views on God’s justice and human suffering, study of Job has focused on:

- questions of date
- related ancient Near Eastern works
- compositional history

Recently, the book’s contents—e.g., its structure, its meaning in its present form, and how readers respond to it—and reception history have also been studied.

The Textual Character of the Book of Job, MT and LXX

The Masoretic Text of the book of Job is one of the most difficult in the Hebrew Bible, rivaled only by Hosea. It is tempting to attribute its opacity to “corruptions” of an originally more transparent Hebrew text. However, the Septuagint translation of Job indicates that it was a challenging text for translators well before the common era. One-

sixth shorter than the Hebrew text (and offering an alternative ending, and rearranged and imported material), the Greek translation reflects an ancient translator's struggle to make sense of some of the difficult Hebrew (including many *hapax legomena*). Even though some characterize the LXX as an epitome of the longer Hebrew version, and thus not reflective of a struggle with translation, even that possibility may be explained as a response to an enormously challenging text. While comparison with other known ancient literary works composed in the same vein has cast some light on obscure elements in the Hebrew text, it remains in many ways a mystery to readers and translators.

The Date of the Book of Job

The book of Job is set by its author in the ancestral period, as is evident from Job's style of life and the age at which he dies. There is an implicit argument that Job is equal with the great ancestors of Israel, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. However, Job is best dated sometime between the seventh and second centuries BC. A date in the middle of this period is most likely, as supported by the following observations:

- Job's plea that his words be inscribed in stone (Job 19:24) may indicate that the author was aware of Darius' late sixth century BC Behistun Inscription (a rock relief).
- To name kings and princes, the text includes language reminiscent of the Persian era (Job 3:14–15).
- Job includes many Aramaisms—Hebrew expressions that reflect the influence of Aramaic, the *lingua franca* of the Persian Empire.
- In Job 1–2, the author uses the definite article with the Satan, which reflects the similar use of the title with a definite article in Zechariah, dated to the late sixth century BC.
- The book shares similarities in interest and theme with Jeremiah and the innocent suffering of the servant figure in Isa 40–55.

However, these indicators do not concretely determine a specific date or date range.

Related Compositions from the Ancient World

The themes in Job—including divine fairness and moral economy governed by principles of retributive justice—are not unique. Many ancient texts also address these issues—especially the apparent failure of the system when those who seemed immune to trouble because of their righteousness faced difficulties. For example, the poetic dialogues may loosely reflect several Egyptian texts (e.g., *The Dispute between a Man and His Ba*, 405–07; *The Admonitions of Ipuwer*, 441–44). Furthermore, the Canaanite “Epic of Keret” (*ANET* 142–49) shares a similar narrative framework with the book of Job.

Works from Mesopotamia are most reminiscent of Job. In the Sumerian work “A Man and His God” (dating circa 1,000 years earlier than Job; *ANET*, 589–91), the speaker respectfully claims to have been unjustly afflicted, and his god hears his claim sympathetically. Similarly, in the Babylonian Theodicy (circa 1100 BC; *ANET* 601–04), the complainant takes up the matter of his god's injustice with a friend; though their dialogue lacks Job's fits of temper, the sufferer does question the righteousness of his god.

However, these parallels do not necessitate a direct connection between Job and any of these Mesopotamian traditions. More likely, these texts explore the universal human experience: they all contend with the troubling puzzle of inexplicable human suffering that violates the expectations of divine justice. Virtually all human cultures have wondered at such seeming injustices, and the wonderment naturally takes shape as discourses between human beings and between humans and their God or gods.

Compositional History

The narrative framework (Job 1–2; 42:7–17) was at one time believed to be a later addition to the poetic core of the book of Job. The poetry reflects the long-standing, cross-cultural tradition of considering the injustice of innocent suffering (especially vis-à-vis God; compare the Babylonian Theodicy, “A Man and His God”), and it was believed the narrative framework was only later added to those speeches. However, that assessment has been reversed in recent study, observing that the narrative framework also has its more ancient parallel (Epic of Keret), and that it is more sensible to imagine dialogues being added to a pre-existing narrative than dialogues that presuppose the elements of the narrative coming first. In addition, some observe that the narrative epilogue seems out of sync with the rest of the book and consider it to be of questionable origin. However, there is no wide agreement to any of these speculations; in fact, reading the book as a whole suggests that, while it may at one time have consisted of distinct, freestanding elements, it coheres well in its current structure.

The book's compositional history is also a matter of study—especially in Job 28, which includes a wisdom hymn instead of another speech from Zophar. While this wisdom hymn seems only to loosely fit its context, it actually aligns with the book as a whole:

- It underscores Zophar's general position.

- It foreshadows God's own response to Job in Job 38–42.
- It reflects one reading of Job's own eventual response (Job 42:3–5).

It can also be heard as words from the increasingly restive Job (a plausible reading since there is no indication that Job has ceased speaking at the end of chapter 27), to be a sarcastic characterization of such “wisdom” as the self-serving morsel God does permit to humans. Intrusion to the text or not, the poem is deeply connected with the rest of the book in surprising ways.

Elihu's speech also draws attention for its lack of awareness of the surrounding material and vice versa. However, Elihu adds a significant dimension to the book's views on God's retributive justice that integrate well with its message: God's justice is not *just* retributive, but didactic and chastening as well, it has the capacity to draw the human back into right relationship with God.

The Interpretation History of the Book of Job

The *Testament of Job* is the oldest known full-scale interpretation of the book of Job. The text treats Job's suffering as the forewarned and willingly accepted consequence of his destruction of a temple of Satan, suffering he can bear because God promises him restoration of everything two-fold *and* eternal glory if he endures patiently. While the text lacks the staying power of the book of Job, it nonetheless stands at the head of a long tradition of wrestling with the deep questions about human life in God's sight that the canonical book leaves unanswered. Examples of other interpretations of Job include:

- Augustine read the book as a testament to God's grace.
- The Zohar—the Jewish mystical work—views Job's suffering as evidence of God's love.
- One unattributed folkloric account suggests that God delivered Job to Satan to keep the evil one busy while He helped Israel escape from Egypt.

Some interpretations of the work are direct opposites of one another. For example, Gersonides, an Aristotelian Jewish philosopher of the 14th century, portrays Job as rejecting God's providence, while Aquinas, a Christian Aristotelian philosopher in the 13th century portrays him as an example of acceptance of divine providence.

Modern interpretations of the book of Job are also diverse. Job has been interpreted by:

- A stage play (MacLeish, *J.B.*)
- Novels (Robert Heinlein, *Job: A Comedy of Justice*; Joseph Roth, *Job*)
- Sculpture (Judith Shea, *Job*)
- Film (Joel and Ethan Coen, *A Serious Man*)
- Philosophical treatises (Lev Shestov, *In Job's Balances*).

Interpretations of Job also differ in substance. For example, the Coen Brothers used Job as a springboard for expressing a nearly nihilist view of modern existence; Shestov used him as a symbol for his view that modern humanity is caught in an epic battle between reason and faith.

Themes in the Book of Job

The book of Job is one of a handful of Old Testament books that almost always evokes theological reflection. Many themes have been recognized in the book or through the book's history of interpretation. Two predominant themes emerge:

1. Human piety in relation to God
2. Theology

Human Piety toward God

The book of Job—or rather Job himself—offers a poignant glimpse into the motivations for piety toward God. “Piety” refers to the habit of belief in and reverence toward God, and affiliated commitment to practices that express that belief and reverence. The book introduces Job's great piety towards God and his own great wealth. Although the narrative portion of the text never explicitly states that Job understands his riches as God's reward for his piety, the Satan gives voice to the reader's natural suspicion: Job is pious precisely because he is rewarded for his reverence.

Job's response to the sudden reversal of fortunes appears to contradict the reader's suspicions and the Satan's certainty: his piety persists in spite of his enormous suffering. However, once Job speaks, it becomes clear that he does, indeed, agree with his friends that God should and does reward the righteous and punish the wicked. In their own ways, Job and his friends repeatedly assert this same basic understanding of God. The difference between Job and his friends is only that they place their trust in different figures to be righteous: the friends assign that quality to God, and Job, knowing himself, assigns it to himself and argues that God lacks righteousness and should be called to account for it. All of them agree that God is constrained by a basic logic of retributive justice: piety does bring rewards from heaven above.

Throughout the narration, God remains noncommittal on the question of the connection between piety and success, wealth and contentment. His response to Job offers nothing but the certainty that He created all things, and that humans are permitted to understand nothing more than that. God neither denies being committed to rewarding the pious, nor does He confirm it; He only claims authorship of all things.

Job's response appears to be disinterested piety, that is, a continued reverence for and belief in God in spite of what he has (not) learned about God's righteousness. Thus, as the speeches draw to a close in Job 42:1–6, the reader seems to be urged to embrace a similar view of piety. However, just as Job seems to embrace an open-hearted approach to piety, God rebukes Job's friends for their views (implying confirmation of Job's new disinterested posture), but goes on to reward Job with double his former wealth and a new family to replace the one he lost: a God committed to retributive justice seems to have made a surprising return, yet oddly censuring some of the firmest believers in that theological perspective, but rewarding Job for his boldness. The book concludes on this note, leaving the reader without a definitive answer to the question of whether or not God lives by the notion of retributive justice.

Differing on the Nature of God: Theology as Debate

The book also presents an implicit argument that theology—reflection on the nature of God—is not so much systematic thought as the diverse and often conflicting claims about God believers make as they grapple with a world beset by the dualities of joy and sorrow, wonder and dread, prosperity and poverty, war and peace.

The book includes many claims about the true nature of God that compete vigorously with one another.

Job's wife is certain of God's retributive justice and equally certain that her husband has brought this misery on himself. She also seems confident that God's justice leaves no room for forgiveness. Job's friends share his wife's insistence on God's commitment to retributive justice, but they reject her view that God does not accept repentance, arguing that God forgives those who are repentant. Elihu's speech affirms his friends' views, but he adds the notion that unjust suffering among human beings is only *apparently* unjust inasmuch as it may also be explained as God's pedagogy and discipline. Job represents in alternating literary personalities a posture of unquestioning (Job 1:20–21; 2:10) and chastened (Job 40:4–5; 42:1–6) devotion to God in spite of all innocent suffering; he also represents the bold view that the principle of God's divine retributive justice stands apart from God as a judgment on God's actions (see especially Job 31:29–37). Together, these diverse theological views in the book of Job testify not only to the fundamentally diverse nature of theology as a product of lived experience, but also to the tensions between perspectives naturally attendant to theology done this way.

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ROB KUGLER¹⁷

JOB

Scripture references:

The Book of Job;

Ezekiel 14:14–20; James 5:11

¹⁷ Kugler, R. (2016). [Job, Book of, Critical Issues](#). In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, ... W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

Date: Unknown

Name: Job [JOHB; meaning uncertain]

Greatest Job endured suffering despite his inability to

JOB'S ROLE IN SCRIPTURE

Job's story and his struggle challenge us to contemplate the mystery of human suffering. Job was an innocent man, a man whom God loved. Yet, all that Job himself loved was taken from him, and Job was forced to endure intense physical and psychic pain. The Book of Job traces his tormented thoughts as Job tries to puzzle out what God could possibly intend by permitting him to endure such anguish.

Job is mentioned in the Old Testament, along with Noah and Daniel, as one of three righteous men whose presence in a city might normally avert God's judgment. Ezekiel refers to the three to underline the certainty of the judgment about to befall Jerusalem in his day. Not even the presence of all three would cause God to withhold His punishing hand (Ezek. 14:14–20).

Job is also referred to in the Book of James as an encouragement for believers who also were suffering despite living righteous lives. James called on his readers to be patient and reminded them, "You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful" (James 5:11).

JOB'S LIFE AND TIMES

Job's date. The Book of Job may be the oldest book in the Bible. Many commentators place Job in the patriarchal era as a contemporary of Abraham. The following are some of the reasons cited for this. The Hebrew in which the book is written is archaic, with many words that do not appear in other Old Testament writings. The book makes no reference to God's covenant with Abraham or to Mosaic Law. Instead, reference is made to revelations received in dreams and to long-held traditional beliefs about God. It seems clear from these elements that Job predates the giving of the written revelation and quite possibly preceded God's special revelation of Himself to Abraham.

Job's character (1:1; 31:1–24). The first verse of the book introduces Job as a man who was "blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil." The Lord Himself confirmed this in His dialogs with Satan (1:8; 2:3).

Perhaps even more significant is Job's own characterization in chapter 31 of his moral commitments. Throughout the book Job argued with three of his friends who were convinced that Job's suffering must be punishment for some secret sin. Job, sure that he had lived a godly life, rejected their arguments. While Job did not know God's reasons for apparently causing his suffering, Job was sure that God couldn't be punishing him.

Job 31 is significant in that it reminds us that God has created human beings with a moral nature and an innate knowledge of right and wrong. Long before the Ten Commandments, nomadic peoples in the legendary land of Uz were fully aware of God's moral expectations, and knew how they should live. Job's problem is that while he has lived by commonly accepted moral precepts, he is still suffering. The puzzle is, Why should such bad things happen to a truly good person?

CHAPTER 31: JOB DEFENDS HIS MORALITY

In none of the following ways did Job fail to live a moral life. Job's conclusion is that God simply cannot be punishing him for sin.

If I have walked with falsehood,
Or if my foot has hastened to deceit,
Let me be weighed on honest scales,
That God may know my integrity.
If my heart has been enticed by a woman,
Or if I have lurked at my neighbor's door,
Then let my wife grind for another ...
For that would be wickedness;
Yes, it would be iniquity deserving of judgment.
If I have kept the poor from their desire,
Or caused the eyes of the widow to fail,

Or eaten my morsel by myself,
So that the fatherless could not eat of it;
If I have raised my hand against the fatherless,
When I saw I had help in the gate,
Then let my arm fall from my shoulder,
Let my arm be torn from the socket.
Or if I have made gold my hope,
Or said to fine gold, "You are my confidence";
Or if I have rejoiced because my wealth was great, And because my hand had gained much.
If I have rejoiced at the destruction of him who hated me,
Or lifted myself up when evil found him
(Indeed I have not allowed my mouth to sin
By asking for a curse on his soul);
If I have covered my transgressions as Adam,
By hiding my iniquity in my bosom,
Because I feared the great multitude
And dreaded the contempt of families,
So that I kept silence
And did not go out of the door.

(Job 31:5, 6, 9–11, 16–17, 21–22, 24, 25, 28, 30, 33, 34)



Job's problem (*Job 3–31*). On the surface it would seem that Job's problem lay in the disasters that had befallen him. On a single day, Job had suffered the loss of his wealth and the deaths of his children. Shortly after this, excruciatingly painful boils tormented him. Yet, it was neither the disasters nor the pain that unnerved Job. What deeply troubled Job was that he could not explain *why* he was suffering. Job's understanding of God reflected the view of others of his time. God was a moral judge who expected human beings to live up to commonly accepted moral standards. And God rewarded those who did so and punished those who did not.

Job, however, had lived an exemplary life. So the question of why God was letting him suffer tormented Job. In a lengthy dialog with three friends Job over and over asserted his innocence, and implied that God was being unfair. Yet, Job could not bring himself to believe that God *is* unfair. The conflict of his beliefs about God over against what he was experiencing frustrated and tormented righteous Job.

Job's end (*Job 42*). In the end, God restored Job's wealth two times over and gave him another family. God commended Job for facing the problem of suffering with honesty and integrity. God rebuked the three friends who, in their efforts to be on what they thought was God's side, tried to coerce Job into confessing sins he did not commit.

EXPLORING JOB'S RELATIONSHIPS

Job's relationship with Satan (*Job 1, 2*). The first chapters of Job take us behind the curtain that hangs between material and spiritual realms. We are shown a dialog between God and Satan, in which God pointed Job out to Satan as a blameless and upright man.

Satan immediately complained that God had erected a hedge around Job that Satan cannot penetrate. If only God would permit Satan to attack Job, Job would deny God to His face. God permitted Satan to attack Job, and Satan stripped Job of his wealth and family and inflicted Job with intensely painful boils. But Satan's efforts to move Job to deny God failed utterly (*Job 2:10*).

Job himself was unaware of Satan's involvement in his experience, and saw God as the direct cause of his pain. However, with the insight provided in chapters one and two, we note several things about the relationship between this believer and the devil.

Satan was innately hostile to God's own. Satan's desire is to harm God's people, never to do them good. The means Satan chose to attack Job shows how wicked this fallen angel truly is.

Satan is limited in his ability to harm believers. Satan's complaint that God had placed a hedge around Job should comfort us. Only with God's permission can our great enemy aim his attacks against us. We are not to take Satan lightly. But neither are we to fear him as though his powers were unlimited. [For a thorough study of Satan, see the companion volume in this series, *Every Good and Evil Angel in the Bible*.]

Satan can be defeated when resisted in faith. Even Job's wife urged him to give up, to curse God, and to die. She seemed convinced that death was preferable to continued suffering. Job however remained faithful in his commitment

to the Lord. And, after the notation of Satan's defeat in Job 2:10, this fallen angel is not mentioned again in the book. Despite his pretensions, Satan is but a bit player on sacred history's stage, destined to be set aside in eternity.

Job's relationship with God. We have noted that Job was a godly person who lived a moral life out of respect for the Lord. When tragedy struck, Job did not blame God, even though he assumed that God was responsible for his sufferings. Job's problem was that he could not *understand* what God was doing in his life.

Job's inadequate knowledge of God. While rejecting the idea that God was punishing Job for sin, Job agreed with his three friends that this was what God did. The wicked were supposed to suffer, for God simply must be fair! As Job's dialog with his friends developed, Job questioned this assumption. Finally Job argued, correctly, that all four of them knew of wicked people who seem to prosper, and apparently godly individuals who struggle. It is dangerous for any of us to "put God in a box," and to assume from what we know of Him that God must act in this way or that.

Job's confrontation by God (Job 38-40). God spoke to Job and his friends following an insight shared by a younger man named Elihu. Elihu had listened as Job and his friends argued endlessly. Now Elihu pointed out that suffering isn't always punishment. Suffering may serve a corrective purpose; God may be seeking to turn a sinner from his ways rather than punishing him. While this did not apply to Job, it did break the impasse. God need not punish Job! So Job can preserve his integrity, and his friends need not "defend God" by accusing Job.

When God appeared to the little company, He did not explain the reason for Job's suffering. Instead the Lord urged Job to consider how far above His creation God is. Job cannot even explain the wonders of nature; how can he expect to explain God's purposes?

Job acknowledged the rightness of what God had said, and humbled himself. Job had heard about God, but now that he had confronted God, Job realized how little right he had to question God's acts. Whatever God's purposes might be in permitting Job to suffer, Job's role was simply to continue to trust and honor the Lord.

Job's restoration by God (Job 42). God commended Job for facing the mystery of God's actions honestly without retreat to theological hair splitting. God restored all of Job's goods twice over. And, God gave Job another seven sons and three daughters. Why not fourteen sons and six daughters? Because unlike the material wealth which had been taken from Job, his children were not really lost to him. In the resurrection Job will be reunited with them. The seven new sons and three new daughters do, in fact, give Job twice as much as he had lost.

JOB: AN EXAMPLE FOR TODAY

Job never learned why God permitted him to suffer. Job did come to know God better, and perhaps this is an underlying purpose in all suffering. Through suffering, we are forced to face the mystery of God, and challenged to trust Him deeper. The Job who emerged from the crucible of pain had a deeper trust in God than the Job who entered it. May it be the same for us, when we, too, face the hurts that are a part of every human life. In the meanwhile, there are other lessons we can learn from Job as well.

- Job's story reminds us of God's watchcare. God does put a hedge around His own, and only what He permits is allowed to pass through. In this we can take comfort. Knowing God's love, we can be certain any pain He permits is for our good.
- Job's story reminds us that experiences we cannot understand provide the greatest opportunities to exercise faith. Faith is proven to be genuine only when it is tested. As Peter reminded us, a faith that passes the test is more precious than gold (1 Pet. 1:7).
- Job's story reminds us that God has multiplied blessings in store for us. We may not find these blessings in this life, as Job did, but they are there for us. They are reserved in heaven, awaiting only the coming of our Lord (James 5:7-11).¹⁸

¹⁸ Richards, L. (1999). *Every man in the Bible* (pp. 62-66). Nashville: T. Nelson.