

Job 15-17

As we approach our text you can almost hear the dinging of the bell as round one ends and round 2 begins in this 3 round bout of these heavy weight ultimate fighters going at it toe to toe. There they are in the octagon of Job's personal pain, and they're jabbing and kicking at each other intellectually, they're throwing heavy blows theologically, they're seeking to gain submission holds philosophically, and being 3 on one though he'll never let go of his integrity it's definitely taking it's toll on Job personally/emotionally. You would think that it times of trouble you could count on your friends to be a site for sore eyes, a beacon of light in dark nights of depression and despondency, and an instrument of comfort when life is treating you cruelly. But instead of really being there *for* Job, or a sense of encouragement *to* Job, they stepped in the arena and began to come *against* Job. And say it how you like, from beating in round 1, to battering in round 2, to all out bludgeoning in round 3, or from discussing, to debating, to disputing, from accusing, to attacking, to all out assaulting Job verbally, the bottom line is that these guys continue to turn up the heat.

Col 4:6 tells us, "*Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.*" The idea being there that there's no pat answer, no policy and procedure manual for how every particular problem needs to be handled. The bible deals with things generally, and in some instances quite specifically, but I find that often times circumstances in people's lives are unique in certain respects unto themselves. Oh, no temptation has overcome you except that which is common to man, and God is faithful making the way of escape for each one of them. But the bible may not address the details of each and every variable in a given situation, and so it's necessary that we be acquainted with heart of God, through the Word of God *generally*, that we might understand how to approach or answer each circumstance *specifically*. Job would be a perfect case in point, are there times that sin results in radical ramifications of suffering in a persons life? Yes. So then do we conclude that anytime a person is suffering it *must be* because of sin in his/her life? No. There may be 2 people before you going through similar situations due to completely different reasons altogether, therefore we're to let our speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that we might know how we ought to answer *each one*.

But at this point Job's friends are more focused on *proving Job wrong* than they are *helping Job out*. Why? Well, I can't answer that emphatically but there's a # of possibilities, at this point no doubt pride is an issue. They've laid their theology on the line, and they all 3 maintain the same basic premise, now they're not about to back down and say that they're all wrong and that Job alone is right. But here's the deal though the bible encourages the safety that can come in a multitude of counsel, it never guarantees wisdom. We do well to receive counsel from multiple godly sources no doubt, but that they be godly is paramount because generally speaking we find in the scriptures that the multitudes were wrong, the majority rule was always blowing it, the minority generally hit the nail. Remember when Korah and his company came against Moses and his family? Korah was all ate up (literally swallowed by the earth) though he had the support of the majority, and we don't have time to get into it but over and over again throughout the scriptures we find fault with the majority, and favor with the minority.

Why is that? Because most people are more willing to follow after the desire of the flesh rather than the discipline/direction of the Spirit, so pride may be involved, “We all feel the same way therefore you must be wrong.”

A pseudo sense of security comes along with their theology. They purport that sin brings punishment, sanctity bring prosperity. Now if Job *isn't a sinner being punished by God*, if he's upright, true in integrity, and blameless before God, than not only is their understanding of God all wrong, but that meant that *they were susceptible to suffering themselves!* There's no security for them in that philosophy, “What's to stop this type of suffering from coming on me?” You see, “If obedience and blamelessness is no guarantee of health and prosperity than this type of thing could possibly happen to me.” Bingo, the bible teaches that we can suffer according to the will of God. 1 Peter 4:19 “...*let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.*” Of course Jesus Himself being the ultimate example in that.

But ultimately, though inadvertently, we realize that Job's friends are instruments in the hands of the enemy, the adversary, Satan himself as he's seeking to provoke Job to curse God, cease serving God if it's of no personal profit to him. So the book of Job reminds us why we serve God, why we give our allegiance, our honor, our praise and blessing *to* God, it's because He's God, and He's worthy of all that we are in and of Himself regardless of what's happening in our lives personally/practically. Well, round 2 begins.

Vs1-6

If any of the guys had an ounce of compassion in round one it was Eliphaz. Well he throws all of that out the window here and goes straight for the jugular. He just immediately begins attacking Job, once again he tells him that he's just a bag of hot air blowing like the hot east desert wind, that his speeches are ineffective in helping anyone, but that his words are detrimental to everyone and that he's irreverent before God. And these are things that the enemy seeks to discourage us with regularly, A.) That we're ineffective in ministering, that our speeches or service do no good, and B.) That our attitude is out of line, and we're being irreverent before God. But it's important to remember that we can't measure our effectiveness by the results that we see immediately, and ultimately we'll only know with respect to eternity how effective we've been at what we've done. Consider Jeremiah, how many converts did he have, how much fruit did he see physically in his ministry? “0” Not one person repented throughout the course of his prophetic ministry (at least that we have record of biblically), would we say then that he was ineffective? I wouldn't, he was absolutely faithful to fulfill what God committed to his trust, and eternity will bear that out. Then consider Jonah, he led quite possibly the largest revival in world history, from our perspective that seems incredibly effective. But he kicked against it the whole way, didn't want to do it, was bitter about it, and it'll be interesting to see how eternity bears that out with respect to how fruitful God really considered him. So immediate results aren't always an accurate barometer of how effective the things we say and do are.

In Vs 4 Eliphaz tells Job that in reality not only is he of no benefit to people, but that in reality he's a detriment, "You cast off fear, restrain prayer before god." In other words, "Because you won't be respectful to God in the things you're saying, you're freaking people out, people are afraid now to approach God, come before God because He just might blast them to!" And he says, "You're saying that we're condemning you (which they were) but in reality the words of your own mouth are testifying against you, the things you're speaking are sinful!"

Now obviously we need to lead our lives in the fear of God, but understand this; God has no problems with the honest skeptic. The one who searches out a matter, has difficulty with a matter, asks questions *about* a matter, God is bigger than our questions, our doubts, our difficulties in reconciling situations.

And the one who's truly searching the matter out will find refuge and security in Christ, because Jesus is the key in our difficulties and dilemmas. Again we shouldn't be all flippant and irreverent, but to have an honest question, to be confronted with a difficult dilemma isn't irreverence, God wants us to find our resolve in Him, to seek after Him. But the enemy seeks to beat us down, pour on condemnation. "Well maybe if you read your bible a little more, or prayed a little more, or went to church more often you wouldn't be such a loser, you obviously don't really love God, and aren't committed *to* God so why don't you just throw in the towel?" We're to reject condemnation, our sufficiency isn't in what we do, it's in what He's done, our sufficiency is of Christ.

Vs7-10

Remember when Job sarcastically said, "You're the men, and when you die, wisdom will die with you!" Well, here's Eliphaz batting that ball back into his court, "What were you the 1st born among men, you're the only one in the world with wisdom, what do you understand that we don't know? In case you haven't noticed Job we've been around longer than you and your dad." It's been said that when it comes to older people being around younger people that the older should never mention it, and the younger should never forget it. And I like that, there needs to be an awareness, and respect. Eliphaz felt the need to bring it up, and the point he's making is that wisdom comes with age. And generally speaking that may be true, but its no guarantee, and there's even less guarantee that age guarantees wisdom when it comes to spiritual matters. In Ch 32 a young man is going to pipe up and acknowledge, "*Great men are not always wise, Nor do the aged always understand justice.*" Job 32:9 The Psalmist writes, "*I have more understanding than all my teachers, For Your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, Because I keep Your precepts.*" Ps 119:99-100 But Job never claimed to have a monopoly on wisdom, he was simply stating that they weren't offering him any. But this is often a way that the enemy seeks to intimidate believers when they're seeking to share with someone, "Well, they know the word better," or "Who am I to share with *them*?" And that sense of inadequacy begins to seep in, Eliphaz is seeking to put Job in his place here, but remember the disciples that Jesus chose?

They weren't educated (the vast majority of them) or reputable men, they were uneducated, unlearned, and even ignorant with respect to an education in the scriptures, but they spent time with Jesus, the Holy Spirit was their adequacy in a situation, not their education. So to with you, so to with me, spend time with Jesus, let the Holy Spirit use you, minister through you, don't be beaten back by feelings of inadequacy. All of us are inadequate, again Christ is our sufficiency, our authority, the qualifying factor in/of our lives.

Vs11-13

“What are you thinking talking like that, isn't the comfort, the compassion, the consolation of God good enough for you?” Sure, you bet it is, but what he's implying is that they're God's instruments of compassion to Job, God's sent them there to comfort him in speaking the truth to him but he won't receive it. Well it's no wonder he won't receive it, how's he supposed to respond? How would you respond if you knew in the integrity of your heart you'd done nothing wrong, yet you were suffering excruciatingly and when your friends showed up they said, “We have word for ya from God, ‘You have sin in your life, confess it, repent of it, and you'll be healed and prosperous.’” You'd be all, “Get outa here that's not from God, there's no cognizant sin in my life, I *love* God, have been *faithful* to God...now you're telling me God is punishing me!” Job is doing what any of us would do, “Get out of my face, I don't need this!”

Vs14-16

“Job you're impure, abominable, and filthy, what do you expect God to do with one who drinks in iniquity like water?”

And again its true that God is no respecter of persons, that He's just, that there's none righteous, no, not one. But think it through, this is more faulty logic, because if God puts no trust in His saints (which is true and well, it's Christ in us, not us that God works through) if Job is suffering simply because he's a sinner, than the rest of them should be going through the same thing. Because who among us has ceased from sin? Oh, in Christ we're *positionally* perfect, but practically we're making mistakes left and right. The bible is clear, “*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*” 1 John 1:8 So you want to be careful when you begin ascribing to the doctrine that says, “When something unfortunate takes place in your life (i.e. poverty, sickness, afflictions) that its because of sin, or lack of faith.” Because that's to imply that if there's nothing going wrong in your life that you're with out sin. Which is to defy the Word of God, then of course what do you do with nonbelievers?

Vs17-26

Boy that was subtle wasn't it? He's talking about Job here. He says, “This is what I've learned about the wicked, they writhe in pain all day, he's not sure when his life is going to end, he gets destroyed in his prosperity, believes he's going to die, trouble and anguish make him afraid, and he speaks stubbornly against God.” Hmmm, who does that sound like?

The question is; are those things true? Is it true that the wicked sit around writhing in pain all day? No, they're often quite comfortable, is he beat down in prosperity, do trouble and anguish make him afraid; rarely. Does he speak out against God? Sometimes, but most often he doesn't bother to give God a 2nd thought, this guy is just giving Job the beat down.

Vs27-35

“He was rich, he'll be made poor, futility will be his reward, he'll be barren, and fire will consume his tents.” What an awful philosophy to live by, it'd bring about incredible insecurity in your suffering. Every time something went wrong you'd be wondering how you offended God, or where you sinned. Is it good to be open to God's correction? Absolutely, but don't allow the enemy to make you insecure in your suffering, God does more than simply chastise His children through suffering. Tough times aren't simply the overflow of sin in your life, they can be, but they're not limited to that. Should we seek to learn from it, you bet, but don't beat yourself over it, thinking that you've somehow disappointed God just because tragedy has visited your life.

Ch 16

Vs1-3

Translation: “Blah, blah, blah, miserable, troublesome comforters are you all, when will you ever shut up?” Remember Eliphaz said, “Why isn't God's comfort enough?” As if that was them. Job said, “You're miserable comforters, with friends like you who needs enemies, when are you guys just going to can it?”

Vs4-5

Job says, “If my shoes were on your feet I could do the same thing to you, but I wouldn't do that, I'd issue words of comfort, not condemnation, I'd console you, not criticize you, I'd be compassionate, not condescending.” He's feeling ostracized by his friends, and this is a hard lesson, but Job is learning, learning what not to do. And sometimes the only way we learn what *to do*, is by observing what *not* to do in a given situation. And I've been on the receiving end of some thing that I think, “May I never act toward others, the way that I've just been acted towards.” Be it harshly, inconsiderately, rudely or whatever. Job is disillusioned with his friends.

And some trials it seems are designed in such a way as to do just that, get us out there independent of anyone else that we might be solely dependant upon God. It's been said, “You'll never truly realize that Jesus is all that you need until Jesus is all that you have.” But your friends have frailties, faults, and failures just like you do, they're not always going to be able to be there for you, or meet the deep needs of your heart. Only Jesus can do that, and there are times when the Lord will get us out there in such a way as to be able to lean only on Him. That's where Job is, he can't look *around* for support, so he has to look *up*.

Vs6-17

So Job is just crying out regarding the way that he feels. Notice he feels worn out, shriveled up, torn, hated, gnashed at, gaped at, struck on the cheek, gathered together against, delivered to the ungodly, turned over to the hands of the wicked, shattered, shaken, set up, surrounded, pierced, broken, his face is flushed with weeping, and he's done nothing to deserve it, his prayer is pure... Man that sounds strangely familiar doesn't it? It's almost a foreshadowing, it's picturesque of Christ, Job, though he doesn't know it and hasn't come to realize it has entered in to the fellowship of suffering. Remember what Paul said regarding his desire to know Christ, and be found *in* Christ? Phil 3, "...*that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.*" Phil 3:10-11 Wow, Job (unbeknownst to him) is undergoing the fellowship of His sufferings, in a way that's more intimate than any of us hope to be subjected to. But I'll guarantee you he's gaining an invaluable insight, and a whole new outlook on life, and when someone is going through the ringer, being ran through the mill in radical ways and no one can understand, guess who that person will be seeking out? Job, because he's been there, can identify, have compassion *on*, and minister *to* like none other, being able to comfort others with the comfort (in Christ) with which we've been comforted.

Vs18-20

"You guys can say what you want, but when it's all said and done, God knows the truth, the integrity of my heart, my witness is in Heaven, my evidence is on high." And that's a great thing to know, because over the years people will assume various things about you, and some of them will be down right ugly and hurtful. You don't have to go out and defend yourself, matter of fact the bible discourages that, let the Lord vindicate you, be your defense, God knows the reality and one day it'll all be seen, God's got your back.

Vs21-22

Again Job is crying out for a mediator here, wonder why his friends are picking *on* him, rather than praying and interceding *for* him. Which is good insight, instead of picking *on* your bro, or talking *about* your sister who's really being run through the mill, how about praying *for* them, availing yourself to minister *to* them? Of course under the new covenant we realize that we have an advocate, one who pleads our case before the throne, Jesus Christ the righteous

Ch 17

Vs1-16

Job is struggling with where his hope lies, when the psalmist was struggling he wrote, "*Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him For the help of His countenance.*" Ps 42:5 Where then is my hope? We hope in the Living God. And of course as believers we realize that God, "...*has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,*" 1 Peter 1:3-4

Job is saying some pretty harsh things here, some of which he'd no doubt like to change in hindsight, but we serve a God who is abundant in mercy, abounding in grace, slow to anger, rich in love. Warren Wiersbe said this, "In the darkness of despair and the prison of pain, we often say things that we later regret; but God understands all about it and lovingly turns a deaf ear to our words but a tender eye to our wounds."

Prayer Points:

God we thank You that You're mindful of our faults, You remember that we're but dust, help us to stay consistent in our focus, fixed on You, that our hope rest firmly *in* You. Thank You that we have a *living* hope in You. Father help us to be a people who are able to minister in compassion, instruments of your comfort, and when people come against us may we rest in the fact that our witness is in heaven, our evidence is on high, God you know our hearts. Search us, reveal any wicked way *in* us, and lead us in the way everlasting.