

Job 20-21

Ch's 20-21 bring us to the end of the 2nd round in this 3 round bout, and it's the last time we hear from Zophar in this all out, gloves off verbal assault of an entanglement between Job and his few friends that have come to "comfort" him.

And this 2nd Vs has been the same as the 1st, all Job's friends ascribe to the philosophy and theology of health/wealth and prosperity. "God prospers the righteous and punishes the wicked," so that godliness to them is a means of gain, to them it follows naturally that if you're living right before God that He's going to prosper your life. So it pays to serve God, to humble yourself *before* God, it's a means of personal gain. And the NT speaks to that position as well. Jesus, who was as "godly" as you could get (being God Himself) said, "*Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.*" Matt 8:20 Which is to say, "Listen, there are certain amenities, certain physical securities, and comforts that the average person in life has (i.e. a place to lay down at night) that I *don't* have. So if you're following Me, and looking to be *like* Me, there's no guarantee of a plush life." Paul when he was writing to Timothy (amongst other things) instructed him on how to teach people what an acceptable attitude and outlook on life was in order to maintain and good witness before the world. And after he'd stated a few things He said, "*If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.*" 1 Tim 6:3-5. And so the bible, both OT and NT speaks to the fact that it's faulty logic that leads a man to the conclusion that prosperity follows godliness, but punishment and penalty follows wickedness. Now God *can* prosper you, but that's not the barometer by which we *measure* godliness, or holy living, or anything else. And to serve God as a *means* of personal gain is something that the scriptures clearly condemn, its godliness with *contentment* that's key. Remember Paul said it didn't matter, whether abased or abounding, our focus isn't to be the things of this world. He told the Philippians, "*I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*" Phil 4:12-13. And that's really where it's at, being satisfied *by* and strengthened in and *through* Christ. He's the goal we press towards, He's our all consuming focus, our reward, there's nothing greater that we could ever hope for other than to simply *know* Him and spend eternity *with* Him.

Well, as we tune back in to our text here, and fix our focus on this next episode of explosive insults and impulsive insinuations Job has just finished responding to Bildad's accusations. And if you recall as Job was responding, there in the midst of his incredible tribulation, he had this absolutely staggering revelation, the resurrection. Look at Vs 25-26.

And it's just amazing yet so often the way God works, that when we're in the midst of immense personal tribulation, God will minister to us in a way as to give us some sort of illumination, or revelation of His heart, His character, His plan or His purpose. And it would be neat if we could camp out on that summit peak of insight and understanding. But generally speaking like Job no sooner than we're so graciously lifted up and given a little light we plummet back down into the depths of depression and despondency.

Well, Job finished out his rebuttal by warning his friends that they need to be careful castigating, criticizing and condemning him because they're going to be held accountable for the things they're *telling* him and they couldn't be more wrong with their accusations *towards* him.

Vs1-3

Zophar had just been privileged to hear this radical revelation, to hear of the view that Job was gleaning from on this summit peak of illumination, but apparently that went right over his head, because rather than say, "What was that Job, even after your skin is destroyed, in your flesh you'll see God? Let's focus on that for a bit." He didn't receive the *illumination*, he felt instead as though it was time for some personal *retaliation*; he's been insulted and can't hold back.

Job had said, "Be afraid of the sword for yourselves, you're all warning me, wrath brings the punishment of the sword, that *you* may know that there's a judgment." And so Zophar is all, "Time out, I gotta jump in here, I've *heard* your rebuke, I've *heard* your reproach, and now I've just gotta say something here." "My anxious thoughts make me answer, the turmoil with in me, the understanding given *to* me causes me to answer." In other words, "I've heard enough, this is how it is." And what he's doing is using spiritual rhetoric in order to justify his impulsive behavior. Yet the bible says, "*He who is slow to wrath has great understanding, But he who is impulsive exalts folly.*" Prov 14:29 You know we come to that point where we say, "I've had enough, I just can't take it anymore!" And so we feel justified in blowing our stack. And we're all, "Listen, I just *have* to say this." Wait a minute, you don't *have* to do anything; Gal 5 tells us that the fruit of the Spirit in your life, in my life, along with other things is *self control*. So whether it's an outright out burst like we have here, or rolling on the floor or running around a sanctuary "in the Spirit" or feeling like I *have to* express myself in a certain motion or posture during corporate worship, none of those things are supported by the Word of God. When the Spirit is truly at work in my life He gives me the ability to restrain/bridle my "Have to's" my impulsive behavior or mannerisms. With respect to having heard enough as in our text tonight; we've said it before, James said, "...*let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.*" James 1:19-20

Getting all up in someone's face over an issue, even a legitimate issue isn't going to bring about a godly result, man's wrath doesn't produce God's righteousness. We have 2 ears, but God only gave us 1 mouth, that should tell us something, we should be listening at least twice as much as we're speaking. But most the time we're speaking twice as much we're willing to listen, and then we wonder how we wind up getting ourselves into the mess we're in. When the bible tells us quite candidly, "*In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, But he who restrains his lips is wise.*" Prov 10:19

Zophar would've been wise to restrain his lips, but instead he felt as though he needed to vent, and there's buckshot all through his position, it doesn't hold water. He's one of those, "Don't confuse me with the facts, I've got something to say!" kinda guys. And it's not that *everything* that he utters is simply untrue, (though most of it is) but that it's misdirected and inapplicable to the situation at hand.

Vs4

What he's implicating is that things he's about to say have just been considered common knowledge from the beginning, from of old, since man was placed on the earth. Which by the way it's subtle there, but notice he didn't say, "Since man has evolved over these millions of years." He said, "Since man was *placed* on the earth." Zophar, though he had a point to prove and refused to reconsider, one thing we can say for him is that he recognized that there was a Creator, that they were apart of that creation and that nothing is here by random chance millions of years worth of evolving. We haven't evolved on the earth; we've been placed on the earth. He carries on.

Vs5-11

So what we have here is that exalted position of the wicked is short lived, though they be prideful God will punish them, He will deal with them suddenly and swiftly. They'll vanish away like a bad dream, any inheritance he may've left will be given back to the poor whom he ripped off, and that he'll die still being relatively young. Now remember that Job has lost everything, and that he's apparently the youngest of the men he's been speaking with, and he believes (and apparently everyone around him would agree based upon the way he looks) that he's about to die. And Zophar is all, "God snuffs out the wicked quick Job, they die still being young." And the idea here is that God has no patience for the wicked, but that He punishes them swiftly and with a finality.

And I'm not sure where he gets his information, or what he considers his resources to be, but last time I checked God was radically patient with the wicked. He gave them 120 years before he flooded the earth; he gave the inhabitants of the land of Canaan at least 400 yrs to repent before he sent the children of Israel in to begin to render His judgment. All you have to do is look around to see God's patience with the wicked, so he's having to ignore all kinds of simple observations, and block out obvious facts in order to graft the conclusion that he has.

Nor is there any guarantee that the wicked will die young, often times the ungodly lives to be a ripe old age. Think of the wicked war crimes committed by the Nazi regime during WWII and some of the things done in those concentration camps, yet there are still some of those guys around today all these years later though they've done, and been apart of unmentionable atrocities towards the innocent. The floodgates of pornography and being blown open, though I wouldn't give him single handed type credit, but Hugh Hefner is still alive being 80 yrs old and incredibly wealthy though he amassed his fortune through exploiting immorality. And he hasn't mellowed out in his old age, has no regrets, and says that he wouldn't change a thing, he's still just as immoral today as he's ever been. So to say that the wicked are snuffed out early in life as a judgment of God is simply untrue. But by the same token missionary David Brainerd when he was 29 yrs old, Jim Elliot whom most of us have heard of, his wife Elizabeth is still ministering today, but he died at age 24, but if you ascribe to Zophar's theology you'd say that guys like this (Keith Green who died at 28) must've had some sort of secret sin in their lives so God judged them and took them out early. Jesus died when He was 33, of course He rose again the 3rd day never to die again which places Him in a category of His own as the 1st born from the dead but my point here is that you have to utterly ignore the facts to draft a conclusion like this. It's not only the wicked who die young; it's not only those who have no faith who falter in health or finances. Sometimes the righteous are struck tragically, while the wicked carry on in prosperity.

Vs12-19

The imagery is that of enjoying sin like a tasty meal, and though it's pleasurable for a season and you roll it around in your mouth savoring every ounce of it, out of nowhere will come penalty and punishment. And he's saying here, "Job you've been *savoring* the pleasure of sin, now suck it up and *suffer* the punishment, the penalty." "You wanna dance? You've gotta pay the fiddler." And one of the things that he's accusing Job of is amassing his fortune by ripping off the poor, he mentioned it once in Vs 10, now here again in Vs 19, "He's oppressed and forsaken the poor, violently seized a house which he did not build." Job you've amassed your fortune through cruelty, foreclosing homes of the poor violently, now it's coming back around on you personally.

Vs20-29

So these guys just keep beating on the same drum, there's no other viable reason to be afflicted outside of non-repentant sin in your life. And there's no escape from the painful retribution that God doles out.

Now we spoke a bit last week about the redundancy of this portion of Job, how it seems to go on and on. And how that's the way trials often are in our lives, but we also need to rejoice and find reassurance in the fact that God allowed this to be rehashed over and over again from different angles, and various semantics. Because by the time they've tried to make their point from every angle and perspective possible, we're left with the irrefutable awareness that God *doesn't* only prosper the righteous and punish the wicked.

That there are *all sorts* of variables that enter into the equation of a man's life, that the righteous might suffer while the wicked prosper. There's no denying the fact as you study through Job that material wealth and health is in no way, shape or form pending upon your personal standing before God. Incredibly godly people at times may suffer tremendously while incredibly wicked people might have it easy in the here and now. And we don't always know why that is, but we still trust the Lord with the details of our lives. We don't live for this world, hey, if the prosperity of this world is all the wicked have to look forward to than let them have it, it's all they're going to get. But you'll enjoy an eternal reward and everlasting comfort in the personal presence of the Lord.

Ch 20

So now Job responds to Zophar and he stands at odds with him at virtually every point. "You say the wicked die young, I say they live to be as old as anyone else, you say they die in pain, I don't see the proof of that, you say they vomit up what they've amassed through iniquity, I say they enjoy it until the day they die."

Now I'm going to make a bit of an assumption here but I would guess that before Job was going through these things, that his opinion would've been similar to that of his friends. Because that mentality was just a common mentality, and to a degree still is today. As long as people are doing ok they think they're ok with God, when trouble breaks loose they think God is punishing them. But what he's gone through has stripped him of everything he's thought he's known and has forced him to challenge and change his perspective. And I've discovered (no doubt you have as well) that it's awfully easy to graft opinions about situations on the outside, but your whole opinion may be subject to re-evaluation once you're the one in the hot seat.

I've had people give me all sorts of advice, or opinions that are quite harsh and unwavering about my life, or this ministry, what I need to do or the way things need to be. And sometimes all I can think is how obvious it is that they've never been there, or in that position before themselves. It's an opinion based upon an outside observer as opposed to inside understanding and compassion. But it's amazing how much personal *experience* will soften you up and *open* you up to a different perspective as opposed to *impersonal* outside observance.

Vs1-3

Or as the KJV says, "Mock on," "Listen, hear me out, then you can keep on with your mocking me." Couple things here, there are those who believe that Job is sarcastically saying, "Listen to my words, and let them be your consolation, sort of like your words have been mine." To me I don't read it that way, it seems to me that he's just saying, "Look, if you'd just keep quite and really listen to me for a minute, even that will be a comfort to me." In other words at this point their open ears would be more comforting to him than their open mouths.

He says, “Listen carefully to my speech,” reminding us again of the need to be swift to hear in the presence of the afflicted. Often times people who are hurting don’t really need all the answers, an open ear will be a huge blessing, being a ready listener will go a long way in comforting a hurting/confused and afflicted individual.

Vs4-16

So Job is refuting Zophar’s philosophy on life, “You talk about the triumph of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment, that their wealth is snatched from them and that their children have to pay for the wickedness of their ways. But in reality the wicked live a good long time, they see generations of their descendants, God doesn’t deal swiftly and suddenly with them, they lead life on ez street. Their businesses boom, they’re all the time partying and milking life for all its worth and then they die, they don’t have these drawn out and prolonged agonizing deaths. And on top of that they consciously reject God, have no desire to *follow* God, see no profit in following God, that’s the way they think.” But in Vs 16 he says, “But I don’t associate with their mentality, and refuse to ascribe to their philosophy.”

And a lot of what we’re reading here is very similar to what Asaph wrote in Ps 73, how that it didn’t seem fair to him how the wicked seemed to prosper while the righteous seemed to so often suffer. But in the course of things he was reminded of the eternal perspective, and that God will deal with them in due time, but it may not always be on this earth. Why?

Because God is patient, desires the wicked to repent, and so often the wicked misinterpret the goodness that has visited their lives for a notion that they don’t need God. God is good to them, but they opt to reject *Him*. Paul speaks to this in the book of Romans when he says, “... *do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who ‘will render to each one according to his deeds’*” Rom 2:4-6 Of course we’re familiar with 2 Peter 3:9, “*The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*” Rom 2:4-6 But such are the dangers of prosperity, a sense of self-sufficiency, “Why do I need God I’ve got everything I could ever want?” And that sense of depravity, and the inner need is masked. That’s why Jesus said it’s difficult for a rich man to get in to Heaven, easier for a camel to enter through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into Heaven, translation it’s a human impossibility. But praise God right after that He said, “With God all things are possible.” ““Is there anything too hard for Me,’ says the Lord?”

Now if you have an OKJV Vs 17 has exclamation marks in it, I believe more accurate are the question marks of practically every other translation/rendering. Remember Hebrew isn’t punctuated like the English language, the translators through in the punctuation to help us understand the inflection and overall thrust, so there’s a bit of room there for a variance of opinion, the overall text isn’t impacted, but the way a passage is inflected may change.

Vs17-21

“You talk about the wicked being cut off and their kids having to pay for the damage the parents did, but how often have you really seen that take place? And why would the wicked care about what happens when he’s gone as if that’s some sort of punishment to him.”

Vs22-26

The idea here being that the righteous and the wicked both die, one may suffer the other may not and we don’t always know the rhyme or the reason behind it, why things happen the way they do.

Vs27-30

The general gist here being that it doesn’t take a rocket scientist to realize that things don’t always happen in a way that seems idealistic to us. God *will* punish the wicked, just not always in this life. Judgment *is* coming, and the wicked will reap the reward of his ways, but in the here and now God extends common grace to both the wicked and the righteous. It rains on the just and the unjust. But the bible is clear, “*The LORD has made all for Himself, Yes, even the wicked for the day of doom.*” Prov 16:4 God will give to each man according to the fruit of his doings, and come judgment day all will stand before the Lord both small and great and at that point there’ll be no escape. At that point wealth will mean nothing, but the righteous covering of Jesus Christ will mean everything. We read in the proverbs, “*Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, But righteousness delivers from death.*” Prov 11:4 The eternal perspective, it’s so critical.

Vs31-34

Often times the wicked, far from being *reproved* in this life, are *approved*, they’re given great memorial services, and even honored in their death. “So don’t come around thinking that your lies, fantasy land philosophy is going to do me any good.”

We’re to be ready listeners, to resist the impulsive outbursts, and when we speak we’re to speak *the truth* in love.

Prayer Points:

God thank You for the clarity of Your Word, and for the comfort found in the fact that any time turbulence, or trying times break out in our lives, it doesn’t mean that You’re against us, or somehow reproofing or rebuking us. Perhaps simply refining us that we might be as pure gold, God give us strength, that we might trust in You, and hold fast *to* You when we don’t understand the tragic times that occasionally enter in to the equation of our lives. Help us to be a people ready to listen, who speak in love...