

Job 22-24

We read in the book of James, “*Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door! My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. Indeed we count them blessed who endure. 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 5:7-11 If you’re anything like me, when you’ve read through that in the past your tendency is probably to think of Job’s perseverance, Job’s patience with in the context of the loss of his home, the death of his 10 children, the utter devastation of his vast resources be it financially and/or materially as represented in his overwhelming abundance of livestock. Even the endurance illustrated in the radical erosion of his own health, being physically on the brink of death, and we’ve discussed before the unbelievably painful and miserable disposition that he was subjected to. Not being able to sleep, how his skin would turn black and fall off, open oozing worm infested sores, insatiable itch, fever, loss of appetite, when he finally fell asleep he’d be tormented with nightmares, I mean he was just absolutely destitute when it came to his own health physically, his family, and where he was at financially. And believe me when I tell you that I would never take away from the tremendous amount of patience and perseverance portrayed by Job in the endurance of those things. But if you look carefully there at the context of James 5 it’s not speaking of trials as such in the form of physical suffering (though James does deal with that). But the context of that particular portion of James 5 finds itself speaking more to the oppression that people may heap upon you or by which they might come against you. He speaks of the oppression of the rich towards the poor, and then in Vs 9 just before he brings up the example of Job in his suffering, perseverance and patience he says, “Do not grumble against one another, brethren,”

So though those other things taking place in Job’s life were incredibly tragic, as you study the book of Job you come to realize that what he seemed to have to continually and perpetually persevere through in his trial was the constant badgering of his “buddies.” I mean out of the 42 Ch’s of the book, they don’t even really get involved until Ch 4, and then there’s over 30 Ch’s of an all out Theological/philosophical “slugfest” as these guys just continue to come *against* him, with really no regard *for* him though somewhere in their minds they think they’re doing what’s *best* for him, trying to *comfort* him, help him to see the situation the way it really is. Yet Job just continues to hang on to his integrity, and he perseveres through their oppression and ultimately God will vindicate him.

And there are going to be times that people will come against you, thinking that they've got a grip on the circumstance or situation *surrounding* you, so they've got a "word" for you. But often times people don't know what they think they know from simply observing circumstances, and rather than helping you they're really only hurting you, they're grumbling against you, but James says "Hey" consider the example of the prophets, how they endured, we count them blessed, remember Job, how God used all that in the end, (and is still using it to this day). And the idea behind all that is to encourage you, encourage me to endure, because God's in control and though He perhaps hasn't caused it, He does have a plan and a purpose in *allowing* it. We may not understand it, or know why we're being subjected *to* it, but God remains sovereign *through* it. And we realize that the things that the enemy desires to use for evil, God is able to turn for our ultimate good, and His eternal glory.

So the bell rings and we enter into round 3. Round 2 ended with Job has finishing off Zophar by telling him that he's not sure where he gets his information regarding how God deals with wickedness and righteousness, but that in essence he subscribes to a fantasy land philosophy and in reality has only spoken lies.

Now Eliphaz speaks up and once again brings nothing new to the table, he's trying to sniff out sin, find fault and all that. He doesn't look for fruit in Job's life to encourage him with or build him up, he looks for fault whereby to criticize him and tear him down, notice.

Vs 1-5

So Eliphaz launches a vicious attack here just tearing into Job with sarcasm and in essence telling him to quit covering his sin and confess it. "Just say it, your wickedness is great and your iniquity is with out end." You know, "quit clinging to this pseudo sense of righteousness and just come out with it already, God doesn't correct you because of your fear of Him, or because you're righteous before Him, because your wickedness is great and your iniquity is with out end. Why else would you be being dealt with so incredibly harsh?" In other words "Job the circumstantial evidence is overwhelmingly against you, so here's what you need to do." He thinks he has a grip on the situation when the fact is that he doesn't have a clue, and Job is having to persevere through this kind of abuse just over and over and over again.

Now there are a couple of things we want to observe here. There in Vs 2 he says, "Can a man be profitable to God." Well, the answer is "No." God doesn't need me, He doesn't need you, He doesn't "profit" in anyway by the work of our hands, the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. Perhaps you remember when Jesus was sharing with His disciples on faith, and being faithful. And he said, "Which of you having a servant after he's spent all day laboring in the field, tending to the sheep is going to say, 'C'mon in sit down let me serve you, get you something to eat, something to drink.'" He said, "Rather you'll have him come in and get you something to eat and drink, then when you're finished with supper he can have something then."

And he said, “Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.’” Luke 17:9-10. And so we realize that even if we were able to fulfill even the most minute of details found in the Word of God, leading our lives in complete submission to the Spirit of God we’ve only done what’s expected, nothing over and beyond the call of duty, we’re at best “break even” servants, not “profitable” servants. So “No” we can’t be profitable.

But in Vs 3 he asks another question. “Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that you are righteous?” The answer to that I would say is, “Yes.” The whole reason that Job is in this thing is because God was well pleased with him, took pleasure *in* him. Said, “There’s none like Job on the face of the earth, a man who’s upright, blameless, fears God, shuns evil.” God was pleased *with* him, so he entrusted a trial that would vindicate His (God’s) integrity *to* him. We read in 1 Chron 29:17 where David said, “I know also, my God, that You test the heart and have pleasure in uprightness.” And over and over again throughout the scriptures we read how the Lord delights in the upright, is well pleased with the sacrifice of the righteous. So are we profitable to the Lord? No. Can we be *pleasing* to the Lord, bring *pleasure* to the Lord? You bet.

But Eliphaz accuses Job of being exceedingly wicked, and overflowing with iniquity. Now he begins to bring out specific accusations against him.
Vs6-11

The idea there being that just as water covered the earth in the flood so as to do away with wickedness and rebellion upon the earth, so God is doing away with you, completely, in totality.

Judgment is upon you, completely enveloping you. But here’s the question we have to ask ourselves as we read all of these accusations, where did he get his *information*? He didn’t live anywhere around there and by the time he came on the scene the damage to Job had been done. He doesn’t know *any* of his business practices or *how* he’s handled any of these situations of benevolence or whatever. And since we have the inside perspective based upon what God *said* of Job, we know these are all lies. It’s complete conjecture on his part, or he’s given way to gossip, hearsay, it’s speculation based upon, A) circumstantial evidence (which is completely misleading to his logic) or B) he’s taking in what someone else has told him and is simply purporting it to be true with nothing to back it up whatsoever. Be careful when you speculate with someone about the on-goings of a man’s heart or even what takes place in his personal life when the fact of the matter is that you don’t know. Because people grab on to those things, and begin to purport them as true, “Well I heard that he does this, or she did that.” “Really, man I can’t believe she would be like that, or he would be so rude like that,” or whatever. Job isn’t guilty of any of these things, yet its being purported like gospel truth, be careful, don’t be party to gossip, or hearsay, conjecture or speculation, all it does is damage.

Vs12-18

So he's setting Job up in a "no win" situation. All along he's said God prospers the righteous and punishes the wicked, now he's saying that God fills the houses of the wicked with good things to. So it seems that now he's even questioning the time that Job was prosperous, he must've had some secret sin in his life even then as well, and he was thinking that God didn't see it, was too far removed, but God is dealing with him now.

Vs19-22

I'm not exactly sure how to reconcile the fullness of what's happening here. Because here Eliphaz is and man he's just tearing into Job, accusing him rudely, bashing on him relentlessly and then somehow in the midst of all that he's able to make this segue into an invitation to salvation. I mean I can't hear his inflections but I have a feeling that things are pretty heated here, he's hammering on Job left and right and then he in essence says, "So why don't you come to Christ?" It's a great invitation, but the delivery seems a bit awkward in it's timing, not to mention Job already knows the Lord and walks in righteousness *before* the Lord.

But we want to be careful with what he's saying at the same time, because it's true that Christ will give you rest, peace for your soul, surely goodness and mercy will follow me all of the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. And it *is* so critical that we receive His instruction, lay up His words in our heart. "*Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.*" Ps 119:11 But what Eliphaz is communicating to Job is that if he repents and gets right with the Lord all his problems will be over, and nothing but good will come to him. And that's *not* true. It's a lot easier living an ungodly life than it is to live a godly life, often times trouble visits us simply because *we are* seeking to lead our lives as unto the Lord. Jesus said, "*Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.*" Matt 7:13-14 So the Christian life is not the trouble free life, it's often times riddled with difficulty as we thrust against the grain of godlessness, sin and unrighteousness, but Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life and no one comes to the Father but by Him, He alone has the Words of everlasting life. One day there'll be no more pain, no more trials, no more tears, no more turbulent times, but as for now there are times we have to endure them.

Vs23-25

It's the prosperity doctrine, come to Christ and you'll be rich, God will be your gold, He's money in the bank. This is the philosophy that uses godliness as a means of gain from which the bible tells us we're to with draw, and have nothing to do with.

Vs 26-28

You'll be able to name it and claim it Job, once you get right with God, it's nothing but good, you'll be wealthy, gold will be like dust, you can make a decree and it'll be done, (that's so appealing to the flesh isn't it?) It's no wonder people ascribe in droves to that type of theology, if in coming to Christ I can be in great health, in total wealth, and I can make a declaration and it'll be done, count me in. And that's another thing that you find the prosperity doctrine subscribing to, the thought that you can declare something in faith, speak it from your mouth, and it'll be done. And they say, "God *said*...and it was done." Therefore you can *say* in faith and *it* will be done, and they have a few different angles they approach it from but that's the general idea. But that's to emphasize the wrong word. They say, "God *said*," but in reality its that "God said," it's not that God *said* it, it's that God said it, I'm not God, you're not God, so you have to be real careful. I'm not saying that our words can't influence or impact a situation, but to think that you can speak sickness upon yourself, or terminal disease, or that you can say, "I drive a Mercedes or Lamborghini" therefore it's going to happen is ludicrous. David was convinced that Saul was going to kill him, was always on the move in order to avoid him, but did it happen? You find negative confessions all over the scripture that didn't bring about that particular ramification in their lives, so there's difference between God speaking, and you or me speaking. With God it's a guarantee, with me I can't declare a thing into existence.

Vs29-30

Ch23

Vs1-2

The KJV says, "My stroke is heavier than my groaning." Which is to say even though I'm crying out, and making my complaint, my complaint doesn't measure up to the gravity of the situation, it's far worse than I'm even able to make it out.

Vs3-7

Job is saying, "I wish I could plead my case before His judgment seat, because I know that He wouldn't be like you guys, He wouldn't use His great power to contend with me, but to vindicate me, have mercy and compassion upon me, He would deliver me." The essence is that, "I don't deserve this," now I want to be careful here because we realize that Job was an upright and godly man. But when it comes to what he deserves, or what you and I *deserve*, we deserve far worse, and when Job finally hears from the Lord guess what... he doesn't go about pleading his case and demanding a release, he gets on his face and cries out in *repentance*. You can't be confronted with the reality of holiness and not fall on your face in utter repulsion of all that you are and in humble awe struck submission of who *God* is. But Job is here acknowledging the mercy of God, the fact that He wouldn't treat him the way these guys are treating him.

Vs8-9

He looked latterly in every direction but he didn't look up, which is sort of synonymous in scripture with seeking the Lord. The psalmist said, *"I will lift up my eyes to the hills -- From whence comes my help? My help comes from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth."* Ps 121:1-2. And again, *"Unto You I lift up my eyes, O You who dwell in the heavens."* Ps 123:1 In times of trouble, don't look around, look up...

Vs10

So Eliphaz says, "God is your gold," Job says, "You are God's gold." And gold never fears the furnace, the fire, because it only serves to purify it all the more. The smelter turns up the heat, melts down the gold, and all the impurities float to the top for the goldsmith to sift out leaving the gold more pure with each refinement. And the furnace of affliction is no stranger to the child of God. We read in Isaiah, *"Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction."* Isa 48:10 Peter tells us, *"In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,"* 1 Peter 1:6-7 Of course we could speak about Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego, if anyone understood "the furnace of affliction" it would be those 3. But here Job is saying, "I don't know what God is up to in this, but I know that He knows me, and somehow He's refining me, and when it's all over I'll come forth as gold." I'm telling you that's a mountain peak type statement of monumental faith. Because I can become derailed at the most miniscule forms of affliction, yet in all that Job is undergoing and enduring, he's able to say, "God's got a plan in this and when it's all said and done I know I won't be bitter, I'll be better, tested and brought forth as gold."

Vs11-12

In other words he recognizes that the primary priority is the inner man, not the outer, it's eternal, not external. We read in Ps 119:103, *"How sweet are Your words to my taste, Sweeter than honey to my mouth!"* Jeremiah said, *"Your words were found, and I ate them, And Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; For I am called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts."* Jer 15:16 Of course we're familiar with Peter's words, *"...as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,"* 1 Peter 2:2 If we could just learn to tend to our inner man to the extent that we do our outer man, I try not to miss a meal when it comes to my outer man, but there are times I let it slip when it comes to the inner man. Yet my outer man will perish, not so with my inner man, the inner man will live on forever, moving from this tent into a body not made with hands eternal in the heavens. Which ought our priority to lie with? God's Word is nourishment to our soul, Job says, "I have treasured the words of His mouth, more than my necessary food."

Vs13-17

Translation: God is sovereign and whether that makes for great circumstances, or devastating times I know that God is going to cause His purpose and His plan to be brought into fruition in my life.

Ch 24

Vs1-12

“Hey if God punishes the wicked and prospers the righteous, than how do you explain these things? The poor cry out to God all the time with injustice yet God doesn’t seem to respond, why is that if your philosophy, if your theology is correct?” And God does hear the cry of the poor, and will judge the wicked, but as we mentioned in our last gathering it’s not always going to happen in this life, God is gracious, causing it to rain on both the just and the unjust, He’s merciful to wicked not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day will come should they not turn to Christ that they’ll reap the reward of their ways, again it’s the eternal perspective that we’ve got to be mindful of.

Vs13-21

This is the way that it seems like things should go, but again God is sovereign, His ways aren’t our ways, therefore things don’t always go like we think they should go.

Vs22-25

Both the righteous and the wicked at times prosper, and both the righteous and the wicked at times suffer, look around, you don’t have to be a theologian to realize that that’s just the fact. Why do the righteous suffer? I don’t know, but I know that as long as we submit to the hand of God in the midst of it all, He’ll refine us as silver, we’ll come forth as fine gold. Keep His way, don’t turn aside, don’t depart from the commandment of His lips, and may God teach us to treasure the words of His mouth more than our necessary food, placing priority on the eternal, for our good, and for His glory.

Prayer Points:

God there are times when circumstance break loose in our lives and we don’t understand, may we trust in You. May we be refined in those times, made better, not bitter. And Lord may we be those whom You use to build up, not tear down, to look for fruit rather than finding fault, help us not to speculate over circumstantial evidence, but to look *to* You, and trust *in* You, that we might be an encouragement to that brother or sister who’s hurting, in need of comfort. We thank You that You are the God of *all* comfort, that we can cry out *to* You, receive strength *from* You, fill us with Your Spirit.