

Job 29-31

For the last 24 Ch's we've been in the throws of this all out 3 round verbal slugfest. Sparks have been flying, tempers have been flaring and the fight has been on. The bottom line of it all is that Job's friends have been accusing him of some sort of secret sin in his life for which God is punishing him, and Job is maintaining his position in defending his integrity.

But when God speaks up in the not too distant future, Job's defense dissolves, and that was one of the things we brought out in our last gathering together in the book of Job. It's so important that we give place to the Holy Spirit when it comes to pointing out what we believe to be people's problems. Because almost invariably when you come against me, I'm just going to get offended, rear up in the defensive position and lash back out at you, I'll justify myself by putting *your life* under the microscope, "You're talking to me! What about *this* in your life, or *that* that you were apart of, or *the other thing* that you took part in?" And I'm going to turn it around so that you're the one with the problem, not me. But when the *Holy Spirit* comes to me, and begins to deal with me, convict me, now that's an altogether different story, and yields an altogether different result. And the bible is clear that He's the one who's come into the world to convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. I can't do that, now the Holy Spirit can work through us no doubt, but it's so important that we be Spirit led in times of confrontation. Job's friends definitely weren't Spirit led; they were the devil's advocates, accusers of their brethren.

Well, the last of Job's friends that we heard from was Bildad, he was brief and to the point and he basically sang the same song. "Job, God is all knowing, He's in control of all things, you're sitting here saying that you're right with God, there's no one born of a woman who is pure, you're a sinner, the moon and the stars aren't pure in His sight, how much less man who is a maggot and the son of man who is a worm?" To which Job responded, "Thanks Barnabas you're a real encouragement. You've been no help, no support, you've given me no wise counsel, you don't know anything about me like you think you do and you're talking out of the side of your mouth."

Now in Ch's 29-31 Job continues his discourse and this is the last we'll hear from him until God addresses him. And he's really not addressing his buddies here, but he's just crying out as he remembers the blessing of his *past exaltation* in Ch 29, his *present humiliation and degradation* in Ch 30, and his final *protestation* of innocence, and cry for *vindication* in the future in Ch 31. So, past blessings, present buffetings, and a future exonerating (Ch 29, 30, 31).

Vs1-6

So in the midst of this his hour of despair and discouragement Job begins now to reflect back upon the past, remembering God's goodness and His faithfulness towards him. And notice he recognizes that he'd done nothing to deserve his *prosperity*, the abundance of blessing that was poured out upon him *personally*, but this was just the friendly favor of God upon his life.

And there in verse 1 where it tells us that, “Job continued his discourse,” it’s almost as if at the end of Ch 28 Job paused, and waited for Zophar to respond, but when he just held his peace and stayed quiet Job continued on.

And he says, “Oh that I were as in the months past, when God was watching over me, shining His lamp *upon* me, just leading and guiding me.” And I think that this is good, because there are going to be times that we go through the fire, when the heat is on in our lives, and we feel perhaps isolated and all alone in our trial. But God would have us to remember His goodness, His grace and His mercy toward our lives.

Charles Spurgeon once said that too many people write their blessings in the sand but engrave their sorrows in marble, and there’s an awful lot of truth to that. How quickly I forget God’s goodness in days of difficulty, I feel abandoned and all alone. But we do well to remember the faithfulness of God toward our lives. Now, someone once defined, “the good ol’ days,” as a combination of a bad memory and a good imagination, and in certain respects that may be true, but it wasn’t with Job, his memory was very accurate. His good ol’ days were really good ol’ days, why? Because the Lord was the central figure, and the primary priority of his life. Often times our memory can cause us to glamorize things that really weren’t that glamorous, the children of Israel remembered all the leeks and garlic of Egypt, but they forgot about the chains, the hard taskmasters and being forced to serve with vigor and hard labor. And the enemy often tempts us to look back at the world in that way, as a great time, a continual party, footloose and fancy free, not a care in the world. But we forget the bondage, the emptiness, the pain, that feeling of desperation, hopelessness and lostness. And so our memory can in certain respects betray us, but when kept in its proper context the memory can be a powerful ministry. And it’s healthy for us to recount God’s goodness and faithfulness. He told the children of Israel that they were to remember the way that He led them and cared for them in the wilderness. He said, “*And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.*” Deut 8:2. And again, “*You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you;*” Deut 15:15 No matter how difficult, how desperate our days may seem, we’re to remember that we were a slave of sin, slaves to the flesh, and the Lord our God redeemed us. The Psalmist writes (being in the midst of a feeling like God had failed him and forgotten him) and says, “*This is my anguish; But I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High. I will remember the works of the LORD; Surely I will remember Your wonders of old. I will also meditate on all Your work, And talk of Your deeds. Your way, O God, is in the sanctuary; Who is so great a God as our God? You are the God who does wonders; You have declared Your strength among the peoples. You have with Your arm redeemed Your people,*” Ps 77:10-15 In Ps 42 the psalmist writes of his soul being cast down and he says that He will remember the Lord; His lovingkindness will be with him during the day and His song in the night, a prayer unto the God of my life.

But here's the deal, our memory should be serving as a rudder to guide us, not an anchor that holds us back, remember God's faithfulness in the past and it'll give you strength for the present, faith for the future. But don't get lost there or lose sight of what's happening around you presently. Warren Wiersbe said, "If we focus so much on the glories of the past that we ignore the opportunities of the present, we may end up unprepared to meet the future." So remember the past, be strengthened *by* it, then move forward *from* it.

And before we move on from here I want you to see the way this lays out, notice 1st his priority was in his personal relationship with the Lord. We see phrases like, "God watched over *me*," "His lamp shone upon *my* head," "By His light *I* walked through darkness." And that's the primary priority of all of our lives, that personal relationship with Jesus. Everything else pivots around that, safeguard that relationship with all that you are. But then from his life *personally* it spilled over into his *family*. Vs 4-5, "The friendly counsel of God was over my tent; the Almighty was yet with me, when my children were around me." #1 My walk and relationship with the Lord *personally* #2 The environment that will be conducive to the spiritual growth and well being of my *family*. Receiving God's counsel, having times of family devotion, praying with your kids, encouraging them with godly principles and precepts. And then from there the things he did *vocationally*, that's the reference there in Vs 6 regarding his steps being bathed with cream and the rock pouring out rivers of oil for him.

The olive press was blessed, God blessed the work of his hands, his business, milk and honey, cream and oil, the idea there is that he was blessed in business. So we might understand this section as the priority of his walk.

Beginning with Vs 7 we see that he was blessed with a *position of worth*; he was respected and adhered to by both young and old.

Vs7-11

When he came to town people stepped aside, not because they *feared* him, but because they *revered* him, they respected him, they saw him as a man of worth; God had blessed him, set him in a position of power in the city. He also displayed a *pattern of good works*.

Vs12-17

He didn't just have good ideas for others; he was actively involved in the pursuit of righteousness and justice for people's lives. Remember Eliphaz had accused Job of exploiting and taking advantage of the poor, and needy, Job says, "No way, I delivered the poor who cried out, the fatherless, those who had no help, I helped." He was eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, and he didn't decide a matter without knowing all the facts, if he wasn't certain he searched a matter out, convenience wasn't a factor, what he did, he did with conviction. Even coming against the wicked, and snatching the helpless out of their jaws. His life had displayed a pattern of good works, what kind of pattern does your life display, as I look back in my life...what do I see about the pattern of my life?

The bible says, “*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*” Eph 2:10 There should be a pattern of good works in my life, doesn’t mean a pattern of practical perfection, but we’ve been created in Christ Jesus for good works that God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. Job was walking in the works that God had ordained for him. Everything was going so great for Job, because of that he saw in the end a life on easy street.

Vs18-20

This image of the bow being strung tight and ready for use creating for us that image of being ready in season and out for any and every reason that God may have need of my life, or desire to use my life. Job is saying, “Man I was like a well oiled machine in top notch condition, my glory was fresh with in me and my bow was renewed in my hand.” Job is in essence likening himself to a bow in the Master Archer’s hand being used in a mighty way. And that was true, God was blessing him and he was utilizing those blessings to be a blessing in the lives of others. There was no reason why he could foresee any change in the forecast. God would just continue to use him skillfully as an instrument of war or peace in the lives of others depending on which side of the fence you stood, defending the widows, poor and fatherless, breaking the fangs of the wicked. And it’s a great feeling to be used as an instrument in the hands of God, but along with that can come a false sense of security or confidence as though now that you’re in God’s hands it’s going to be living life on easy street and then one day you’ll go to sleep and wake up in the arms of Jesus, but such isn’t necessarily the case, rarely the case.

We’ll all have days of difficulty, times of tribulation, being refined in the fire, passing through the rivers of live and all. And don’t get me wrong, I’m not saying that we should live life pessimistically regarding the future, its good have a certain expectation of the future, but not an *exaggeration* of the future. God is in control; it’s true, and He hold’s His eternal glory, and you’re eternal good at the forefront of His heart and mind. But what makes for those things isn’t always what we think, or how we imagined it would be. But God is no less with Job right now than He was then, Job just isn’t as cognizant because of the circumstances surrounding his life.

And these are the times that God is teaching us to walk by faith not by feelings. He’s said that He would never leave us nor forsake us, now we either believe it and receive it or we don’t. And it’s those tough times that prove out the reality of where we’re at and what we truly believe. Am I going to trust in the Lord with all my heart and lean not on my own understanding? Or am I going to tuck tail and split on the Lord? Do I love Him for what He can do, or simply for who He is?

Well, not only did Job have the priority of his walk, a position of worth, a pattern of good works, but there was *power* in his *words*, he’d been blessed to be a man of influence in the lives of both young and old, notice.

Vs21-25

“My words were refreshing, renewing, relaxing, and revitalizing.” In Job’s words were power to help, and power to heal, and God wants to use your words in the same way. We can use our words to tear one another down, to sow contention, confusion, discord or division, or we can use our words to build one another up, to speak clarity, comfort, bring unity and harmony. The bible says, “*Death and life are in the power of the tongue,*” Prov 18:21 My tongue can give someone hope, or crush someone’s spirit. Peter tells us, “*If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God.*” 1 Peter 4:11 Paul said, “*Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.*” Col 4:6 God wants to use us to bring help, hope, and healing to peoples lives, Job was that guy his was the final word, as a king in the army, as one who comforts mourners. That was the blessing of his past, now he speaks of the buffetings of his present, from the past exaltation, to the present humiliation, degradation.

Ch 30

Vs1-8

So from his peaceful past we step into the plight of his present. You can almost hear the groan there in Vs 1, “But now...” And he proceeds to show how he’s been systematically stripped of every blessing he once enjoyed. From having enjoyed the respect of the most respectable, now he suffers the contempt of the most contemptible. He’s become lower than the lowest on the social ladder; it used to be that people older than him respected him, stood up in his presence. Now men younger than him mock at him (which in his culture was an absolutely unthinkable discourtesy). This Ch shows Job disrespected socially, in pain physically, he feels abandoned spiritually, *opposed* socially, and exhausted both physically and emotionally. He was seen as the outcast of the outcast.

Vs9-10

The proverbs tell us, “*The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, And a man is valued by what others say of him.*” Prov 27:21 Job has become the taunting song of the most debased, social off scouring of his society, people have nothing good to say of him, they see him as a worthless man waiting to die. “They do not hesitate to spit in my face.” Which is an insult in any culture but it’s the most disdain you could possibly show in his. But in all this it’s interesting to parallel the suffering of Christ (which we’ve done before) and see how much the sufferings of Job correspond to those of Christ’s. He’s entered into the fellowship of his suffering, having been betrayed by his friends, he’s become a by word, a laughing stock, men mocked him, spit in his face. They believe he’s God forsaken, and so in a very real respect though Job is sitting there on the ash heap he’s been promoted in the highest possible way in that he’s gleaning from the inner workings of the very heart of Christ, in essence coming to know Him (that is the fellowship of His sufferings). Jesus was a Man acquainted with sorrows, who knew what it was like to suffer unjustly at the hands of men, even those who thought they were doing God a favor while beating Him down.

Vs11-15

Look at Vs 11 (read). In Ch 29 we saw where Job likened himself to a tightly strung bow being used by the Master Archer. He felt useful, now he feels as though his bowstring has been loosed, translation: he feels *useless*. And because God has rendered him useless (in his mind), people have no more use for him. “My bowstring has been loosed and I’ve been afflicted, so they’ve cast off restraint before me.” So they mock him, trip him, break up his path and block his way. How tragic that he sought out the outcast, and now the outcast have cast him out. And we’ll see him touch on this again in a minute but there’s a key in here for us and it’s this.

Why do you do, why do I do what I do? What is the motive behind your good works? My motive ought to be the love of God and obedience to Jesus Christ But there’s a wicked way in me that has this mentality that once I’ve done something good for you, that you owe something good to me. So that when you’re down and I help *you* out, if I’m down you need to be there to help *me* out. And certainly that would be good, but I’m not to serve others to obligate them in any way to me. Jesus said, *“When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just.”* Luke 14:12-14. And we hear that and we think, “Yeah, that’s right on.” Yet there’s something in us that when we don’t get repaid, we don’t get thanked, we don’t get the pat on the back and we go, “That unthankful jerk, see if I ever help him again.” And it’s not that we shouldn’t be thankful, or seek to be kind to one another, absolutely we should, but do we do what we do to get the kind *response*, or to obligate them to us? Or because we love the Lord, and are obedient to His direction for our lives? Job is bummed, because though he’s helped them, they’re now hurting him (emotionally, socially etc) and that’s only natural, but it helps to have proper perspective, I didn’t do it for them anyway, but for the Lord, He’ll repay, He’s seen in the secret and He’ll reward openly.

Vs16-21

You see earlier he felt as though he had proper priorities in his walk, now he feels as though God opposes him. He had a pattern of good works, now he feels his works are worthless, notice.

Vs22-31

My instrument knows nothing but the blues, no more power in my words, no more profitable good works, I’ve done good to others only to be repaid with no good. This is his present humiliation, now we see (quickly) his final plea for future vindication.

Ch 31

And again I would reiterate that Job is speaking from the integrity of his heart, I don't doubt anything he says here. But when you get in God's face (proverbially speaking) and challenge Him regarding your innocence, you're inviting condemnation. But to humble yourself before Him, confessing you're a sinner will bring about his justification. Remember Paul said that if we'd judge ourselves we wouldn't be judged, but when we justify ourselves we invite God's judgment.

But there's some great stuff in this Ch nonetheless, he deals with his innocence regarding the private sins of the heart, and public sins against his fellow man, and he invites and welcomes any judgment that he's warranted on the basis of any wrong doing he may've committed.

Vs1-8

If I'm guilty of trying to cover private sin in my heart than I'm willing to be subject to the proper penalty.

But I haven't lusted after another woman, and underline Vs 1. Be careful the things you allow your eyes to be cast upon, lust is a powerful thing and it can lead to the destruction of your life. Don't even go there, don't look there, Jesus said if you even look on another woman to lust after her you've already committed adultery with her in your heart. In other words God is looking not only to our outward actions, but also the thoughts and intents of our hearts. So as the psalmist said, "Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things, and revive me in Your way." It's true that the outward act brings about greater ramifications, but it all starts in the heart, through lust, make a covenant with your eyes, don't look upon another woman, or another man. Job says he's clean there.

Neither has he been deceitful (Vs 5) in his business dealings, he's dealt upright, with integrity, no deception in his heart

Nor has he been covetous (Vs 7) his heart walking after his eyes, if so he's willing to reap the consequences. And he's calling down all these curses on himself if he's guilty of these things. But he says, "I have no secret sin I'm covering, nor any public violation."

Vs9

"I haven't committed adultery. If so let my wife be given to another man, that would be deserving." Safeguard your marriage, maintain an intimacy with your spouse, the enemy has just the man who will listen to your wife, or just the woman who'll be affectionate to your husband and he wants to destroy your marriage. The proverbs tell us, "*Can a man take fire to his bosom, And his clothes not be burned? Can one walk on hot coals, And his feet not be seared? So is he who goes in to his neighbor's wife; Whoever touches her shall not be innocent.*" Prov 6:27-29 You might jot down Prov Ch 7. It's all about the ways of the adulterous, the dangers thereof.

It's not just the weak stragglers that are picked off in that way, strong men are slain in such ways. There we read that her house is the way to hell descending into the chambers of death, and it's not that there's no forgiveness in the light of repentance, but the ramifications are brutal, be careful maintain that 1st love relationship with Jesus, and make sure He stays in the middle your marriage. How many people's lives have been reduced to a crust of bread due to adultery? Job says if that was me, I'd deserve just punishment, but I'm innocent of that.

Vs13-15

"I haven't treated an employee unfairly, or despised anyone because they weren't on a higher rung on the social ladder." Of course James gives a stern warning regarding treating people different because of social status, rich, poor, employer or employee. God created both, everyone was fashioned in the womb just the same, and we do well to remember that.

Vs16-23

"I've been a provider for the downcast, and a protector of their cause." And again all these things are true, but none of these things will justify you before God, though I give my body to be burned, but have not the love of God, it profits me nothing.

Vs24-28

He says he hasn't been prideful over money, or guilty of idolatry.

Vs29-40

In Vs 35 where he says, "Here's my mark" he's in essence signing the document, closing his case and saying, "The defense rests" then he remembered one more area, he's even been careful not to abuse the land. And I thought Vs 33 was interesting where he references Adam even though the book of Job is older than the written record of Genesis, Job was readily aware of Adams sin and how he sought to hide his sin, to cover his transgression. Job says, "I haven't done that." Sometimes we try to cover our tracks, but Job is innocent of any willful sin, be it private, or public. So, he's remembered his past exaltation, contrasts that with his present humiliation, and now cries out to God for his vindication and rests his case.

Prayer points:

God we thank You for Your Word, the washing of the Water thereby. Help us to be a people of integrity, using our words wisely. And when we're troubled with the problems we face in the present, may we remember Your goodness, grace, mercy, and faithfulness to us in the past, that You might strengthen us *by* it, and help us to keep moving forward, trusting in You with all our heart, Lord we know that our works don't justify us, but Jesus You are both Just, and the Justifier of us all, we submit ourselves into Your hands, and give You praise.