

The last time we were together Job was in deep despair as he finally broke his silence after seven days and nights of just sitting with his three friends. After conceding that his hope was taken away two of his friends spoke up with different approaches to counseling Job.

The first friend, Eliphaz, approached him with some compassion and understanding as he tactfully tried to show Job that there might be the possibility that Job had done something in his life that prompted God to bring this calamity upon him.

The second friend, Bildad, left no room for doubt.

**Job 8:1-6** <sup>NAU</sup> Then Bildad the Shuhite answered, <sup>2</sup> "How long will you say these things, And the words of your mouth be a mighty wind? <sup>3</sup> "Does God pervert justice? Or does the Almighty pervert what is right? <sup>4</sup> "If your sons sinned against Him, Then He delivered them into the power of their transgression. <sup>5</sup> "If you would seek God And implore the compassion of the Almighty, <sup>6</sup> If you are pure and upright, Surely now He would rouse Himself for you And restore your righteous estate.

At this point Job is exhausted with life and concedes that it would almost be fruitless to make his case before God because even if he could prove his case that he was innocent God would still exact His wrath on Job.

**Job 9:16-23** <sup>16</sup> "If I called and He answered me, I could not believe that He was listening to my voice. <sup>17</sup> "For He bruises me with a tempest And multiplies my wounds without cause. <sup>18</sup> "He will not allow me to get my breath, But saturates me with bitterness. <sup>19</sup> "If *it is a matter* of power, behold, *He is* the strong one! And if *it is a matter* of justice, who can summon Him? <sup>20</sup> "Though I am righteous, my mouth will condemn me; Though I am guiltless, He will declare me guilty. <sup>21</sup> "I am guiltless; I do not take notice of myself; I despise my life. <sup>22</sup> "It is *all* one; therefore I say, 'He destroys the guiltless and the wicked.' <sup>23</sup> "If the scourge kills suddenly, He mocks the despair of the innocent.

As we noted last time, Job's thinking here is all messed up. It is not true that God mocks the despair of the innocent. We know this because God in His word tells us so. But when you're experience is telling you the opposite there is the tendency to trust your experience instead of what God has revealed.

And that was the point Paul was making when discussing the idea of having to live in this present world where we groan as we await the resurrection. And in the midst of that context Paul simply says, “for we walk by faith, not by sight” (**2 Corinthians 5:7**)

In that same context of looking forward to the resurrection as we live our lives out daily serving one another in the body of Christ Paul says this.

<sup>NAU</sup> **1 Corinthians 13:12** For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.

Job was looking into a clouded mirror, he only knew part of the story of what God was trying to accomplish in his life at that time. But when the veil is lifted by God, either in Job's case, or in the last day when God ushers in the new heavens and new earth and we finally see clearly, we have no choice but to live by faith.

Well, we do have a choice and this is the rub. Often times we make a choice to wallow in our situation instead of trusting that despite our ability to see as God sees, we are more comfortable trusting in only what we see at the time and instead of walking by faith, we do in fact walk by sight.

Having said that, God already knows our weaknesses and still does not abandon us anymore than He will abandon Job, or Peter in his denials, or Paul when he questioned God's understanding of his situation with the messenger of satan, or any of our doubts.

But in each of those cases God still instructs and points us back to His sovereignty and mighty hand to save and sustain. Job will learn this and submit, Peter learned this and submitted, Paul learned this and submitted, but all did so by the grace and strength which God supplies, not because they picked themselves up by their own boot straps.

Each of those three had given up hope and yet God rescued each of them in due season and He will do the same with us.

But God is still taking Job on a journey and the learning curve is sharp. And now his third friend is about to open his mouth with what he assumes is wisdom and he seems to have taken a page from Bildad's hand book on how to counsel friends.

**Job 11:1-5** <sup>NAU</sup> Then Zophar the Naamathite answered, <sup>2</sup> "Shall a multitude of words go unanswered, And a talkative man be

acquitted? <sup>3</sup> "Shall your boasts silence men? And shall you scoff and none rebuke? <sup>4</sup> "For you have said, 'My teaching is pure, And I am innocent in your eyes.' <sup>5</sup> "But would that God might speak, And open His lips against you,

**Job 11:13-16** <sup>13</sup> "If you would direct your heart right And spread out your hand to Him, <sup>14</sup> If iniquity is in your hand, put it far away, And do not let wickedness dwell in your tents; <sup>15</sup> "Then, indeed, you could lift up your face without *moral* defect, And you would be steadfast and not fear. <sup>16</sup> "For you would forget *your* trouble, As waters that have passed by, you would remember *it*.

### **What does Zophar assume is going on in the life of Job?**

Sin, that needs to be repented of. In fact, all three friends have assumed this.

Now, again we may jump to the conclusion that they are simply being harsh. But there's a reason that they are referred to as Job's friends, and it's not because they want to destroy him. Like Job, they are looking at the situation and coming only to one conclusion.

Job's conclusion is that God seems to be unfair that He would judge a righteous man. His friend's conclusion is that God does not judge the unrighteous, therefore Job is in some way unrighteous.

But both parties are wrong because God has something entirely different in mind for Job for reasons he does not understand at this point.

### **So, as Monday morning quarterbacks, what is it that Job should have done in his situation despite the fact that he didn't understand why he was undergoing such an ordeal?**

He should have trusted in his God as a faithful God who knows what He's doing.

Well, isn't that nice. Your world is falling apart and you should just trust that God knows what He's doing and that despite all the evidence to the contrary God is a gracious and loving God extending mercy to His people.

This is the hard reality to living life in a sin-filled cursed world. And it was the promise that was given to Adam and Eve. Let me remind you of that fact.

**Genesis 3:16-19** <sup>16</sup> To the woman He said, "I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth, In pain you will bring forth children; Yet your desire will be for your husband, And he will rule over you." <sup>17</sup> Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life. <sup>18</sup> "Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the plants of the field; <sup>19</sup> By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return."

Essentially, God told them that from this day forward nothing in life will be easy and nothing in this life will ultimately produce anything but death. Have a nice life.

There is only one hope in this life and it has nothing to do with this present life, it is the hope that at the end of the day, if we belong to God, that He is still with us and loves us and that nothing will be able to separate us from His love as we are in Christ.

But, even that reality is often not enough for someone who is going through tough times. I remember counseling someone in the church who had a family member who was experiencing great physical pain. And there was nothing that I could say that would convince them that God was not being an ogre for allowing their loved one to continue in their pain.

And I totally understood that but at the end of the day we can either believe that God loves us or He doesn't. Those are the only two choices. But as we'll learn, as Job is taken down this road, that even a loving God has plans for His people that we simply will not understand at times and will have to come to grips with the fact that all things work together for good to those who love God, or they won't.

And there will be times in our lives when we come down on both sides of that fence at any particular point. But God will always remind us that there is only one side of the fence where He wants us to stand and that is the side of the fence where the Rock and only foundation is there for us to stand upon.

We see in the case of Job, even when his friends remind him of this, that they are pointing Job back to God, but it will still be hard for him to trust that God will be there for him.

But notice how he responds to his friend Zophar.

**Job 12:1-2** <sup>NAU</sup> Then Job responded, <sup>2</sup> "Truly then you are the people, And with you wisdom will die!

### **What is Job essentially saying here?**

You obviously have the inside track and you know all things and therefore there is no reason to question your counsel.

But as we continue in the text this is said in a condescending sense.

**Job 12:3-4** <sup>3</sup> "But I have intelligence as well as you; I am not inferior to you. And who does not know such things as these? <sup>4</sup> "I am a joke to my friends, The one who called on God and He answered him; The just *and* blameless *man* is a joke.

### **What is Job declaring here?**

He's actually declaring a couple of things. The first thing is that he recognizes that his friends have judged him according to what they see with their physical eyes.

But there's a second thing that he declares and that is that he knows in his heart that he is not guilty of doing anything that would have brought this calamity on himself.

### **What does the end of verse 4 say?**

The one who called on God and He answered him; The just *and* blameless *man* is a joke.

Job still contends that he is a just and blameless man, and remember, God would agree with this as He told satan to consider His servant Job who is blameless and upright in all his ways.

This is the tension that Job is dealing with. In his heart of hearts he knows that what is going on in his life makes no sense based on what he knows about God and His justice.

His friends see the same thing and conclude that he is not blameless and upright before God in some sense.

Job's theology is quite deep. He knows more about the nature of God than we might give him credit for. In fact, the theology of his three friends is quite deep. They too understand the nature of God and His justice and mercy.

**Job 12:7-10** <sup>7</sup> "But now ask the beasts, and let them teach you; And the birds of the heavens, and let them tell you. <sup>8</sup> "Or speak to

the earth, and let it teach you; And let the fish of the sea declare to you. <sup>9</sup> "Who among all these does not know That the hand of the LORD has done this, <sup>10</sup> In whose hand is the life of every living thing, And the breath of all mankind?

### **What does Job seem to understand about his God according to this passage?**

Job has an understanding of how God is sovereign and how His ways and His plans are beyond our understanding. Job knows this. In fact, this is precisely what he declares in our text.

**Job 12:16-22** <sup>16</sup> "With Him are strength and sound wisdom, The misled and the misleader belong to Him. <sup>17</sup> "He makes counselors walk barefoot And makes fools of judges. <sup>18</sup> "He loosens the bond of kings And binds their loins with a girdle. <sup>19</sup> "He makes priests walk barefoot And overthrows the secure ones. <sup>20</sup> "He deprives the trusted ones of speech And takes away the discernment of the elders. <sup>21</sup> "He pours contempt on nobles And loosens the belt of the strong. <sup>22</sup> "He reveals mysteries from the darkness And brings the deep darkness into light.

So, it's not as though Job is approaching his situation with no knowledge of God and God's ability to do as He pleases. And this is part of his argument before his three friends, who also know all of this about God.

**Job 13:1-2** <sup>NAU</sup> "Behold, my eye has seen all *this*, My ear has heard and understood it. <sup>2</sup> "What you know I also know; I am not inferior to you.

### **What is Job saying to his friends here?**

We're all on the same page. We're all in agreement on who God is and the sovereignty of His hand. The point of contention is not on who God is, but on why God is doing what He is doing in the life of Job.

### **And this is usually the question we ask as well of God. But in Job's answer to his friends in verses 16-22 what is he saying about the why of God?**

In God's wisdom God does what He does because He is God and knows best.

This is not the answer any of us are looking for. We want to know times, places, results and outcomes, and we want it wrapped up in a neat package that fits with our timetable.

Job is still holding out that despite the seeming unfairness of his situation he still understands that God is sovereign and that somehow God will reveal what is going on and will show his three friends that their take on what God is doing is wrong.

**Job 13:3-13** <sup>3</sup> "But I would speak to the Almighty, And I desire to argue with God. <sup>4</sup> "But you smear with lies; You are all worthless physicians. <sup>5</sup> "O that you would be completely silent, And that it would become your wisdom! <sup>6</sup> "Please hear my argument And listen to the contentions of my lips. <sup>7</sup> "Will you speak what is unjust for God, And speak what is deceitful for Him? <sup>8</sup> "Will you show partiality for Him? Will you contend for God? <sup>9</sup> "Will it be well when He examines you? Or will you deceive Him as one deceives a man? <sup>10</sup> "He will surely reprove you If you secretly show partiality. <sup>11</sup> "Will not His majesty terrify you, And the dread of Him fall on you? <sup>12</sup> "Your memorable sayings are proverbs of ashes, Your defenses are defenses of clay. <sup>13</sup> "Be silent before me so that I may speak; Then let come on me what may.

**When Job says in verse 3, that I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to argue with God, what is he saying?**

He is saying, that I have a legitimate case to bring before God when it comes to my righteousness and uprightness. And essentially, he is saying that his friends don't have all the facts as they are worthless in their assessment of his situation.

And then he turns the tables on them and says, if you were to use the same standard for your own cases how would you fare before God?

But then Job seems to return to some form of reason as he argues his case. He continues to stick to his guns but acknowledges that even if he is guiltless he is willing to let God be God.

**Job 13:13-16** <sup>13</sup> "Be silent before me so that I may speak; Then let come on me what may. <sup>14</sup> "Why should I take my flesh in my teeth And put my life in my <sup>1</sup>hands? <sup>15</sup> "Though He slay me, I will hope in Him. Nevertheless I will argue my ways <sup>1</sup>before Him. <sup>16</sup> "This also will be my salvation, For a godless man may not come before His presence.

**What is Job saying as it relates to his understanding of God's justice and the ultimate outcome of his future?**

He essentially says, I will make my case before God and whatever He decides to do with my life is in His hands and I will be okay with that once I learn the why of God's actions.

But he adds something very interesting to the end of verse 16. "For a godless man may not come before His presence."

### **What does he mean by this?**

He knows that despite what is going on in his life, and despite the fact that he does not understand why God is doing this in his life, he knows that he has access to God's throne and that God listens to him, precisely because he belongs to God because God has brought him near.

He knows he can bring his case before God because he knows the nature of what a righteous man is, and that only such a man can approach a holy God.

But the reason he wants to approach the throne of God is to get some answers, because he is still bewildered by his situation, knowing that he belongs to God.

This is his frustration and lends to his hopelessness.

**Job 13:20-28** <sup>20</sup> "Only two things do not do to me, Then I will not hide from Your face: <sup>21</sup> Remove Your hand from me, And let not the dread of You terrify me. <sup>22</sup> "Then call, and I will answer; Or let me speak, then reply to me. <sup>23</sup> "How many are my iniquities and sins? Make known to me my rebellion and my sin. <sup>24</sup> "Why do You hide Your face And consider me Your enemy? <sup>25</sup> "Will You cause a driven leaf to tremble? Or will You pursue the dry chaff? <sup>26</sup> "For You write bitter things against me And make me to inherit the iniquities of my youth. <sup>27</sup> "You put my feet in the stocks And watch all my paths; You set a limit for the soles of my feet, <sup>28</sup> While I am decaying like a rotten thing, Like a garment that is moth-eaten.

### **Does this sound like Job is experiencing the love of God?**

**No. But would we be mistaken if we took what was going on in the life of Job for a lack of love from God for Job?**

Absolutely.

**Why?**

Because nothing has changed from the first day that satan approached God's throne as he was asked by God if he considered his righteous servant Job.

God's love for Job was no different after the trials started as it was before the trial. The trials didn't start in Job's life because Job was not loving God and God loving Job. The trials started in Job's life despite the mutual love between God and Job.

The trials started so as to bring glory to God in Job's life. But that's not usually the answer we're looking for is it?

We'll pick up here next week as Job continues to express his correct understanding of the nature of God and the nature of man in chapter 14.