

The last time we were together we left Job answering his three friends who came to conclusions based on the information that they had.

What information did they have to work with as they saw it in Job's life?

Job's life has fallen apart. He has lost possessions, family and health.

What information did they have regarding the holiness of God?

God blesses righteousness and punishes disobedience.

When you say that you are guiltless, and yet the evidence of God's apparent disfavor is surrounding you, it's hard not to be skeptical of your boasts that you are guiltless. In fact, this is how Zophar sums up his argument.

Job 11:1-4 ^{NAU} Then Zophar the Naamathite answered, ² "Shall a multitude of words go unanswered, And a talkative man be acquitted? ³ "Shall your boasts silence men? And shall you scoff and none rebuke? ⁴ "For you have said, 'My teaching is pure, And I am innocent in your eyes.'

What is the case against Job that Zophar is laying out here?

You've done a lot of talking about your innocence and now are we to remain silent regarding the truth of the evidence against you?

And again, the only evidence they have is that Job is claiming to be righteous but he's still scraping the boils off of his skin as he has recently buried his children and is living in squalor. Nothing adds up to Job's claims.

And Zophar understands this as he points out that a holy God must punish sin.

Job 11:11-15 ¹¹ "For He knows false men, And He sees iniquity without investigating. ¹² "An idiot will become intelligent When the foal of a wild donkey is born a man. ¹³ "If you would direct your heart right And spread out your hand to Him, ¹⁴ If iniquity is in your hand, put it far away, And do not let wickedness dwell in

your tents; ¹⁵ "Then, indeed, you could lift up your face without *moral* defect, And you would be steadfast and not fear.

Again, as I have said before, I don't believe that any of Job's friends came to him with the intention of hurting him any more than he has already been hurt. I believe that they would like to see his pain stop. But, according to what they see with their own eyes, they understand that that will take a repentant heart that turns away from the sin that brought this calamity upon Job in the first place.

The problem is that both Job and God know that it was not a particular sin that brought this calamity upon Job.

And how do we know that?

Job 1:8 ⁸ The LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil."

There was no particular sin that brought any of this upon Job. God Himself has made the declaration that Job is blameless and upright, turning away from evil.

And by the way, what kind of righteousness must be employed in Job's case for God to make that claim?

Only the kind of righteousness that can be employed by God put to the account of Job as Job has trusted God and His promises by faith.

To suggest that the righteous acts of Job alone can earn him the praises of God before Satan is to miss the point of what righteousness is in God's eyes.

Romans 3:10-18 ¹⁰ as it is written, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE; ¹¹ THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD; ¹² ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE." ¹³ "THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE, WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING," "THE POISON OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS"; ¹⁴ "WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS"; ¹⁵ "THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD, ¹⁶ DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS, ¹⁷ AND THE PATH OF PEACE THEY HAVE NOT

KNOWN." ¹⁸ "THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES."

So, if there is none righteous then how can a man be declared righteous before a holy God?

Only if that man embraces the provision for his sin by faith. And that provision was first announced in the Garden of Eden to Adam and Eve, which is the same provision Job has embraced by faith. But there's more to this because as Paul rightly points out, there is none who seeks for God.

So, for a man to embrace the promises of redemption by God that man must first be born again, or born from above, or as Jeremiah puts it, God must do an initial work of the Spirit to bring you from death to life so that you can see your need for a Savior.

Ezekiel 36:26-27 ²⁶ "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

God has given Job a righteousness that only God can provide and because of that he lived a life that turned away from evil. And this is why Job is so perplexed because he knows, unlike his friends, that he is guiltless before God on two levels.

From a positional standpoint he is guiltless because he has believed God and it has been reckoned to him as righteousness, but on a practical level he knows that living out that life on a daily basis is something he has pursued even to the point of interceding on behalf of his children by offering sacrifices for them regularly.

This by the way, does not mean to suggest that Job thought of himself as guiltless of sin in general in that he thought of himself as incapable of sinning.

Job 13:23 ²³ "How many are my iniquities and sins? Make known to me my rebellion and my sin.

Job was certainly aware of his propensity to sin, but his life characterized the new life in his Savior and he simply asks that if there is some hidden sin in his life that God would reveal it so that he can repent of it and get on with living life in the favor of God.

All of chapter 14 Job continues to make his case that by nature man is like a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes

away. Or as Solomon put it, all is vanity in light of a holy God who has numbered the days of man on this present earth.

And Job sums it up well.

Job 14:10-13 ¹⁰ "But man dies and lies prostrate. Man expires, and where is he? ¹¹ "As water evaporates from the sea, And a river becomes parched and dried up, ¹² So man lies down and does not rise. Until the heavens are no longer, He will not awake nor be aroused out of his sleep. ¹³ "Oh that You would hide me in Sheol, That You would conceal me until Your wrath returns *to You*, That You would set a limit for me and remember me!

By the way, even Job understood that though this world is passing away and man returns to the dust there will be a day when the righteous man will rise to see his God in his flesh.

Job 14:14-15 ¹⁴ "If a man dies, will he live *again*? All the days of my struggle I will wait Until my change comes. ¹⁵ "You will call, and I will answer You; You will long for the work of Your hands.

Job 19:26-27 ²⁶ "Even after my skin ¹is destroyed, Yet from my flesh I shall ^asee God; ²⁷ Whom I ¹myself shall behold, And whom my eyes will see and not another. My ²heart ^afaints ³within me!

What is Job describing?

The physical resurrection of men.

We know this was a concept that O.T. saints understood, including Abraham as the Holy Spirit gives us insight into Abraham's thinking as it related to the promises given to him by God.

Hebrews 11:17-19 ¹⁷ By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten *son*; ¹⁸ *it was he* to whom it was said, "IN ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS SHALL BE CALLED." ¹⁹ He considered that God is able to raise *people* even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.

And so, Job, even in his suffering, had the hope that one day all will be made right in the resurrection.

But right now he is having to deal with the present and the suffering that is all around him and that is how he ends chapter 14.

Job 14:22 ²² "But his body pains him, And he mourns only for himself."

Chapter 15 has Eliphaz, the first one to open his mouth to Job after sitting with him in silence for 7 days and nights, speaking again. But unlike the first time he counseled Job his tone has changed significantly as it has become harsher.

Job 15:1-6 ^{NAU} Then Eliphaz the Temanite responded, ² "Should a wise man answer with windy knowledge And fill himself with the east wind? ³ "Should he argue with useless talk, Or with words which are not profitable? ⁴ "Indeed, you do away with reverence And hinder meditation before God. ⁵ "For your guilt teaches your mouth, And you choose the language of the crafty. ⁶ "Your own mouth condemns you, and not I; And your own lips testify against you.

Again, why are these three friends of Job taking such a hard line against him?

Because they don't have all the evidence. And this gets to the heart of the secret things of God that you and I in this life may not ever see. Things may happen to us that we conclude are the direct result of something bad we must have done, and there is certainly room for sinful choices we make.

But this was not the case with Job at this time. God made a choice to use Job to bring Himself glory in the presence of satan who boasted that he could break Job and have him curse God to his face.

That's why I've said, this book is not so much about Job, or his wife or friends as it is about the God who is able to hold His people to the end even when we don't fully understand the rhyme and reason of things that go on around us.

And it is during those times that our faith in a holy and loving God must rest on the promises of God and not on our circumstances. And the promise is this.

Romans 8:28-32 ²⁸ And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. ²⁹ For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; ³⁰ and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. ³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *is* against us? ³² He who did not spare His own Son, but

delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

By the way, verse 32 is the pivot verse for the dichotomy of suffering and rejoicing in the midst of that suffering.

Does anyone see it?

God ordained the suffering of His Son for a reason. He ordained the suffering of Job for a reason. He ordains suffering in our lives for a reason. And ultimately the reason is to bring glory to Himself and allow us to share in that suffering for the reason of finally being delivered from death to life as seen in the Son of God who rose victoriously to secure our sharing in the inheritance of our Lord and Savior.

But in the meantime we are being tested by our God so that our faith might be shown to be real, and this is precisely what Peter tells us.

1 Peter 1:3-9 ³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to *obtain* an inheritance *which is* imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵ who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, ⁷ so that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; ⁸ and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, ⁹ obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.

Job understood this. But like Job, when you are in the middle of suffering there is often little comfort, especially when that suffering makes no sense to you under the circumstances. And that is where feelings have to give way to faith. Again, often easier said than done.

And I would like to say that this is where the body of Christ is so vital to helping us through those situations, and yet even in the body of Christ, you don't always find the comfort that only God

can bring, as we see in the case of Job who had part of the body of Christ, if you will, trying to help him with the information that had at their disposal.

And this is where the book of Job is continuing to move. It will ultimately force us to take our eyes off of what we see and place them on the Creator who has all things under control and moving in the direction He has chosen for His good purposes.

We may not like that at any moment in our lives, but it is what He is doing, because He is God.

As Job responds to his friends in chapter 16 we are once again reminded that for all the good intentions others around us may have it does not always come across as what we believe is the answer. That doesn't mean we don't try and give wise biblical counsel in love with the information we have so as to help others in the body of Christ.

But in the case of Job, as we've said countless times, they simply didn't have all of the information, and so we cannot fault them for pointing to what they believed was the only solution to Job's obvious sin for bringing this calamity on himself.

And this is why he responds in the beginning of chapter 16.

Job 16:1-6 ^{NAU} Then Job answered, ² "I have heard many such things; Sorry comforters are you all. ³ "Is there *no* limit to windy words? Or what plagues you that you answer? ⁴ "I too could speak like you, If I were in your place. I could compose words against you And shake my head at you. ⁵ "I could strengthen you with my mouth, And the solace of my lips could lessen *your pain*. ⁶ "If I speak, my pain is not lessened, And if I hold back, what has left me?

There is this tension that exists between Job and his friends. They believe they are right in their counsel according to what they know about the holiness of God. Again, their theology is correct. It just doesn't leave much room for God to make certain choices they don't understand.

And Job is in the same boat because his theology rightly understands the general covenantal language of God, so that those who walk in the counsel of the Lord will prosper and yet he's not prospering, even though he has done nothing in particular that has brought on this calamity, which God has confirmed to satan in chapters 1 and 2.

And this is why Job makes the statement at the end of chapter 16.

Job 16:15-17 ¹⁵ "I have sewed sackcloth over my skin And thrust my horn in the dust. ¹⁶ "My face is flushed from weeping, And deep darkness is on my eyelids, ¹⁷ Although there is no violence in my hands, And my prayer is pure.

And so, both parties are right, and yet as we will see both parties are wrong when it comes to things that God has not revealed to them at this time.

Chapter 17 deals with the hopelessness of Job in the midst of his trials. And it is during these times in life where our faith is definitely tested. And it is during these times where we must go back to the relationship we have with our Father through His Son Jesus Christ, because it is very easy to think that God doesn't love us and that He has become an abusive father.

This could not be further from the truth. We who are believers in Christ are not having to pay for our sin in any way, shape or form if we have placed our faith in His atoning sacrifice for our sin. It is either paid for in full or it's not. There is no in between.

We are no longer children of wrath. We are children who have been adopted into God's family and as such there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God in Christ. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. All that the Father gives Me, says Jesus, I will lose none.

Sometimes it's hard to distinguish between this reality and the reality of life in this world that is full of sin and the curse. But again, we go back to either believing God at His word or believing what we see around us. And this is where Job is.

Job 17:1 ^{NAU} "My spirit is broken, my days are extinguished, The grave is *ready* for me.

And yet Job knows deep down that God is still there even though He seems far off at this time in his life.

Job 17:6-9 ⁶ "But He has made me a byword of the people, And I am one at whom men spit. ⁷ "My eye has also grown dim because of grief, And all my members are as a shadow. ⁸ "The upright will be appalled at this, And the innocent will stir up himself against the godless. ⁹ "Nevertheless the righteous will hold to his way, And he who has clean hands will grow stronger and stronger.

Here we have a man who is guiltless and yet who is suffering at the hand of God.

By the way, do you see in this language anybody else who was guiltless before a holy God who was crushed by God for a purpose?

Our Lord Jesus Christ is often seen through Job who was a type of Christ, the suffering servant, of whom there is none like Him in all the land, righteous in all ways, and yet who was crushed for our iniquities.

Isaiah 53:3-6 ³ He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. ⁴ Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. ⁵ But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being *fell* upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. ⁶ All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.

There were many who accused Jesus Christ of being a sinner, as He sat with sinners, or as He apparently blasphemed the name of God by claiming to be the, I am. But He was guiltless. Many of His time concluded that if He could save others He can surely save Himself if He's truly the Messiah.

But they didn't know the full counsel of God and many concluded that He deserved to die. But as we know it was God's eternal decree to send the Son to save a people for Himself. All of the word of God is about Jesus Christ, even the book of Job, as it points to the guiltless Christ.

And it is only as we seek Him diligently that the things of this world grow strangely dim. Hard lessons to learn sometimes even as Job is learning. But God will come to his rescue as He comes to ours.