

08a JOB

This is the 16th day of June, 2006. We continue tonight our study in the book of Job, resuming in chapter 10. Let's take a moment as we begin our study.

It will be a little bit shorter tonight because of our late beginning, so we'll want to maximize our time and our attention. Let's go to the Lord in prayer. Father, we are grateful for another opportunity to spend time in fellowship and in the study of your word.

We recognize that it is the equal measure of your spirit and your word that enables us and empowers us and equips us for every good work. We pray that our study tonight will refresh and renew our understanding of your plan and your purpose, your character, and your dealings with us as human beings with a corrupt nature in a fallen world. We ask your blessing on each one here.

May each of us find in your word those transforming truths that will thoroughly equip us for every good work. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

If you remember the outline of the book of Job, you remember that there are dialogue cycles, three sets of three back and forths between Job and his friends. We are in the first of those three dialogue cycles. Job spoke in chapter 3 and Eliphaz responded in chapters 4 and 5. Then Eliphaz replied in chapters 4 and 5. Then Job spoke again in chapters 6 and 7, followed by Bildad's words in chapter 8. Job is going to speak in chapters 9 and 10, which is where we are now.

And then Zophar, the third friend, is going to speak in chapter 11. So at the end of chapter 11, we have completed the first cycle. Chapters 3 through 11, Job and each of the friends speaks.

And then Job is going to launch the next round of debate in chapters 12 through 14. 12, 13, and 14, Job is going to have a long speech. So we are looking at this first set of statements.

And Job basically says, my life has no meaning and no purpose, and I don't know why God let it start, much less let it continue. That's what he said in chapter 3. Eliphaz responded with some words. And what was the most significant thing in Eliphaz's speech in chapters 4 and 5? What was the source of his ideas? The dark spirit that came by night.

Now, I'm in the process, I've realized that there are some things that we really need to clean up in the text. And there are some fascinating things related to this dark spirit. Job actually speaks of him in his reply to Eliphaz in chapters 6 and 7. And we missed it because we have a bad translation.

I shouldn't say a bad translation, but we can use a better translation and see some things that are not really obvious in our current English. So I hope to have that ready for you next week. But in the meantime, it takes a while to translate 11 chapters of Hebrew.

I'm sorry, but I couldn't get it all done this last week. But it is in progress. I'm about halfway along.

But then, this was the source. And basically, here's our view, just to refresh our minds. Satan has attacked Job, first of all, through his possessions.

And that didn't get Job to curse God. So, he went back to God and said, give me some more power. If you will touch Job himself, skin for skin, then he will curse you.

And God said, he's in your power, but don't take his life. So now Job's health goes away. He's got this severe decrepitude in his body.

Job still hasn't cursed God, or sinned with his lips. So this that we are looking at is the third attack. Everything comes in threes in this book.

Three friends, three sets of responses, and there are three satanic attacks. And I think one of the things that it's been sort of overlooked in approaching the study of the book of Job is to realize that these dialogues with Job's friends are a sneak attack. This is the third satanic approach.

He sort of tried the brute force approach. I'll take away his stuff. I'll take away his health.

Now, he's going to take away his confidence. He's going to try to erode away the foundation upon which Job's faith rests. How can he do that? Well, he can't just show up and start arguing with Job.

He can't do what he's going to try to do with the Lord Jesus. By the way, how many attacks did Satan make on Jesus? Three. Well, that's what he's doing with Job here.

But what we're watching for is what is the satanic element in the otherwise wonderfully truthful dialogue that takes place with these three friends. Well, in Eliphaz, it is the source of this question. Can a man be righteous before God? Can the Creator be so righteous? And it instills this doubt and this bone-shaking lack of confidence in God that, well, sooner or later, God's going to get tired of messing with you because you're just not righteous enough.

And I know he's come down and made promises and you've had a good run. But sooner or later, God is going to get fed up with all of his creatures, even his angels. He gets sick of them after a while, and they're not pure in his sight.

Well, this idea came from this dark spirit. And that was the first prong. You remember how they always picture Satan as a red epidermis and a forked tongue and a tail? What does he always carry? Pitchfork.

How many tines are on your standard pitchfork? Three. And this is his three-pronged attack. Each of these friends is one of the prongs, this is how I think of it, in Satan's pitchfork.

So prong number one is this dark spirit that speaks to Eliphaz, and Eliphaz faithfully carries the water for this dark spirit. Notice the dark spirit doesn't come to Job. Job has nightmares.

Job has visions in the night that scare him. But the dark spirit doesn't come and whisper in his ear and say, can a man... This comes through his friend. And it's a reminder to us that our associations and our friendships can be avenues of attack.

Thoughts that would never come to our mind. You see this all the time, even in entertainment, where somebody is blithely going along and they're all happy, they're infatuated, they have a new love relationship, and then their best friend, they say, oh, I just love Bob. Bob is such a great guy.

I'm in love with Bob. The girl is at work and she's staring off into space thinking thoughts about Bob. Well, then her little friend Marge comes over and says, well, you know, Bob might have a prison record.

I saw a tattoo on Bob and it looks like a prison tattoo to me. Anyway, I don't know what kind of example might come to your mind, but friends can make suggestions and friends can plant seeds of doubt and insinuations. Well, I heard a friend of a friend say that Bob drives a Volkswagen and you can't trust a guy that drives a Volkswagen or some such thing.

You know what I'm talking about. Friends can be support. Friends can be great fellowship.

Friends can build you up and be a co-traveler, a fellow traveler on the narrow road. Or friends can be someone who are constantly dragging you off the path and putting ideas in your mind and saying, well, let's do this and let's try that. And their conversation always trends into areas that aren't healthy and that wind up leading into sin.

And the Apostle Paul reminded Timothy that bad company corrupts good morals. And it really does. And we have a responsibility to ourselves and a responsibility to God to pay attention to who we keep company with.

And Paul also told the Corinthians, he said, look, I'm not telling you to not associate with anybody because your needs must go out of the world. If you're going to try to avoid all kinds of sin, well, you just wouldn't associate with anyone. But we can set limits.

We can manage our relationships so that they do not become a source of temptation. They don't become a source of sin. They don't plant ideas in our minds.

And if somebody starts down a bad road, we can say, look, I'd really prefer to not talk about that. Let's talk about something else. We can steer the conversation in another direction.

We don't have to let people run on. And when we go back and get our annotated translation for Job, I'm not calling it a corrected translation. I'm not saying mine's better than somebody else's.

But we're going to annotate the translation. I'm going to explain some things and some relationships in the Hebrew that will really help us see the nature of the argument. What are the points that are being made? It's one of the hardest things in the book of Job to follow the points.

What is his point when he says things about the papyrus in the marsh? What is his point? We're going to annotate the translation a little bit so that we can follow the thread of the argument. And one of the things we're going to see is that Job is going to respond to Eliphaz not just the source of his ideas, but the thrust of his ideas. And Job's going to say, wait a minute.

Look, here's my counter-argument to your argument. And this is the thing that keeps Job on the path. And he's going to basically tell Eliphaz, I don't want to hear that.

Don't keep talking about that. I don't want to hear that. So this is what we have to do in our relationships.

When people start taking the conversation in a direction that it should not go, we steer it into a more productive area. And sometimes I've had to do this with my own relatives. Not any of them that are yet living.

Or I wouldn't be telling you this story. But I've had some of my dear departed relatives that would steer the conversation in a bad direction. And I had to say, look, that is not a subject that we can talk about.

Please, let's talk about something else. And you just have to cut it off. This is a lesson we learn from these friends who are being used by Satan as prongs of his attack.

So the prong in Eliphaz, although he quotes a lot of good truth and he quotes what we would call Scripture, there's this satanic twist. It's the same thing Satan did in the Garden with Eve. It's the same thing Satan did in the Temptations of Christ.

He'll quote Scripture, but he leavens it. He perverts it. He partially quotes it.

This is why we are so adamant on getting our memory verses letter perfect. Word perfect. We don't want to miss a single word.

Because if you leave out a word, or you leave out a phrase, or you mix and match two different verses and mash them together. I do this all the time. There are two verses that John wrote.

And I have the hardest time keeping them straight in my mind. He that hath the Son hath life. He that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

But the wrath of God abideth on him. That does not follow. That's from a different verse where it's talking about having the Son.

And I just have those mashed in my mind. It's important to keep them straight so that Satan will not twist the words of Scripture. People will always come up and quote and say, Well, you know, all things work together for good.

All things work together for good. Yeah. What's the rest of that verse? All things work together for good to those who love God.

If you don't love God, all things are not working together for good. I'm sorry. To those who are the called according to His purpose.

Things are going to work together for good when we are looking toward God's purpose and we are a part of God's purpose and we recognize our calling in that area and we love God and we love His purpose and we want to be a part of it. Everything is going to work together for good. If I'm pursuing the purposes of Sam and they are different than the purposes of God, then things are not going to work together for good.

Things are going to work together for evil. Things are going to work together for badness. And the plan of Sam is a crummy plan compared to the plan of God.

So, that's Eliphaz's problem. This dark spirit has perverted the truth that he knows and there's this insinuation that your righteousness is not good enough. You're not righteous enough to stand before God.

How can you have any confidence? What's the flaw in that argument? Do we stand before God based on our righteousness? Has any human being ever stood before God? Anybody descended from Adam and part and parcel of the human race? Anyone who's inherited sin? Have we ever stood before God and achieved enough righteousness to have confidence standing before Him? Of course not. That's not the basis. We stand before God based on God's grace and God's remedy for sin, God's solution, God's cleansing grace and cleansing power.

Our confidence is in God, not in our own righteousness, but Eliphaz makes an issue out of Job's righteousness. Well, then we got down and Job replied and then we got down to Bildad in chapter 8. What was Bildad's argument? Bildad says, How long are you going to speak and then the words of your mouth be like a strong wind? Does God subvert judgment? Does the Almighty pervert justice? If you have sinned against Him, if you were pure and upright, He would awake for you and prosper your dwelling and so on. Inquire, please, and this is where we get the twist, this is where we get the tilt and the off-kilter in Bildad in verse 8. Inquire of the former age and consider the things discovered by the fathers.

We were born yesterday and know nothing. Let's go to the great gray heads. What does tradition tell us? What does history tell us? It's the argument from history.

It's the argument from tradition. You've got to be wrong, Job, because history tells us, tradition

tells us, the great gray heads tell us, Are you smarter? I've had people actually say this to my face. So, you think you're smarter than John Calvin? Do you think you know more than Martin Luther? Because you don't agree with Calvinism, you think you're smarter than them? Are you smarter than B.B. Warfield? Do you know more than Arthur Pink? Do you know more than Shedd and Hodge and all these other great Reformed theologians who have written these magnum, what's the plural of opus? Magnum opi? Magnum opi? Magnum opuses? These big long poems, these big long volumes of systematic, do you know more than they do? Are you smarter than them? How arrogant of you to disagree with Luther, Calvin, Shedd, Hodge, Pink, Warfield, etc.

And what is this? It's an appeal to history. It's an appeal to tradition. It's an appeal to the authority of those who have gone before and saying, how can you possibly argue when smarter and better people say something different? That's not the basis upon which we analyze our life and draw our conclusions.

It is the standard of the Word of God. Not what people say about the Word of God, not a creed, not a confession, not a doctrinal statement, not an opinion of a committee, not even the doubtful looks of fellow believers. We are our own priest in this age in particular, and we stand before God on our own two feet.

We have to examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith. So this is the skew, this is the false note in Bildad's reply. Well, now Job is responding to that, and this is where we are in chapter 9 and 10.

And Job, the substance of his response, I can't even really give you until I straighten out the translation. You can get the gist of it. Job says, look, I acknowledge the good points in your argument.

God is in fact just. God is in fact righteous. I'm not arguing with the good points that you've made.

But you can't use the measuring stick of history and tradition on me if your suppositions are wrong. Both Eliphaz and Bildad have supposed that there's a righteousness problem with Job, that he is in error, that he has committed evil, and all of their arguments rest on this supposition. And Job says, you know, there's two problems with your argument.

First of all, you've got a flaw in it because it either came from a dark spirit or it's based on history and tradition. And secondly, your supposition that I have done evil and I am out of line and that this is discipline is false. So you've got a two-fold fallacy in your argument.

And I can summarize all of chapter 9 and 10 with that simple point. Your argument does not apply. You're arguing past my problem.

I don't need to confess iniquity and sin. I do that all the time. And I don't... And they say, well, you must have overlooked something.

You must have missed something. Job says, look, that's not it. Try again.

Pick another answer out of the multiple choice list because that's not it. Well, what kind of response is this going to produce in the friends? This is what we're going to get in the second cycle. So we want to finish the first cycle.

We have one friend left to go and that starts in chapter 11. Now, we're going to come back. Don't panic.

There's a great statement that Job makes in chapter 10. It's one of the highlights of the Old Testament. And we're not skipping it, but we're saving it.

But I want to finish this idea because this really sets up our understanding of the whole book, that these three friends each have a problem in their argument. It's truth mixed with error. So what does Zophar say? Job essentially says to God, I don't understand what You're doing.

My friends here aren't helping me. And I wish I could talk to You about it. That's the essence of chapter 10.

I wish I could approach. I know that I can't. I know that I don't have that privilege, but I wish I could.

I wish there was some way to communicate and ask God a direct question. My friends here are no help. They're less than help.

They're less than no help. I wish I could talk to God. I wish God was sitting here instead of you three individuals.

That's the essence of chapter 10. Now, in chapter 11, Zophar is going to speak up. Then Zophar the Naamathite answered and said, Should not the multitude of words be answered? And should a man full of talk be vindicated? Should your empty talk make men hold their peace? And when you mock, should no one rebuke you? Now, have you noticed a decline in the courtesy level? Remember Eliphaz started out saying, I don't really presume to speak.

I know how afflicted you are and all that, but if I may presume to offer a word, and he kind of eases into his thing. And then when you get to Bildad, Bildad is less tactful. He basically says, How long will you speak these things? And the words of your mouth be like, in the English it says, a strong wind.

And then he starts advancing the argument here. Well now, Zophar just takes the gloves off. And he says, You're rambling on.

You think nobody's going to answer this babble that you're putting out here? You're full of talk. Do you think just saying all these words vindicates you? Should your empty talk make men hold their

peace? And when you mock, should no one rebuke you? Here's Job scraping his boils, and he's got these oozing crusties. He's hollow.

He can't sleep. He's all emaciated. He can't hold his food down.

And he's talking to him like he's a common slave. This is verbal abuse. You get the idea that Zophar is very impatient.

He's impatient with all the talk. Notice also, just glance at the length of chapter 11, compared to the length of Bildad and the length of Eliphaz. This is 20 verses, and it's pretty concise.

It's pretty short. But Zophar, we're going to observe, has this as a characteristic. Let's go on and see what else he says in verse 4. You have said, My doctrine is pure, and I am clean in your eyes.

Oh, that God would speak. You just got through saying you wish you could talk to God. Well, I wish God was here, and I wish He'd give you a good talking to.

Oh, that God would open His lips against you, that He would show you the secrets of wisdom. They would double your prudence. Know, therefore, that God exacts from you less than your iniquity deserves.

Is what we have in the English here. You think this is bad? God hasn't even given you what you deserve. Deserve for what? It's a pretty bold assumption.

Verse 7, Can you search out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limits of the Almighty? Do you think you've got everything figured out, Job? Do you think you've got the knowledge to understand this problem? They are higher than heaven. What can you do? Deeper than Sheol. What can you know? You're ignorant.

You're a dummy. You're presumptuous. You say you want to talk to God? If God was here and spoke to you, He would shut you right up because you know nothing.

This is the thrust of what Zophar has said so far. If God passes by in prisons and gathers to judgment, who's going to stop Him? He knows deceitful men. And He sees wickedness also.

Will He not consider it? If He sees it, is He not going to deal with it? An empty-headed man will be wise when a wild donkey's colt is born a man. When an ass becomes a man, that's when an empty-headed man will be wise. That's exactly what He's saying.

If you would prepare your heart and stretch out your hands toward Him, if iniquity were in your hand and you put it away and would not let wickedness dwell in your tents, surely you could lift up your face without spot. You could be steadfast and not fear. You would forget your misery.

It would be like waters that are under the bridge have passed by. Your life would be brighter than

noonday. Even though it's dark, it would be like the morning.

You would be secure. You would have hope. You would dig around and take your rest in safety.

You would lie down. No one would make you afraid. Many would court your favor.

But the eyes of the wicked will fail and they shall not escape. And their hope is destruction. Loss of life.

Now, what do you sense from this about Zophar? Zophar has the argument of pragmatism. Zophar is a practical guy. He basically says, cut the bull, admit your sin, and let's get on with it.

Do something, Job. This talk is wearing me out. You get the idea that Zophar is one of these salt of the earth.

What you see is what you get. Don't bore me with the details. What works? Give me a hammer and let me beat on something.

That's Zophar. He's not a philosopher. He's not a long-winded discussor of problems.

He says, look, you got a problem. Here's the answer. Do the answer and fix it.

And shut up. That's the thrust of his argument. That's Zophar's approach.

He is a pragmatist. He's practical. He says, look, cut to the chase here.

Quit your windbag stuff. You think you can just sit here and talk and talk and God's going to put up with it? Look, you got sin in your hand? Throw it away and everything will be fine. His appeal is to practicality.

Common sense. You don't need a lot of philosophy. You don't need a lot of deep thought.

See the hill, take the hill. See the problem, fix the problem. Get a bigger hammer.

This is Zophar's approach. Now, this is a form of guile on the part of Satan. Why? Do we have this argument today? What about science? I don't want to hear about gods and mysterious invisible forces.

I want something I can touch. I want something I can weigh. I want something I can measure.

Science works. I get this argument all the time from the atheistic side of the human race. All of your stuff about ethics and morality.

Look, I want to get from Boston to Chicago. I want an airplane. Aerodynamics, thrust vectors, that's science.

I can measure it. I can touch it. Bones in the ground.

They're old. They didn't get there from a 6,000 year old creation. They got there from millions of years of evolution.

I can touch it. I can look at the bones. I can go to the museum and see the dinosaurs.

Evolution works for me. It makes sense. I'm a pragmatist.

I'm practical minded. Give me the tangible fix. Don't give me a lot of bombast.

That's Zophar. Now, what does Satan offer to the world? Don't worry about your spiritual issues. Don't worry about pie in the sky, by and by.

I want something that works now. How does this come into the church? Modern day churches, mega churches, denominational churches. When you go there, are they going line by line, verse by verse, phrase by phrase in the word of God for Bible study? It's too long-winded.

It's a big, long process of observation and interpretation. Look, give me a class on how I've been bereaved. I want a class on how to get over my bereavement.

I've got a problem with relationships. Fix my relationships. I'm a single mother of two.

Give me a singles class for divorcees. I want to meet somebody and get remarried. Solve my practical problems.

I've got teenagers. Give me a parents of teens class. I've got self-esteem issues.

Give me a class on fixing my self-esteem. This is what churches have done. Pragmatic solutions for problems.

God is a band-aid. God is an aspirin. When you come to God, he will fix your immediate problem.

This is what your Christianity is good for. So, cut to the chase. Skip the spiritual stuff and give me my answer now.

This is Zophar. This is the satanic shortcut. What did Satan tell Jesus? Look, all of this stuff about atonement and cross and covenant stuff.

All you have to do is fall down and say, Satan, you're the man. Satan, you're the angel. Satan, you're the ruler.

I'll give you the kingdoms of the world. You don't have to go through this cross, atonement, save the world business. I'll make you the king of the world.

You can set up your kingdom now. Skip the cross. Cut to the chase.

Let's get this problem solved. You want to be king of the world? I'll make you king of the world. That's the Zophar argument.

What's Job going to say to this? How is Job going to respond to this latest attack? We'll pause here and take our break. When we come back, we'll take a look at his response in chapters 12 through 14.