

11b JOB

Let's resume our study now in the book of Job. We are in the second dialogue cycle. Job has made a clear declaration regarding the Lord God.

And if you watch, you can really see the difference in his point of view. His expectation of personal relationship with God versus this sort of impersonal view that Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar have. And we were talking on the break, I was talking with Patty, about the fact that so many of us as Christians reach a place of comfort.

We reach a workable accommodation between ourselves and God. You look around at denominational churches, why are there so many different denominations looking at the same Bible? And this is a regular criticism by atheists and agnostics and all the enemies of God and enemies of Christ and enemies of Christianity. They say, nobody can figure out what your Bible says.

It's confusing. It's a confusing book. It's contradictory and that's why you've got all these church people fighting with each other over what it means.

Is there eternal security or is there not? Is there a trinity or is there not? They just say, it's just wars and divisions among you because the Bible is unclear. Why is there such a spectrum of understanding of the Word of God? Is it really so hard to understand? It's not. The reason, it's just like politics.

You have an issue that comes up and most issues are relatively simple to understand but there are people that have vested interests. Should they drill for oil in Alaska? Yes, they should. It's a no-brainer.

We have the land, it has oil under it, go up there, pump out the oil and stop buying it from the Arabs. This would be a seemingly simple issue but there are people that say, no, it's a vast untouched pristine wilderness and we should preserve it. Of course, I've never been there but somebody might someday want to go see the vast untouched wilderness and so we should go there and preserve it and not let anybody drill in it.

The oil companies say, look, we can have minimal intrusion, we'll be careful, we'll take roads, we'll do this, we'll replant the trees. Oh, no, no, no, vast uncharted wilderness, we want to leave it like it is up there where nobody ever goes. Well, why do they say that? Well, I can't figure it out.

I don't know why they say that. I think they're suspicious of big oil. They say the oil companies are making too much money.

We know it's much better for the Arabs to make all that money than for Americans to make that money. What's amazing to me is if you think about big oil, you know who big oil is? Big oil is my

grandmother. My grandmother had shares of Standard Oil and she got dividends from Standard Oil for decades.

That big oil is all these little moms and pops and people that have a couple of shares and when those companies make money, millions of Americans make money. But the naysayers and the people who get into... How did I get off talking about this? There is a viewpoint that becomes comfortable and it fits your worldview. People who have a certain worldview say, Oh, hug a tree, save a whale, and I am a wonderful person because I care about the trees.

I care about the whales. I care about the dolphins getting caught in the tuna nets and I'm out there, rah-rah. I'm writing letters to the editor and so on and that makes me a good person because I care about the environment and this is comfortable and it lets people feel good about themselves, I guess.

And when you have an interest in a thing, then you don't want to hear opposition. And it's important for us to understand this because all of us have this nature and have this tendency and have this instinct. We reach a place where we look at a thing and it's comfortable and we like it the way it is and we don't want anybody to mess with it.

Ladies get their garden a certain way. They don't want cats in there digging it up. They don't want bugs in there chewing it up.

They don't want gophers in there killing it from the roots. Man gets his shop a certain way, gets his office a certain way. You get things arranged a certain way and that's the way you like it.

You don't want anybody to bug with it, to mess with it. Well, this happens mentally. This happens in viewpoint of life.

Eliphaz is an old man and it's a truism that as you get old, you get set in your ways. You become a curmudgeon. I've been around long enough to know this is the way it works and that's what he's saying.

He says, look, I've been around a long time. This is the way the world works. This is the wisdom that you gain from being as old and gray and crotchety as I am.

Eliphaz says. Well, this happens in the spiritual world. Why are there so many denominations? Because you get into a church and it has just enough pounding on you for money.

It has just enough discomfort that you feel pretty good when you leave. Well, you know, I did the hard thing and I sat through the sermon and I went and knocked on a couple of doors where I gave money I didn't really want to give. I've had sort of a catharsis.

I've done this sort of painful thing. I wore the hair shirt for a couple of hours and now I feel okay. Save a will.

Hug a tree. Go to church and put some money on the plate. Listen to a boring sermon.

Shake hands with people I really don't know and don't want to know. And go home and I've done the church thing. I'm okay.

And it's comfortable. It fits like an old shoe. I've been doing it for years and I like it.

And different denominations have different levels of ingress into the truth of the Word of God. Different kinds of churches have a different level. Some of them are pretty good.

Some of them are really good. Some of them are kind of good. Some of them are just minimally invasive.

You get a verse and a song and then you go home. But people, as people, we as people, have levels of interest in God. We have levels of interest in relationship with God.

You think about music. Think about somebody who performs music. Somebody that you really like a lot.

That you buy their CD and if they had a DVD, why you'd get that? Because you like to watch them. Think about fans of that person. I like Jake Hess.

When he was alive, I think he was the finest gospel singer that God ever minted on this earth. From the 50s until he passed away, I don't think anybody could touch him in interpreting gospel songs. He was just a great guy.

I loved everything about him. Well, there's lots of people who are Jake Hess fans. But there were people who were such Jake Hess fans that anytime he was at a concert within half a continent, they would go.

Hear him sing the same songs. Drive for six hours. Fly to Milwaukee.

Do whatever to hear him sing. There are people who become obsessive and become compulsive. Every single thing that they've ever done, you have to have it.

You write them letters and you want to have your picture taken with them and you really get deeply involved. I understand this. I've been sucked into that vortex a little bit.

You really like something and you just want to maximize your exposure to it. And then there's other people like Mick Jagger. Mick Jagger could be right across the street there singing his heart out.

I wouldn't walk across the street to see him. I just don't care. I'm happy that he's had a career, but Mick Jagger does nothing for me.

I can't get no love for Mick Jagger. I just don't care about him whatsoever. Keith Richards is a talented, talented guitar player.

I wouldn't. In fact, I would probably run the other way if Keith Richards was across the street. He is a scary man.

Great guitar guy, but I've never bought and never will buy a Rolling Stones album. Don't give me one for Christmas. Don't want it.

Don't need it. I've got all the satisfaction I need without it. But there are people who would kill for a front row ticket at a Stones concert.

Well, what I'm saying is this. When it comes to God and relationship with God, what is the first and great commandment? Thou shalt love the Lord thy God. Different people have different levels of being a fan of God.

Some people, well, I'll go this far. I'd drive ten miles. Some people, well, I'd drive five miles, but I wouldn't go ten.

Well, I'd go to one Bible class a week, but not two. Certainly not three. I would be interested in Him when I have a real problem, but when things are going smooth, well, I don't really need Him at that point.

I just need Him as kind of an emergency. I have God like I have Band-Aids. When you have a problem, you really need a Band-Aid, but the rest of the time, I don't just wear Band-Aids like Les Nessman on WKRP.

I just have one on me all the time. You know, just have them when you need them. And when things are going good, I really don't need them.

There are different levels of interest in God. We are commanded. It is not optional.

We are commanded to love God. And we ought to, if you think about it, look at what God has done for us. Oh, the mighty gulf that God did span at Calvary.

Think about it. Think about the words to that song. Oh, the love that drew salvation's plan.

Oh, the love that brought it down to man. Oh, the mighty gulf that God spanned. God came all the way down to us in our hopeless, helpless, and useless condition to save us.

The Lord Jesus Christ died for us. And some of us as Christians can't even get up enough interest to memorize a verse, to go to a Bible class. I'm talking about us believers at large, Christians in the world today.

We are just nominal Christians. And where is the interest? Well, now, back to Job. Think about

the spectrum.

You have your overcomers, those who are going to walk with Christ in white, sit with Him on His throne, partake of the hidden manna, white stone, new name, morning star, all of those great overcomer blessings. You have other people that are going to be living on the diametrically opposite part of the planet from Jerusalem, from David, from Zion, and will be just thrilled. I don't know what's diametrically opposite.

It's probably somewhere out in the Pacific. Maybe it's Hawaii. Oh yes, post me to Hawaii.

Well, listen, do you want Hawaii and Waikiki, or do you want the presence of God? I mean, ask yourself the question. There are a lot of people that say, Don Ho, here I come. But think about it.

This is the difference between Eliphaz and Job. Eliphaz has an understanding of God, very wise man, has seen the way the world works, and knows something of God, and he's at a comfort level. He's got a comfortable knowledge of God.

Here is a new thing. What has happened to Job isn't comprehended in wisdom. And Eliphaz doesn't say, You know, Job, if you haven't sinned, then let's figure this out.

I'll take your word for it. But you haven't sinned, and yet these calamities have happened. What could God be doing? Let's think back.

Is there any other analog to this? Can we think back to Shem or Abraham? Remember Isaac? Isaac is history for these guys. Isaac kept getting persecuted. You know, Abimelech and the men taking the wells and driving them further.

Isaac didn't do anything wrong. I wonder if there's anything we can pull from past experience. What about Abel? Abel did the right thing, and he got killed for his trouble.

Why did God allow that? Let's try to think through what we know of God. What does Eliphaz say? Job, stop asking so darn many questions. Look, wisdom says this is the way the world works.

Fit your experience into my wisdom box. It's all in my box. There's nothing outside of it.

This is my grid. This is how I understand it. Don't bother me with any new facts.

I like it the way I've got it. Now, why isn't Eliphaz on the ash heap? Why didn't Eliphaz lose his sons and daughters? Why wasn't Eliphaz trashed by the Sabaeans and the Chaldeans? Why didn't fire from heaven come down and burn up Eliphaz's sheep and servants? Why? Who hungers and thirsts to know God better? Job. What is Job talking about? Every time he opens his mouth, who is he talking about? I can't figure this out.

What is God up to? I wish he would speak. I wish I could speak to him. Where is my relationship with God? The thing that troubles Job the most about his calamity is he's wrestling with the idea

that God must be unhappy with him in some way, that God has taken away the purpose for his life, which is to come to know God better, and he's totally depressed.

He says, my life is meaningless. If God's not going to be in it, if God's not going to be for me, it's all about relationship with God. Now, back to chapter 1 and chapter 2. What was Satan's contention? What did Satan contend? God said, have you seen my servant Job when you were walking up and down? Upright man fears God and eschews evil.

What did Satan say the first time? Well, of course, because you have put him in a box, and he's got the stuff that he likes in that box. Take the stuff out of the box, and he won't love you anymore. He won't have a relationship with you anymore.

What is the pounding refrain from Eliphaz and Bildad and Zophar? Come on, Job, jump in the box. God is the giver of good things. Do the right thing, so God will give you good things.

This is the Satanic argument filtered through these three friends. Come on, Job, isn't it all about doing the right thing so God will bless you? That's the Satanic argument. Job loves you because you bless him.

Take away his blessings, he won't love you anymore. Job is sitting there in the ash heap with no blessings, and he's still saying, where are you, Lord? Speak to me. Let me speak to you.

I know I'm not worthy. On my best day, on my best clothes, my clothes would abhor me. Remember that verse? He says, I could wash myself with soap and stand before you, and my clothes would abhor me.

Because in your presence, I know I'm not worthy, but where are you? This is the refutation of Satan's argument. Satan came back the second time. Well, skin for skin.

A man will give all he has in exchange for his life. Take away his personal comfort. Touch him.

He'll curse you to your face. What's Job saying? He's not saying, go away, God. I'm sick of you.

He's saying, I need to go away because I have somehow, something has happened in my relationship with God. This refutes the Satanic argument. Now, so what? This is what we observe.

What is the interpretation? What is the application? Well, what are we like? Are we in Eliphaz? Have we found the wisdom to get by in life and we're comfortable in our box? Okay, God, I'm not under duress. I don't have any real serious problems, or at least I've found a way to manage my problems. And so, that's good.

That's really all I wanted from God. Are we Bildad? Well, you know, my daddy was a Baptist. My granddaddy was a Baptist.

My great-great-great-granddaddy was a Baptist. And I'm a Baptist or a Catholic or a Presbyterian. I'm in a long line of people and I'm comfortable in my tradition and in my lineage.

And this is the experience that we have. And everybody thinks the way I do. And I go to church and everybody understands it the same way I do.

And we do a little bit of evangelism. We chuck in a little bit of offering. We listen to a little bit of Bible.

We have a little bit of entertainment. We go on some short-term mission trips. It's comfortable.

It's traditional. It's what we've always done. We sing the same old hymns in the same old way.

We dunk people in the same old water. Listen to the same old organ we've been listening to for 50 years. And it fits just like an old shoe.

Daddy did it. Granddaddy did it. I'm doing it.

It's the old-time religion. Paul is good enough for me. And don't be stretching my understanding.

Don't be asking questions. Don't be upsetting my apple cart. I like it this way.

Got all my stuff stacked in there and it fits. So far. Look, man.

Common sense tells you. Lost your stuff. Just fall in line.

Look at these other guys. They all lost their stuff. Just get back on the bandwagon.

Tow the line. Don't be inquiring into the deep things of God. You're just making waves.

You're causing trouble. And it's liable to give way. I think deep down in a lot of people's minds they don't want to inquire too closely.

They don't want to test the rigor of the Scriptures because in their secret heart of hearts they've heard the rumors that there's contradictions. They've heard the rumors that, well, you know, I'm not sure if you really lay the gospel accounts side by side that they don't line up. Maybe they contradict.

Maybe it, you know, well, just put my blinders on. I'm just going to look at this. Don't bother me with that.

You cannot be an overcomer and be comfortable. You cannot be an overcomer. You can't come to a better understanding of God.

I always go back. I've told you this story a million times, but it really made an impression on me when I was just a youth. And I was reading these little books, biographies of famous Americans.

They had Nathan Hale and Nathaniel Hawthorne. They had Green. What was his name? Somebody Green.

He was a mountain man. They had the Lees. They had Light Horse Harry Lee.

They had Robert E. Lee. They had Thomas Jonathan Jackson. They had all of these pioneers in the early days of our nation.

Patrick Henry gave me Liberty Gave Me Death. Thomas Paine. All these guys had little mini-biographies of them.

They were written for 6th, 8th grade level. I consumed those. And when I was reading about Daniel Boone and when he was courting his wife, remember in the TV series, Rebecca, everything was real formal.

He never went anywhere without a chaperone. There was always family around. It was a big risque thing that they were sitting out on the front porch and there was nobody out there sitting on the stoop of the cabin.

And he was over there and he got his big old hunting knife and took her apron and just ripped it down the middle and then watched her. And she reared back a little bit. She said, what did you do that for? She was very calm.

And that's what he was looking for. He wondered how would she handle the unexpected? How would she handle something that she didn't understand? Would she scream and throw a conniption fit? People had to make stuff by hand. It wasn't that easy to come by cloth and thread and stuff in the wilderness there.

And he had always seen her under ideal conditions. I want to know what you're like. I want to know if you're going to be a good wife when we have unexpected things happen.

You know, bear clawing at the cabin or whatever. Well, here's a little test. If you want to know someone, you have to see them under other than ideal.

This is one of the big problems with dating. Everybody's got their best foot forward, smell good, pick the place carefully, limited contact, everything is perfect. That's not the way to get to know someone.

You've got to see them when there's a flat tire in a rainstorm and the jack is missing and stuff goes wrong. You want to find these things out. Well, if we want to know God, He can't just give us the rose garden.

Remember Lynn Anderson, I never promised you a rose garden. God doesn't promise us a rose garden. How are we going to get to know Him if He totally smooths our path and as long as we

dot our I's and cross our T's, everything is perfect.

Where will we see... What if Adam had never fallen in the garden? He even never bit the fruit. Bitten the fruit. How much would the human race know about God if there had been no sin and no fall and no need for redemption, no need for salvation? How would we know about the grace of God and the compassion of God, the mercy of God, the love of God? There would have been no need for the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

God allowed this thing, knowing full well it would happen. Why did He put the tree in the garden if He didn't want Adam to sin? What did He put the tree there for? All God had to do was leave off one tree and none of this would have happened. No starving children in Afghanistan, no murders, no rapes, no child abuse and burns with cigarettes and these poor little kids who get beaten to death by sadistic, bestial, subhuman people.

Awful things have happened in the world. Why? Why does God let that happen? Why does God let this happen to Job? There is an ideal path where you can just negotiate the obstacles and everything is fine. But it is under stress, it is in times of adversity that you learn new things.

We wouldn't know anything about God if everything was perfect and nobody had fallen. We see a great deal of the character of God revealed because there is sin, because there is the fall, because there is the need for redemption. Now, do you want to pay that price or not? There are a lot of people that say, No, I don't.

I don't want to pay that price. I don't love God that much. I just want God to bless me and leave me alone.

And that is exactly what you get. You are going to be Eliphaz. You are going to be Bildad.

You are going to be Zophar. And you will get by. And you are going to have a limited understanding of God.

You are going to have a limited inheritance. And there are a lot of people, that is all they want. The question is, what is the matter with us that we would settle for that? From those to whom much is given, much is required.

And it is kind of a scary thing. You say, well, so if I say I really love God and I want to know Him, then is all kinds of bad stuff going to rain down on my head? Not necessarily. Because Job has already gone through it.

The Lord Jesus Christ has already gone through it. David has gone through it. Joseph has gone through it.

It is in the Word of God. And the things that we learn by studying the Word of God, we don't have to go through. God doesn't have to put me in slavery in Egypt.

God doesn't have to take away my family and all my stuff. If I can learn the things that Joseph and Job and Moses and David and Daniel learned through those experiences. It has been done.

People have been there. It is in the Word of God. If we love God, we will want to find out about Him.

And we will ask God to reveal Himself. We will be like Job. Lord, show me what is going on.

These are paradigms. These are examples and are archetypes in the Word of God. How many people have had to go through the Job thing? In the Bible, how many people besides Job had to go through the Job thing? Not very many.

You have Ezekiel and Daniel. You only have people that are ripped out of their homeland and taken to far off places. But the things that God wants to reveal about His character are now in His Word.

And we have God, the Holy Spirit, to teach it to us. And so, it should not be a fearful thing. I remember as a teenager, a similar challenge came out.

If you want to know God, you should be willing to suffer. Pray the prayer that God will take you through whatever. And then stand by because you are liable to get your arm chopped off and have people dying around you.

And go off into slavery. The Communists will invade. You will be some kind of guy in a prison camp somewhere.

It is going to be some kind of a depressing thing. Listen, the knowledge of God is a sweet and precious blessing. And the momentary light affliction that we go through gives us an eternal weight of glory.

And we should not be hesitant. And we should not be reluctant. And we should not be indifferent and apathetic.

Why do Eliphaz and Bildad and Zophar say the things they say? Now watch. This is the second dialogue cycle. Job is a huge contrast to these men.

They are talking about cause and effect. They are talking about impersonal forces. Job is talking about, where is my God? Where is, in effect, my Heavenly Father? Well, when you look at Eliphaz in chapter 15, he just says, Job, you are a fool.

And you are treating us like a fool. Listen, my wisdom is sufficient for this. God is not doing anything new.

And you are a fool if you think that He is. Everything will fit in my grid and in my box. Well, Job

comes back.

And you can read the details of this. But this is just Eliphaz singing the same song. All he talks about is the justice of God.

I will tell you, verse 17, hear me. What I have seen I will declare. What wise men have told, not hiding anything, to whom alone the land was given.

The wicked man writhes with pain all his days. The number of his years is hidden from the oppressor. Those who writhe in pain, that's the wicked man.

Job, you are writhing in pain. Guess what? Dreadful sounds in his ears. In prosperity the destroyer comes upon him.

He does not believe that he will return from darkness. For a sword is waiting for him. Verse 23, he wanders about for bread, saying, where is it? He knows that a day of darkness is ready at his hand.

Trouble and anguish make him afraid. They overpower him like a king ready for battle. He stretches out his hand against God and acts defiantly against the Almighty, running stubbornly against Him with his strong embossed shield.

You are bumping up against the justice of God, Job. Come on. He has covered his face with fatness, made his waist heavy with fat.

He dwells in desolate cities and houses where no one inhabits, which are destined to become ruins. He will not be rich. His wealth will not continue.

His possessions will not overspread the earth. He will not depart from darkness. The flame will dry out his branches.

By the breath of his mouth he will go away. Let him not trust in futile things, deceiving himself. Futility will be his reward, etc., etc., etc.

Cast off his blossom, company of hypocrites. Fire consumes. Conceive trouble and bring forth futility.

Their womb prepares deceit. Job, wicked people, get the punishment. This is the message of wisdom.

Now look at Job's response in chapter 16. Job answered and said, I have heard many such things. Come on, Eliphaz.

You said all this the first time. You gave me two chapters of this, and you're just singing the same old thing. I've heard a multitude of this.

You're a miserable comforter. All of you. You're miserable comforters.

Shall words of wind have an end? What provokes you that you answer? I also could speak as you do, if your soul were in my soul's place. I could heap up words against you, and shake my head at you. I would strengthen you with my mouth, and the comfort of my lips would relieve your grief.

Though I speak, my grief is not relieved. If I remain silent, how am I eased? And he has worn me out. You have made desolate all my company.

You have shriveled me up, and it is a witness against me. My leanness rises up. Verse 11, God has delivered me to the ungodly, and turned me over to the hands of the wicked.

Now, whose hands is Job in? Well, you could say, maybe he's talking about the Sabaeans and the Chaldeans, but that doesn't really cover it, does it? He, verse 9, terrors me in his wrath and hates me. He gnashes at me with his teeth. My adversary sharpens his gaze on me.

They gape at me with their mouth. They strike reproachfully on the cheek. They gather together against me.

God has delivered me to the ungodly. I was at ease, but he has shattered me. He has taken me by my neck and shaken me to pieces.

He has set me up for his target. His archers surround me. He pierces my heart and does not pity.

He pours out my gall. That's actually, he has pierced my kidneys. And my gall, he's stabbed me in the guts, and my innards are spilling out.

He breaks me with wound upon wound. He runs at me like a warrior. Now, even though Job is confused, and even though Job is saying, God is like my adversary, look at the difference in viewpoint.

It's still personality. God is a thinking, reacting, responding person, not this force of nature. I have sewn sackcloth over my skin, laid my head in the dust.

My face is flushed from weeping. On my eyelids is the shadow of death. Although no violence is in my hands, and my prayer is pure.

O earth, do not cover my blood, and let my cry have no resting place. Why does he say that in verse 18? O earth, do not cover my blood. What is this a reference to? What story does Job know about blood crying from the ground? Who's the first innocent man to be slain? And Job is saying, my blood is innocent.

Don't cover it up. If it spills to the ground, I want my blood to cry up to God, because I am

innocent. My prayer is pure.

Even now, my witness is in heaven, and my evidence is on high. My friends scorn me. My eyes pour out tears to God.

Oh, that one might plead for a man with God as a man pleads for his neighbor. Job returns to this theme. Where is my mediator? Where is someone who can span the gulf? Because God is personal.

And if someone could present my case and make my appeal to God, He would listen. When a few years are finished, I will go the way of no return. My life's going to be over, and I'll never get this figured out.

So in chapter 17, he says, My spirit is broken. My days are extinguished. The grave is ready for me.

Are not mockers with me? I'm being mocked by my friends, my comforters, my empty caravan ears. Does not my eye dwell on their provocation? Now put down a pledge for me with yourself. Who is he who will shake hands with me? For you have hidden their heart from understanding.

Therefore you will not exalt them. Very interesting statement. You have hidden their heart from understanding.

Who is he talking about? Three friends. Why would Job hide their heart from understanding? You will seek me and find me. When? When you search for me with all your heart.

Eliphaz has reached a comfort level. He is sated. He is like that crowd that Jesus broke the bread for, and the disciples went and gathered up all the pieces.

We've had enough. No thanks. I know you made more, but I'm not hungry now.

I've got all I need. Here's the rest of it back. Jesus tells the disciples, Do you remember when I fed the 5,000? How many baskets did you take up? When I fed the 4,000, how many baskets did you take up? Do you not yet understand? God is providing bread, and people say, No thanks.

I've had enough. There's more to understand than the justice of God. But Eliphaz doesn't want to know any more than that.

Bildad doesn't want to know any more than that. Zophar doesn't know any more than that. And because of that lack of interest, because of that lack of love, because of that lack of seeking, and asking, and knocking, Job says, You, God, have hidden their heart from understanding.

God is not going to reveal himself to people who aren't looking. And they will not be exalted. He who speaks flattery to his friends, even the eyes of his children will fail.

These men have a little clash going. They had a meeting before they ever came and saw Job. They said, Well, it's obvious what's happened here.

Job has messed up, and God's hammered him. We just need to encourage him to confess his sins. And of course, they've all got their prosperity and their possessions, so obviously they're in good graces with God, and they haven't sinned.

And this is comfortable. It's the way they like to view life. They don't want to inquire into the ways of God.

Job says, He has made me a byword of the people. I have become one in whose face men spit. My eye also has grown dim because of sorrow, and all my members are like shadows.

Upright men are astonished, and the innocent stirs himself up against the hypocrite. Yet the righteous will hold to his way, and he who has clean hands will be stronger and stronger. Job says, I don't know how, I don't know when, but my heart is pure, my prayer is pure, my hands are clean, and the righteous man is going to be vindicated.

God may have to hide me in the earth until his wrath is over, but at some point I will be vindicated. But I wish I could understand. I wish there was somebody who could talk to God for me, who could talk to me for God, and give me understanding, and broker relationship with God, because where is he? I wish I knew what he's thinking.

I wish I knew what he's up to. Verse 10, chapter 17, Please come back again, all of you, for I shall not find one wise man among you. And I think this is, Go back again, all of you.

The same word Bo is using for come and go. I think he's saying, Please go back again, all of you, for I shall not find one wise man among you. I don't know why they translated this, come back.

My days are past, my purposes are broken off, even the thoughts of my heart. They change the night into day. The light is near, they say, in the face of darkness.

He's talking about his friends. They're saying, Look, Job, the light and the blessing of God are just around the corner. You just have to identify your sin, make the appropriate sacrifice, put the appropriate coin in the slot.

They change the night into day. Oh, this is not night, Job. You've just messed up.

They say the light is near, in the face of darkness. If I wait for the grave as my house, if I make my bed in the darkness, if I say to corruption, You're my father, and to the worm, You are my mother and my sister, where then is my hope? As for my hope, who can see it? Will they go down to the gates of Sheol? Shall we have rest together in the dust? He's basically saying, You all have no concept. Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, and all of your retinue.

You're going to come down with me to Sheol? You want to see what night really is? You want to see what darkness really is? You think, Oh, it's just a momentary little problem here. I know better. I know my heart is pure, my hands are clean, and there's something else going on.

I want to find out what it is. You're no company, you're no help. Go home.

Well, chapter 18, Bildad, number 2, in the cycle of conversers here, is going to speak. What does Bildad represent? Eliphaz is the wisdom of the aged. Smart man from T-man.

Bildad is what? Tradition, experience. This is what's been handed down. So Bildad the Shuhite answers and says, How long till you put an end to words? Everybody's saying, Job, you keep saying all this stuff.

Why don't you just cut to the chase? Gain understanding and afterward we will speak. Why are you treating us like dumb animals? Why do you regard us as stupid? You who tear yourself in anger. Shall the earth be forsaken for you or shall the rock be removed from its place? Do you think life is going to change to suit you, Job? Should the world accommodate itself to you or should you accommodate yourself to the world? This is the way life works.

The rock here, this is the rock of tradition. This is, you know, don't move the old landmark kind of a thing. The light of the wicked goes out, Job.

The flame of his fire does not shine. The light is dark in his tent. What was Job just talking about? You don't understand the kind of night that I'm in.

You don't understand the kind of Sheol that I'm descending to. And Bildad comes right back and says, Look, that darkness, that's the darkness of the wicked, Job. The steps of the wicked are shortened.

His counsel casts him down. He's cast into a net by his own feet. He walks into a snare.

Verse 9, the net takes him by the heel and a snare lays hold of him. A noose is hidden for him. This is the same song, second verse.

Job, do well, you get well. Do bad, you get bad. The world is not going to change because you're crying out and railing.

You've got to conform yourself. A lot of people look at what they consider to be unorthodox Christianity. We're kind of an unorthodox church.

We have an unorthodox style of gathering and of studying and so on. And, you know, if you experience adversity, if your life is strange, people say, well, you know, what you really need to do is to get into a normal church. Get into a normal situation.

You need to get into the mainstream here. I was in an abnormal church that had a big problem. And the first thing everybody said was, we've got to get into the mainstream.

The reason we had this problem is, we're weird. We're abnormal. We've got to get back into the mainstream.

Started getting mainstream speakers and mainstream candidates for pastor. And that group just crumbled and disappeared because God was trying to teach new things. And a lot of the people in that group just missed it.

Eliphaz, Bildad, here, is missing it. He's trying to shoehorn a new thing, new wine into an old wineskin. Trying to sew a new patch into an old garment.

It's just not going to work. The wicked strength is starved. He's uprooted from the shelter.

He dwells in his tent. Brimstone is scattered on his dwelling. His roots are dried out.

Verse 16. His branches wither. This is the wicked.

The memory of him perishes from the earth. He has no name among the renowned. He's driven from light into darkness.

Chased out of the world. He has neither son nor posterity among his people. Ouch.

Thanks a lot, Bildad. I just lost my ten children. You're saying that's because I'm wicked.

Nobody remains in his dwellings. Those in the west are astonished at his days. Those in the east are frightened.

Surely such are the dwellings of the wicked. And this is the place of him who does not know God. If you know God, you know justice.

And that's it. Very same thing. Bildad, it's all of a piece.

Well, Job answers in chapter 19. How long will you torment my soul and break me in pieces with words? These ten times you have reproached me. You're not ashamed that you have wronged me.

If indeed I have erred, my error remains with me. If indeed you exalt yourselves against me, plead my disgrace against me. Know then that God has wronged me and has surrounded me with his net.

If I cry out concerning wrong, I am not heard. If I cry aloud, there is no justice. He has fenced up my way so that I cannot pass.

God is a person. I don't understand why God is doing what he's doing, but God is out there. Job is pushing his face against the plastic, trying to stretch through and figure out what God is up to.

I don't understand, but I want to know. Job keeps looking up toward God. Bildad, Zophar, Eliphaz keep looking at Job, saying, Job, it's your problem, and you need to look at yourself.

Job says, there's nothing wrong with me. I want to understand God. This is a challenge for us.

Are we just trying to make our life work out, or are we pushing to understand God? We don't have to go through what Job went through. We can find it in his word, but it's a matter of asking and seeking and knocking. Do we love God or not? Do we want to understand him better or not? It's a lot easier to learn it through the study and meditation on God's word than it is to go through a Job experience.

We don't have to do the Job thing. We have the book of Job. We have the word of God that the Holy Spirit can minister to us, and we don't have to go through these awful experiences.

But in these awful experiences, we find the grace of God. We find that God is bigger than a lot of believers conceive of him. That's why Job speaks rightly, and these men don't.

When we get to chapter 42, Job sees how big God is. God is bigger than just justice. We'll pick up in chapter 19 next time.

Father, thank you for the truth of your word, and thank you for the ways in which you have revealed yourself to us, most importantly through the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will fan into flame the enthusiasm and the desire that we have to know you, that your word will be precious and uplifting and exciting to us as we meditate on it, that we can grow in grace and knowledge and be prepared for an eternal future with you. We ask these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.