

16b JOB

Let's resume our study now in the book of Job. We have made our way to verse 24 of chapter 30. Having seen that Job returns attention after the discourses and the issues and sub-issues that were brought up in all of those dialogue cycles, he is focused on the fact that God is the source of wisdom and that this wisdom is not easily found.

It's not located by men. Men will miss it. It can't be found in so many different places.

It will be found in the places where God dwells. God is the one who takes the chaotic forces of darkness and destruction and sets their limits and their bounds and organizes them and turns them. This is the classic cursing to blessing where what seems to be a disaster ultimately works together for good.

And this, if you will, Job 28 is kind of the Romans 8 28 of the Old Testament. All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. If all you're interested in is your own purpose, you're going to be in the Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar mode and you're just using God hopefully to get over and get by and to succeed and to accomplish your own purposes.

This has been the contrast and the distinction between Job and his friends all along. Job is interested in God and the things of God and this is what he focuses on now as he moves into what has often been called Job's defense, Job's apologia, his apology in the classic sense of the term, his speech as you would find in a courtroom, sort of his summary of his defense. And many comments, many interpretive opinions have been given about this section that this is actually harking to the judicial proceedings that might have taken place in the city gate and would later take place in courtrooms where there is a summary of the case for the defense and that the language in the presentation here is formal legal language in its style and in its presentation.

And you'll see even in your New King James, I think it's labeled here, Job's summary defense. So he reviews the past in chapter 29 and then in chapter 30 he says, now everything is reversed and I am in that dark place. I have been plunged into that darkness and that confusion and that separation from God.

I stand up and He doesn't speak. I cry out and He doesn't answer. He is cruel to me.

And he turns and more or less addresses God in the first person. He has been talking and addressing his friends, describing his former prosperity and his current denigration and despair and so on. And he says in verse 16, my soul is poured out because of my plight the days of affliction take hold of me.

But then in verse 20, he switches to the second person. And he says, I cry out to you, but you do not answer me. And it's as though he turns his gaze heavenward and begins to address God

directly, as he has done a time or two before.

With the strength of your hand, you oppose me. You lift me up to the wind and cause me to ride on it. You spoil my success, for I know that you will bring me to death and to the house appointed for all living.

Surely he would not stretch out his hand, verse 24, against a heap of ruins if they cry out when he destroys it. Have I not wept for him who was in trouble? Has not my soul grieved for the poor? But when I looked for good, evil came. And when I waited for light, then came darkness.

My heart is in turmoil and cannot rest. Days of affliction confront me. I go about mourning, but not in the sun.

I stand up in the assembly and cry out for help. I am a brother of jackals and a companion of ostriches. Not something you ordinarily hear people who are in distress say.

I'm in a flock of ostriches. I don't know what the technical term is for a flock of ostriches. I'm going to say flock.

It might be a gaggle or a weasel or some other weird... You know, they have coveys and things for groups of animals. I don't know what they are for ostriches. We'll say flock.

I'm a companion of ostriches. My skin grows black and falls from me. My bones burn with fever.

My harp is turned to mourning. And my flute to the voice of those who weep. The instruments that normally would have been used for praise and rejoicing are instead used for lament.

Well, as we look at this and try to decipher it, the idea here is that he is a broken man. When he says in verse 24, I'm a heap of ruins or I'm like a heap of ruins. I am not receiving... You know, the New Testament aphorism is Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.

Meet out the judgment to others with which you would like to be judged. And the judgment with which you judge others will be meted out to you. And Job says, well, I have sympathized with the unfortunate and those who were in trouble and grieved for the poor.

But when it was my turn, it didn't come. That system didn't work. Have we not often felt this way, where you have these one another passages, love one another, look out for one another, put others ahead of yourself, and you say, you know, the way this is supposed to work is I put others ahead of myself, and then those others put me ahead of themselves, and everybody gets put ahead of somebody, and it all works great.

But what happens in my case is I put others ahead of myself, others put themselves ahead of me, and I wind up coming in last every time. And it's not fair. Well, this is the Eliphaz, Zophar, Bildad point of view.

Why don't I get the action-reaction, Newtonian view of spirituality that I anticipate? It leaves God, more or less, out of the equation. My soul is grieved for the poor, but when I looked for good, evil came. I waited for light, then came darkness.

Therefore, I am in turmoil, he says. Days of affliction confront me, I am mourning, and so on. So, in chapter 31, he goes on and he says, it is not as though I have compromised my integrity.

I have not brought this stuff on by some hidden sin. First of all, talking about his outward righteousness, notice in verses 25 and following, this is what I did overtly. When I saw the poor, I sympathized, I empathized, I helped him, I grieved with him.

I have received nothing but abuse and spite, and so on. Now he talks about his internal life. I have made a covenant with my eyes.

Why then should I look upon a young woman? For what is the allotment of God from above, and the inheritance of the Almighty from on high? Is it not destruction for the wicked, and disaster for the workers of iniquity? Does he not see my ways, and count all my steps? Now once again, this seems to be a reversal for Job, where now he is agreeing with Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, that well, doesn't God bless the righteous? And he says, look, even in the secret places of my heart where I might be doing the Jimmy Carter, remember that way back where Jimmy got interviewed for Playboy or something, and said he was lusting after women in his heart, and he got splashed all over the press for years? Job says, no, I have made a covenant with my eyes. I have established a policy that I adhere to. I don't look with lust upon younger women.

That's wrong. Who would know if I was doing this? But I have made a covenant with my own eyes. It's my personal, internal, hidden policy.

What is the allotment of God from above and the inheritance of the Almighty from on high? Why did I make this covenant with my eyes? Because I know that God looks on the inward man. God sees the thoughts and intents of the heart. And while maybe people around me wouldn't see me looking with a shifty gaze and having all kinds of imaginary thoughts about young women in the periphery, God would know.

The inheritance of the Almighty, what is it? It's destruction for the wicked. And I don't want to fall under God's judgment. That's exactly why I have maintained my integrity.

That's exactly why I have made this covenant with my eyes. I know it's displeasing to God, even though it's sort of a hidden sin. He sees my ways.

He counts all my steps. Is this not so? If I have walked with falsehood, if my foot has hastened to deceit, let me be weighed on honest scales that God may know my integrity. You can look in my inward parts.

You can look in my innermost thoughts and you're not going to find evil. You're not going to find sin. I have known for a long time what does and does not please God, and my foot has held His steps, remember? His way have I kept and not declined.

This is a rehearsal again of that theme. Just weigh me on an honest scale. Not the scale of Eliphaz, not the scale of Bildad, or the scale of Zophar.

That's a dishonest scale. You think about it. The weights that they used to use on the old scales, you've seen blind justice and so on.

And they used to have the pan scales that are just an arm on a pivot. And you put your thing to be weighed on one side and then you stack up known weights on the others. And by adding those up, you find out the weight of this thing.

Well, a dishonest scale would mean either the weights have been bored out from underneath so that when it says it's a gram or it says it's a pound, it's really not. And so you have to put more on. You say, oh look, I'm selling you five pounds of hamburger here when it's really only three pounds of hamburger.

That's a dishonest scale. It doesn't weigh accurately. Job says on an honest scale, on a good scale, my integrity will show.

And by implication, the scale upon which his three friends have weighed him is not accurate. A scale is a great thing. And it's a great concept to weigh a thing.

But your scale has to be accurate. This goes back to what I was saying earlier that you have to make your argument, you have to apply your principle in the proper context. This is sort of like giving your child an instruction in the house and you say, don't leave the door open.

When you come in and out of the house, close the door. We have air conditioning, we have heat, whatever. Don't leave the door open.

So now it's time to carry in groceries from the car. And you say, come help me carry in the groceries. Yes, Dad.

And so child gets a load of groceries. Dad gets a load of groceries. Start walking toward the house.

The child goes through the door and slams the door in my face before I come in. Well, Dad, you said close the door after I come in and out. Well, yes, but not in this context.

Not in the context of carrying things in and out when I'm standing right there trying to come in. That's an inappropriate application of a normally valid principle. That's exactly what the friends have done.

So Job is pointing this out. That God may know my integrity if my step has turned from the way, if my heart has walked after my eyes. Notice, this is a category of sin.

Your heart walking after your eyes. We have to guard our eyes. Men have a whole category of things that they shouldn't look at because your heart will follow your eyes and you get in trouble.

This is one of the big hazards of the Internet. I can't tell you how many computers I have worked on where nobody in immediate context, by the way, but in times past, when I was in a Christian organization, completely different place and time, and would start working on computers and through no fault of my own as I was trying to do my job and clean these computers up, discovered that this computer that was bought and paid for and ostensibly to be used in this Christian benevolent organization had been visiting all kinds of pornography sites. Why? Somebody's heart started following their eyes.

It's an easy thing to do on the Internet. Probably 60% of the traffic on the Internet is pornography. It's huge.

Pictures are big downloads and they soak up a lot of bandwidth. A lot of what you pay for Internet access is paying for the bandwidth that is used by perverted people who can't get enough of pornography. My heart has walked after my eyes.

How do we keep that from happening? Well, you can't control what is available, but you can control what you avail yourself of. And you don't. You make a covenant with your eyes and you say, I am not going to follow this strange link that came up when I was searching for something innocuous.

I'm not going to proceed into this. Now this can be less perverse. Suppose you're supposed to be getting your homework done or you're supposed to be getting other things done and something of interest pops up on your screen.

You're supposed to be researching goldfish or something and suddenly here's some interesting little sidebar. Or suppose you're trying to get online to check your bank account and here's a shopping link or something and you're an inveterate shopper and you go down the shopping trail. This doesn't have to be some awful, dark, perverse thing.

It's when we follow our eyes and the heart goes right after. It can be a lot of things. It can be a hobby that gets out of hand.

It can be anything that we enjoy to excess. Job says, if my heart had walked after my eyes, what if Job had just become a greedy miser and it said, I want more camels. I want more donkeys.

I want more servants. I want more yolks of oxen. I saw them in the marketplace.

I must have them. He says, I haven't done that. If I had or if any spot had adhered to my hands,

he doesn't say I never got a spot on my hands.

He says, I never got one that stuck. I have always washed my hands. Then let me sow and another eat.

Let my harvest be rooted out. If my heart has been enticed by a woman, if I have lurked at my neighbor's door, then let my wife grind for another and let others bow down over her. You can draw your conclusions from that.

That's a nice euphemistic phraseology. But that would be wickedness. I would have been guilty with wickedness and I would deserve, if I had gone astray, for my wife to go astray or have others go astray with her.

If I had violated my marriage bond, then I would deserve to have similar treatment. It would be iniquity deserving of judgment. That would be a fire that consumes unto destruction and would root out all my increase.

What is Job basically saying here? He's saying, look, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, in the context of wrongdoing, what you say is true and I would be the first to say I would deserve everything I get. I'm not arguing with the points that you have made in the context that you make them. My argument with you is, that does not apply.

If I had done those things, I would deserve such a fate. If I had despised the cause of my male or female servant when they complained against me, what then shall I do when God rises up? When He punishes, how would I answer Him? Did not He who made me in the womb make them? Did not the same One fashion us in the womb? By the way, there's a lot of great doctrinal truth being reflected here in this speech. It's not just a complaint.

Job is saying, these are the things that I know. I know the way God works. I know what spiritual inheritance is.

I know where the favor of God lies and doesn't lie. And I know what God expects of me as a man who has been favored and as a man who has been blessed. I should be looking out for the poor.

I should be keeping my own counsel. I should be respecting my marriage. I should be respecting the young women in my periphery and not disrespecting them even in my mind.

I should be caring for my servants. The Bible doesn't come out against slavery, but it does come out against slave abuse. In the same way that the Bible does not come out against alcohol, but it comes out strongly against alcohol abuse.

Now, it's just incendiary to say such things in a public venue that the Bible doesn't come out against slavery, but it doesn't. There was slavery rampant in the Roman Empire. Jesus never went down to the slave market and picketed.

He never went down there and got a switch of cords and drove people out of the slave market. And he easily could have. There were slave markets all over Jerusalem.

Even Paul, the whole Philemon episode. Read that. There is no polemic against slavery.

There is a polemic in favor of treating a brother as a brother. Did not he who made me in the womb make them? Did not the same one fashion us in the womb? And notice, from ancient times, a proper understanding recognizes that a slave is not a lesser human being. It was basically a form of employment that included room and board.

And the Bible has always emphasized fair treatment for those who are in a subservient position. Whether they were captured as slaves, whether they have indentured themselves and are bond servants. Fellow Israelites had to do this to get out of debt.

The Bible does not say, Thou shalt never allow someone to enslave himself. Thou shalt never take slaves. Never make slaves.

Never keep slaves. What it does say is, because if you think about it honestly, somebody's country is devastated. Their army is slaughtered.

Their government is gone. Their economy is wrecked. In some cases, this was the best possible thing for members of the population was to be taken in where they were fed and clothed and given an occupation and the opportunity to live a meaningful life.

Nobody wants to raise their hand and say, Oh yes, me first. Let me go be a slave. But it's a lot better than starving to death in a wrecked country.

It's a lot better than being slaughtered with impunity as certain populations in Canaan were. Well, that's a whole different subject. But Job knows, and this is before the law of Moses, probably before the Israelites themselves became slaves in Egypt, that slaves ought to be treated as fellow human beings.

The same God made us. The same one fashioned us in the womb. And that perspective alone prevents abuse.

Or ought to. If I kept the poor from their desire, if I caused the eyes of the widow to fail, what does this mean? Here's somebody who's disadvantaged. Their husband has died or their son has died.

They don't have someone to look out for them. And it would be easy to take advantage of them. Job could muscle his way in and take their land or take their crops or take their possessions.

He could take advantage of them because he is powerful and they are weak. Their eyes, this is a metaphor for their hope. Their view of the future.

You raise your eyes unto the hills from whence comes your help. If you cause their eyes to fail, they just can't see where anything good will ever come. If I cause the eyes of the widow to fail, if I had eaten my morsel by myself, if I had eaten all my food, hoarded it, kept it all to myself, so that the fatherless could not eat of it, but no, from my youth, I have reared the fatherless as though I were his father.

And from my mother's womb, I have guided the widow. If I have seen anyone perish for lack of clothing, or any poor man without covering, if his heart has not blessed me and if he was not warmed with the fleece of my sheep, can you find a poor man that I came in contact with that I did not help? Is there anyone who didn't come away for me? Any poor man that came in contact with me that didn't come away blessing me? This is what Job is saying. It wasn't warm because I gave him a warm coat from the fleece of my own sheep.

If I have raised my hand against the fatherless when I saw I had help in the gate, then fine, judge me. Let my arm drop off of my shoulder. Let my arm be torn from the socket for destruction from God is a terror to me and because of His magnificence, I cannot endure.

I have always, this in a nutshell, Job is saying, I have known what pleases and displeases God and I have lived my life to please Him. That has been my policy and my goal ever since I was a boy. Which tells us, by the way, that Job evidently grew up in a wealthy family because even as a child, he looked out for those who were less fortunate from his youth.

Job says, if I have become a miser, if I have made gold my hope, or said to find gold, you are my confidence, you are my God, this is where my trust and my hope for the future resides, is in my wealth. If I rejoice because my wealth was great, because my hand had gained much, if I observe the sun when it shines or the moon moving in its brightness so that my heart has been secretly enticed, my mouth has kissed my hand, by the way, this mouth kissing the hand, this was a part of a worship ritual for sun worshippers and moon worshippers who went into pagan cult practices. I read a paper on this one time, it was a real obscure reference, if my mouth had kissed my hand.

But the long and short of it is, this is referring to those who are superstitious. It's kind of like throwing salt over your shoulder. At certain times of the year, on certain occasions, certain rituals, you would kiss your hand as a sign and symbol of your respect for the sun or your respect for the moon.

This would be iniquity deserving of judgment. I put something ahead of God. I put my confidence in something other than God himself, superstition or my own wealth.

I would have denied God who is above. If I had rejoiced at the destruction of those who hate me, if I had built my happiness on others' unhappiness, he's saying, if I lifted myself up when evil found it, I took advantage. Remember the woe songs that Ezekiel penned against the nations who took advantage when Israel was down and being judged? And they said, Aha! This was the

basis for their judgment.

Job said, If I had ever done that, I have never allowed my mouth to sin by asking for a curse on my enemies. I have never asked God to put retribution on someone who hates me or who has wronged me. If the men of my tent have not said, Who is there that has not been satisfied with his meat? Everyone who serves with me, everyone who eats a meal in my tent, has nothing but good things to say.

There's nobody who's grouching. There's nobody who's complaining. Nobody has an issue with me.

No sojourner, no traveler, strangers who are passing through have never had to lodge in the street. I have opened my doors to the traveler. If I had covered my transgressions like Adam by hiding my iniquity in my bosom, notice, he says, if I had tried to do the fig leaf dance because I feared the great multitude and dreaded the contempt of families, I wanted to hide my indiscretion, I wanted to hide my nakedness, I wanted to hide my wrongdoing, so that I kept silence and did not go out of the door.

If I had done any of this, and then he just kind of breaks off. It's like an ellipsis. He just says, when have I ever done any of this? And this is a double edged sword.

It cuts backward at the comments. The four chapters of Eliphaz, the three chapters of Bildad, the two chapters of Zophar. It cuts backward at all of that.

Once again, it's a summary refutation of all that has gone before. He says one more time, if I had ever done that, you'd have a case, but you don't because I haven't. Now he returns to a theme we have seen earlier.

Oh, if I only had one to hear me. Here is my mark. Oh, that the Almighty would answer me that my prosecutor had written a book.

Surely I would carry it on my shoulder and bind it on me like a crown. I would declare to him the number of my steps like a prince. I would approach him.

I would not be embarrassed. I would not be ashamed. If I could approach him, if he would make an accounting and put it in the book, I would wear that accounting like a crown.

I would approach him boldly as though I were a prince because I have nothing to hide. I have nothing of which to be ashamed. Job is reaching for superlatives to make this case.

Now, once again, think about the foreshadowing element here. Think about the Lord Jesus Christ in His trial phase and the crucifixion, the accusations that are made, the false charges that are brought against Him. If God delighted in you, He would deliver you.

You are hanging on the cross. You claim you are the Son of God. Well, come down from the cross.

Vindicate yourself. What's the problem? That your very circumstances seem to convict you of falsehood. This is the very argument that's going to be made against the Lord Jesus Christ.

And yet, He is the sinless, spotless Lamb of God. And the Lord hath laid on Him our iniquities so that by His stripes we are healed. But can't you imagine that the Lord Jesus might have run some of these Scriptures through His own mind? Why can I not represent myself before the Father? God, why have You forsaken me? Why are You so far from hearing me? I am not guilty of that for which I am suffering.

If the land cries out against me, its furrows weep together. If I have eaten its fruit without money or caused its owners to lose their lives, then let thistles grow instead of wheat and weeds instead of barley. The words of Job are ended.

He has stated once again definitively, succinctly, elegantly his innocence. At the same time, he has acknowledged that there is a purpose. He doesn't know what it is.

He wishes God would reveal it. But he knows that that treasure is to be found in these dark shadows, in these times of tribulation. He knows that.

And at the same time, he is affirming that whatever the nature of this darkness and this distress and this suffering, it is not because he has sinned. That's not God's purpose. His purpose in suffering, His purpose in at least temporarily being separated from that normal relationship with God and that fellowship with God is not retribution.

It is not judgment. God has some other purpose and it's going to be gold and it's going to be silver. But he wishes the Almighty would come and reveal it because he's kind of in the dark.

The words of Job are ended. So, we come to chapter 32 and with this transition, this turning point, having been turned, this wonderful gem of a chapter 28 and this defense and vindication that Job offers for himself in chapters 29, 30 and 31, we come now to chapter 32 which is going to begin a unique section of the book of Job. This, again, beginning back in the 19th century with the higher critical school of Bible dissection.

Scholars have come out and said, well, this is a later addition to the book. The speech of Elihu wasn't original to the book. They say Elihu isn't mentioned at the beginning of the book.

He's not mentioned in the denouement. He's not mentioned in the narrative epilogue of the book. He just pops up out of nowhere as if by magic.

They say the language is different. The style is inferior. It's full of Aramaisms.

It is this, it is that, it is the other. I could give you a long dissertation on all the ins and outs of that, but suffice it to say, it's bunk. It's another example of the useless stuff that you get from higher criticism.

Elihu is essential. The solution to the riddle, the solution to the puzzle of Job's questions, of Job's suffering, of Job's vindication of himself in the light of all of his suffering, and so, well, if that's not it, then what is it, is going to be found in two sections of this final half of the book. Elihu and God.

Job has turned the corner for us. Job has stated his situation very clearly in case we got lost in the funhouse with the dialogues. What do we have? We have an innocent man, separated from God, scratching his head, saying, I wish the Almighty would write this stuff in a book.

Well, guess what? The Almighty has written it in a book and we're looking at it. Job says, I would stride up to Him as a prince because I have done nothing wrong. And as soon as He reveals Himself, I'm going to rush toward Him, not away from Him.

If I had done something wrong, I would deserve everything. Take away what I've got. Take my wife.

Take my stuff. Let my arms drop out of their sockets. That would be fine.

But I haven't, and the next time I see God, I'm not going to be hiding like Adam in the garden behind a fig leaf. I'm going to strap His book on my head and walk right up to Him like a prince. That's what Job says.

Well, this is now the introduction and we're going to have... How many chapters did Eliphaz have? Four. How many chapters did Bildad have? Three. How many chapters did Zophar have? Two.

How many chapters is Elihu going to have? Six. He's going to say more than, or as much as, the rest of these guys put together practically. Four and three is seven and two is nine.

Well, he's going to have six. He's going to have two-thirds as much to say all by himself as the first three friends put together. Elihu is going to speak up.

He's going to say why he's speaking, and then he's going to make his case. He's going to go for six chapters. 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37.

When we get to chapter 38, there's going to be the Lord answering Job out of the whirlwind. This episode began with a whirlwind, knocking down the house where all of his children were feasting, and it's going to end with a whirlwind, knocking down the house of cards that has been constructed by the three friends. The introduction to God's words is provided by Elihu.

The scholars try to say, well, now that Job has vindicated himself, we ought to hear God talk next.

No way. When we look at this, we're going to see in these next six chapters why Elihu speaks, what the nature of his speech is, why it is placed precisely here between Job's apologia and the answer of God, which winds up the whole discussion.

It's one of the most fascinating sections in all of Scripture, and it is essential to understanding the book of Job, to hear what Elihu has to say. Well, it deserves its own night, and so we'll knock off here at the threshold of Elihu's speech and pick up here next week. But we're going to see Job with his miner's light on finally find that gold and that treasure that was waiting for him in this dark, deep cave in the ground.

It's going to come in these last two sections, and it's going to explain the nature of the events in the epilogue, because Job is going to have his answer by the time this is over. Well, this is where we'll pick up next week. Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word.

Thank You for the variety and the depth of the communication that You have given us in Your Word, whether it's narrative or poetry or didactic portions or historical portions. We find so many wonderful ways in which You communicate Your truth to us. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will impress us with the truth of these things and show us the application of them in our own lives, that it will shine as a light on our path in the days that remain to us in this life.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.