

20b JOB

Let's pick up our study now in Job chapter 35. I know it's been a little bit slow going here getting the text right, but you know, it's kind of like Elihu says, there's a return on the words once we get them down. So we've seen him say the following, and I'm just going to read you the translation of these verses.

Talking about all the substance in chapter 34. Here's the whole concept that there is suffering for purposes other than discipline, and there are people who are going to say, well, I don't get that, I think Job is sinning, and he just needs to suffer more until he breaks. So he's replying, and Elihu says, do you think this, i.e., Job, and for justice you say my righteousness is from God.

So he's contrasting the view in chapter 34 presented by the guys with what he says. He says, do you think this? This is what I've heard you say. You said you get your righteousness from God.

You said I don't get any benefit from my sin, i.e., why would I hang on to it? Why wouldn't I confess? I'm a confessing kind of guy. I'm a sacrificing kind of guy. I've been happy God has done all these things.

I would be nuts to be sitting here suffering and refusing to acknowledge sin. What's in it for me? What's the upside of this situation here? You think I'm some kind of a nut? Sitting here scraping myself, and all I have to do is confess a sin, and I'm back in God's good books? So he says, look, I'm going to give you a return on your words. You've said some things.

These guys have said some things. Here's my return on your words. And then he begins with his illustration before he even makes his point.

Three words for looking. Look up at the heavens, see the clouds, and take note of them. They're higher than you are.

Deep concept there. They're way up there. Without having to fill in the blanks here, he goes on and says, look, if you sin, what do you accomplish against Him? You're already looking in His direction as you look up at the sky.

If you multiply your transgressions, what do you do to Him? If you are righteous, what do you give to Him? Remember, Job said, it's what He gives to me. My righteousness comes from God. That's where my justice is grounded and based.

What does He receive from your hand? It's kind of trying to push a rope. It comes the other way. We receive from God's hand a blessing.

So in verse 8, he goes on and he says, to a man like yourself, your wickedness makes a difference. That's the understood concept. There's no verb here.

It's to a man like yourself, your wickedness. It's a son of man like yourself that is your righteousness. Your righteousness can make a difference to people.

Your wickedness can make a difference to people. This is kind of a novel concept. It doesn't make a difference in the effect sense to God.

It makes a difference in the forensic sense. It makes a difference in the legal sense. But this, by the way, if you want a point of application, if you listen to talk radio, if you watch the people who render their judgments and give their opinions, whether it's blogs or television or whatever, there is a huge amount of talking that goes on about foreign policy, the Middle East, our president, domestic issues.

Supreme Court nominations are off the table at the moment, but when those are up, there's just endless, endless discussion. People marching about this and talking about that and nagging and carrying on about one thing or another. Now we've got elections going on.

Here's a guy that said this and did that. Will he get elected? Well, I ask myself, I could get deeply into this. I could research it.

I could formulate these cogent arguments. I could slay my debate opponents and lay them out in rows on the ground with the devastating logic of my superior wisdom and so on. And then I ask myself the inevitable question, so what? This stuff in its active influences, the causes, conditions, successions, and relations that make history happen, it's like looking at the clouds.

What do you see when you look at the clouds? I see a bear. I see Theodore Roosevelt. I see Mount Rushmore.

Well, I see Cottontail Rabbit. Well, it gives us perspective. It puts things into context to realize that our deep concerns about things are largely confined to those in our immediate periphery, our bursting radius.

We, you know the old song, you always hurt the one you love. It's people who are closest to us that we have an influence on. Our righteousness can benefit them.

Our wickedness can injure them. It is man and the Son of Man that sees any kind of action or reaction from our righteousness and sinfulness. God is up here.

And as I mentioned, David, when you go to the Psalms, I always get Psalm 2 and Psalm 8 confused. I'm going to guess and say that it's Psalm 8. Yes. When I consider verse 3, your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, when I consider in verse 3, which is verse 4 in Hebrew, but this is Raah, when I look at the heavens, Shemayim, what is man that you are mindful of him? What is the Son of Man that you visit him? You have made him lower than the angels, yet you have crowned him with glory and honor.

And it isn't us reaching up to God, making an influence or a difference with God. It's not our righteousness. Our righteousness can't touch God.

Nothing comes from our hand. It's what comes from His hand and what comes in the other direction. So this is a great centerpiece in Elihu's third speech.

There is a distance between man and God that man cannot reach up and cover. It's God who covers it. And Job already understands this.

You know where I get my righteousness? Up there. Well, this is the concept as we pick up now in verse 9. He says, your wickedness affects a man such as you, your righteousness a son of man. Now in verse 9 it says, because of the multitude of oppressions, they cry out.

They cry out for help because of the arm of the mighty. We know what an arm represents in Hebrew. This is your strength.

Hands represent things. Eyes represent things. Faces, everything has a representation.

Arm speaks of strength. So, from a multitude of oppressions, they cry out. Now who's the they? Well, these are those who are affected by the wickedness of man.

And this is introduced by the idea the multitude of oppressions. This harks back. It's the man and the son of man that is affected by wickedness.

When there's a multitude of oppressions, just as He said up above, when you multiply your transgressions, it's the very same form here. It's Rav, many, many. They cry out for help because of the arm of the mighty, because of the strength.

Somebody's putting them down. It's the man. It's the fuzz.

It's the dominant racial group. It's the dominant cultural group. It's the Serbs or it's the Croats or it's the whites or it's the blacks or it's whoever it is.

Somebody's picking on me. It's the Catholics and the Protestants. It's the Muslims and the Christians or the Christians and the Muslims.

It's kind of like that Star Trek episode where they had the guys that were black on the right side and white on the left side and they had the guys that were black on the left side and white on the right side. And they were tangling with each other. Whatever it is, somebody's got the upper hand and they're making oppression and they cry out for help.

Now, nobody really faults somebody for saying, hey, here's somebody that's being oppressed and they're crying out, right? Wrong. God does. Look at the next verse.

These people who are oppressed by their fellow man, they cry out for help because they're

oppressed, but no one says, where is God my Maker? Now, this is poetic literature here. This is a poetic passage. And when you say no one, and this is going to sound bad, but no one doesn't always mean no one.

You remember in John where it says He came unto His own and His own received Him not? It sounds like, well, nobody received Him. But the very next verse says, but as many as received Him, to them gave He the right to be called the sons of God. So we have sort of a scientific view, a very literal-minded view of language, and we say, well, there's none to do with righteousness, no, not one.

Well, that means there's not a single person that ever does any righteousness. If you look at the context, He says these people are eating My people like bread. Well, if nobody's righteous, then who's My people? Are they eating each other like bread? Why does He call them My people? I mean, it makes no sense.

Same thing here. When He says there is no one who cries out saying, where is God my Maker? It doesn't in Hebrew even say no one. It says they cry out for help because of the arm of the mighty and do not say, where is God my Maker? These who are crying out for oppression do not say.

It doesn't say no one. There is no pronoun here for no one. But you can understand that the semantic idea seems to be there, and that's why the English translators put it in.

But Elihu is talking about a particular category of people. They get into enough discomfort and enough pain and enough oppression, and they'll cry out for help, but they're not looking for their Maker. What is the issue? Why is God called their Maker? This is Eloah Esau.

Esau, to do or to make. Elohim, the Maker, who gives. And then you have songs in the night.

They do not say, where is God my Maker? Who gives songs in the night. Now, there's been a lot of speculation about this passage because it seems like he sort of goes super poetic in the midst of a rather mundane set of arguments. Why would somebody who's oppressed by the man, by whoever's got the power, who's got the arm, suddenly be crying out and saying, where's my song in the night? Sing, sing a song.

I'd like to teach the world to sing. I'd like to give the world a coke. It just seems a little bit out of place.

So people have tried to amend the text. If you go to the Tanakh, the Jewish Publication Society translation, they decided that this, instead of being zamir, must be the Hebrew word for strength. Where is God my Maker who gives strength in the night? B'lailah, there's no getting around it.

B'lailah is night. If you're in Israel and you want to say something nice to somebody toward evening, say, B'lailah tov. Good evening.

Just like Boker tov in the morning, or broke your toe, as Glenn McCarty used to say. Broke your toe? That's Boker tov. Good morning.

B'lailah tov. Good evening. So this is, where is God my Maker, the one giving, this is from Natan again, and then Zomrot, from zamir, this is the plural, B'lailah, songs in the night.

After a hard day of work, you come home, you eat, and then you have the idea of songs in the night. It's a metaphor for peace and prosperity. That even if it's dark, you're still feeling pretty good.

Sun's down, it's not light, but we'll just sing around the campfire, kind of a thing. What's the point here? Oppression takes place, and people cry out, but they're crying out for the wrong reason. They're not looking for their Maker.

They're not looking for the one who gives that ability to celebrate even when it's dark. And this doesn't need any kind of inundation at all. Elihu's whole point is, Job is the kind of guy who can say, though he slay me, yet will I trust him.

Job is the kind of guy who can say, I understand that there can be suffering for other than discipline. And I'm experiencing it. I wish I knew what the point was.

I wish I could talk to God and get the lesson, or I wish He would hide me until His wrath has passed and I could come out on the other side. Job has definitely some questions. He's not singing a song in the night at the moment, but there is a vast category of people who when the oppression comes, they're not asking those questions.

What has Job said? What did we notice in the whole first 30 chapters? Every time Job spoke, what is his constant refrain? Where did God go? Where's God? I wish I could talk to Him. I wish there was a mediator. I wish I could ask Him.

I know I'd have trouble standing before Him because even when I'm righteous, I'm not pure in sight. But he's always thinking about where is God? Where is God? Where is God? Elihu says, there's people who endure oppression and that's not the question they're asking. Isn't this exactly what we've seen in the first half of the book? Job asks that question.

But these people cry out because of the oppression or the power of the great, the great, the arm. But none says, where is God my Maker? This harks back to chapter 34 where Elihu is quoting the friends and saying, you know, that Job, he just needs more pressure. He needs some more oppression.

He needs something that will break his pride and get him to confess his sin. Elihu says, look, he's already looking for God as Maker. That's not the rule.

That's not the way the wicked typically do. Who gives songs in the night? Who gives knowledge

and makes us wiser than the beasts of the earth and the birds of heaven? There's something I can learn here. Remember we saw that in the last chapter? What can you teach me? He cries out.

What can I learn in this situation? But there in verse 12, they cry out and He does not answer. And then you have in your New King James, they cry out but He does not answer because of the pride of evil men. Well, I find this interesting because there is no word for pride here.

We have a perfectly good word for pride and this ain't it. This is literally, there they cry out. They're in that group who's oppressed and they're not looking for God their Maker and He does not answer from the face of the rising of evil ones or the rising faces.

I translate this, He does not answer from the rising faces of evil men. In other words, when they look up in their oppression, they're not saying, where is God my Maker? Arrogance is not necessarily a bad translation but I like the literal nature of the words here. When they turn their faces toward heaven, they're not looking for God their Maker.

They're lifting up their faces but it's evil. It reminds you of the description of the pre-flood civilization. The imagination of their hearts was only evil all the day.

God looks down from heaven and He sees the faces of men. What's in their face? You can be looking up saying, where is God my Maker? Or you can be looking up and all God sees is evil. Your face is rising but evil is rising right along with it.

That's the picture here. And once again, we still have this vertical image that Elihu introduced when he said, look and see and take note of what's up high and what's down low. Your actions are down low.

God is looking down on them. What does He see? What does He see when He sees your upturned face? This word, by the way, for rising is gaon. G-A-O-N And it's the same word.

It basically means exalted. It's used of God. It's used to describe God's majesty and so forth.

In Job 40, verse 10, he says, Adorn yourself with majesty and splendor and array yourself with glory and beauty. This is a legitimate thing. Majesty and splendor and glory having high status or rank is what the dictionary of biblical languages has to say about it.

So, pride is a little bit of an interpretive translation, but you get the idea. It's this upturned face of evil men. So, people can be under pressure and they will cry out for help, but they're not crying out for their Maker.

Stop the pain. Okay, yeah, I'll go to church. Sure, I'll put money on the plate.

What do you want me to do? Read five verses and pray to Jesus? Okay, fine. Just somebody

stop the oppression. Yeah, what's the formula? What's the drill here? Let me go through whatever hoop or motion because I just want the pain to stop, like I mentioned earlier.

The fact that somebody eventually says, alright, let me do whatever it is you want so that my pain will stop, that is not a heartfelt attitude. That's a stopgap. That's a makeshift.

That's an expedient to get something to stop. And there's a lot of, you know, what they call foxhole conversions and people who say, oh God, if you get me out of this mess, I promise you X, Y, and Z. And then once the crisis has passed, why, X, Y, and Z kind of conveniently get forgotten as well. Well, God sees this and it says in verse 13, surely God will not hear this empty talk.

And literally in verse 13 it says, surely futility. And I think the verse has been misdivided. I think these two words in verse 13 belong at the end of verse 12.

From the rising faces of evil men, surely futility. So verse 13 begins with God will not listen, nor will the Almighty regard it. See how that works? If you take your surely and empty words and stick them up on the end of verse 12, because of the pride of evil men, or better, from the rising faces of evil men, surely it is futility.

They cry out, but He does not answer. Surely from the faces of evil men, it's futile, it's futility. That's verse 12.

Verse 13, God will not hear, Shaddai will not, and here we have that word again, take note of it. It goes right back up to the beginning of this section. Look and see and take note.

You're looking up at this thing that's higher than you? Well, these people down here that are upturning their evil faces in futile calls for help, God is not going to take note of it. Very same verb. God's not going to observe that closely and react to it.

Now verse 14, although you say you do not see Him, is what you have in the New King James, but this is literally also because you say you do not take note of it. Same verb again. Now, remember I told you how everybody kind of conspires and uses the same little interpretation? If you look at the New American Standard in verse 14, it starts out with how much less when you say you do not behold Him.

The Tanakh in verse 14 says, it matches the New King James, though you say or although you say. But the New English translation says how much less than when you say. The NIV says how much less than.

And they get how much less than out of a two-letter word in Hebrew, af, A-P-H. It's three letters in English, but it's aleph and peh in Hebrew. Af means also.

That's all it means, also. So, our translation in verse 14 is, also because you will say you do not

take note of it, judgment is before His face, and you strengthen yourself for it. Now, this is tough.

You really got to hang with me here. We're almost at the end of the chapter, but this is tough. Because you say.

Now, how much of what follows is what Elihu is mentioning to Job. This is still the singular you. The only guy he can be talking to is Job.

Also, because you say you do not take note of it. Do not take note of what? Well, what's the next line say? Judgment. This is one of my favorite Hebrew words.

Din. It's the one that we get Dan from. Dan means judge.

Din is the infinitive. This is the infinitive construct. It becomes a noun.

This is something having to do with judicial matters or a judicial case. My case is the way a lot of translators translate it. It can be just justice.

Justice is before His face. Justice is before Him. My case is before Him.

So, what's going on here? There are people who are evil. They are oppressed. And even when they turn and cry out for help, they're not really seeking their Maker.

They're not really looking for a relationship with God. They want the pain to stop. Job is the opposite case.

He is not an evil person. He is under oppression. You've got the Sabians and everybody else coming in and stealing his stuff.

Satan has oppressed him directly. And he is saying, where is God my Maker? And he says, I am not looking at this oppression as judgment. I do not consider this.

I don't take this to heart as me needing to repent. I recognize that I'm not under discipline for sin. That's what I think Elihu is saying here.

Now, because you say, you do not take note of it, it being the oppression that you are under, Job, you're not taking note of this and saying, gee, I need to keep digging through my soul until I find a sin I can confess. And the quote continues. You say, judgment is before His face, and you strengthen yourself for it.

Remember all the times Job said, I'm ready. When God comes to hear my case, I will be vindicated. Remember that? Elihu is saying, this is what you say, Job.

You say, I'm not dissuaded from my position that I'm righteous. I'm not dissuaded from looking for God my Maker because of this oppression. Judgment is before His face.

He is a righteous judge. This is the exact opposite of the way they label this chapter in your New King James and say that Elihu is condemning Job for self-righteousness. Just the opposite.

Elihu says, look Job, what you're saying is, judgment is for God to decide. You get it. You're not dissuaded by this oppression.

And you are strengthening yourself for it. It says you must wait for Him. But this is a real interesting word.

It's not the usual word for wait. This is the word from which we get Kael. When you talk about a mighty man, and it says Kael, it's C-H-A-Y-I-L.

Well, this is that verb. And it's the Hithpahel form of this verb. Hithpahel is reflexive.

And it takes a simple word like Kael, C-H-A-Y-A-L, and it turns it into Tikkoel. And somebody was asking, how easy is it to sight-read Hebrew? Well, when you get a word like this, it's not that easy. But Tikkoel, you can see the infix there, the O-E infix that makes it kind of an I-N-G word.

So this is an intensive, and although it has the idea of strengthening, it's strengthening yourself. You strengthen yourself for it. So you're building yourself up.

You're ready. You're making your case. You're ready for when it comes to trial, so to speak.

Now verse 15. We've just got two verses left in this chapter. And then we can analyze it and draw a few conclusions.

Remember earlier on when Elihu said, I myself will return you some words? Now he's going to use the pronoun again, because we're coming full circle here. It's a nice little chiastic structure. He's gone back and used the word observe or take note again.

And now he's coming back and he says, And you yourself, atah, because, well, I just said there's problems with sight reading. This is I-N and not Aleph. This is the word for now.

And now, because there is not, and then it says he judges or he punishes. So to put this in sort of a poetic form, and now, because there is not, he punishes. What were we talking about? The friends say, God's punishing you, Job.

God's punishing you, Job. You've got to respond. God's punishing you.

Elihu has just quoted Job saying, I'm looking for my maker. He's got my case. I'm going to strengthen myself and wait for the upshot.

Wait for the justice. He gives me righteousness. Justice is coming.

So because you say that, now, because there is no he judges, we've taken that off the table now

for Job. Then it says, And he does not know the transgression greatly. In Hebrew, that's what it says.

And he does not know in, by, or with the transgression greatly. So what do you make of that? Well, your New King James says, Nor take much notice of folly. But this is not the word for folly.

This word pash is actually, should be read from peshah, which is transgression. And it's a text issue I won't go into, but this is. And he does not know the transgression greatly.

Well, what on earth does that mean? Now, Elihu says, he's wrapping up. He's about to finish his little speech here. Because there is not he punishes, because we've decided that, okay, God is not punishing Job with his anger.

I left that out. Because he's not punishing with his anger. And he does not know great transgression.

God doesn't know something that we don't know. Job won't admit it. Nobody else can figure it out.

There's some great transgression that brought all this down on Job's head. But, no. He, God, does not know of some great transgression.

And that's why he's punishing Job. So does this make sense? Look, there is no he punishes Job in his anger. There is no God knows some great transgression against Job.

Verse 16, And Job, Hevel, remember that word? If you went through Ecclesiastes, you know that word well. What is Hevel? It's the vapor, the impermanence. It's translated vanity, vanity.

All is vanity, sayeth the preacher. Well, it's not vanity at all. This is vanity in a consuming of wind, or a chasing of wind, or something associated with that, which is impermanent.

So, And Job, Hevel, will open his mouth, in no knowledge will he multiply words. So, no problem there, right? And Job, vanity, perhaps vainly, or enthily, or something transient and impermanent, something of no... When Job opens his mouth, what he says doesn't have value. And he's multiplying words without knowledge.

All of this is off the table. Now, because he has not punished in his anger, he does not know of some great transgression on Job's part. And then you have therefore in verse 16, but there's no therefore, it's just and.

And Job is not opening his mouth, and without knowledge, multiplying words. Opening his mouth for Hevel, that which is valueless, and in no knowledge, multiplying words. So, this is the big conclusion.

This is the point of the chapter. Does it make sense? Is it tracked with what he said in chapter 34? He's making the point that Job is the one guy. Look at the distinction.

He started drawing this distinction two chapters ago between wicked men and Job. Job's not like the wicked men. He doesn't hang out with them.

He doesn't say what they say. And he has demonstrated that in these last two chapters. Well, that is the third speech.

And it makes a very clear point. Now, we say, so what? What is the application? If Job can perform this exercise, if Job can look up and say, you know, it's an easy thing to conclude, God is mad at me. Look at how my life is coming in glued.

Look at how these edges are unraveling. Why did God let this happen to me? I must have done something wrong. Or you look at someone else who gets a bad, what they call, run of luck.

A bad row to hoe. Look at the troubles. And people start speculating.

They must have really fallen off the wagon there in some way in terms of their spiritual life because look at all the trouble they're having. And people naturally assume that you're bringing this down upon yourself, right? Well, look at chapter 35. Job maintains his confidence.

Sure, he doesn't have all the answers. And he'd sure like to get some clarification from God. But he knows he's not suffering for sin.

He knows that God is eventually going to vindicate him. He knows his case is before the face of God. And so what's he going to do? He strengthens himself.

He waits. Chayil. I'll strengthen myself for the day of judgment.

I'm comforting myself. I'm encouraging myself because I know that my justice is based on the righteousness that God gives me. And that comes from faith.

And the longer I trust Him, the more righteousness I have to make my case. And that refutes and negates and rebuts the idea that God is punishing Job in anger, that God knows of some great transgression on his part, that Job is speaking empty words and multiplying his transgression thereby. That's the chapter in a nutshell.

This information is here because from time to time, to reveal to us greater truths, to teach us from the hidden manna, as it were, God will sometimes put us in these times of testing, in times of trial. It's an opportunity. It's not discipline.

You can look for God, your Maker. You can look for the One that gives songs in the night. When the night falls and it's dark, is there a song that can be sung? Paul Simon's most recent album has a song on it.

I forget what the whole thing is about, but he's got one line in there that kind of lodged in my brain

because he's talking about why is everybody fighting with everybody? Why are you a Christian? Why are you a Jew? Why are you a Muslim? Why are you a Hindu? How can you do this? How can you do that? How can you make these issues and be all divisive and all that? Everybody's got a plan. Everybody's got a philosophy. Everybody thinks that we need all of this light in the world and I'm going to enlighten you.

He says if light and enlightenment is the answer, then why does everybody sleep in the dark? If constant unbroken light is the answer, why is it we only sleep in the dark? Dark can be good, is the idea. Sometimes we need the dark. And spiritually speaking, sometimes we need the night.

You're never going to learn that night song if you don't spend some time in the night. There are things that God can reveal to us and if we're looking for God, our Maker, and if we're confident of His justice, confident that the case rests before Him regardless of what people say, then we have that great opportunity. It's all a matter of faith.

That to me is the great lesson of chapter 35. We'll pick up in 36. Next time, let's close in a word of prayer.

Father, thank You for the opportunities You give us in this life to learn and to grow. We pray that this passage will strengthen us and equip us for that process and that opportunity. We ask it in Jesus' name, Amen.