

22b JOB

Let's resume our study now in the book of Job. We're in chapter 36 and we're getting to the good part here because this is the punchline. This is the distillation, the consummation, the summation of the theme of the book right here in this chapter.

God is going to refer back to this when he speaks. And it's right here at the beginning of chapter 36. Elihu has just got through talking to Job in chapter 35.

You remember he said, you say you do not see him, but justice is before him, just wait for him. And this is one of the hardest things, especially in our modern culture. We don't want to wait for anything.

Wait on the Lord, be of good cheer, he will strengthen your heart. Wait, I say, on the Lord. It's one of our memory verses, isn't it? Is that why I remember that? And we have, they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.

They will mount up with wings like eagles. We say that verse so many times, but if you think about it, why is it they who wait upon the Lord that renew their strength? Why is it those who run after the Lord or those who work hard for the Lord, why is it those who wait on the Lord that renew their strength? Why are they the ones that mount up with wings as eagles? Where does our strength come from? Jesus told the devil where it comes from. Man doesn't live by bread alone.

It's the Word of God. And it is the understanding, it is the insight, it is the hidden manna of God's Word that nourishes and strengthens our soul. And we partake of that truth sometimes.

And this is the privilege of a growing believer. One of the sort of comforts of realizing that you're actually in undeserved suffering is that at least we qualify for undeserved suffering. This is not for the milk-stage believer.

You remember in Hebrews, we went through Hebrews chapter 5 and chapter 6, where he said, you know, I've got so many wonderful things to tell you about Jesus Christ. He's a priest after the order of Melchizedek. I've got these great things to tell you about the priesthood of Jesus Christ.

And mentally, at least, he sees his audience going, Melchizedek? And he says, look, you ought to be teachers by now. And you have need for somebody to teach you again the first principles of what? The doctrines of Christ. Meat is for the mature.

Milk, the simple stuff. What is the simple stuff? This is what Eliphaz and Bildad and Zophar, I mean, although they are Job's friends, and you know that they're some of the most advanced believers of their day, but when it comes to the application of the justice of God, and why believers suffer, all they can do is keep basically pouring more milk. It's a simple thing to observe

that God is going to reward the righteous and punish the wicked.

And God, in this conversation with Satan, says, all right, let's let a righteous man suffer for what seems to be no good reason. And Satan says, if we do that, he's going to reject you. And we've seen that the first test and the second test did not produce that result, and the friends are actually the third test.

And they say many of the same things that Satan says. And so here, in chapter 35, he says, you've got to wait for him. We don't want to wait.

We're sick of the trouble. We can speak right along with the Lord Jesus. You've got this cup coming, I don't want to drink that cup.

It's whether or not we reach that nevertheless stage, which the Lord Jesus, his words are in the scriptures so that we can learn from them. And he said, nevertheless, not my will. Nobody sticks up their hands and says, suffering? Oh, me, put me at the head of that list.

What kind of hardship have you got? How much loss are you going to dish out? I'm up for that. We're sort of unwilling participants in that kind of thing. The comforting knowledge that comes to us from the word of God is that God knows what we need.

He doesn't test us beyond what we are able to bear. With the test comes the means of endurance or escape. We know that the Lord Jesus has been tested in all points like as we are with the same equipment that we've got.

That was one of the most blindingly great insights that ever struck me because I couldn't really admire the Lord Jesus when I was a youth. Growing up in Sunday school and being taught all the stories, I thought, well, what's the big deal about Jesus? Of course he was sinless. Of course he was God.

And they would reinforce this in church and say, his humanity is the copper wire welded to the iron pipe of his deity. The whole posse non peccary, non posse peccary. He's able not to sin, not able to sin.

He was tested, but there was never any serious question that he would pass it because he's God. His humanity was welded to his deity and he could not sin. I struggled with that and struggled with it and struggled with it.

Finally got enough tools to go in and dig on that for myself and discovered that this is the essence of the doctrine of kenosis, of the Lord Jesus emptying himself and taking on the form of a servant. And if he is tested in all points like as we are, that means that he had the same tools, the same grace from God in terms of the ministry of God's spirit and the power of God's word. That's why Jesus, when he's facing the devil in the wilderness, doesn't say, well, man, he's got the bread and he's got the word of God, but I've got my deity, so test away.

I'm impervious to your temptations. Forty days in the wilderness. Satan wouldn't waste his time tempting Jesus unless he thought there was a real possibility of success because Jesus is in his humanity and he's at a weak point.

And the reason the Lord Jesus did not sin was not that he was unable to sin, it is that he chose not to sin and he was sustained by the grace of God in the very same form that it is made available to us. And this is why scripture offers us Jesus as our example. This, by the way, is why scripture offers Job to us as our example.

There are similarities when you look at the honest tribulation of soul that comes from undeserved suffering. And the Lord Jesus honestly expressed that tribulation of soul, the agony in the garden, the prayers that he offered to his father. His scream from the cross is not just an empty quote from the Psalms.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Now, an omniscient deity on the cross isn't going to ask rhetorical questions. But the Lord Jesus in his humanity, in the ultimate act and ultimate point of undeserved suffering, did ask that question and it wasn't sinful to ask it. And it isn't sinful for us to ask.

Why am I suffering? We need to first of all be sure that we are not, in fact, being chastened by the Lord for correction. And it is a legitimate thing to check and to examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith and come out with a thumbs up and say, you know, I am in the faith. I am not in line for discipline here.

I can honestly say that my prayer life and my meditation life and my walking in the light is okay. I've got my usual round of stumblings and fallings but I'm not in line for heavy correction. And yet, here is this suffering.

And it is a healthy thing. If the Lord Jesus can question, and you remember the rest of that Psalm, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me? You have the power to end this. Why is it not ending? Jesus, in quoting from that Psalm, basically broaches that question.

And there is a reason and there is an answer. That's the significance of this section of Job. Look at chapter 36.

Elihu says the same thing I feel like saying. Bear with me a little. This is some of the most difficult material to teach in the Bible.

The Hebrew is difficult. The setting is difficult. These are wise men saying wise words.

This is not small stuff. This is big stuff. But look at what Elihu says.

Bear with me a little. This is chapter 36. I will show you there are yet words to speak on God's behalf.

And once again, we have this idea reinforced that Elihu here is really a picture. We have many pictures of the Lord Jesus in the Old Testament. Joseph, when he is betrayed by his brothers and sold into slavery and seems to be dead.

The bloody coat is brought to the father. And he seems to be dead. And yet he is, as it were, brought back to life.

Certainly from Jacob's point of view, the son that he thought was dead is brought back to life. And in living, redeems and delivers his brethren. And it's a beautiful picture of the Lord Jesus.

He has the favor of the father and his brothers hate him for it. And this is the attitude that is expressed toward the Lord Jesus. There are so many pictures in the Levitical offerings that we studied in those first seven chapters of Leviticus.

There are so many pictures of Christ in the tabernacle that we saw in our Exodus study. All the way through the Old Testament. We saw it in Ezekiel.

We saw it in Daniel. We have seen it in study after study, passage after passage. And this is another.

Elihu is not just idle boasting when he says, I am going to speak pure words. I am going to be your mediator. I am made out of the same clay that you are.

I will speak on your behalf to God. And I am going to speak on God's behalf to you. And this is the phase that we are in right here.

I will speak on God's behalf. Remember that great opening section of Hebrews? Hebrews chapter one. God in many parts and in many ways spoke in times past to our fathers.

But in these latter days, how does he speak? He speaks by a son. Same thing in John chapter one. In the beginning was the word.

The word became flesh and dwelt among us. We beheld his glory. The glory as of the only begotten of the Father.

No man has seen God at any time. It is the Son who reveals him. And so Elihu here says, I am going to speak on God's behalf.

I am going to reveal truth about God. I will fetch my knowledge from afar. I will ascribe righteousness to my maker.

This is the whole theme and the contrast that he draws. For people who are in suffering, some of

them cry out and say, Where is my maker? Where is the one that can give me a song in the night? Where is the one that can teach me something more than just the dumb animals? And Elihu says, I am going to talk about God. I am going to talk about my maker and his righteousness.

God is mighty. God is on high. God is powerful.

But he doesn't use that power to despise, to tread down. He is mighty in strength of understanding. He does not preserve the life of the wicked, but he gives justice to the oppressed.

Once again, ultimately, when all is said and done, people say, and we've heard this argument many times, that well, there can't be a God, because look at starving children, look at the injustice in the world. God is either not powerful enough to stop it, or he's powerful enough, but he's not willing. And in either case, he's not a God worthy of worship, because if he's got the ability, and he's not doing it, then he's a sinister God, and he should not be worshipped.

And if he's not powerful enough to stop the evil in the world, then he's not really God, and we shouldn't worship him. And this is the false sort of logic that's used. Elihu says, look, God has got the power, and God has got the justice.

So the question remains, if God is powerful, and if God is just, why is there this injustice? Why is there undeserved suffering? Look at verse 7. He does not withdraw his eyes from the righteous. The righteous are going to suffer, and God's not gone away looking at something else. And notice, they are *is in italics*.

We looked at the Hebrew here. They are going to be on the throne with kings. This is that inheritance.

This is life that is eternal, not in the sense of duration, but in the sense of quality that we've seen so many times, especially in our New Testament studies. Eternal life, most of the time, when the Bible talks about eternal life, it's talking about life that partakes of the eternal, life that partakes of the things of God. It is eternal in its quality, in its nearness to God.

If you enjoy walking in the light now, you're going to dwell in the light in the future. If you are far from God and keep turning off into the darkness, you're going to be outside in the darkness. We've gone through those controversial waters where people in the darkness, which is outside, are in fact believers.

But there are some who are going to pass under the rod. The judgment passages that we saw in Ezekiel about Israel, passing under the rod, some are going to be granted access to Jerusalem, and some are not. You have to be resurrected to even be looking at the rod.

The rod can't stop you unless you're resurrected. And yet, why are they passing under the rod? Because only some are let in and some are not. Jesus told the Pharisees, you will see many

coming from the north, east, south, and west.

If the Pharisees were godless, pagan, savage unbelievers, they're not going to see anybody sitting down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, because they're not resurrected to the great white throne. So there is, in fact, this separation. There is, in fact, that division.

God is going to reward the righteous. He is going to punish the wicked, both unbelieving wicked and believing wicked. Those who are saved and yet are disobedient.

And how many different passages have we seen this? Disobedient sons, when you get over there to the epistles of John and Jude and so on. He does not withdraw his eyes from the righteous. They are on the throne with kings.

There are promises of rulership. You remember Jesus' parable? That you've been faithful in a few things, you will be ruler over many things. He has seated them forever.

He has assigned them this place. I liken this promise. I liken this observation that Elihu makes to Samuel.

Going out into the Judean wilderness. Going out past Bethlehem into the country. And finding the household of Jesse.

And looking over all of the sons of Jesse. And not finding the one that he has been sent to anoint. He says, you must have another son.

Because I don't see the one I've come here to deal with. Jesse says, well, my youngest is out chasing the sheep. He says, well, go get him.

And he brings in David. He's a ruddy youth. He brings him in and he anoints him.

Anointing by the prophet of Israel means you are going to be the king. And yet David, for years and years and years, is hounded by Saul. He's persecuted.

He's chased around in the desert. He lives like a fugitive and a vagabond. He becomes a mercenary.

It's years and years and years. And yet, that anointing oil was poured on his head when he was still a youth. What does it tell us? There is the promise for those who are faithful.

God sees a man after his own heart in the youthful David. And yet, David is going to learn to become the great ruler of Israel that he will one day be through the things that he suffers. God has forever seated these righteous, these faithful.

Because righteousness comes by faith. Abraham believed God and it was credited to him for righteousness. That's how righteousness comes.

It's trusting God. But these righteous are going to be seated with kings. He has seated them forever and they are exalted.

But in the meantime, look at verse 8. These same righteous may be bound with fetters, held in the cords of affliction. Why? What are the words of the hymn? I think we just sung that. I only design thy draws to consume and thy gold to refine.

Boy, some of those hymns have got some of the greatest words. But these righteous, it doesn't mean you're perfect. It doesn't mean, well, okay, nothing more to teach you.

You're already righteous. To those who have, more will be given. To those who have not, even what they have will be taken away.

And the righteous are the teachable. These are the ones that can learn. So, if you've got areas that need work, if you've got room for improvement and you're teachable, God is going to put us in that position.

Held in the cords of affliction, He tells them their work and their transgressions. Here's what you don't know yet. You're faithful, you're righteous, you're doing well in these areas, but here's a place where you need work.

Here's a rock in that soil that's keeping the tenfold seed from bearing fruit. You're only a thirtyfold field here. You're only a sixtyfold field.

Here's how you can be a hundredfold field. He tells them their work and their transgressions, that they have acted defiantly. He opens their ear to instruction.

Now, Calvinists would love to come to this passage and say, look, God just arbitrarily throws a dart at the map and says, hey, I'm going to take this guy's ear and I'm going to open it up and pour in instruction. Who are these people whose ears are open to instruction? The righteous. These that God has already designated as rulers.

Did God open David's ear and pour in instruction during his days at the cave of Adullam? During his days of being a fugitive from Saul? Even in his early days on the throne? David had a lot to learn, and he had transgressions, and God taught him and grew his faith through things that he suffered. He opens their ear to instruction and commands that they turn from iniquity. If they obey and serve him, and there are two kinds of believers.

You may be a 30-fold field. You may be a field that has got the seeds scattered on it, and the grain is going to come, but there's weeds and there's rocks. Well, maybe those rocks and weeds never go away, and you're doomed by your own decisions to always be a poor field.

You're a field, and the seed of the word is growing, and there's righteousness being produced, but it's not all that it could be. If they turn from iniquity, obey and serve, they shall spend their

days in prosperity and their years in pleasure. This is specifically looking forward to the millennial kingdom.

This is Israel's immediate future. This is the time of the fulfillment of the promises of God. We find out in Hebrews, all these died in faith, not having received the promises, but they're going to.

But if they do not obey, they will perish by the sword, and they shall die without knowledge. This is the real tragedy. They don't learn.

They die without that knowledge that God wanted to teach them in that adversity. Here is refinement. Here is progress.

Here is a greater surface area that you can accumulate so that you can reflect the glory of God in the eternal future. You can move from 30 to 60. You can move from 60 to 100.

Hypocrites in hearts store up wrath. They do not cry for help when He binds them. Now, is an unbeliever a hypocrite? Not really.

Boo on God. Boo on the things of God. What's on the inside is on the outside.

That's really not hypocrisy. Hypocrisy is when you're supposed to be a child of God, and you're trying to be light on the outside, and whitewashed on the outside, and inside you've got the dead man's bones. Jesus said this about the religious in Israel who absolutely believed in God, but they, as Paul describes them, they had a form of righteousness that wasn't God's righteousness.

They had a zeal for God, but not according to what? Knowledge. You've got an enthusiasm for God, but you're going about it all the wrong way. You're trying to establish your own righteousness instead of claiming God's righteousness by faith.

You're a believer, but you're messed up. Do you think there was any doubt in a Pharisee's mind that there was a God in Israel, and that He had promised a Redeemer? I think they believed it heart, soul, body, and mind. But when it came to practical living, and practical faith, and practical righteousness, they totally missed it.

Jesus said, if you would acknowledge your sin, remember He was talking to them one day and He said, if you were blind, you would have no sin. It's because you say, we see, that your sin remains. You've got to acknowledge what you don't have.

You've got to be teachable. Jesus said, I haven't come to call the righteous. It's sinners called to change of mind.

Those who consider themselves to be righteous don't feel the need to turn. I have come to call sinners to repentance. These are the lost sheep of the house of Israel that Jesus said He was sent to.

It's believers called to the fulfillment of God's promise. And that's the great sorting. Hypocrites in hearts store up wrath.

They do not cry out for help when He binds them. They're not looking for their Maker. They're not looking for God in that night.

They die in youth and their life ends among the perverted persons. The poor He delivers in their affliction. Even in the affliction there is deliverance.

Your affliction may still be going on and you're already delivered. You're already vindicated. Indeed, He would have brought you out of dire distress that you, in verse 16, is singular.

He's talking to Job. He would have brought you out of dire distress into a broad place where there is no restraint and what is set on your table would be full of richness. But you are filled with the judgment due the wicked.

Judgment and justice take hold of you. What's he talking about here? He's not talking about Job's circumstances. He's talking about this conversation.

You're consumed with this idea of justice and judgment and you're not looking at what God is trying to put on your table. God is setting a table before you in the presence of your enemies, so to speak. And you're not looking at that.

He's talking to Job. He's saying, look, this is what you're missing. You've done great in vindicating yourself and saying you're not suffering for judgment.

But here's what you haven't grasped. God is setting a table. He's putting a banquet of knowledge and understanding before you.

And you keep looking at the justice and judgment issue. Trust God for the justice and the judgment. Wait on God for the justice and the judgment.

And in the meantime, sing your song in the night. Eat your banquet in the night. Isn't it interesting that the Passover meal itself, unlike most meals in Israel, was eaten in darkness with your traveling clothes on.

It was a meal eaten in the dark. It was a meal eaten after sundown. And this is the deliverance.

It's literally darkest just before the dawn. He's bringing you out of dire distress into a broad place where there's even more freedom, even more opportunity. But you've got to see it.

Because of wrath, beware, lest he take you away with one blow. You see, there's a lot of italicized words there. The Hebrew is tough here.

With a large ransom, or a large ransom would not help you avoid. Will your riches or all the

mighty forces keep you from distress? Do not desire the night when people are cut off in their place. Take heed.

Do not turn to iniquity. For you have chosen this rather than affliction. In other words, don't keep going around and around, chewing this bone of, did you sin? No, I didn't.

Yes, you did. No, I didn't. Yes, you did.

No, I didn't. God's punishing you. This is justice and judgment for sin.

Elihu says, you've got to quit chewing that bone and look at this banquet that God is trying to set. There are things that you can learn. There are things greater than you going on.

Does Job, or any of the Three Friends, or any of this assembled audience have any inkling of the heavenly discussion that went on before this started? They don't. But this is huge. This is making a point in front of God's angels.

It's making a point that's going to be studied by, literally, hundreds of millions of people all down through history for thousands of years. People are going to look at this. Job has no inkling.

All he's saying is, I can't figure out why God is far from me and why I'm suffering all this stuff when I haven't done anything wrong. Elihu is saying, look, wait on God for the justice and look for what God is trying to teach. Don't worry about your riches.

Don't worry about the distress. Look at verse 22. God is exalted by His power.

Who teaches like He does? His teaching isn't going to follow a human model. Nobody teaches like God does. It's counterintuitive.

Spiritual things are, to the carnal mind, counterintuitive. The last shall be first. The first shall be last.

God has chosen the foolish things to confound the wise. The wisdom of men is as foolishness with God. It's counterintuitive.

You wouldn't think that in the midst of suffering and loss, this is the greatest opportunity ever to partake of heavenly things and lay hold on rulership and riches and things that are in the eternal realm. But that's exactly what it is. Who is assigned in His way? Who has said you have done wrong? Remember to magnify His work of which men have sung.

Remember that song in the night? He says you've got to remember those things you sing about in this dark time. Remember God's work. Everyone has seen it.

Man sees it at a distance. God is great. We don't know Him.

We don't know the numbers of His years. He draws up drops of water that distill His rain from the mist. And this is counterintuitive.

The water is getting sucked away from the earth. And you think, wait a minute, the water is leaving. Be patient.

It's going to distill and come down as rain. Elihu is just, you see him just grasping for figures and trying to find ways to express the great yet counterintuitive plan of God. The clouds are going to drop this water down that's drying up in the hot sun.

And you say, well, the brook is getting dry. The crops are withering. Just wait.

It's distilling somewhere. And the rain is going to come and rain abundantly down on man. Can anyone understand the spreading of the clouds, the thunder from His canopy? Look, He scatters His light upon it.

He covers the depths of the sea. By these He judges the peoples. He gives food in abundance.

He covers His hands with lightning. Commands it to strike as thunder declares it. Thunder and lightning don't seem like a blessing.

And yet they are the harbingers of rain. The cattle also concerning the rising storm. Cattle get spooked.

And yet if it wasn't for these storms, they wouldn't have anything to eat. Well, this brings us to the cusp now of chapter 37. And this is our stopping place.

And I got there early for a change. But we're going to see this final chapter presented by Elihu. And when he wraps this up, God is going to speak.

And isn't it interesting that when God talks about and reviews everything that we've studied in this book, He's going to talk to Eliphaz. And He's going to talk to Bildad. And He's going to talk to Zophar.

And He's going to talk to Job. And He doesn't say anything to Elihu, who collectively has said more than just about anybody else. Why doesn't God render judgment on Elihu's words? Well, if you think again about this foreshadowing of the Lord Jesus Christ, God the Father doesn't need to judge the Son.

God is going to render judgment on the words of those who have not been the mediator, those who have not spoken the words of truth, the words of wisdom, the defense of God's justice and judgment, and His teaching methods. This is all Elihu's presentation. And God doesn't say anything about it.

And it's really quite striking. It's one of the most talked-about puzzles of the book of Job when you read commentators and so on. They must have stuck in the Elihu thing later, because God doesn't address it.

That means it wasn't there. To me, that's just horrifying. This is the central gem in the book.

This is the most important thing. Everything before it led up to it, everything after it refers back to it. And so next time, we'll start in chapter 37, we'll finish it up, and we're going to then move into what is just unbeatable, which is God speaking in the first person directly to this assembled crew.

And then we have the denouement at the end of the book. This is a good place for us to stop and close in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the truth of your word.

Thank you for its integrity, for its symmetry, for its line upon line and precept upon precept presentation, so that together it is a whole cloth and the whole representation of your plan and purpose, which is ultimately expressed in the Lord Jesus himself. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will find us teachable students, that we can remember these things when our dark days come and when our challenges and tests arise, that we will learn the things that you would have us to learn and grow in grace and knowledge of our Savior. We ask it in his name.

Amen. Amen.