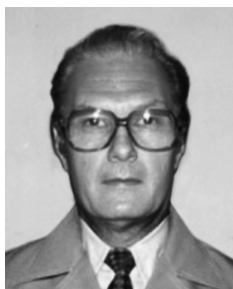


April to June 2022

“The Book of Job”

by Rev Dan Ebert III (1931-2012)

About the Author



Rev Dan Ebert III, missionary from the USA to the Philippines was a linguist and pioneer in this missions field. Venturing into the island of Palawan, never before penetrated by Christian missionaries, he lived and worked among the “stone age” natives, listened and deciphered their language, and “Romanised” it in writing. With his team of workers, he translated the New Testament into Palawano, a monumental task that took the better part of twelve years.

In the 1980s, Rev Ebert taught at the Fundamental Baptist Bible Institute in Manila, and was a Visiting Professor of Contemporary Theology at the Far Eastern Bible College, Singapore.

Having served the Lord faithfully as a missionary since 1955, Rev Ebert went home to be with the Lord on 26 August 2012 in Kentucky, USA.

INTRODUCTION

The Scripture does not record who was inspired to write the book of Job. It may have been Job himself, although some scholars feel it was recorded by Moses. There is a possibility that Job wrote the main part of the account and Moses wrote the opening prologue which introduces Job and described the heavenly scene. However, the question of who wrote the book has no bearing on its value or authenticity. The Hebrews have always considered the book of Job inspired by God and listed it as part of the Old Testament Canon. There are many quotes in the New Testament from Job, preceded by the words “for it is written,” marking it as Holy Scripture.

Since the book of Job is God’s Word, we accept it as true. This is a historical account of a real person and his real situation in life. Job is named by the prophet Ezekiel, along with Noah and Daniel (Ezek 14:14). He is also mentioned in the New Testament (James 5:11).

There are many great lessons for us in the book of Job. It deals with suffering, a fact in the life of every believer at one time or another. It deals with uncertainty and confusion about God’s dealings with man, another fact in the lives of most Christians, although, unlike Job, we have the inspired written Word of God to guide us. Ultimately, it is a book of faith. Job stands out for his perseverance and confidence in the ultimate justice and goodness of God. When we, in our Christian life, can have this confidence, God will be able to use us as never before to accomplish His purpose.

May we lean on God’s grace for help in time of need, in order to live victoriously for Him.

FRIDAY, APRIL 1

HEBREWS 12:3-11

PSALM 94:12-19

*“...the LORD will not
cast off his people...”*

SUFFERING IN DISOBEDIENCE

The book of Job is almost entirely taken up with both asking and answering the question, “Why do the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper?” In preparation for our study of Job, we shall spend several days in a brief study of the teaching of the Scriptures with regard to this important subject.

The Scriptures present a number of reasons for the suffering of God’s people, the most well-known reason being disobedience. Many Christians think this is the only reason God’s people suffer. However, this is not what the Scriptures teach. Disobedience is not the only reason but merely one of the reasons.

A good father must correct his children to keep them from dangerous activities so that they mature in a proper manner. God, as our Heavenly Father, provides us with all we need, including correction (Heb 12:6). Sin, with its evil desires, wars against the soul, destroying our well-being and keeping us from the joy of the Lord (1 Pet 2:11). Therefore, God in His love corrects us in order to teach us the proper way and keep us from soul-destroying sin. No one enjoys being corrected, but we should be thankful when this happens because it takes us to a place of righteousness, peace and joy (Heb 12:11).

Sometimes, earthly fathers punish their children in anger or through their own misunderstanding of what is good. God’s punishment is always right and is meant to turn us from our evil ways. Punishment is never effective or proper unless one understands its purpose. We can be sure that when we, as Christians, suffer because of sin, God will make clear why He is punishing us.

As we go through life, it is important for us to faithfully study God’s Word so as to understand His will. We must live in obedience, carefully confess our sins, and ask for His forgiveness. Only then, can we be sure of blessings, peace, and spiritual prosperity in our lives.

THOUGHT: Proper correction is always part of proper love.

PRAYER: Father, may I be grateful for Thy loving correction.

SATURDAY, APRIL 2

1 PETER 4:12-16

2 TIMOTHY 3:12-17

*“...if any man suffer as a Christian,
let him not be ashamed...”*

SUFFERING IN RIGHTEOUSNESS

It is not surprising that Christians living in sin are corrected by the Lord through suffering. However, some Christians, who are unlearned in the Scriptures, are surprised to find that suffering can come into the life of a Christian living in obedience.

Jesus told those who would follow Him that they should not be surprised if the world hated them since the world hated Him (John 15:18-19). The Apostle John also referred to this fact as he endeavoured to encourage Christians to love one another as part of their defence against the hatred and persecution of the world (1 John 2:13).

The Apostle Peter continued this theme. The world is wicked and when we live for God, it causes those who hate righteousness to strike out. Thus, it is not strange if great difficulties enter the life of an obedient Christian. We can rejoice in that we are allowed to suffer with our Lord, in some small measure, in presenting righteousness and salvation to the lost (1 Pet 4:12-13). Paul made the statement, in his letter to young Timothy, that anyone who wants to live for God will suffer some form of persecution (2 Tim 3:12). The persecution may simply be ridicule from friends or neighbours. It may, however, take on a more serious form – we may even find ourselves missing out on promotions in our company or losing business contracts because of our Christian principles.

However, no matter how we are called upon to suffer, we should remember that it is not a strange or unusual thing. When we do suffer for the cause of Christ, we should not feel any sense of shame but should praise God that we have been found worthy to suffer for Him (1 Pet 4:16). Thus, we can see that Christians often suffer simply because the world is wicked and hates the Lord whom we serve, or the righteousness that our lives show. May we be encouraged to live for God, knowing that our sufferings for Him cannot be compared to the joy He has prepared for us in eternity (Rom 8:18).

THOUGHT: Can an obedient Christian experience great hardship?

PRAYER: Help me, Father, to be prepared to suffer in righteousness.

LORD'S DAY, APRIL 3
EPHESIANS 6:10-13
REVELATION 20:7-10

*“...we glory in tribulations also
...tribulation worketh patience.”*

THE UNIVERSAL CONFLICT

Righteous Christians often suffer simply because the world is a wicked place. This suffering for the Lord has a beneficial result. We are promised that such suffering by obedient Christians results in spiritual growth and strength (Rom 5:3-5).

However, there is another reason why Christians living in obedience to God suffer. This is one of the themes in the book of Job. The answer to this issue can be found by understanding the universal conflict. This conflict is between the forces of evil under Satan and the forces of good under the Almighty God. This unseen and often untaught area of conflict occurs in the spirit world. God's people are often involved in this for reasons unknown to them. The opening portions of Job give us a good example of this conflict. We will see that Job became involved not so much because of what he did, but because of what he was – an obedient child of God.

In our introduction to the book of Job, we saw three reasons why Christians suffer. Those living in disobedience suffer as part of God's correction to bring them back to righteousness and away from sin, which destroys their spiritual well-being. Righteous Christians sometimes suffer simply because the world is wicked and hates the Lord they follow. Christians, living in obedience, also suffer because, like Job, we are called upon to play a part in the universal conflict when we live for God. Knowing these things will make us better prepared when difficulties come. We will then realise that it is not because of “bad luck” that we suffer as God's hand is always upon us. Moreover, we are reminded that His eye is even upon the tiny sparrow, and He cares much more for us (Matt 10:29-30). When God allows hardships to come, there is always a reason. If we honestly examine ourselves, we oftentimes can see what the reason is. Should we be unable to, we can then be sure that, like Job, we have been drawn into the universal conflict and, thus, we must praise God for this privilege.

THOUGHT: Obedient Christians may also suffer.

PRAYER: I thank Thee, Father, for Thy hand is always upon me.

MONDAY, APRIL 4

JOB 1:1-5

ROMANS 12:9-16

“...perfect and upright, and...
feared God, and eschewed evil.”

JOB, AN UPRIGHT AND RELIGIOUS MAN

These early verses (Job 1:1-5) give us the background of Job. He lived in a country called Uz. As far as we can tell, it was located on the western edge of the Arabian desert, west of Babylon, as mentioned in two other portions of Scripture (Jer 25:20; Lam 4:21). This region can be found on a Bible map in the area marked Edom.

Job was an upright man. He “*feared God*” (Job 1:1). This is the well-known Old Testament concept of reverential trust. Job had complete trust in the Lord’s great power and love. He held God in complete respect and reverence. And he “*eschewed evil*” (Job 1:1). Evil is opposed to God and all that He stands for. Those who are truly devoted to Him cannot be involved in the wickedness of this world. By staying away from evil, Job was able to avoid temptation (Job 1:1; Rom 12:9).

During this pre-law era, men of faith like Job acted as family priests. They made sacrifices for themselves and their families (Gen 12:7). Job had ten children, was very wealthy and had a united and happy family. He offered sacrifices for the sins of his family, one for each child. He gathered his children together to sanctify them (to “*sanctify*” means to “*separate*”) and worship God. He wanted to separate his children from the sins of the world and bring them to a spiritual condition whereby they would remain in fellowship with the righteous God (cf. Exod 19:10).

As we look at the beautiful picture of Job and his family, we can want nothing less for our own family. How wonderful to pass on to our children the heritage given to us by God! However, as Job lived amidst the battle for the souls of men, difficulty was certain and could destroy everything he had, including his family. It is from the difficulties that afflicted Job that we can learn many lessons. May we ask the Lord to prepare our hearts to learn these lessons so that we may be better prepared to face the difficulties of living for God in this sinful world.

THOUGHT: What does it mean to be upright?

PRAYER: Help me, Father, to be dedicated to Thee, and thus to separate from sin.

TUESDAY, APRIL 5

JOB 1:6-12

2 CORINTHIANS 4:1-6

“...by manifestation
of the truth...”

A HEAVENLY SCENE

We have, in this portion of Scripture, a report of a heavenly scene. This not only gives us the key to understanding the book of Job but also to understanding some of the reasons Christians suffer. Job evidently wrote about these events in retrospect because, at the time they were occurring, he was unaware of them.

The angels (“*the sons of God*,” Job 1:6) were coming before God to make their reports. Angels are spirits (Ps 104:4), and one of the duties of angels is to minister to God’s people (Ps 34:7; Heb 1:14). As they came before God, Satan (meaning “the accuser”) was among them. Originally called Lucifer, he was cast out of heaven as he was filled with pride and desired to take God’s place. He is now the enemy of God and His people (Luke 10:18). Satan had no right to be with the holy angels to enter into the presence of God. He is, however, presumptuous, with no respect or humility. God questioned Satan to expose his wicked activity. Satan’s answer (Job 1:7) showed he is not idle in the battle for the souls of men.

Satan complained that God had blessed Job far beyond other men and dared God to take away Job’s blessing, claiming that this would reveal Job’s true motive in obeying God (Job 1:11). God offered Satan a chance to prove his point. Here, we note that Satan is powerful, but he is limited by the greater power of God: Satan would be permitted to take away all that Job had, but could not touch Job’s person.

We can rest in the assurance that God’s hand is upon us. Nothing happens to us that God does not permit and He invariably provides the strength for us to pass through (1 Cor 10:13; John 10:29). After this exchange, Satan went forth from the presence of God as he had no legitimate part in the meeting that was taking place.

Job was unaware of what was happening in heaven and how it would affect him. Let us always be mindful of the spiritual battles we are in (Eph 6:12). Let us continually be on our guard so that our lives will be a testimony to God’s grace and saving power.

THOUGHT: Why is Satan a danger to the Christian?

PRAYER: Father, help me to always watch and pray.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 6

JOB 1:13-17

MATTHEW 6:19-21

*“For where your treasure is,
there will your heart be also.”*

EARTHLY TREASURES

Perhaps one of the greatest dangers to the Christian is the desire to accumulate wealth. It is certainly proper to care for our family, as this is a necessary part of proper Christian conduct (1 Tim 5:8). However, it is easy to gradually get caught up in the competition for wealth in this world, taking our minds and hearts from the things of the Lord. Our hearts, that is to say, our desires, will be found where our treasure is (Matt 6:19-21). We will soon see that although he was extremely wealthy, Job's heart was set on pleasing God and living for Him.

The battle was between the spiritual forces in the heavens, but Job was to feel the weight of Satanic power upon him in his daily life. Satan attacked Job with a series of troubles, with one tragedy rapidly following another. In the midst of a peaceful life came the first message of disaster – all of Job's cattle had been carried off and those guarding them had been killed by the Sabeans (Job 1:13-15). (Sabeans were wild bands of nomads who lived by attacking others and plundering their goods.) Just then, another messenger arrived to tell Job that the loss of his wealth was complete – the Chaldeans had stolen three thousand of his camels and killed the servants caring for them (Job 1:16-17). Like people today who suffer great loss when a tsunami strikes, Job lost everything that he owned.

Considering Job's financial disaster reminds us of present-day men who go from being multi-millionaires to bankrupts almost overnight. Sometimes, in desperation, these men commit criminal action to recoup their losses. Others become so despondent that they commit suicide. Job, however, had a heavenly treasure which far outweighed his loss.

Let us, like Job, fix our eyes on things that have greater value than the fleeting wealth of this world. May we live to build treasures in heaven (Matt 6:20-21).

THOUGHT: What is one of the greatest dangers I face?

PRAYER: Father, may I live with eternity's values in view.

THURSDAY, APRIL 7

JOB 1:18-22

LUKE 12:18-22

*“...rather seek ye
the kingdom of God...”*

CONFIDENCE IN GOD

Job had just suffered great reversals in his financial fortunes. Perhaps, his loss was bearable as he still had his wonderful family. However, another messenger appeared to inform him that a wind, probably a typhoon or cyclone, had not only destroyed his oldest son's home but had also killed all his children as well (Job 1:18-19). Certainly, we would all agree that while the loss of wealth would be a shock, the loss of one's family would, indeed, be an indescribable tragedy.

Satan had rained fire from heaven and then a windstorm. We know that he does not control nature. The powers of the universe are in the hands of God. Jesus Christ created the entire universe and keeps it in motion by the strength of His word (Heb 1:2-3), but Satan is able to perform certain miracles and counterfeit various acts of power (2 Thess 2:9). The lying wonders spoken of in 2 Thessalonians can well refer to Satan's ability to make his limited power seem unlimited. Although he may not be able to control the vast forces of nature, he can cause local phenomena.

Job had lost everything. To show his sorrow, he tore his robe and shaved his head as was the custom in his day. However, Job knew that all he had was due to the blessing of the Lord, and thus recognised God's right to take it away. Although he did not understand why these calamities had befallen him, he still praised God (Job 1:20-21).

The Scriptures tell us that he did not charge God foolishly. That is, he did not accuse God of unwise or unjust action (Job 1:22). Satan had hoped to weaken Job's trust in the Lord, but he had failed. Job's failure to understand did not cause him to turn from God. His confidence in God did not come from his ability to comprehend God's actions but from his faith in God's perfect righteousness and love.

Even during times of tribulations may we live with full assurance of God's love and protection.

THOUGHT: What was Job's reaction to his great loss?

PRAYER: Father, I believe that all of Thy ways are the best (Psalm 18:30).

FRIDAY, APRIL 8

JOB 2:1-6

1 PETER 2:21-25

*Commit yourselves to Him
that judgeth righteously.*

PHYSICAL SUFFERING

Although he is eternally doomed, Satan continues to battle with God. His eternal condemnation was sealed when Christ died on Calvary (John 12:31). At the final judgment, Satan will be cast into eternal punishment (Rev 20:10). However, for the time being, he is allowed to try the children of God.

Satan failed in his first attack against Job. He again entered into God's presence and God once again pointed out Job's faithfulness. Job, like every obedient believer, reminded Satan that Satan's doom was sure. God pointed out to Satan that, despite his unmerciful and unwarranted attacks on Job, Job's position before God had not changed (Job 2:1-3).

Originally, Satan had claimed that if all of Job's blessings were removed, he would desert God (Job 1:11). Having failed in this, Satan tried to cover his failure by intimating that God was protecting Job in a special way, and asked for further power over Job. Satan complained that God had not permitted him to harm Job physically – physical pain weakens a person as nothing else can. (The Apostle Paul had a chronic affliction and had to lean heavily on God's sustaining grace – 2 Cor 12:7, 9.) We must be especially on guard against Satan when we are tired and weak because of physical affliction (Job 2:4-5).

God granted Satan's request but limited his activity against Job. When we walk in obedience, Satan has no power over us except as permitted by God. Our God is the Sovereign Commander. He sets the boundaries of the battle and leads His people on to victory. God now opened the hedge around Job a little wider. Previously, Satan was not permitted to touch Job's person, but now this limitation was removed. However, Satan still could not interfere with the length of Job's life (Job 2:6).

Job was about to suffer because of his love for God. Likewise, when we are tested similarly, we are promised that God will never leave us nor forsake us. With this promise in mind, we can stand against the onslaught of the Evil One.

THOUGHT: In what way is Satan's power limited?

PRAYER: Father, no matter what the test, Thou canst give me victory.

SATURDAY, APRIL 9

JOB 2:7-10

JOHN 10:23-29

*“...ye... are now returned unto
the Shepherd... of your souls.”*

THE CONFLICT CONTINUES

Job had lost his wealth and his children, but he still continued to praise God. Now, in Satan's final attack, Job's health was broken and he experienced unbearable pain. Those who have suffered from boils will agree that to have just one is a very painful experience. Here, God's servant was covered with boils (Job 2:7).

Job was in unbelievable agony, with no friends to turn to for help and no money for a physician. He sat alone on a heap of rubbish and tried to scrape some of the infected matter from his sores (Job 2:8).

From being very wealthy, Job had become this miserable object of pity. The most difficult part of it all was that he did not know why these things had happened to him. An important lesson that we can learn from Job is that when called upon to suffer for reasons not clear to us, we can have confidence that God's grace will be sufficient. Moreover, we can be sure that He will not forget us in our difficult situation.

Job still had his wife. No doubt, like most men, he greatly depended upon her in the battles of life. Now, however, she was no comfort or help. Unable to understand his faith, she mocked him for his loyalty to God. Although happy with Job's devotion to God when there was health and security, in the face of great loss, she had no spiritual understanding (Job 2:9-10).

Amidst afflictions, Job still did not sin with his lips. A man who can control his tongue is a spiritually mature man indeed (James 3:2). Job suffered the ridicule of his wife and yet refused to speak against his God.

At that point of his life, Job stands out as a tremendous example of what it means to have confidence in God. He was careful not to speak about the things that he did not understand, and accepted God's will in the matter. In this, he did not become bitter or angry and therefore did not destroy his testimony.

May we face the adversities of life with the same patience and godliness as Job, in order to be a testimony for the Lord.

THOUGHT: In what ways should I admire Job?

PRAYER: Father, may I use my tongue to Thy honour and glory.

DIRECTING OUR THOUGHTS

Job had been able to endure the ridicule of his wife and remain silent before the Lord in his suffering. However, bad news generally travels very rapidly and Job's friends heard about his misfortune. It appears that these friends were probably men of wealth and position, although, perhaps, not as wealthy as Job had been. These three friends came to visit Job in his hour of need to comfort him (Job 2:11).

Words cannot fully convey the unbelievable state which Job had fallen into. He was so different from the man he had once been that his friends failed to recognise him. When they finally recognised the pathetic creature as their friend, they burst into mourning (Job 2:12). When they saw Job's horrific physical condition, all thoughts of comforting him seemed to have vanished. All the things they had planned to say seemed empty and useless in the face of their friend's great suffering. Completely overcome by the horror of Job's situation, they sat for seven long days and nights in complete silence (Job 2:13).

Job too sat with his three friends in silence. As time passed and the intense suffering filled his mind, he began to forget the faithfulness and mercy of God and began to dwell on his present condition.

Our mouths speak what overflows from our hearts (Luke 6:45). If Satan can get us to take our eyes off from the Lord and look at ourselves instead, he has gained an advantage. On the other hand, when our minds dwell on the Lord, His Word sustains us. The Psalmist said when his mind was crowded with difficulties and worry, the Word of the Lord comforted him (Ps 94:19). The Apostle Paul reminds us that we should think about the blessings of the Lord and the good things in life (Phil 4:8).

We too can find strength in times of trouble when we remember the faithfulness of God and the eternal blessings of salvation.

THOUGHT: Why did Job begin to weaken under Satan's attack?

PRAYER: I thank Thee, Father, that the thought of Thy blessings brings me joy and contentment even in difficult times.

MONDAY, APRIL 11

JOB 3:1-10

PSALM 93

*“The LORD reigneth,
he is clothed with majesty..”*

LOST JOY

As we begin to consider Job’s words spoken in the misery of his situation, it is necessary to remember that Job is a book of poetry in the original Hebrew. Although this poetic style is not reflected in most English translations, we need to understand a little about the Hebrew poetic form in order to understand the book. One of the interesting things that we should note is a tendency to overstate in order to emphasize. The Hebrew poet would say things in a much stronger way than they were actually meant. As Job’s friends listened to him, they understood what he was doing and we should react in a similar fashion.

Job cried out, speaking of his misery in the tradition of the Semitic poets of his time. He cursed the day he was born and, in effect, wished his birth had never taken place (Job 3:1-10). In his bitterness, he forgot the joy of past blessings and the promise of blessings in the future, having no thought of his responsibility to serve God. The Lord can supply joy in the midst of hardship but sin, such as Job’s bitterness, robs us of that joy. Thus, the Psalmist, in Psalm 51:12, had to call out to God to restore to him the joy of his salvation.

While we recognise the tremendous tribulation of Job, we must also remember the sufficiency of God’s grace. When we are led into times of difficulty, we must remember to keep our eyes fixed on the Lord Jesus Christ. The composer has written,

“Earthly friends would prove untrue, Doubts and fears assail,
One still loves and cares for you, One who will not fail.”

It is true that Jesus never fails and, in times of difficulty, we must remember this in order not to fall into sin and despair as Job did. Let us remain firm and steadfast as Job was at the beginning of Satan’s attack. We must recognise that if we do not lean upon the Lord, we will grow weary and discouraged.

THOUGHT: Why did Job become so discouraged?

PRAYER: Father, help me to always fix my eyes on Jesus, even when things are difficult.

TUESDAY, APRIL 12

JOB 3:11-19

PSALM 119:97-104

*“...the sufferings of this present time
are not worthy to be compared...”*

MISPLACED THOUGHTS

When severe difficulty comes into our lives, our Christian testimony faces its greatest testing and, once again, we must remind ourselves that one of the most difficult tests is a severe chronic illness. Job now looked at his present situation and expressed the wish that he had died at birth (Job 3:11-13), having allowed the hardships of the moment to colour everything. This hides all the joys of God's tomorrow. Job cried out in his sorrow that whether rich, poor, or even still-born, those in the grave were better off than he (Job 3:11-15).

Job said that if he had to be born, it would have been better if he had been still-born. Then, he could have hidden in the grave and never experienced the days of misery that had come upon him (Job 3:16). He longed for rest from his sufferings, such rest as he saw coming to slaves and prisoners when death released them from their sorrows (Job 3:17-19). We should not be too harsh with Job for his rash statements as he did not have the inspired Scriptures for guidance. He probably had no written Word of God at all, but had to rely on revelation passed down from Adam.

As we listen to Job's complaints, we realise it is not the suffering that drove him to such despair but rather the feeling that God had deserted him. Job obviously lacked revelation concerning the universal conflict into which believers are drawn. He did not seem to know that the sufferings of this present world could result in spiritual growth and blessings. He certainly did not have the light of the New Testament to remind him that his present suffering would seem as nothing in light of the glory that awaits all of God's children (Rom 8:18).

Since we know these truths from God's Word, we are better prepared to pass through times of suffering and hardship than Job. Let us be faithful to seek God's instruction and strength when He leads us through the deep waters of difficulty.

THOUGHT: Why did Job make such shocking statements?

PRAYER: I thank Thee, Father, that Thy Word gives light even in my darkest hours.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13

JOB 3:20-26

PSALM 119:33-40

*“...with the glory
which shall be revealed in us.”*

MISUNDERSTOOD PURPOSE

Job continued to voice his misery in the manner of Hebrew poets. His words are startling in their overstatement. Yet, even today, in times of great stress when Christians take their eyes off the Lord and look on their troubles, they sometimes express deep despair and say shocking things.

Job sinned because, in his time of trouble, he questioned God's actions. He asked why God forced man to continue life when it was filled with sorrow and a longing for death (Job 3:20-22). In the depths of his despair, he longed for the peace of God that the death of saints would bring.

We must admit that Job's despair is far more excusable than ours if we were in a similar situation. Unable to understand, Job complained to God that his punishment was unfair since the proper way had been hidden from him (Job 3:23). This had resulted in terrible misery which was undeserved. One trouble after another came upon him and he lived in continual fear (Job 3:24-26). Yet, Job never rejected God or cursed Him as Satan said he would.

Job's despair could have been avoided if he had better understood the purpose of God. In this, we learn an important lesson that all who are called upon by God ought to know hardship. The more we know concerning God through a systematic study of His Word, the more strength we find for the tests set before us. The Psalmist said that he loved God's law and meditated on it all through the day because God's commandments had made him wiser than his enemies who were ever around him. Certainly, Satan is a constant enemy (Ps 119:97-98).

Let us fix our eyes on the Lord and His blessing instead of on our own difficulties. Let us remember the blessings of the past and the Lord's promises for the future. This will help to deliver us from the sin of despair when passing through times of difficulty.

THOUGHT: In what way did Job not sin in his tribulation?

PRAYER: Father, help me to always think on Thy blessings.

THURSDAY, APRIL 14

JOB 4:1-11

PSALM 51:1-10

*“We have also a more sure
word of prophecy...”*

ELIPHAZ’S FIRST SPEECH

Job’s friends, unhappy with his bitter words, broke their seven days of silence. When they answered Job, it was easy to see that they were not offering sympathy but had become critical. Perhaps, this was in part due to Job’s words. However, more importantly, this probably sprang from the common notion that suffering was always a result of sin. When the Lord’s disciples saw the man blind from his birth, they assumed that his affliction had been caused by either his own or his parents’ sin. However, the Lord told them that this man’s blindness was not because of sin but for the manifestation of the power of God (John 9:1-3). Job’s friends could not understand that it was not sin causing his problems.

The first of Job’s friends to speak was Eliphaz. He came from Teman, a town known for its many men of wisdom. Eliphaz accused Job of not following his own teaching and practice. Job had evidently instructed many people who were having difficulty and had helped them to be strong in the Lord. Of course, Eliphaz saw this as an admirable thing (Job 4:3-4). However, he immediately put forth the popular premise that those who were in trouble were sinners and those who had lived righteous lives were prosperous, basing his statement on human experience (Job 4:7-9).

However, it is not through human experience that we come to know about God and His dealings with man. It is through God’s revelation of Himself in the Holy Scriptures. Interpreting God’s dealings with man on the basis of experience is very dangerous, even the Apostle Peter, who had personally witnessed the transfiguration, viewed the Scriptures as the only sure word of prophecy (2 Pet 1:15-21). Man lacks the data and understanding necessary to examine experience and thus cannot come to understand God’s purpose.

As we see the confusion of Job and his friends, we should be encouraged to ignore man’s own ideas concerning God and instead rely on the revelation of Holy Scriptures.

THOUGHT: What was wrong with Eliphaz’s reasoning?

PRAYER: Only God’s Word can give wisdom concerning spiritual matters.

FRIDAY, APRIL 15

JOB 4:12-21

PSALM 46

“...whereunto ye do well
that ye take heed.”

A FAULTY CONCLUSION

Eliphaz had a dream-like revelation on which he based his claim to religious knowledge (Job 4:12-16). We know that God spoke to man in days gone by through dreams and visions (Job 33:14-15). However, this dream could not have been a revelation from God as Eliphaz's information was truth mixed with error. In all likelihood, it came from his own observation mixed with some truth he had learned from others. We should also note that today God no longer speaks to man through dreams and visions. His final message to mankind was given through Jesus Christ and recorded in the Holy Scriptures (Heb 1:1-2).

Eliphaz began by stating that God's morality, justice and purity were far greater than man's. There is certainly no question about this. God's simplest thought is greater than man's greatest thought and He is absolutely just and pure (Isa 55:8-9; Deut 32:4). Eliphaz further concluded that while God is absolutely pure and just, all of creation is hopelessly sinful. We must surely agree with that (Job 4:17-19).

From what he had seen and experienced, Eliphaz concluded that man went through life slowly dying. Man ultimately dies and, in the end, is not wiser (Job 4:20-21). Due to man's sinful and hopeless condition, Eliphaz then drew the conclusion that all suffering came from sin. He stated that the man who said he did not sin was lying. Once again, this is true. The Scripture says, “*if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us*” (1 John 1:8). However, Eliphaz's conclusion that all suffering is from sin is not correct. The reason this conclusion is faulty is that such a conclusion is not revealed to us by God in the Holy Scriptures.

As we continue our study in Job, we see again the importance of knowing the Scriptures. It is through this knowledge that our confidence in God and His love continues to grow. May we remember that God sometimes allows His obedient children to suffer. When He does, His grace is sufficient to meet that need.

THOUGHT: Why was Eliphaz's thinking faulty?

PRAYER: I thank Thee, Father, that “*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path*” (Ps 119:105).

SATURDAY, APRIL 16

JOB 6

PSALM 103:1-13

*“Like as a father pitieth
his children...”*

SIN AND SUFFERING

Job was still in the depths of despair and desperation. He answered Eliphaz, reflecting on his condition and expressing a longing to be relieved from suffering. Being an upright man, he was somewhat convicted by Eliphaz's harsh words. He asked for understanding because he was overcome by his troubles (Job 6:2-3).

Job agreed with his friends that God's judgment was upon him but he could not understand why. He claimed he had a right to cry out in what appeared to be an unjust situation because even wild animals did this (Job 6:4-5). He pleaded again for God to grant him escape from his suffering through death (Job 6:6-8).

Job asked that someone honestly consider the extent of his suffering. Eliphaz had implied that Job was suffering just as all mankind suffered. Job, however, replied that he was not just touched with affliction in a usual way but that he had been completely devastated by an unusual attack and, from the account of the Scriptures, we know this to be true.

Job was conscious of the problem of sin and we have seen this from his continual blood sacrifices. This was why he pleaded for someone to point out to him the overlooked sin that was causing his troubles (Job 6:24). If he knew, he would then ask for forgiveness so that his former relationship with God could be restored.

God loves us as a gentle father. He knows our weaknesses and has mercy on us (Ps 103:13-14). God does not punish us without our knowing what our unconfessed sin is so that we can come to a place of repentance. However, neither Job nor his friends understood this. At a time when Job desperately needed help and support, his friends failed him. He wanted wise counsel to discover his sin. Then, he would repent and be free from God's chastisement (Job 6:14-15, 22-24).

In all of Job's confusion, he continued to call on God as his only hope. Since we know the promises and instructions of the Scriptures, how much greater should our confidence be in our Heavenly Father?

THOUGHT: What is the purpose of God's chastisement?

PRAYER: I praise Thee, Father, for Thou art just in all Thy dealings with us.

JOB SPEAKS TO GOD

Job had been speaking to his friend and now he addressed God. In his despair, he asked God to consider his insignificance. The days of his life passed by swiftly, bringing more pain and confusion (Job 7:1-7). Job pleaded for release from the struggles of life to the comfort of death (Job 7:8-10). He felt he had to complain about his suffering, for even attempts to forget his difficulties in sleep failed as he was tormented by dreams (Job 7:11-14).

Job could not understand why God seemed to continue to visit him with terrible punishment. This was his reason for choosing death rather than suffering on in confusion. God had always shown Job his sin before and forgiven him when he confessed it. Therefore, he could not understand why there no longer seemed to be any forgiveness (Job 7:17-21).

Again, we remind ourselves that Job did not have the Scriptures that we have today. He clearly did not understand that he could cast all his cares upon his Lord (1 Pet 5:7). We once again see that Job did not understand the universal conflict or understand that God had a part for him to play in it.

There should never be a time in our lives when we sink into despair like Job. Through study of the Scriptures, we can come to a clear understanding of God's method of dealing with His people and His love for us. We can come to realise that there is a purpose for everything that happens in our lives. When we walk in obedience to God, we can have confidence that He will see us through any tribulation (1 Cor 10:13). Furthermore, we are reminded that even in the most difficult times, God is able to deliver us (2 Pet 2:9).

As we continue our study of Job, we must be filled with compassion for this man as he suffers. Yet, we recognise this as a learning experience for him. We are also reminded that we ourselves often learn by going through times of difficulty with the Lord. May we learn to be patient and persevere during such times.

THOUGHT: What was Job's biggest problem?

PRAYER: Father, may I walk in the light of Holy Scriptures.

MONDAY, APRIL 18

JOB 8:1-7

DEUTERONOMY 32:1-10

*“He hath not dealt with us
after our sins...”*

IMPROPER REASONING

Job’s second friend, Bildad, now began to reason with him. His argument, like many we hear today, was a mixture of truth and error. Since our minds tend to focus on the truth of such arguments, the error often hides itself. Due to this, we sometimes come to a false conclusion as it was with Bildad.

Bildad began by correcting Job, saying that his speeches were like the wind with no content – Job had continued far too long in protesting his innocence (Job 8:1-2).

Bildad spoke about God’s attributes to strengthen his argument. God was just and righteous in all His dealings (Gen 18:25). God never needs to change His decisions. Since God’s knowledge is complete, His judgments are always right. Therefore, it had to be assumed, although Bildad did not say it directly, that Job’s children died because they had sinned. It was clear to Bildad that God, being just, would not have allowed them to die for any other reason. We see here an example of man beginning with truth but coming to an erroneous conclusion (Job 8:3-4).

Continuing in his train of human reason, Bildad challenged Job to seek the Lord. He had to admit that his suffering was for some specific sin. If he did this, God would surely accept him and return him not only to his former position but to an even greater one (Job 8:5-7).

Again, we see the dangerous mixing of truth and error. While it is true that God will accept and restore any of His repentant children, it is not true that all suffering is caused by sin. Such instructions as Bildad’s can cause an uninformed Christian to be filled with self-condemnation and confusion if there is no specific unconfessed sin in his life.

We must not be misled in this way. Part of our confidence in God is based on His just and gracious dealings with us. He has forgiven our sins and does not hold them against us (Ps 103:10-11). He will forgive us of sins knowingly committed (1 John 1:9) and He will take us safely through any temptation (2 Pet 2:9).

THOUGHT: What was wrong with Bildad’s reasoning?

PRAYER: Father, may I not rely on human reasoning to know Thee.

TUESDAY, APRIL 19

JOB 8:8-22

PSALM 98

“...with the well advised is wisdom.”

KNOWLEDGE OF THE ANCIENTS

Bildad claimed to have special revelation from God, but based his opinion on the traditions of his forefathers. According to Bildad, this was necessary because our lives are very short. We have no experience from ages past and, in the limited days of the individual's life, there is little time to learn. Therefore, it is necessary to learn from the wisdom of ancient men (Job 8:8-9).

There is certainly nothing wrong with considering things learned by our people down through the centuries. Scripture itself commends the wisdom gained by long life – wisdom comes in part by a willingness to take advice from others (Prov 13:10). However, Bildad was appealing to human experience and wisdom to solve a spiritual problem. Such a course always brings great danger. The Scriptures remind us that God's ways are very different from man's ways. If we are to know Him, it must be through His revelation of Himself in the Scriptures (Isa 55:7-9).

Bildad's final conclusion was that it was obvious to the human mind that God blessed the good and punished the evil. A life of joy and satisfaction with no suffering was promised to those who were righteous (Job 8:20-22). Therefore, if Job had really been righteous, he could appeal to God and his affliction would be removed.

It is true that “*the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much*” (James 5:16). However, in order to pray according to God's will, we must know the Scriptures and be mindful of His eternal plan and purpose. When it comes to spiritual things, the way that seems reasonable and right to man is a way that leads to destruction (Prov 14:12).

May you and I, as God's people, rely solely on His Word for our spiritual direction and understanding, so that we will not be misled with respect to spiritual things. In this way, we will be able to face the difficulties of life with understanding and confidence.

THOUGHT: What was wrong with Bildad's conclusion?

PRAYER: Father, Thou hast revealed in Isaiah 55:9, and I believe, that Thy ways are higher than man's ways.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 20

JOB 9:1-15

PSALM 8

*“...trust in the mercy of God
for ever and ever.”*

MAN’S HOPELESS CONDITION

Job replied to Bildad’s exhortation, agreeing that God is always right and just. Fallen sinful man has no hope of ever justifying himself before God. God’s law shows man to be a sinner without hope (Job 9:2; Rom 3:20). Job was not protesting that he was innocent of sin but only that he did not deserve such severe punishment.

God’s wisdom is so great that man cannot argue with Him on even one subject with any hope of winning. Spiritual wisdom can only come from the Lord as He alone has understanding of hidden things (Job 9:3; Prov 2:6). Not only is God’s wisdom unfathomable, but His power is so great that no man can resist Him (Job 9:4; Isa 40:26).

This power will be fully shown at the final judgment. God will then demonstrate His anger at sin by shaking the entire universe. He had done this in a limited sense by the flood and the plague of darkness in Egypt (Job 9:5-7; Isa 13:13).

God’s righteousness and power can be clearly seen in creation (Ps 19:1-2). Modern man often refuses to consider these things but, in ancient times, men were amazed at God’s revelation of Himself in creation (Job 9:8-10). Only a fool will say that there is no God (Ps 14:1; 53:1).

As Job considered the greatness of God, he recognised man’s inability to meet with his Creator. As it is, there is no reason for God to stop as He passes by. There is no way to address so great a Being. Job recognised that man’s only hope was to throw himself at God’s mercy (Job 9:11-15). He could truly say with the Psalmist that when he considered God’s greatness as displayed in creation, it is amazing that God would even take notice of such an insignificant sinful creature as man (Ps 8:3-4).

Like Job, we must recognise that it is only because of God’s mercy that sinful man has any hope. With the Psalmist, we can rest in God’s eternal mercy (Ps 52:8).

THOUGHT: Why does God pay attention to man?

PRAYER: I praise Thee, Father, for Thy mercy endures forever.

THURSDAY, APRIL 21

JOB 9:16-35

PSALM 119:49-56

*“And now, Lord...
my hope is in thee.”*

MAN SEPARATED FROM A HOLY GOD

Job continued to answer his friend Bildad. The real problem is that God is so great and His righteousness so absolute that man has no hope nor ability to reach Him on his own.

Job expressed man's dilemma in Hebrew poetic form. Man should simply be overwhelmed by his own wickedness (Job 9:16-18) in view of God's unattainable righteousness and strength. The creature is always wrong because of sin – man's own testimony proves this (Job 9:19-20).

In the midst of Job's present suffering, he had forgotten the great blessing of the past. He continued to protest that he was not guilty of any particular wilful, unconfessed sin but he recognised that his imperfect nature still made him guilty before a Holy God. God, in His absolute holiness, seems to punish both the wicked and the righteous. As Job looked out upon the world, the wicked seem to be in control of everything and God did not hinder them (Job 9:21-24).

He used the examples of the swift eagle and of the rapidly passing ship to illustrate the quick end of life. We should notice that, in all of Job's complaining, and despite his lack of understanding, he still looked to God as the righteous Judge of all the earth (Job 9:21-28).

Job recognised his own hopeless condition, and he asked the question, “What is the point of even trying to be righteous?” (Job 9:29). Any attempt by man to cleanse himself of wickedness is useless because God will still prove him a wicked sinner. As the Prophet Isaiah exclaimed, all men's righteousnesses are like filthy rags in the sight of a Holy God (Job 9:29-31; Isa 64:6).

The only hope for man as he stands before a righteous God is to cast himself on the mercy of God and accept this Mediator, Jesus Christ, as his Lord and Saviour. In Christ, we can have eternal life, assurance of sins forgiven and a life of purpose, joy and peace.

THOUGHT: What could have helped Job in this time of trouble?

PRAYER: I thank Thee, Father, that Ephesians 2:8-9 reveals that salvation is through Thy grace alone.

FRIDAY, APRIL 22

JOB 10:1-12

PSALM 139:1-7

“...the man Christ Jesus.”

THE LORD WILL NOT FORSAKE US

As we continue our study of Job, there are two important points we need to remember in order to understand the book. First, Job was suffering greatly. Such weakness and constant pain can affect one's outlook of life. In fact, Job pleaded with God to remove his pain just briefly (Job 9:34-35). Second, Job was confused. He recognised his own sinful state but felt God was punishing him for an unconfessed specific sin that he had not committed.

Job was disgusted with his lot in life. In his despair, he gave vent to his emotions and told God how he felt. He thought of begging God not to condemn him unjustly and tell him what the problem was. Job knew that God was always just, but here we see his bitter words contradicting what he actually believed. We must be careful not to let the trials of life cause our outlook to be in conflict with our faith (Job 10:1-2).

Job asked three questions in an attempt to account for his suffering. First, he asked if God found pleasure in persecuting him in his innocence while blessing the wicked. Such a question denies the kindness of God (Job 10:3). Second, he asked if God had eyes that saw only the outward appearance as man did. Job knew from his earlier experiences, and we know from the Scriptures, that this is not true (Job 10:4; 1 Sam 16:7). Third, Job asked if God was like mortal man in that his life would soon end; and thus, He had to rush to investigate sin and force a confession from man guilty or innocent (Job 10:5-7). Job knew such a thing was not true of God.

Job spoke of God's love towards mankind. God had made man in a wonderful way and constantly cares for him (Job 10:8-12; Ps 139:14). He contrasted God's former care of him with what appeared to be not only His neglect but actual persecution.

God loves us. When we pass through times of difficulty, He is ever with us (Heb 13:5-6). Let us encourage one another with this truth.

THOUGHT: What two things caused Job's main problem?

PRAYER: May I love Thee knowing that Thou hast first loved me (1 John 4:19).

SATURDAY, APRIL 23

JOB 10:13-22

PSALM 130

*“I wait for the LORD,
my soul doth wait...”*

WHO CAN STAND BEFORE A HOLY GOD?

Job opened this portion with a shocking statement. In his pain, anguish and confusion, he said that, perhaps, all of God’s former goodness was just hiding the fact that this terrible judgment was to come (Job 10:13). Job now saw the entire situation as hopeless, feeling there was no chance to have a restored relationship with God. He knew that God would not overlook sin, but the sinner would be chastised; but Job said that even if he acted in a proper manner and did not sin, he would still be weighed down by shame and misery (Job 10:14-15).

Job believed that even if he were to try to lift up his head in joy, God would hunt him like a lion, and His righteous presence would remind Job of his own pitiable situation. The witness God would bring against Job was his own suffering. Like his friends, Job felt that his present condition somehow had to be linked to sin. It was like a war being fought against him, with one blow after another being added to his suffering (Job 10:16-17). Once again, Job wished that he had been still-born. In his present suffering and confusion, he felt that it would have been better if he had been buried at birth (Job 10:18-19). Recognising that man’s days were few, Job pleaded with God to give him a little rest before he died (Job 10:20). He refers to the *“shadow of death,”* an expression often used by the ancients (Job 10:21-22). However, we can see from his earlier statement about death that he believed his eternity would be a time of rest from the afflictions of the earth (Job 6:9-10).

Job, in his despair, said many harsh things about God’s judgment. He had lost sight of God’s love but he also spoke of God’s mercy and justice. He continued to pray to the Lord and, at no time, did he renounce his faith as Satan said he would.

May we have the faithfulness and perseverance of Job. When these things are coupled with a knowledge of God’s Word, it produces giants in the faith who truly stand for God.

THOUGHT: Why was Job confused?

PRAYER: Thy Word reveals to me that the presence of Thy righteousness shows man’s sin.

ZOPHAR SPEAKS

Job's third friend, Zophar, was now ready to answer him. He began his attack by accusing Job of being an eloquent long-winded speaker who said things that were worthless. His long speech should not be allowed to silence people. Job had to be answered and not be allowed to mock his detractors into silence (Job 11:1-3).

Zophar was infuriated by Job's insistence that he had not sinned in such a way to bring his suffering upon himself, calling Job a liar for saying that his relationship with God was good when these calamities came (Job 11:3-4). Zophar claimed that if God would deal with Job in a true measure for his evil ways, his suffering would become even worse (Job 11:5-6). Even today, we find that man becomes infuriated at the idea that we can be sure of our relationship with God. Like Job's other two friends, Zophar exhibited some spiritual understanding as far as God's holiness and greatness were concerned. However, man cannot learn about the nature and work of God even upon hard investigation. God's knowledge and ways are too great for man with a finite mind to understand (Rom 11:33-34).

God's greatness is compared to the heights of heaven, the depths of hell, the length of the earth, the breadth of the sea (Job 11:8-9). The Creator is too great for His creatures to understand by their own intellect. Only by His Word and the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit can we come to truly learn about God. The Apostle Paul prayed that we may come to know the immensity of the love of Christ (Eph 3:18-19).

Zophar criticised Job for complaining that God was being too hard on him. Zophar said that God knew all about the wickedness of man, therefore, we have to be silent before Him (Job 11:10-12). As Zophar had claimed, it is true that man, by seeking on his own, cannot find out about God. However, we can know about Him because He has revealed Himself through His Word (Heb 1:1-2; 1 Cor 1:4-6). May each of us continue in the study of God's Word in order to know Him better and to understand His work more clearly.

THOUGHT: What two things caused Job's main problem?

PRAYER: I love Thee, Father, because Thou first loved us (1 John 4:19).

MONDAY, APRIL 25

JOB 11:13-20

PSALM 73:1-12

*“Truly God is good...
even to such as are of a clean heart.”*

HUMAN REASON PLUS GODLY TRUTH

In Zophar’s speech, we continue to see some truth concerning God, mixed with error as well as a misapplication of the Scriptures. Everything Zophar said sounds good, but his conclusions were faulty and his knowledge misapplied.

Zophar’s thoughts about unconfessed sin are true. Nothing causes greater misery in the life of God’s children than wilful unconfessed disobedience. It takes away our joy and spiritual contentment and even hinders our prayers (Ps 66:18). However, we have a promise that, by confessing our sin and leaning on God’s mercy, we can have forgiveness and restoration of fellowship (1 John 1:9).

Zophar pleaded with Job to examine his heart and confess the sin which surely had to be there. Then, he would have complete spiritual restoration (Job 11:13-16). The problem we see here is truth misapplied. Job’s problem was not hidden sin, but the universal conflict. None of his friends had enough spiritual knowledge to inform him of this.

Zophar now added human fiction to the truth. We see much of this today. Zophar claimed that if a man was right before God, everything would be bright and sunny (Job 11:17). No one would frighten the child of God and everyone would want to be his friend (Job 11:18-19). On the other hand, the wicked would suffer: their hopes and dreams would never be realised (Job 11:20).

This type of teaching is very common today. Salvation and living a godly life will bring physical health, wealth and success while being ungodly results in failure. The only problem is that this teaching contrasts with the Scriptures. In Psalm 73:1-12, the Psalmist said he was discouraged to see how the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer. It was only after he thought of eternity that his heart was encouraged.

May we be careful to desire the pure milk of God’s Word and refuse the popular humanistic teachings so common today.

THOUGHT: What were the problems with Zophar’s teaching?

PRAYER: Father, may I live with eternity’s values in view.

TUESDAY, APRIL 26

JOB 12:1-10

PSALM 46:1-7

“God is in the midst of her;

she shall not be moved...”

GOD IS IN CONTROL

When we are constantly under attack, it is sometimes easy to slip into a non-Christian attitude. Job's suffering continued and he was very discouraged. He was now out of patience with the attacks of his friends. He replied them in a sarcastic and angry manner. Obviously, said Job facetiously, his three friends represented all the wisdom of the ages. However, in fact, Job remarked, he was also intelligent and could reason things out (Job 12:1-3). Job now looked at his situation as the world saw it. Before his problem, he called on God, and his Creator answered. He lived a just and holy life, careful not to sin, but he had now become a laughing stock. Many, no doubt, ridiculed his religious devotion (Job 12:4).

Those who are prosperous condemn and shun those whose fortune has fallen. Failure is looked on like a lamp and is a torch that may ignite others. There was evidently a belief among the ancients that failure was somehow contagious, so such men were to be avoided (Job 12:5).

Job proved that Zophar's teaching was false. One only has to look at God's creation to see His power and know that, ultimately, He controls all things. Despite this, a person's righteousness does not guarantee freedom from suffering nor does wickedness necessarily result in pain and hardship. Therefore, God must at least allow these things to happen (Job 12:6-10).

Job, looking at the wonders of creation and seeing the power of God, broke forth and called God by His name Jehovah. This is the only time this name of God occurs in the book of Job (Job 12:9). Job may not have understood this tribulation but he knew for sure that God was in control.

The ideas of Job's friends, like much human teaching, show that their philosophy was not based on facts and Job pointed out the fallacies in their ideas. He might have still been confused about his situation but he recognised proper reasoning when he saw it. May we, too, be wise to see the false premises in human philosophy and teaching.

THOUGHT: In what way did Job see God's power?

PRAYER: Father, I believe Thou art the Creator and Ruler of the universe.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 27

JOB 12:11-25

ISAIAH 40:10-15

*“Search the scriptures;
for in them ye... have eternal life...”*

GOD IS THE SOURCE OF TRUE KNOWLEDGE

Job continued his reply to the arguments of his friend. Zophar had claimed that the wisdom of the ancients provided irrefutable knowledge about God and His dealings with men.

Job acknowledged that with age comes wisdom and there was value in knowledge passed down from the fathers. However, we must test wisdom even as the mouth tests food to determine if it is good. Solomon asked God for wisdom in discerning between good and evil (1 Kings 3:9). God, who has all wisdom, stands out in contrast to the ancients who had some wisdom (Job 12:11-13).

To remind Zophar of God's greatness, Job observed that everything God did was final and indisputable. He not only commands the forces of nature, but all strength and wisdom are in Him. Therefore, both good and evil are ultimately under His control (Job 12:14-16).

Job considered the great men of this earth in their relationship to God. Counsellors, stripped of their power, and judges, proud of their wisdom, are as fools before the all-powerful, all-wise God. Kings, supreme in their authority, and priests, secure in their position, lose everything when confronted by the only true God whom they do not know. The wise men of this age are as nothing before God's wisdom. The eloquent speech of orators has no effect on His purpose. No one, no matter how great in this world, can stand before God (Job 12:17-21).

Wicked men are always scheming for power and manipulating others. The dark secrets of their counsels are all open to God (Job 12:22). Throughout history, nations have risen to great power only to sink into oblivion. The mighty, whose cleverness have lifted them above their fellow man, are reduced to nothing. All these come by the decree of God (Job 12:23-25).

Job has brought out an irrefutable truth. Man cannot always understand God's dealings, but all things are in His hands. We have no hope but to cast ourselves on His mercy and grace.

THOUGHT: In what way did Job see God's power?

PRAYER: I thank Thee, Father, that Thou art the Creator and Ruler of the universe.

THURSDAY, APRIL 28

JOB 13:1-11

PSALM 113

*“The LORD is high
above all nations...”*

GOD IS TO BE FEARED

Job was, no doubt, feeling the agonies of his afflictions increased by the stress of his long speech. He became very bold and brash in answering his friends and ridiculed them for feeling that they were the only ones who knew about God. Job also had knowledge of the majesty of God which he had gained from his own experience and the teaching of others (Job 13:1-2).

Job was tired of disputing with his friends and longed to speak with God to present his case (Job 13:3). Job said that his friends did not present the truth. They were not physicians and they certainly could not cure Job's spiritual wounds. How nice it would be if they would just remain quiet. Job reminded them that even a fool seems wise if he keeps silent (Job 13:4-5; Prov 17:28). Their silence would give them a chance to listen to Job. He felt that he had a right to present his position (Job 13:6).

Although it appeared that Job's friends were defending God, they were not doing this with the truth. Job accused them of twisting the facts in their attempt to defend God's position (Job 13:7-8).

As Zophar had not presented the truth, Job remarked that it would not be pleasant if God were to examine his premises. God is not as easy to fool as man (Job 13:8-9). God will surely rebuke those who mislead others about His dealings with man. Job asked his friend if he did not fear God (Job 13:10-11).

Often, it appears that people speak about God and give advice about spiritual things with no concern about God Himself. As if speculation about God, based on human assumption, is not a dangerous matter to them. Indeed, they appear to have no respect for the reality of the Person or work of God. Both the Old and the New Testaments see a lack of reverence for God as a sign of unregenerate, spiritually rebellious man (Ps 36:1; Rom 3:18). We must beware of such people and separate ourselves from those who teach things contrary to the Holy Scriptures.

THOUGHT: What was Job's accusation against Zophar?

PRAYER: I thank Thee, Father, that Thy truth is eternal (Ps 117:2).

FRIDAY, APRIL 29

JOB 13:12-28

PSALM 5:1-7

*“Lead me, O LORD,
in thy righteousness...”*

STILL I TRUST IN HIM

Job continued to answer both Zophar and Eliphaz, charging that their words did not represent the wisdom of the ages but were like worthless ashes. Their improper conclusions caused their speeches to be of no help. Job asked for silence so that he might express his position before God. After that, no matter what happened, he would rest in what he believed (Job 13:12-13).

Now, we have some of the clearest verses from which to understand Job's ultimate position. He was confused, deserted, and totally discouraged, but he would not give up his explicit faith in God. His trust was in the Lord. Job said he would present his understanding of God's dealings with man even if it meant endangering his life. Life is not worth protecting at the cost of truth (Job 13:14).

Sometimes, the greatest and most faithful of God's servants do not understand their Lord's actions. We know that God's ways are beyond the understanding of man. His wisdom and knowledge are too amazing to comprehend (Rom 11:33). Like Job, our walk with God often must be a matter of faith. Job testified boldly of his unflinching faith (Job 13:15).

He firmly believed that his trust in God would ultimately vindicate him. No godless man would dare to stand before God on his own (Job 13:16). Job wanted his friends to hear his testimony of faith. No one could bring a charge of unconfessed sin against him. The rest of his shortcomings would somehow be taken care of by God. He then threw himself at God's mercy, asking Him to take away the extreme chastisement he was experiencing and to show him any fault he might have had. Job firmly believed that God would forgive him when he confessed that overlooked sin which was causing his trouble (Job 13:17-18).

Job was confused, unsure and misled, but he would not renounce his faith in God. May we, more privileged than Job in the knowledge of God and His Words, have his perseverance.

THOUGHT: What was Job's greatest strength?

PRAYER: Help me, Father, to walk by faith rather than by my understanding.

SATURDAY, APRIL 30

JOB 14:1-12

PSALM 14

“The fool hath said in his heart,

There is no God...”

NO HOPE WITHOUT MERCY

In our previous devotion on Job, we saw a paradox in Job's thinking. On the one hand, he had faith in God and would not renounce it, but on the other hand he charged God with being unreasonable. Job did not know of any unconfessed sin, yet he thought that God was chastising him.

We need to remind ourselves that Job lacked the written Word of God. His confusion came because he thought the calamities, which had befallen him, were due to sin. Job did not understand that he had been drawn into the battle which was raging between God and Satan (Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6).

Man is born, ages and soon dies. His life is difficult and he has no real hope of changing it. Yet, as insignificant as man was, it appeared to Job that God often brought him to a judgment which he had little hope of enduring (Job 14:1-3).

How wonderful if, from among imperfect man, there were just one who would be found perfect before God's tribunal. However, Job knew that not a single sinless man could be found (Job 14:4). Job pleaded that since man had no hope of meeting God's righteousness, he should be accorded some mercy (Job 14:5-6).

Man's life, like that of a tree, is planned from birth to death – there is no way to stop its terrible end (Job 14:7, 9). However, the tree has some hope. Water can cause new life to spring forth from old roots. Man is less favoured than the tree. He dies and leaves no trace of himself. Job had lost sight of his hope beyond the grave, his despair at his present situation had turned his mind from the promises of God (Job 14:10-12).

Job has shown mortal man's hopelessness without God's mercy and grace as exhibited in the finished work of Jesus Christ. However, in Christ, we have eternal hope reaching beyond the grave, and it is this hope that helps us to be steadfast in the faith even during times of great trouble (1 Cor 15:51-53, 58).

THOUGHT: Why was Job in such terrible despair?

PRAYER: I thank Thee, Father, for Thy Word which gives us light.

LORD'S DAY, MAY 1

JOB 14:13-22

PSALM 27:1-5

“...the LORD is
the strength of my life...”

MAN'S UNDERSTANDING OF LIFE

Job continued to discuss his troubles. Although he felt God had turned against him, he still appealed to Him, knowing that God was his only hope in this time of trouble (cf. Ps 46:1).

Job again pleaded for death. He did not know why God's anger was upon him but death appeared to be a good way to avoid God's present chastisement (Job 14:13). Job asked if there was any further hope if a man died. From a purely human standpoint, the answer would be “no” but for those who hope in God's grace, there is a future beyond the grave when a miraculous change will take place (Job 14:14-15; Phil 3:20-21).

Man is without hope of escaping his deserved punishment for sin. Job knew that he was a sinner so his judgment was sure (Job 14:17-19), but he also had faith in the resurrection. This was not the problem here. The problem was that he needed relief from his present unbearable situation and God, who was his only hope, did not seem to be offering any help. Job spoke of man's end so far as this life was concerned. Man goes to the grave and his body can no longer be recognised or have a part in life. This is the end of a body that has known only pain and grief in life (Job 14:20-22; Eccles 9:5-6).

Job had tried to answer his three friends. He had known the peace of true godliness, but he was confused because God did not seem to be acting toward him in a way that was right. Frustrated and confused by this problem, Job pleaded for death. Yet he would not deny his close relationship with God in the past and continued to maintain full trust in Him.

Unlike Job, today we have the Holy Scriptures that can encourage us in times of difficulty. We are challenged to trust in the Lord and not in our own ability to understand (Prov 3:5-6). When we do this, then like Job, we can boldly say, “*Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him*” (Job 13:15).

THOUGHT: Why was Job confused?

PRAYER: I thank Thee, Father, that trust in Thee brings perfect peace.

MONDAY, MAY 2

JOB 15:1-13

JAMES 3:1-10

“...if any man offend not in word,
the same is a perfect man...”

CARELESS SPEECH

Eliphaz, the oldest and supposedly wisest of Job's three friends, replied to Job. He charged Job with using crafty language to confuse the issue and with irreverence in questioning God's actions. Eliphaz said that Job filled “*his belly with the east wind*” (Job 15:2). This ancient expression speaks of man's deepest innermost thoughts which are made worthless by bitterness and anger. To “*utter vain knowledge*” (Job 15:2) refers to lengthy and useless chatter – people who have little to say often cover this by long speech.

Job was accused of hindering the worship of God by his speech. This is true in the sense that Job, in his anger, accused God of injustice. It is easy to sin with our lips when there is anger and frustration in our hearts (Job 15:1-6; Matt 15:11).

Eliphaz asked where Job had gotten all his wisdom. “*Art thou the first man that was born?*” (Job 15:7). This was the expression used for a man who claimed to have direct wisdom from God. He asked Job if he possessed some secret knowledge unknown to his friends.

Eliphaz accused Job of answering their gentle attempts to comfort him with anger. This was, of course, not entirely true since Eliphaz and his companions had unjustly accused Job of harbouring some horrible secret sin (Job 15:7-10).

We sympathise with Job and recognise that he did not have the Scriptures to guide him. Yet, his bitterness made it difficult for his friends to believe his claim. If he had dwelt less on his problem and more on his assurance of a proper relationship with God, he might have made a better case with his friends.

In times of trouble, we should learn from this fault of Job. It is only when we, with God's strength, look beyond our present difficulties that our faith rings clear. Our verbal testimony must be reinforced by our life (James 1:22).

THOUGHT: What was Job's major problem here?

PRAYER: Father, may the trials in my life lead to my spiritual growth.

TUESDAY, MAY 3

JOB 15:14-24

ISAIAH 6:1-7

“...I am undone: because
I am a man of unclean lips...”

MAN'S IMPERFECT WISDOM

Eliphaz had a good understanding of the sinfulness of mankind. He used this as a charge against Job who claimed to be right before God. No human is righteous enough to stand before the Creator. If the angels of God are not perfect in God's sight, what hope does man have? (Job 4:18; 5:1; 15:14-16).

Again, we have the recurring theme of Job: man needs a Mediator to arbitrate with God (Job 9:33). Whenever man sees the righteousness of God, he sees his own sinfulness (Isa 6:1-5).

Eliphaz insisted that only the wicked suffer. In his first speech, he based his dogma on a dream revelation. Now, he based it on the wisdom of the ancients which was supposedly pure because they lived in their own land and did not mingle with strangers. Thus, their opinions were derived from their own experiences, undisturbed by foreign influences (Job 15:17-19).

Eliphaz restated his premise that the wicked would live in pain all of their days. Even in times of prosperity, there would be “*a dreadful sound...in his ears*” (Job 15:21), i.e. an inward anxiety and lack of peace. The Psalmist spoke of the prosperity of the wicked (Ps 73:3) and, in Luke 16, we see the truth that wealth does not fully satisfy. In times of trouble, this becomes apparent (Isa 55:2; Prov 28:22).

We have a horrible picture painted of the wealthy who are unsaved. They worry about becoming poor and are always searching for more wealth, power and prestige. Their actions show that these things do not bring true satisfaction (Job 15:20-24).

Therefore, while Eliphaz was wrong in saying that Job's suffering came because of sin, in this portion, he did give us an accurate picture of the unsaved man and his lack of true satisfaction. Let us not be drawn into the world's battle for wealth and prestige but, like the Psalmist, find our rest in God (Ps 62:1-2).

THOUGHT: Why does wealth not bring satisfaction?

PRAYER: Father, I believe that Thy blessing alone brings contentment.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 4

JOB 15:25-35

ISAIAH 59:1-8

“...the LORD’S hand
is not shortened,
that it cannot save...”

THE WAY OF THE WICKED

While Eliphaz’s basic premise was not correct, many of the things that he said are true. In this part of his speech, he gave a good description of the unsaved man.

Eliphaz mentioned two major sins which bring judgment upon the wicked. The first is a haughty arrogance against the Almighty. The phrase “*strengtheneth himself*” (Job 15:25) actually means to make oneself something one is not. Wealth causes a man to rest in possessions and be unfeeling towards God (Job 15:26-27; Ps 17:10). As the unsaved man stands against God, the Scriptures speak of the unsaved as being “*enemies*” (Rom 5:10) with God.

The second sin mentioned is man’s refusal to admit that God punishes sin – he is content to live in cities destroyed by God because of the sin of their former inhabitants (Job 15:28). Later, the law would forbid the rebuilding of such towns (Deut 13:12-16). Today, man scoffs at the idea that God punishes sin. Due to this disregard for God, sinful man’s posterity will tend toward the same sinfulness and judgment (Job 15:29-30).

The Scriptures give many warnings to the unsaved concerning the dangers of sin in this life and the eternal punishment it brings. The wicked are warned not to trust in worthless things (Job 15:31; Isa 59:4). On a number of occasions, the Scriptures mention that men who continue to flaunt their power in the face of God will have their lives shortened. Also, we are reminded that after death comes punishment (Job 15:32; Heb 9:27).

The man who lives all of his life separated from God will end up with absolutely nothing and his children will follow his steps (Job 15:33-35). On the other hand, we, who know the Lord, have the hope of seeing our posterity come to know the Lord and continue in righteousness.

Let us be sure to live for Him.

THOUGHT: What were the two major sins mentioned?

PRAYER: Father, may I be watchful of sins in my life.

THURSDAY, MAY 5

JOB 16:1-11

PSALM 109:21-26

*“Blessed be God, even...
the Father of mercies...”*

USELESS COMFORT

Job listened quietly while his three friends gave long speeches. They were filled with human reasons. The friends of Job showed little compassion and seemed to be untouched by the severity of his trouble. They saw this as an opportunity to stand up boldly and admonish him in self-righteousness. They were unwilling to consider Job's protest of innocence because it was contrary to the dogma they held.

Job finally broke his silence to point out to his friends that they had not been much help. If he were in their position, he might also make grand speeches, but Job claimed he would at least have pity for them in their affliction (Job 16:1-5). As Job spoke about his condition, we see his utter confusion. There is no comfort to be found either in silence or in speech (Job 16:6).

Job had lost his entire family and was physically exhausted by his suffering. It appeared that his condition witnessed against his claim to be righteous and faithful. Men openly scoffed at him and gathered to witness his suffering. The most difficult thing for Job to understand was why God appeared to have turned him over to wicked men and abandoned him altogether (Job 16:7-11). We see once again in the words of Job how difficult it was to go through life without the written Word of God. Job had no source of reliable information to which he could turn to discover the cause of his problem.

Perhaps one of the great lessons we can learn from Job is that we cannot truly comfort someone if we do not have a sense of pity. We must also have a clear understanding from the Scriptures of how God works so as not to give false advice to those we try to comfort. Christians who have been comforted by the Lord in times of trouble should desire to comfort others. We can do this when we know God's Word (2 Cor 1:3-4).

THOUGHT: Why did the effort of Job's friends to comfort him fail?

PRAYER: Help me, Father, in my duty to comfort those in trouble.

FRIDAY, MAY 6
JOB 16:12-22
PSALM 66:16-20

*“O LORD my God,
thou art very great.”*

NO HOPE WITHOUT GOD

Job continued to answer his friends' charges, speaking of the terrible punishment God had meted out on him. He complained that he was living in contentment and all was going well when God attacked him like an infuriated warrior. This began with no warning and for no apparent reason. Job did not realise that he had been drawn into the universal conflict, the great battle between God and Satan. This happened because of Job's righteousness and faithfulness to God (Job 1:8-12; 2:3-5). At the time these dreadful things were taking place, there was no way for Job to know the reasons behind them.

Job was a man in great sorrow and, in the manner of the people of his day, he clothed himself in sackcloth and put dust on his forehead (Gen 37:34). His sorrow was very genuine – not only was it shown by these outward signs but it was also evident in his face and eyes (Job 16:15-16).

Despite his suffering and mental confusion, Job could honestly say that his hands were free from sin and he had continued to pray to God for help (Job 16:17). Job's faithfulness before the Lord in spite of his suffering, which so confused him, is amazing. His outbursts, caused by physical and emotional suffering, were, in his circumstances, understandable. We may learn from this to have patience and gentleness toward those in great physical suffering whose faith seems to waver.

Job still maintained his innocence – there was no unconfessed sin which stood between him and God. He recognised that his only hope was to have an advocate before God (Job 9:33). Soon, he would die and he longed for this relief (Job 16:19-22).

From the revelation of Scripture, we know that this need for an advocate has been filled by Jesus Christ and, when trials surround us, we find strength in Him and the hope of His soon return.

THOUGHT: What did Job long for?

PRAYER: Father, I trust that in Thy timing Thou wilt make Thy eternal plan clear to us.

SATURDAY, MAY 7

JOB 17:1-9

PSALM 88:1-7

*“Come and hear,
all ye that fear God...”*

LIFE'S DARKEST HOURS

Job was slowly dying. He saw his days numbered and the grave standing ready. In his suffering, his friends mocked his assertion that he knew of no unconfessed sin to cause his suffering (Job 17:1-2).

Job now turned from his friends to speak to God. He had been treated as a sinner undergoing just punishment. Job now asked God to *“lay down now”* (Job 17:3), that is, put up a pledge or guarantee on his behalf. There was no one else who would do this for him. Someday, the Saviour would come and place His seal and eternal guarantee on all His people (Job 17:3; Heb 7:22).

Job felt sure that God would not allow his friends and their false views to triumph. They had done a terrible thing in turning their backs on their friend and accusing him of rebelling against God (Job 17:4-5).

God had allowed Job to be made a spectacle before the world. He was as one accursed. Due to this, his face showed the signs of his grief and his body was racked with pain. Those who were righteous were astonished at his suffering (Job 17:6-9).

It is hard to stand for the truth when all are against us. In the depths of his heart, Job knew that he loved God. Although he could not explain what appeared to be God's displeasure with him, he held firm in his faith. Surely, this was Job's darkest hour and yet he was faithful.

May we be as faithful as Job in these final days of this age so that when the Lord comes, He will find us rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation and continuing instant in prayer (Rom 12:12).

THOUGHT: How do trials affect the righteous?

PRAYER: Father, help me to count it a privilege to suffer for Thee.

LORD'S DAY, MAY 8

JOB 17:10-16

PSALM 139:1-6

*"Such knowledge is
too wonderful for me..."*

ONLY DESPAIR WITHOUT SCRIPTURE

Job, in his frustration, challenged his friends who came to him again and again with their dogma. No matter how often they proclaimed that difficulties only come into a man's life because of sin, Job knew differently. If they had been wise men, they would be able to see the truth of Job's situation and help him with sound advice, but they had no wisdom to give him (Job 17:10).

Job stood and looked out at his life and saw it shattered. His plans were in ruin; his possessions, prestige and family gone. He had no desire now for anything but to see his miserable life come to an end and, in the midst of it all, his friends turned truth around with their ungodly advice so that night became day and confusion reigned (Job 17:11-12). Job lacked clear understanding of many spiritual truths because he did not have God's written Word to guide him. Therefore, he lapsed into deeper despair, seeing death as his only relief from suffering. Everything he lived for had been destroyed. In this life, he no longer had any hope (Job 17:12-16).

We see in Job's words the end of those who lose sight of the fact that God is still on the throne. Job had to face his suffering at a time when he probably did not have much of the Old Testament and had none of the New. God's Word assures us that our suffering will never be more than we can bear (1 Cor 10:13). How wonderful for us in life's darkest moments, when despair almost overcomes us, to have this promise! Suffering for righteousness is often a part of the Christian life (1 Pet 3:14). When we have the Scriptures, it strengthens us for such times.

May we, in times of difficulty and trouble, cling to God's Word and its promises, knowing that the Lord Jesus Christ will meet our every need.

THOUGHT: Why did Job sink into such deep despair?

PRAYER: Father, Thou art the sovereign God. No difficulty comes into my life by chance.

MONDAY, MAY 9

JOB 18:1-11

PSALM 73:22-28

*“...they that are far from thee
shall perish...”*

BILDAD SPEAKS AGAIN

Bildad began to answer Job by making a second speech. He urged him to be sensible so that they could talk and come to some agreement. Bildad was obviously angry at Job's accusation that they lacked understanding and wisdom, charging Job with considering them as little more than stupid beasts of the field (Job 18:1-3). Often when Christians insist on truth, which runs contrary to commonly held beliefs, they are considered contrary, divisive and unkind people.

Bildad was sure his ideas were correct. It was not possible, he stated, to change eternal truth by becoming angry and fighting against it. According to Bildad, that truth was that suffering only comes because of sin (Job 18:4).

Bildad now spoke about the condition of the wicked. Job did not say that suffering never came because of sin. He was simply saying that in his case, there was no unconfessed sin that caused his suffering.

What Bildad said now was true but it simply did not apply to Job. The wicked will have their light snuffed out. This is an old proverb that speaks of trouble coming as when one's fire does not give warmth and when one's light goes out, leaving only darkness. While a sinner may approach life with great vigour, sooner or later, his assurance will be weakened (Job 18:5-7).

A wicked man is trapped by sin. There is no way for him to be freed. He must face death alone. There is no help for him. The Psalmist speaks of the heathen who are drawn down into a pit that they have made themselves (Ps 9:15). What a sad picture the Scriptures give us of the life of those who do not know the Lord (Job 18:8-11).

What a joy to know the Lord Jesus Christ and to walk through life with His guidance! May we be careful to share this joy with all that we meet along life's way.

THOUGHT: In what way was Bildad's speech correct?

PRAYER: I thank Thee, Father, for I have in Jesus a wonderful friend.

TUESDAY, MAY 10

JOB 18:12-21

PSALM 11

“...*the righteous LORD
loveth righteousness...*”

THE SUFFERING OF THE WICKED

Bildad continued to vividly portray the condition of those who opposed God. He was endeavouring to prove to Job once and for all that only the wicked suffered and only the righteous prospered.

We know that on this earth, the wicked do prosper at times so, in this, Bildad was wrong. The Psalmist spoke of his discouragement when he saw the prosperity of the wicked. Then, after fellowship with God, he was reminded of their terrible eternal punishment (Ps 73:2-3, 17).

We also know that on this earth, the righteous are often called upon to suffer great difficulties. Thus, in this, Bildad was also wrong (Heb 11:36-38; 1 Pet 1:6).

However, the wicked do suffer very often and inwardly have great turmoil and anxiety even those who are rich and powerful. Hence, the description Bildad now gave of the wicked was sometimes true. It is a terrible thing to go through life without the Lord.

Step by step, these verses of Scripture, written in Hebrew poetic form, trace the course of the total destruction of the wicked. Calamity and misfortune are pictured as just a step away as death slowly takes its toll (Job 18:12-13). Everything that makes ungodly man happy – his home, his family and wealth – can be lost at any moment; even his hope of leaving behind some memory of himself through his children will be lost (Job 18:14-19). Finally, Bildad pointed out that those who followed such wicked men would eventually face God’s punishment of their sin (Job 18:20-21).

While this awful picture is true of the ultimate end of the lost, it had nothing to do with Job. His friends, unlike Job, knew nothing of righteousness which comes through faith in God’s mercy and salvation. In the midst of life’s difficulties, it is a joy for the child of God to know his sins are forgiven by God’s grace.

THOUGHT: What are some of the sufferings of the wicked?

PRAYER: Father, I confess that it is only by Thy grace that I can have eternal salvation.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 11

JOB 19:1-15

PSALM 35:24-28

“...Let the LORD be magnified...”

NOT ALONE

In all of his torment, Job found no comfort in the words of his friends, complaining that their words merely tormented him. The phrase “*ten times have ye reproached me*” (Job 19:3) is not a literal ten times but a Semitic expression signifying the extent of human possibility. Job was simply saying that his friends had already exhausted their arguments, so why did they not just leave him alone (Job 19:1-4).

Job cried out in his anguish that God had misjudged him. He had asked for mercy but received no answer, and now, although he was innocent, everything had been taken from him, including his honour. That Job actually believed God was just and the Justifier of those who had faith in Him is clear from many other portions of Job. These occasional outbursts against God’s dealing with him must be attributed to Job’s terrible physical and mental torment (Job 19:5-11).

Job saw himself as having become the object of God’s attack. Although he was God’s friend, he had been treated as an enemy (Job 19:12). Job saw himself as being all alone. His brethren, that is, his acquaintances and friends, had been estranged from him, even the three that were with him at this time had attacked him as an unrighteous sinner (Job 19:13). Also, his relatives and most intimate friends had abandoned him (Job 19:14) and, finally, even those that lived in his house, who ought to have thanked him for giving them work and looking after them, now treated him as if he were a stranger (Job 19:15). Job was speaking again out of anguish of his suffering. He had momentarily forgotten that those who know the Lord are never really alone.

In times of difficulty and hardship, we, as God’s people, must always fix our eyes on Him rather than on our troubles and difficulty. In this way, God will lift us up and we will understand the all-sufficiency of His grace.

THOUGHT: What was Job’s main complaint in this portion?

PRAYER: I thank Thee, Father, that knowing Thee I will never know loneliness.

THURSDAY, MAY 12

JOB 19:16-29

PSALM 27:10-14

“...the LORD will take me up.”

MY REDEEMER LIVES

Job had lost all his friends and loved ones, even his wife was no longer loyal and found him obnoxious. His body had deteriorated until he was literally nothing but skin and bones. He was alone in his misery. Job's assurance of God's justice had been momentarily clouded by his troubles but the Lord God never abandons His people, even when their dearest loved ones forsake them (Job 19:13-20; Ps 27:10).

Once again, Job asked his friends to have pity on him. God had punished him for unknown reasons and now his friends were adding to his troubles and not willing to leave him alone. Job now expressed the wish that his plea of innocence would somehow be preserved for posterity since no one would listen to him at this present time (Job 19:21-24).

In the midst of unbearable physical, spiritual and mental anguish, Job's mind cleared and his faith broke through like the sun upon a cloudy day. Many things Job did not understand but one thing he knew. He had complete assurance that his Redeemer lived and would someday stand upon the earth. Therefore, after his tortured body had rotted in the grave, he would come forth at the call of his Redeemer to a new life and see with his own eyes his Creator, Lord and Saviour (Job 19:25-27).

At this point, Job was totally destitute as far as this world was concerned, but his hope was in the eternal God and His ability to save those who come to Him in faith. His friends might continue to accuse him of having hidden sin but he would rest in the Lord (Job 19:28-29). We have a much greater revelation from God than Job had, so may we, in times of trouble, show Job's abiding faith.

THOUGHT: Were many people as faithful as Job in his trouble?

PRAYER: Father, may my faith in Thee hold me firm in times of deepest need.

FRIDAY, MAY 13

JOB 20:1-16

PSALM 93

“Thy testimonies are very sure...”

ZOPHAR'S SECOND SPEECH

Zophar had heard Job's plea that they stop accusing him of hidden sin, but he saw Job's statements as faulty and would not allow them to go unanswered. He was not impressed with talk of a Redeemer or life hereafter. Zophar wanted Job to listen to him concerning his beliefs about life (Job 20:1-3).

Zophar asked Job if he had not learned about suffering from past experience and ancient wisdom. If the wicked have any moments of joy, they are short. The wicked may become powerful but their judgment will come quickly (Job 20:4-6; Obad 3-4).

Zophar reminded Job of the shortness of man's life and the sure punishment of the wicked. Man will perish like fuel burned in fire, passing quickly away even as a vision or a dream fades. He will vanish from the sight of his friends and his place will be left vacant. All that Zophar said about man is true. The Psalmist reminds us that the wicked prosper but for a moment, then face certain judgment (Job 20:7-9; Ps 37:1-2).

Truly wicked men often oppress the poor. Wealth gained in an evil manner is like food that tastes sweet when swallowed, then turns sour in the stomach. Evil man finds that wealth does not satisfy. He will soon be forced, as it were, to spit out the riches he has swallowed. God will make him realise the futility of his life (Job 20:10-16).

Job had no argument with the things that Zophar said and, surely, the Scriptures teach about the worthlessness of a life lived in rebellion against God. However, Job claimed that while he suffered like a sinner, he did not have any unconfessed sin. How frustrating it is to know the truth and not be able to prove it to one's critics! When this happens to us, as it did to Job, we can only rest in the fact that God's truth is eternal and He will vindicate His people in the final day. May we continue on faithfully with Him even though the world does not approve of what we teach and how we live.

THOUGHT: One with God is the majority.

PRAYER: May I always stand firm in Thee, Father.

SATURDAY, MAY 14

JOB 20:17-29

JEREMIAH 17:7-11

*“Blessed is the man...
whose hope the LORD is.”*

WEALTH'S FLEETING JOY

Zophar declared again that although the wicked might gain wealth and power by evil means, they would never enjoy it. The wicked man will never see the *“brooks of honey and butter”* (Job 20:17). That is, he will never be able to enjoy the bounty he has gained. All of his wealth will be worthless because he has obtained it in an evil way. This is a continuation of the idea that the wicked always, ultimately, suffer on this earth (Job 20:17-22). However, as we learn from the parable of the rich man, this is not always true. It is true that wealth does not bring real satisfaction or meet man's greatest need but there are ungodly people who are wealthy and seem to be satisfied, having no interest in God. Their judgment will not be in this life, but it is sure (Luke 12:16-20).

According to Zophar, in the midst of wicked man's prosperity, punishment will come upon him. He will try to flee from God's punishment even as a soldier tries to flee from the weapons of the enemy. The picture here is of the wicked man suddenly having terrible physical afflictions. No doubt, Zophar hoped to convince Job by these words that his horrible physical suffering must be from God because of unconfessed sin. Certainly, it is true that wicked men do sometimes suddenly lose all of their wealth and others, while keeping wealth, find no satisfaction in it. However, again, we must state that this did not apply to Job who was righteous before God by faith (Job 20:22-25). The eternal punishment of the wicked is sure. The prophet Isaiah reminds us that the day will come when the Lord shall come from heaven to punish the wicked inhabitants of the earth (Job 20:26-29; Isa 26:21).

Surely, reading these verses reminds us that it is better to suffer, even as Job did but know God, than to have great wealth and be without Him. May we rest in this truth.

THOUGHT: To know the Lord is to know real joy.

PRAYER: Father, keep me from worldly thinking.

JOB ANSWERS AGAIN

Job asked his friends to give him a little comfort in his misery by being quiet and carefully listening to what he had to say. If they would really give consideration to his position, then they could go on with their mocking. He knew that his friends were not really considering his argument. They remained silent but were just gathering more material to continue their own argument (Job 21:1-3). What Job had to say is disturbing, but the truth has to be considered. The wicked often prosper in this life and it is not always a short-lived prosperity as Job's friends claimed. In fact, the wicked not only prosper but are often able to pass their wealth on to their children and God does not seem to punish them (Job 21:4-11).

Job had spoken the truth but it did not have any effect on his friends. They were so busy preparing their arguments that they could not hear Job. Often, believers cannot hear God speak to them because they are so busy speaking to God, and trying to work out their own problem. We will never know God's will unless we quietly and systematically study His Word. It is through the Holy Scriptures that we learn what God is like and His will for us. It is through the Word of God that we find strength to face troubles and difficulties (Isa 40:28-31). Having a knowledge of God from the Scriptures gives us quiet confidence in Him. When we stop struggling to solve our own problems and rest in God, the answer is often found to be already evident. As we look at Job and his friends, we see the reason for their troubles. They were so busy talking that they did not have time to learn what God wanted to teach them.

Let us learn from the example of the book of Job. May we patiently wait upon the Lord and study the Holy Scriptures in order to know His will. Then, He will be able to give us joy and blessing as He uses us for His eternal purpose.

THOUGHT: What did Job accuse his friends of doing?

PRAYER: Father, may I never be too busy to hear Thee speak.

MONDAY, MAY 16

JOB 21:12-21

PSALM 84:1-5

*“...my thoughts are
not your thoughts...”*

THE UNGODLY SOMETIMES PROSPER

Job considered the things he had observed in the lives of the wicked. Often, they lived lives of ease, enjoyed their wealth and seemed to have no cares. They often lived this way until they died a seemingly easy death. These facts contradicted Job's friends who insisted that the wicked always suffered in this life (Job 21:12-13).

The world often has no interest in God. They mock Him and challenge His authority. They see no profit in His Word or in prayer, thinking themselves sufficient to meet their own needs, they have no desire to learn of God or His ways (Job 21:14-15).

The ungodly are mistaken in thinking that their wealth and good lives are their own doing. All blessings come from God, whether they are upon the wicked or the righteous. This is a part of God's love and care which includes even those who are His enemies (Matt 5:43-45). Job said, therefore, that he would not listen to the council of the wicked because it was wrong and would lead to eternal damnation (Job 21:16; Prov 1:10).

Verse 17 is actually in the form of a question rather than an explanation. Despite man's wickedness and deliberate ignorance of God's blessing, their lives are seldom snuffed out. Although calamities do not happen often, there are times when men are smashed and blown like straw before the wind (Job 21:17-18).

Once again, Job made a serious mistake by judging God as if God were man. He had a complaint about God's manner in dealing with the wicked – God often saves a man's punishment and visits it on his son. This did not seem right to Job. He wanted wicked men themselves to feel the power of God's destruction because they are so wicked, they do not really care about their children (Job 21:19-21; Exod 20:5).

Job had forgotten a lesson that we should remember for our own peace of mind: God's ways are not the same as man's but they are always right. May we rest in this truth (Isa 55:8-9).

THOUGHT: Was Job's idea about the ungodly man's way of life correct?

PRAYER: Father, I thank Thee that all Thy ways are the best.

TUESDAY, MAY 17

JOB 21:22-34

ISAIAH 40:9-15

*“My heart and my flesh
crieth out for the living God.”*

GOD’S UNFATHOMABLE WAYS

Job’s three friends continued to insist that the wicked always suffer on this earth but this is obviously not the way God works. Hence, Job asked them if they would teach God what was right (Job 21:22; Isa 40:14).

Some wicked men live in luxury all their lives but others, who are no more wicked, live in poverty. However, in the end, they all die and their bodies rot in the grave (Job 21:23-26). Since this is true, his friends should accept it and not insist on dogma that was clearly false (Prov 3:7).

Job knew that his friends had already made up their minds that his suffering was because of unconfessed sin. They were not listening to Job but only preparing further accusations against him. Travellers brought word that many wicked were rich and were never accused of their wickedness. They told of wicked man who went to their graves, never charged with their sin and, after their death, remembered with honour. However, Job’s friends would not change their position (Job 21:27-33).

Some men will persist in their way even when they are proven wrong. These are dangerous people, unable to accept the truth. It is best to leave such people to their own devices and simply to pray for them (Prov 14:7). However, Job could not do this and had to continue to listen to his friends expound on their dogma despite its lack of truth.

Job then asked his friends how they could expect to console him by speaking nonsense – there was nothing left of their answer but falsehood. How sad to need a comforter and not be able to find one! In the midst of a busy life, it is important that God’s people not neglect to gather with the church so as to exhort one another to good works and encourage one another in times of trouble (Job 21:34; Heb 10:24-25).

THOUGHT: Why could Job’s friends not console him?

PRAYER: Father, I thank Thee that Thy Word is a comfort in affliction.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 18

JOB 22:1-11

PSALM 124

“Truly my soul waiteth upon God...”

RESTING IN GOD’S MERCY

Eliphaz reminded Job of the greatness of God. He is the self-existent One who needs no power other than His own. Therefore, He does not need the righteous. Eliphaz seemed to be saying that God did not care if man was righteous since it did not add anything to Him. God also was in no danger from the sinner. Therefore, Eliphaz concluded that God punished man just because His righteousness demanded sin to be punished (Job 22:1-4).

Eliphaz had come to a knowledge concerning God’s greatness and majesty but he understood little of God’s love and mercy. As a result, he came to a false conclusion regarding Job’s suffering.

Eliphaz was driven to desperation in trying to get Job to admit that a particular hidden sin had caused his problem. He enumerated sins he was sure Job had committed. Perhaps, he had taken a pledge from his brother that caused him to lose his livelihood or he had taken the last clothing from someone in payment of a debt. These things would violate God’s law (Job 22:5-6; Deut 24:6, 17). Perhaps he did not give water to the weary or food to the hungry. It may have been that he refused to care for widows or for orphans (Job 22:7-9). From Eliphaz’s ease at listing these sins, all connected in one way or another with business, we wonder if they were not a reflection of his own business dealings. We know these accusations could not be true of Job, as God pointed him out to Satan as a righteous man.

Eliphaz continued to insist that some unconfessed sin was causing Job trouble. The phrase, *“abundance of waters cover thee,”* was a common expression, referring to one whose burdens were really too much to bear (Job 22:10-11; Ps 62:2).

There are times when it is not possible for us to understand the cause of our troubles, but we can rest in the truth that God is merciful and cares for us each day. These were truths unknown to Job’s friends.

THOUGHT: What did Eliphaz not understand about God?

PRAYER: I thank Thee, Father, that in times of confusion, I can rest in Thy mercy.

THURSDAY, MAY 19

JOB 22:12-20

PSALM 32:1-5

*“Blessed is he whose
transgression is forgiven...”*

THE ALL-SEEING GOD

God is on the throne. He knows all things and there is no way man can hide from Him. From the beginning, sinful man has tried to hide from God and found it impossible (Gen 3:8); even the darkest clouds cannot hide man’s sin from the eternal Judge (Job 22:11-17; Ps 69:5).

Eliphaz now pleaded with Job to stop following the path of wicked men. Their end is clear – they die before their time and no evidence is left of their existence. These men mock God despite the fact that He has blessed and prospered them. The righteous can find satisfaction in knowing that the destruction of these wicked men is sure (Job 22:15-20). Eliphaz saw Job’s complaint of their failure to comfort him as unjust. Job was a sinner and therefore, it was expected that the righteous would see his terrible punishment as proper.

Obviously, Eliphaz had not considered Job’s argument at all, feeling secure with his ideas and not considering any contrary facts. There was no question that if trouble came into Eliphaz’s life, it would be devastating. As Job had said, Eliphaz could hold his position only because he was not the one suffering. If their positions had been reversed, Eliphaz would be hard-pressed to pursue his dogma.

We recognise some truth in Eliphaz’s statements. He knew that God will forgive the truly repentant sinner. He also understood what to do about suffering that was caused by sin, but he could not understand suffering that came for other reasons and would not be taught otherwise.

In many ways, Job is not a pleasant book to study as it dwells on suffering and unteachable men. Yet, from it, we can learn how to endure suffering for the Lord, knowing that this does not only come because of sin. Moreover, we can be encouraged to be teachable and open to the Holy Spirit as He speaks through God’s Word.

THOUGHT: What can we learn from Job?

PRAYER: Father, I know I cannot hide from Thee.

FRIDAY, MAY 20

JOB 22:21-30

PSALM 113:1-5

*“He raiseth up the poor
out of the dust...”*

TRUE REPENTANCE

Eliphaz continued to insist that Job's suffering came because of sin. While he was wrong about this, he did give a good picture of the value of true repentance.

If a man wants to have peace with God, he must submit himself to the Lord. Then, the Lord will teach him wisdom so that he can deal with life in a proper way (Job 22:21-22; Prov 2:6-7).

To have a proper relationship with God, we must not only confess our sin but also put it away from us. The Scriptures warn that whatever a man sows, he reaps (Gal 6:7). True repentance is more than just saying we are sorry for our sin. It means to confess the sin to the Lord and not continue in it (Job 22:23).

We cannot be close to God and still find our joy in the wealth and power of this world. The *“gold of Ophir”* (Job 22:24) was considered the finest in the world. These verses remind us that the greatest of wealth and power do not satisfy, but often stand in the way of a proper relationship with the Lord (Job 22:24). When we turn from dependence on the things of this world, God is able to fill our lives and become the source of blessing and joy (Job 22:25-26).

Eliphaz's reply had been very biblical up to this point. He now, however, moved back to the ideas of the world, assuring Job that if he repented, God would not only hear his prayers but would fill his life with joy. This is true but the rest of the statement is not necessarily so. Eliphaz further claimed that everything that Job attempted would succeed in his own life and also in the life of anyone whom he prayed for (Job 22:27-30).

We must not make the same mistake as Job's friends. They equated wealth with blessing and poverty with God's disfavour. God meets our needs and fills our lives with joy when we obey Him. He does this whether we are living in the midst of plenty or suffering in times of difficulty. We can rest in this truth.

THOUGHT: What part of Eliphaz's reasoning here is false?

PRAYER: Father, please help me to obey Thee come what may.

SATURDAY, MAY 21

JOB 23:1-10

PSALM 31:1-5

*“In thee, O LORD,
do I put my trust...”*

CONFIDENCE IN GOD

Job ignored his friends' accusations and spoke from his heart. His suffering was almost more than he could bear, causing him to be bitter. He felt unable to find God although he searched for Him. He was confident that if he could find God, He would accept his plea of innocence. If God examined him, He would recognise that he had been righteous in all of his ways. Job would be vindicated and relieved of his suffering (Job 23:1-7).

Job saw the work of God in various places but when he looked for Him, He was not there. Obviously, the suffering of Job had clouded his mind and he was not saying what he really believed in his heart. He felt that God had abandoned him and did not hear his cry (Job 23:8-9). We are reminded in the Psalms that God is omnipresent and never abandons us (Ps 139:7-10).

Job understood that God knew his every step. [David also recognised this truth and rested in the fact that God knew he was living for Him (Ps 17:3).] Job was also sure that when God gave him a proper hearing, he would find that he too had lived for Him and did not have any unconfessed sin (Job 23:10).

We know from the Holy Scriptures that God does not hide Himself from us and that He will always hear when we call upon Him (Ps 4:3). However, there are times when it appears to some of God's people, as with Job, that God is not listening and is not concerned about us. It is good in these times to remember the promises of the Scriptures. We rest in these promises which come from a God who cannot lie or fail. Although we may not be able to see the end from the beginning, we can have confidence in God and rest in Him in times of unexplainable difficulty.

THOUGHT: Why did Job think God was hiding from him?

PRAYER: Father, Thou art omnipresent. I thank Thee that Thou art always personally with me.

JOB PLEADS FOR JUSTICE

Eliphaz had challenged Job to accept and meditate on God's Word (Job 22:22). Job was confident that he had obeyed the Lord and walked in fellowship with Him. He was not claiming perfection in any sense but a judicial righteousness. His heart was right before God and all his sins were confessed but, because of his tremendous physical suffering and emotional confusion, Job was not resting in God's justice and righteousness. If he had been able to do that, even though he could not understand why he was suffering, he would have known that it was not because of some shortcoming of his own (Job 23:11-12). The Psalmist speaks of the value of the believer knowing and obeying God's Word (Ps 119:11).

As Job viewed the situation, he saw God sometimes allowing the wicked to prosper and the righteous to suffer. Job did not understand why but he recognised that God was sovereign and could not be questioned or changed from His course. Job's friends had worked diligently to make God like man in both His actions and thinking, but Job realised that this was not true. He spoke out about the fear that he had when he saw the righteousness and power of God. He was troubled in God's presence and afraid of Him (Job 23:15). The Scriptures tell us that an honest fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Job 23:13-17; Prov 9:10).

Despite Job's terrible suffering and the fact that he believed God had abandoned him, he still spoke out against what he saw as a lack of justice on this earth. Job is not alone in his feelings. Many of God's people through the ages have been troubled with this fact. The Psalmist, however, knew the reality of what God was doing and reminds us not to worry ourselves because of evildoers. God will take care of them in due time (Ps 37:1-2).

THOUGHT: What can you learn from Job's troubled state?

PRAYER: I thank Thee, Father, that when I pray, Thou hearest me.
(Ps 40:1)

MONDAY, MAY 23

JOB 24:1-12

PSALM 79:1-6

*“O GOD, the heathen are
come into thine inheritance...”*

LONGING FOR GOD’S JUDGMENT

Job asked why God did not set times to judge the wicked. The righteous waited in vain for this time of judgment to come. Often, God’s people of old cried out, asking God how long they would suffer while the wicked prospered (Job 24:1; Ps 79:6-7).

Job’s friends insisted that divine punishment was seen everywhere on this earth, but Job realised that this was not true. He spoke of how wicked men went about fearlessly breaking God’s law and were unpunished for it while the poor and helpless were misused by these wicked men. Job spoke of those who removed landmarks. This was done by those who wished to deprive someone of their land. It was forbidden in the Scriptures (Deut 19:14; Prov 22:28). This same kind of men would steal the flocks and goods while their owners were absent. They took advantage of orphans and widows, insisting that they put up things needed for their livelihood as security for their debt. The poor and the hungry were frightened before these wicked people who seemed to go on their way unpunished for their terrible sins (Job 24:2-4).

We should have mercy on the honest poor (Ps 41:1). Job outlined how the wicked took advantage of the poor. They worked long hours and did not get honest wages. They did not have proper clothing or a place to live. The Scriptures strongly urge those who are employers to treat their employees well and not to take advantage of their poverty. Honest wages should be paid and given on time. Orphans and widows should not be taken advantage of but helped (Job 24:5-9; Deut 24:14-15, 17).

Today, even as in Job’s days, we see wicked men of power and wealth who take advantage of the poor without being punished for their wickedness (Job 24:10-12). However, we know that their judgment is sure. Christians who are employers should behave in a Christian way, as an example of God’s righteousness, mercy and justice.

THOUGHT: Name some of the seemingly unpunished sins listed here.

PRAYER: Father, help me to behave in a manner pleasing to Thee.

TUESDAY, MAY 24

JOB 24:13-17

PROVERBS 14:9-12

*“...among the righteous
there is favour.”*

MEN IN DARKNESS

Job gave a description of those wicked men who rebelled against God, despoiling the poor and helpless. They grew rich and powerful, seeming to have no care on this earth or concern about their coming judgment.

Often in the Scriptures, God and His truth are portrayed as light. Wicked men despise the light and rebel against it, refusing to follow God's way (Job 24:13; John 1:5; Ps 119:105, 130). Having refused the right way, they go in a way that seems right to them but which only ends in spiritual death. They find satisfaction in the many who are following them in rebellion against God (Prov 14:12; Matt 7:13-14).

We now have a description of some of the sins that are characteristic of those who rebel against God. They are murderers and take advantage of the poor and weak. They are constantly involved in adultery and those sins which are done in secret. They are thieves marking out things that belong to others in order to take them for themselves (Job 24:14-16).

When men rebel against God, they have nowhere to go but out into the darkness. Job said that the light was like death to them. They were frightened that their evil deeds would therefore be shown. The Scriptures tell us that men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil (Job 24:17; John 3:19).

As God's people, we are warned against having fellowship with those who walk in darkness because they are in rebellion against God. Since we, who know the Lord, have come to understand His righteousness, we must live properly, in God's way. Then we, as Christians, can show forth the light of God to others so that they may come to know Him (2 Cor 5:14-15; Matt 5:16).

THOUGHT: Why do evil men hate the light?

PRAYER: Help me, Father, to reflect Thy light to a wicked world.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 25

JOB 24:18-25

2 PETER 3:1-7

“...be mindful of the words

which were spoken...

by the holy prophets...”

JUDGMENT IS COMING

In this portion, Job seemed to be agreeing with his friends. Yet, to do this would be inconsistent with his position. We understand his words to be a prediction as to what will ultimately happen to wicked men, although in many cases, this does not take place at the present time.

The phrase “*swift as the waters*” (Job 24:18) gives the idea of the rapid passing of foam across the top of the water, so a wicked man’s life will be short and swift. Although evil men may die an easy death, their heritage is appointed to destruction by God because of sin. No one realises their hopes and plans by leaving their “*vineyards*” (their projects) empty and incomplete. Despite their power and wealth, their bodies will rot in the grave and ultimately, their heritage will be lost. They will not be remembered by those who follow them (Job 24:18-20).

Wicked men will continue to take advantage of the helpless and to show no kindness to those in need, but their eternal doom is sure. God is storing up judgment against them. Although they feel in control of life and rely on their own power, it is actually God who holds the key to life and death. God’s eyes see the ways of the wicked and they will not escape Him. Judgment will come upon them, but it will come in God’s time (Job 24:21-25; Prov 15:3; 2 Pet 2:9; 3:7).

The power of God has control over the wicked and reserves them for judgment. This same almighty power will deliver the godly from the trials and temptations of life (2 Pet 2:9). Let us be sure to walk in obedience to God’s Word. We will then be in the light and in fellowship with God so that He can guide and protect us each day.

THOUGHT: How do I know God’s judgment is sure?

PRAYER: Father, I love Thee, thus help me to obey Thee.

THURSDAY, MAY 26

JOB 25

PSALM 14

*“What is man, that thou
art mindful of him?”*

BILDAD’S FINAL ANSWER

Bildad had no new advice for his friend – all his arguments had not caused Job to waver from his position. Job insisted that he had no unconfessed sin before God which could have brought on his terrible tribulation. Thus, in his final speech, Bildad focused on two things: the greatness of God and the weakness of man.

God is supreme in power and glory, far above all the creatures of heaven and earth. He is Lord among the legions of heaven, commanding their reverence. There is no place that the power of God is not supreme (Job 25:1-3; Isa 40:26; Ps 115:3).

When man sees God in all His righteousness, he sees himself as a sinner, hopeless before the Almighty Creator. He cannot approach God to plead his case. Bildad voiced the cry of mankind down through the ages, *“How then can man be justified with God?”* (Job 25:4-6; Isa 64:6; Rom 5:12).

Bildad hoped that contrasting God’s righteousness and man’s wickedness would remind Job that he needed to humble himself before God. Basically, all that Bildad said in this last speech was true but it did not really answer Job’s problem.

It is true that man is a hopeless sinner before a righteous God. Man can do nothing for himself. However, there is hope because God, in His mercy, sent Jesus Christ to be a sacrifice for us. His death paid the penalty for our sins. When, by faith, we accept this payment on our behalf, we receive the righteousness of God so that we can stand before Him. This righteousness cannot be attained by religious rituals or good works in the hope of pleasing God. Our justification comes by faith alone, in the mercy and grace of God, as it is offered in Jesus Christ (Rom 5:1, 8-11).

May we, who know the joy of this salvation, live for God in order to show others the righteousness that we have in Him.

THOUGHT: What is sinful man’s only hope?

PRAYER: I thank Thee, Father, for Thy gift of eternal life through faith in Thy Son Jesus Christ.

FRIDAY, MAY 27

JOB 26:1-7

PSALM 89:1-7

*“I will sing of the mercies
of the LORD for ever...”*

JOB'S SECOND ANSWER

Although Bildad's speech was beautiful, like all the other advice offered, it gave no help to one in such intense suffering. Thus, Job opened this speech by remarking on the lack of help received from his friends. Although Job's friends accused him of ignorance of God's workings, he actually found that he knew more than they did. Bildad's speech was worthless as a means of aiding Job in his troubles because Bildad made no reference to the problem Job was facing. By a refusal to even consider Job's claim, his friends missed an opportunity to help him in his trouble. Job said that Bildad did not even use his own words but was passing on what he received from Eliphaz (Job 26:1-4).

Job continued to extol the majesty and power of God just as Bildad had done. He noted that God's power extended even to the lower parts of the earth, the realm of the dead. The Scriptures clearly present God as being omnipresent. His power extends over those things most feared by men who do not know Him – final destruction and the grave (Job 26:5-6; Ps 139:8; Prov 15:11).

Modern man, with his powerful telescope, has the ability to look far into the heavens. He is amazed by the great size of God's creation, but the Psalmist says the creation of the universe speaks of God's presence, power and glory (Ps 19:1-4). God's wrath is justly upon wicked men who, despite His effort to make His presence known in creation, ignore Him and claim themselves able to provide for their own needs (Rom 1:20-21).

How wonderful it is to know that our lives are in the hands of this great Creator who saves and keeps us by His mercy and grace!

THOUGHT: How does God make His presence known to the unsaved?

PRAYER: Thy creation, Father, declares Thy glory, majesty and power. All praise be unto Thee!

SATURDAY, MAY 28

JOB 26:8-14

PSALM 86:10-17

*“...thou, LORD, hast holpen me,
and comforted me.”*

HOW GREAT THOU ART

The Psalmist speaks of the greatness of God. In our supplemental reading for today, he extols the Lord with the words: *“For thou art great...thou art God alone”* (Ps 86:10). Job was unable to understand his circumstances as he had forgotten the majesty of God. Having God’s magnificence in our minds is a great deterrent against sin (Isa 6:1-5).

Job spoke of God’s power displayed in the forces of nature. He keeps the water in the clouds so it does not descend all at once and destroy the earth as in Noah’s day (Job 26:8). God’s throne, from which He controls His creation, has between it and the earth, dark clouds which provide rain at appointed times (Job 26:9; Lev 26:4). Although the earth and its surroundings contain far more water than land, God, by His almighty power, keeps the water in its place so that man can have a proper abode (Job 26:10; Ps 104:9; Gen 1:9-10).

In the poetic form of Job, the mountains were called the pillars of heaven. Even these astonishing towers of heaven tremble at the voice of God. His power controls all the forces of nature as well as the great and terrible beasts of the sea (Job 26:11-13; Ps 95:5; Mark 4:39).

All of God’s awe-inspiring power that we see in the control of nature is but a small part of the extent of His greatness. Like a whisper of a mighty voice, we catch but a glimpse of the God of our salvation in what we see in the universe (Job 26:14).

It is this great God who saves and keeps us. He gives perfect peace in times of trouble and difficulty. What a joy to be able to rest in Him as we live for Him from day to day (Ps 29:11).

THOUGHT: In what way can man see the power of God?

PRAYER: What a joy to know that Thou, the God of creation, cares for me! How great Thou art!

JOB'S INTEGRITY

Job's friends had insisted that no man could be righteous before God. Therefore, Job ought to take these warnings into consideration and admit that he was sinful. While Job recognised the universal sinfulness of man, it was not an explanation for his own suffering. He recognised that because of God's grace, a man can be righteous before Him. Job continued to insist that he was not hiding any unconfessed sin. Hence, despite all his suffering, he refused to allow his confidence to be shaken.

Job reaffirmed his relationship with God. Just as sure as God lived and as sure as he had been dealt with harshly, he was innocent. He could not change his position because he had not lied. From the very beginning, we have seen Job's insistence that his relationship with God was good. Because of that relationship, he was confident that his suffering was not brought about by sin. In his closing answer, he again proclaimed this truth (Job 27:1-7).

Job looked beyond this life to see the eternal destiny of the hypocrite who acts as a believer but lives without faith in God and lives in sin. The time will come when God will require his soul (Luke 12:20). There will no longer be an opportunity to trust in the One that has been rejected during life on earth (Matt 7:21-23). Although Job's life had been difficult, he drew strength from the assurance of a right relationship with God. This is something that the ungodly do not have whether they are rich or poor.

The wicked cannot truly delight in the Lord or His law. Job had been able to do this and even in his affliction found comfort in remembering his past relationship with God.

When we, who are God's people, find our true pleasure in doing His will and obeying His commands, we then have great comfort (Ps 43:3-5).

THOUGHT: In what did Job find comfort?

PRAYER: Father, may I always put my hope in Thee.

MONDAY, MAY 30

JOB 27:11-18

PSALM 62:1-5

*“...God...is my defence;
I shall not be greatly moved.”*

THE WAY OF THE WICKED

Job's friends had been teaching him about God's dealings from their ideas formed through the wisdom of the world. Now, Job would teach them about God's actions from the things they had seen Him do. He challenged his friends to acknowledge that they had actually seen these things for themselves. Very often, people do not wish to face the realities of life because they conflict with their own ideas (Job 27:11-12).

Job explained the ultimate end of wicked men. They might have many descendants and seemed to have lived in success but, sooner or later, these descendants would suffer from war, hunger or disease. This is God's punishment on the wicked and it will come in His time. Some will say that God is unjust to punish the descendants of the wicked. However, the truth of the matter is that God does not really need to do anything to them. When men live in rebellion against God, it ultimately brings not only calamity into their lives but also eternal damnation. These things come into the life of the wicked because of their attitude towards God (Job 27:14-15). However, those who guard their souls from sin are kept safe from the thorns and snares (Prov 22:5).

The wicked may gather riches as the dust of the earth and have far more clothing than they can wear, but ultimately these will all be lost. All that the wicked have built will be as fragile as a moth's cocoon or a temporary shelter. Nothing that wicked men acquire has eternal value (Job 27:16-18).

Just as there is a great gulf between God and wicked men, there is a strong bond between God and His people. We can rest in the promise that the God who never sleeps is close to us and always hears us when we call (Prov 15:29).

THOUGHT: Why do the children of the wicked often suffer?

PRAYER: Father, help me not to waste my life on that which has no value. May I live always with eternal values in view.

TUESDAY, MAY 31

JOB 27:19-23

PSALM 23

*“the... ungodly shall not
stand in the judgment...”*

THE DEATH OF THE WICKED

The worst horror presented in the Scriptures is the death of those who reject God's salvation. The wicked may work to gather wealth and feel they control their own destiny. They may become powerful, famous and may live in great comfort, but even if just retribution does not come on this earth, it will certainly come in eternity. The wicked rich prepare only for a life of comfort but, in His time, God will require their souls. The wicked man will lie down one night in all the comforts wealth brings but will wake in eternity to face his terrible destiny (Job 27:19-21; Ps 37:1-2).

The answer to the question why some evil men begin their suffering on this earth while others do not suffer their punishment until eternity is hidden in the mind of God. God has not chosen to reveal His purpose in this but we know that He is just and all His dealings with mankind are fair and right.

Wicked men in death are stripped of the wealth and power they have spent all their lives to gain. They have lived in rebellion against God, knowing that He will judge those who live in this way (Rom 1:32). Rich and poor outside of Christ all face death and final judgment from which there is no escape (Heb 9:27). Living in self-righteousness while condemning others will not fool God or enable such men to escape His judgment (Rom 2:3).

Man's only hope of salvation lies in Jesus Christ. Those who know Him can face life's end with great boldness. Job was confused and, at times, bitter but he maintained an integrity with regard to righteousness and God's mercy (Ps 71:5).

At this juncture, we must ask ourselves where we place our trust. If we trust in wealth, it brings no redemption. If we trust in ourselves, we will fail in the final day of judgment. However, if we trust in God, we have eternal redemption in Jesus Christ (Ps 49:6-7, 13-15; Rom 4:5).

THOUGHT: In what way did Job show his integrity?

PRAYER: Father, I know that sin's penalty is death, but Thy gift is eternal life. I thank Thee, Father, for saving me through Thy Son Jesus Christ.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 1

JOB 28:1-12

1 CORINTHIANS 1:17-21

“...wisdom is better than rubies...”

MAN’S USELESS SEARCH

Job’s three friends came to comfort him in his time of affliction. However, rather than comforting him, they intensified his suffering by their accusations. These men insisted that because God was a righteous, perfect being, He always punished sin immediately and, therefore, all suffering was because of unconfessed sin. Job, then, had to have hidden sin and if he would confess it, the suffering would cease and God would restore him.

On the other hand, Job held that it was obvious that at times, the righteous suffered and the wicked prospered. These things were in the hand of God and Job was unable to understand God at this point. But Job knew that whether the wicked prospered or suffered, they would all face the holy God and just retribution in the end. Job saw himself as a righteous man suffering unjustly and could not understand this. He hoped for vindication in this life but, if not, he had full assurance that God, as his Redeemer, would vindicate him in the hereafter.

Job showed his terrible frustration in being unable to understand his situation. We have here a detailed description of how man goes about mining deep in the earth for gold, precious gems and other metals. It is amazing how in days of old, man had already discovered various ways of extracting wealth from the earth (Job 28:1-11). Job remarked that despite man’s ability to extract wealth from the earth, he had never learned to acquire knowledge about spiritual things and had no idea of where such knowledge might be found (Job 28:12).

As King David told his son Solomon, it is only the Lord who can give true wisdom and understanding (1 Chron 22:12). May we search for wisdom from the Lord as diligently as the men of old searched for hidden wealth so that God can guide us from day to day.

THOUGHT: What is being described in Job 28:1-11?

PRAYER: Father, may I understand that true prosperity comes from following Thy godly wisdom.

THURSDAY, JUNE 2

JOB 28:13-28

PROVERBS 3:13-21

*“The fear of the LORD is the
beginning of wisdom...”*

WISDOM COMES FROM GOD

In the early verses of this chapter, Job gave an account of man as he searched for hidden riches in the earth. While man is skilled at doing this, he cannot find spiritual wisdom and understanding. Yet, these things are far more precious than the material wealth men labour so hard to obtain. In fact, all of man's wealth cannot buy wisdom, nor can it be found by man on his own (Job 28:13-21; Prov 3:13-15).

God alone is the source of true spiritual wisdom. He knows all things from eternity past to eternity future (Job 28:23-27). Some of these things are not open for man to know and are hidden in the mind of God (Eccles 3:11). On the other hand, there is also spiritual truth which God reveals to His people. These things are to be kept not only for ourselves but to be handed down to our children and carried throughout the earth (Job 28:28; Deut 29:29).

At first glance, Job seemed to have departed from the subject, but as his mind cleared of its confusion, his implicit faith in God shone through. As the arguments progressed, he began to present his case more clearly. He declared that the answer to his problem was not in the discussions of man but in the wisdom of God.

As we go through life, may we also learn this lesson that Job was slowly learning. The real answer to all of the problems and difficulties of life does not lie with man's wisdom or with long discussions concerning this. However, the answer to the problems and difficulties of life lies in God's revelation of His holy Word. As we study God's Word, we find the proper way to live so that we may please God and be the recipients of His blessing. May we be true students of His Word so that He may bless and guide us from day to day.

THOUGHT: How does man find wisdom?

PRAYER: Help me, Father, to put Thee first in my life. I thank Thee, for the promise that Thou wilt direct my life into paths of blessing.

FRIDAY, JUNE 3

JOB 29:1-11

PSALM 46:1-7

*“Put not your trust in princes,
...in whom there is no help.”*

A LONGING FOR REST

A song writer penned these words: “When the road is rough and steep, fix your eyes upon Jesus.” Sometimes, the difficulties of life seem almost more than we can bear. Certainly, this was true of Job. He was suffering unbelievably and he did not know why. Job did not have the Scriptures which could have revealed to him the promises of God, on which he could depend in his trouble. He did not know the wonderful truth about looking to the Lord. Not having the written Word, in his suffering, Job forgot the wonderful comfort which comes from looking to the Lord and depending on His unfailing justice and grace.

He did not understand the great truth that God is always with His people. While we do not always understand what He is doing, we can always rely on His tender care and mercy. We know that in life’s darkest hour, the Lord will be with us and guide us (Ps 27:10-11). Not knowing this, Job thought that his trouble had come because God was no longer with him. He longed for those days when he was sure God was present and leading him (Job 29:1-5).

Seeing the trouble and destruction around him, Job longed for the past days of blessings. In those days, he had wealth, family, and the honour of his people, but now all this was gone and, even worse than losing these things, he felt sure that God’s blessings had also departed (Job 29:6-11).

We must remember Job had suffered the loss of not only his wealth but also of his family and his own health. Many of God’s people are called upon to suffer. We may see those we love called from us and our own health deteriorate. Yet, unlike Job, we have the written promises of the completed Scriptures.

Let us rest in these words given to Joshua and later to us: “...*I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee*” (Josh 1:5). God will never leave us or forsake us, so that we can boldly say in life’s darkest hour that the Lord is our helper (Heb 13:6; Ps 46:1-5).

THOUGHT: Why did Job think God had left him?

PRAYER: May I always remember, Father, that though others fail me, I can always depend on Thee.

A GODLY LIFE

The Scriptures teach that true Christians will reflect their faith by their lives. Being considerate of those in difficult situations is an example of godly love. From the time of the giving of the law throughout the Scriptures, we are charged with being concerned with orphans, widows and others in trouble (Exod 22:22; James 1:27).

Job thought back on his former life when he saw himself blessed by God. He testified that he had obeyed God in taking care of orphans, widows and others in need. He was concerned about justice in the land and protected the poor from those who would have taken advantage of them (Job 29:12-17).

The Scriptures do not teach a "social gospel," i.e. a religion of good works. Yet, God's Word clearly teaches that those who are His children should care about others and Job had done this throughout his life. He showed his faith by his works and we should do the same (James 2:18).

Due to his obedience, Job believed that he would live and die in the wealth and blessing God had given him. He assumed that his kind and gentle manner would preserve the respect and admiration of his friends. He never expected that God would allow calamity of any kind to befall him and certainly not the unbelievable devastation that had come upon him (Job 29:18-25).

In all of this, we see Job's misunderstanding of his part in God's eternal purpose. He did not understand that his physical blessings, while they were indeed from God, were not as important as the eternal reward his suffering would gain.

We too, like Job, may be called upon to suffer for a while to accomplish God's eternal purpose. At such times, may we be encouraged by remembering that our difficulties will last just for a moment, but our blessing will be eternal (2 Cor 4:17).

THOUGHT: Why did Job not understand his problems?

PRAYER: Father, may I truly understand that to suffer knowing Christ is better than a life of ease without Him.

JOB'S LAMENT

Job, who was once a powerful man and honoured by his neighbours, was now not even respected by the sons of worthless men. These men without ambition had to eat salt herbs (a wild plant eaten only by the destitute). Such men were vagabonds mocked by others, often stealing if the opportunity presented itself. They had no hope of gaining the respect of their fellow men (Job 30:1-8).

Again, Job mentioned the sons of these destitute men who mocked and shunned him. Before, they would have been proud if he had just noticed them, but now all Job's dignity and the safety that it would have accorded were gone. In those days, when there were no police or army to speak of, men had to look after the safety of their own families. Often, men gathered their families under the leadership and protection of a wealthy man. Job, with his servants and family members, would present a formidable group against wicked men. As a man of renown, he would be relatively safe from attack, but now this safety was gone. He had lost not only his wealth and position but also the safety it provided (Job 30:9-15).

We can contrast Job 29:20 with 30:11. In the former, Job had confidence that God would renew his "bow," while in the latter, God, rather than renewing, is seen as unstringing or making it useless. In the Old Testament, the bow often referred to a nation's power so God, in the former days of Job's life, constantly renewed his strength. However, now Job saw God as taking away all that he had and leaving him without the ability to protect himself.

We see the effect of constant pain and trouble on Job. If we are careless in our spiritual life, when difficulties come, our eyes will be on these difficulties. When this happens, our relationship with God will deteriorate. We, who know the Scriptures, realise that God is always with us and when difficulties come, He will provide all that we need to see us through (2 Cor 12:7-9).

THOUGHT: What lesson do I often learn when troubles come?

PRAYER: Father, may I always be assured that Thou wilt never forsake me.

MONDAY, JUNE 6

JOB 30:16-19

PSALM 146

When Satan tempts and doubt and fears assail, look to the Lamb of God.

CONFUSION AND DESPAIR

It is sad to see a Christian who is confused and in despair concerning the trials of life. As this account unfolds, this was Job's position. We need to remind ourselves once again, however, that he did not have the written revelation of God. Nevertheless, God would have comforted Job if he had not fixed his mind on his sufferings and, through human reasoning, became confused. Due to this, he could not dwell on the promises of God and find comfort there.

As God's people, we must be careful not to allow all this to happen to us. At the same time, we must be gentle with the children of God who are going through great times of difficulty and are confused and discouraged. We should endeavour to help them see the truth of God's promises and understand His workings and power.

Job started this part of his lament talking about the terrible physical suffering that he was undergoing. He saw his life ebbing away and felt, as it were, pain in the very bones of his body (Job 30:16-17). Perhaps, the very worst thing of all, however, was that God seemed to overcome him by His mighty power. That same power that once worked on his behalf now seemed to be crushing him with one tragedy after another.

From time to time in the Psalms, it seemed to King David that God's people were in danger of being destroyed. He would cry out, even as Job, and say: "Lord, you have seen what is happening, do not remain silent, do not be far from me, move Thyself, Lord, to work on my behalf" (Job 30:18-19; Ps 35:22-23).

We must be sure not to fix our minds on our troubles, but on God's promises and faithfulness. This will prevent us from sinking into this kind of despair and enable us to live with assurance and joy even in the face of great difficulties.

THOUGHT: Why was Job in such despair?

PRAYER: Father, may I live each day looking unto Jesus.

TUESDAY, JUNE 7

JOB 30:20-31

PSALM 102:1-11

*“Hope thou in God...who is
the health of my countenance...”*

LIFE'S DARKEST HOUR

Job said he cried out to God but He did not act. Rather than answering his supplications, God seemed to strike out at him again and again. At this point, Job was convinced that God had not only turned against him but would ultimately pursue him to the very grave (Job 30:20-23).

Job proclaimed that it was unfair not to comfort those in great distress. In better days, Job himself had comforted others who were in trouble and suffering. Yet now Job, looking for good, saw only evil. His body was racked with pain and in his desperation, he saw himself as the companion of the most miserable and despised animals. He no longer experienced any joy and his only song was the sound of mourning. No one, not even the God of his salvation, seemed to care (Job 30:23-31).

In life's darkest hour, we must constantly remind ourselves of the promises of God. He is near to all who call upon Him in truth, God's Word being truth, and He fulfils the desires of those who worship Him and He will preserve all who love Him (Ps 146:8-9). From time to time, we can see from Job's words that in principle he recognised this truth. Yet, at this point, because of his terrible trouble, he was totally defeated.

In Psalm 102, the Psalmist spoke of a time when he was in great trouble. It seemed like no one cared and life with its sorrow was hardly worth living. He felt like he might fail in the long wait for God's complete salvation, but at that point, he placed his faith totally in the Word of God and trusted in His promises. Psalm 119:81: *“My soul fainteth for thy salvation: but I hope in thy word.”*

Let us also learn to rest in the promises of God. In this way, even in life's darkest hour, we can know the joy and peace that God has promised His children and we can live looking forward to that day when the Lord will call us to be with Himself and all suffering will be over.

THOUGHT: What should I do in time of trouble?

PRAYER: I thank Thee, Father, that in life's darkest hour, Thou hast promised to hold me in Thine hand.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 8

JOB 31:1-23

PSALM 86:1-7

*“Thou art my hiding place and
my shield: I hope in thy word.”*

A LIFE OF OBEDIENCE

When God called Satan’s attention to Job, God said that Job was a man that was righteous in all his ways (Job 1:8). In an attempt to defend himself against his friends’ accusation that he was hiding sin, Job gave testimony to that righteous life. He did not realise at the time that it was this very righteousness that had caused his trouble. He had not learned the truth that all who live in obedience to God would suffer in one way or another (2 Tim 3:12).

In his defence against his friends’ false accusation, Job noted that God knew all things. Therefore, if he had been involved in any gross wickedness necessitating punishment under God’s righteous decrees, God would have known this. If he had committed sin and had not confessed it and made it right, God would also have known this (Job 31:1-6).

Job listed the various categories of sin of which a man might be guilty. After listing these, he noted the punishment prescribed for such sins. He was more than willing, if found guilty of any of these by God, to suffer just punishment, mentioning in his list immorality, injustice, lack of kindness to the poor and claiming that he had never been involved in any of these sins. Job had lived an obedient life, knowing that the day of judgment would be a terrible thing for those who spurned God’s salvation (Job 31:7-23; Isa 13:6).

Job once again exhibited confusion concerning his difficulties. He was not aware that Satan could cause difficulty to come into the life of an obedient child of God. Job (even you and I today) had much to learn about God’s dealings with His children.

When we face difficulties, may we think of Job’s problems and confusion. Let us thank the Lord that in our time of trouble we do have His written Word to enlighten us and help us along life’s way.

THOUGHT: How can Job’s experience help us?

PRAYER: Father, help me to daily fix my eyes on Thee and Thy Word.

THURSDAY, JUNE 9

JOB 31:24-40

PSALM 119:33-40

*“The fear of the LORD is
to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy...”*

A LOVE FOR GOD’S WAY

Job continued to speak about the fact that he loved righteousness, hated evil and endeavoured to live in a way that would please God all of his life.

He was careful not to put any confidence in his personal wealth, although at one time it was very great, as he realised wealth could not buy anything of eternal value (Job 31:24-25). Also, he was not involved in idol worship even though it was going on all around him. These verses refer to the worship of heavenly bodies which was among the oldest of false religions. These heavenly bodies were often shown respect by throwing kisses from the hand toward them (Job 31:26-28; Deut 4:19). Job abhorred the sins of the world and any form of idol worship because these things offended the Lord (Col 3:5).

Job continued speaking of his hatred of sin because it offended God. He did not seek revenge against his enemies because vengeance belongs to God and His people should rest in this truth (Job 31:29-31; Deut 32:35; Rom 12:19). He was hospitable to strangers and he was never a hypocrite about sin. Despite his high position, he did not allow sin to hide in his heart but he confessed it (Job 31:32-34). We recall Job’s weekly sacrifices for his children and must grant that he made them also for himself (1 John 1:8-9).

Now, Job’s desire was that God speak to him and give him the needed understanding for the way ahead (Job 31:35). In this, once again, we see that Job understood many things about man’s relationship with God. For it is God alone who can show us the right way to live and provide us with the answers to all of our problems.

THOUGHT: Why did Job hate sin?

PRAYER: Father, may I always remember that as a true Christian I must have no part in heathen worship.

FRIDAY, JUNE 10

JOB 32

PSALM 37:1-7

*“If any...bridleth not his tongue,
...this man’s religion is vain.”*

ELIHU SPEAKS

Through all of the discussions, a younger man sat quietly listening to the comments of his older companions. Finally, when all the others had exhausted their wisdom, Elihu spoke.

He was angered both by Job and his three friends. He was angry with Job because Job was more concerned with his own innocence than with God’s justice. He was angered by the friends because even though they had no answer to Job’s problem they condemned him anyway (Job 32:1-3).

Elihu had patiently remained silent while his elders spoke. However, we must sometimes recognise that wisdom is not always with the great or with the old. It is interesting to note here that the name Elihu means “he is my God.” He evidently had a personal relationship with God and not just a philosophical idea about Him. Now he wished to speak about the problem (Job 32:4-9).

Elihu had quietly listened through the long arguments (Job 32:11-14). Now, he spoke because he had some truth which had not been considered. Some people like to speak just to be heard, like the three friends who repeated the same arguments long after Job had proven them to be untrue, but Elihu was mindful of the danger of idle words. He would not answer Job by repeating the speeches of his three friends or their ideas dressed up in other words (Job 32:14; Matt 12:36; Ps 139:4).

Elihu said he would teach without showing favour to anyone, neither would he flatter nor take sides. This is necessary if one is to be honest in giving forth God’s truth. God is no respecter of persons, so His servants must be faithful in teaching His Word without showing favouritism or partiality (Job 32:21-22; 1 Thess 2:5; 2 Cor 2:17).

May we, like Elihu, speak God’s wisdom rather than man’s and do it in a clear and honest way in order that the truth of God’s Word may be brought forth.

THOUGHT: What good points did Elihu exhibit?

PRAYER: Father, may I speak Thy Word without fear or favour.

SATURDAY, JUNE 11

JOB 33:1-13

2 THESSALONIANS 2:5-11

*“He that speaketh truth
sheweth forth righteousness...”*

A MAN SPEAKS FOR GOD

Elihu wanted to speak honestly in the hope of helping Job, recognising that he was just a man created by God. He did not want to frighten or condemn, but only to enlighten. He felt that he had the proper answer and demanded that Job stand up and give a direct answer to his comments (Job 33:1-7).

Elihu's attitude was in stark contrast to Job's three friends. These men had a certain amount of divine truth, but they tried to meet the problem with human reasoning. Such reasoning never brings spiritual understanding but only confusion (1 Cor 3:19; 2 Cor 5:7). They were so set in their religious dogma that they were not open to further teaching. Like Job's friends, the spiritual growth of many Christians is stunted because they feel they possess all spiritual truth.

A major basis for the three friends' dogma was their certainty that they were able to judge men accurately, but man is unable to do this because he can only look on the outward appearance. On the other hand, God is able to judge man properly because He can look at the inner man (1 Sam 16:7).

Elihu stated that Job was wrong when he insinuated that God's punishment was a questionable act. Job had said he was righteous before God but God punished him harshly anyway. Elihu said this was wrong because it cast aspersions on the justice of God. Elihu did not say Job was lying when he claimed a proper relationship with God but he did say that Job was wrong to complain about God's dealings constantly. In so doing, Job implied that God had acted improperly (Job 33:8-13). We too must be careful of the implications of our speech so that we do not appear to say things we do not mean.

We see in Elihu a willingness to listen and to learn. May we also come to the Scriptures with open hearts and minds so that the Lord can teach us in the proper way.

THOUGHT: What made Elihu different from Job's other friends?

PRAYER: Father, help me to firmly base my beliefs on the Scriptures.

LISTEN TO GOD

Job had complained that God did not speak to him. Elihu said that God did speak, but man did not always choose to hear. The inference was that God did speak to Job but because He did not seem to address Job's immediate problem, Job did not listen. We, too, may become so concerned with a problem that when God tries to teach a greater truth, we are also unable to hear (Job 33:14).

In times past, God spoke through dreams and visits. Today, He speaks through His Word. Hence, we need to be quiet and meditate upon the Word in order to hear Him (Job 33:15; Ps 4:4; 119:11).

When we listen to God, He teaches and instructs us. By His Word, He keeps us from the evil plans of our sinful nature, thus protecting us from sin. The Psalmist says, *"By the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer"* (Ps 17:4). Elihu agreed, saying that God withdraws man from man's purpose (Job 33:16-17; Prov 3:5-6).

If we are wilfully disobedient, God may send hardship to bring us back into the proper way. Sin in the life of the believer brings broken fellowship, lost service and discipline from a loving heavenly Father (Job 33:19-22; Heb 12:6).

When man comes to the Creator in repentance to plead the blood of the ransom, he will be accepted and given God's righteousness. This speaks of both salvation for the sinner and restoration for the Christian who has fallen into sin (Job 33:26-28; 1 John 1:9-2:2).

Elihu stopped to give Job a chance to reply, but Job was silenced by this young teacher's wisdom. He had been reminded that in his suffering, God might well be speaking to him and he needed to consider this truth (Job 33:32-33).

In times of trouble, may we also be aware that God may be speaking to us, and let us listen so that we may be comforted and guided by His Word.

THOUGHT: What was Elihu's major point in this portion?

PRAYER: I thank Thee, Father, that in Thy love, Thou dealest with me concerning my sin.

CARELESS SPEECH

Some of the harshest words Elihu spoke against Job are found in this portion. By insisting that God had been dealing with him harshly, Job insinuated that a good relationship with God was of little value on earth. Job did not actually say the words attributed to him here, but he did express an almost fatalistic view of life when he spoke of God in His sovereignty moving against good and evil men alike (Job 34:1-9; 9:22).

We must grant that in his despair, Job had overemphasized his position. He spoke more severely of God than he had really intended to. Perhaps, Elihu was too strong in his accusation. He ignored the fact that Job was suffering when the victorious cry burst forth from his lips: *“I know that my redeemer liveth”* (Job 19:25). On the other hand, Elihu had a point. When Job spoke as he did, he sounded just like the wicked men of this world. They said that a good relationship with God was of no help so far as the trials of life were concerned (Job 34:8-9).

Elihu reminded Job of God's justice and mercy. Although man may not always understand His actions, he can always be sure of God's justice as well as His mercy (Job 34:12; Ps 89:14).

God, who created everything, is supreme. No one gave Him power (Ps 89:11; Heb 1:2). Yet, this mighty God is mindful of man. It is His power that gives man life and keeps the earth as a proper habitation for him. Elihu presented this truth in a negative sense, saying that if God were not mindful of man, He would just withdraw His power and mankind would cease to exist. We are reminded of this same truth in the New Testament (Job 34:13-15; Heb 1:3).

May we, even in the most difficult times, be mindful of God's mercy and grace in giving life and providing for us all that we need to pass through this life in spiritual victory.

THOUGHT: Why was Elihu so harsh with Job?

PRAYER: Father, may I be aware that my careless words may damage the testimony of my faith.

MONDAY, JUNE 13

JOB 34:21-37

PSALM 69:1-6

*“For my thoughts
are not your thoughts...”*

RESTING IN GOD’S MERCY

God, in His sovereignty, knows all about the activities of man. Since God’s knowledge is complete, we can be assured of His perfect justice. He will never allow us to suffer more than is just and right according to His perfect plan (Job 34:21-23; Ps 69:5).

Elihu’s conclusion seemed surprisingly like that of Job’s three friends but there was a major difference. He did not accuse Job of unconfessed sin but accused him of falling into sin during his time of suffering. Job now needed to graciously accept the chastening of the Lord and repent of his sin in questioning God’s justice. He should ask the Lord to teach him that which he needed to learn from his present difficulties. It is a wise Christian who accepts God’s reproof and profits from it (Job 34:31-37; Prov 6:23; Heb 12:7).

This challenge to repentance was an effort to get Job to prepare his heart for God’s visit. God will not meet with His people when they have unconfessed sin in their hearts (Isa 1:15-16).

At this point, the biggest problem Job had to face was his bitterness and anger. We can see a number of reasons for this attitude. Job was going through tremendous physical, mental and spiritual anguish. He had been driven to the edge of human endurance. Second, Job had taken his eyes from the Lord and begun to dwell on his suffering. This obscured the face of God and the strength which He would have given to Job.

We have learned a number of lessons so far from this great book of Job. One is to be merciful and gracious toward those who are going through intense suffering. We ourselves must be strong in the faith and quietly listen to the voice of God in our times of trouble so that our testimony will honour the Lord.

THOUGHT: What was Job’s major problem at this point?

PRAYER: Help me, Father, to walk with Thee daily, so that I may learn more of Thee.

TUESDAY, JUNE 14

JOB 35

PSALM 138

*Our words are the evidence
of the state of our hearts...
(J C Ryle)*

ELIHU'S THIRD SPEECH BEGINS

Elihu pointed out the inconsistency in Job's position. On one hand, he trusted in God's justice and expected to be eventually vindicated. On the other hand, he implied that there was no reason to live a righteous life since God seemed to punish such a person anyway. Elihu said he would now give an answer to Job's inconsistent position (Job 35:1-4).

We note again that Job had not actually said some of the things Elihu attributed to him, but Job had in his bitterness implied them. What Job's statements showed was that at times he looked beyond his troubles and saw the just and merciful God he had trusted all his life. At other times, he was so overcome with his suffering that he lost sight of God. At these times, he implied things he did not really mean. Job was now challenged to take his eyes from the world and look toward the God of heaven. His own troubles would then become small in the light of God's majesty.

Elihu claimed that good and evil carry their own reward or punishment, so God did not have to act when men chose one or the other (Job 35:5-8). When their wickedness brought trouble and men cried out in their suffering, it was not really in supplication to God so much as in anger and pride because they felt unjustly punished. For this reason, God often did not answer, and this was probably why He had not answered Job, Elihu said (Job 35:9-16; Ps 138:6).

We should learn from this portion the importance of knowing the Scriptures before we try to help others. A daily study of the Word will build us up in the faith, giving us greater spiritual knowledge and maturity. It is only in this way that we can encourage rather than discourage others in their times of special need.

THOUGHT: What in Elihu's speech was correct?

PRAYER: Help me, Father, to remember that Thou dost not hear the prayers of the proud and arrogant.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 15

JOB 36:1-17

PSALM 94:12-19

Grace is stronger than circumstances.

(J C Ryle)

GOD DOES HEAR AND CARE

Elihu now made his fourth and final speech asking Job to be patient and listen. He claimed his knowledge came from God and was, therefore, correct and would meet Job's needs (Job 36:1-4).

Although God is mighty and far above all, He does not fail to consider man. He is impartial in His judgment and gives the same attention to the weak as to the great. He does not forget the evil of wicked men although it sometimes appears that He does. The wicked go through life gathering as their only treasure God's wrath for eternity (Rom 2:5). God does watch over the righteous and, at times, they are exalted to places of leadership. If the righteous fall into sin, God sends suffering to bring them back to the right path and teach them His truth. When they repent of their sin, they find blessing from the Lord, but if they refuse to listen, they will fail to benefit from the Lord's teaching and their days of effective service will be over (Job 36:5-12; Ps 94:12).

God will deliver the poor from their distress (Job 36:6, 15). We should note that the word "*poor*" in Job 36:6 does not indicate a lack of wealth, but one who is humble of heart and quiet before God. Elihu said that God would deliver Job from his suffering if he would stop judging God's actions and accept His sovereign will. In questioning the dealings of God, Job had reacted as the wicked would (Job 36:15-17).

Elihu had cut through all of the previous rhetoric to outline the truth about God's dealings with man. Also, he pointed out to Job the problem of his present sin, which was bitterness and anger against God. We must remember that while we often cannot understand what God is doing, He always does that which is right and best for us. May we be humble before Him and accept His dealings and plans. Then, God will not only bless us but meet our needs in times of trouble.

THOUGHT: How does God deal with the righteous who fall into sin?

PRAYER: Father, I acknowledge Thy righteousness. May Thou direct my paths in the way of blessings.

THURSDAY, JUNE 16

JOB 36:20-33

PSALM 147:1-7

*Praise is the best of all sacrifices
and the true evidence of godliness.*

(J Calvin)

LET US PRAISE HIM

Elihu was concerned that Job's bitterness might cause him to rebel against God. Often, when our own plans fail and this causes embarrassment, rather than looking to the Lord for the reasons of the failure, we become bitter and tend to disobey Him. It is a sad fact that at the very moment when God's people need the fellowship of the church and those who love Him, they begin to withdraw from this fellowship. Job was faced with this very problem and Elihu was right in warning him (Job 36:20-21). In times of trouble, we must remember that God is exalted above all and is complete in knowledge. There is no one who can teach Him, but He can teach us all things. We should think of the Psalmist who pleaded with God to teach him His ways (Job 36:22-23; Ps 25:4-5).

Now, Elihu challenged Job to praise God as this would take his eyes from his own trouble and keep him from sin. Perhaps, it is right to say that the church today needs to learn the lesson of praising God. We notice that Elihu did not tell Job to praise God for what He had done for Job, but to praise God for who He is. He should praise Him for His works, His greatness and His eternal existence (Job 36:22-26; Ps 134:1-3).

God should also be praised for the glories of creation which speak of His power. He should be praised for His guiding hand in the affairs of men and provision for mankind, both good and evil (Job 36:27-33).

Let us learn to praise the Lord as did the men of old. Let us praise Him for Himself, remembering that we can love Him only because He first loved us. May we rest in the glory of His power and His grace, with His praise always on our lips. Surely, this will keep us from sin and will cause us to walk in obedience to the One who has loved us and saved us by His grace.

THOUGHT: What was Elihu's concern?

PRAYER: I praise Thee, Father, for who Thou art. May my praises of Thee be always on my lips.

CONSIDER GOD'S GREATNESS

Elihu stood in fear and trembling as he considered the power of God as displayed in nature. The thunder, snow and rain all speak to men of the existence of the righteous, holy, almighty God (Job 37:1-13; Acts 14:17; Rom 1:19-20).

Elihu challenged Job to consider God's greatness as displayed in His work of creation. Since man cannot understand God's workings in nature or the universe, how could he expect to understand His workings with regard to man's suffering? We have seen the greatness of God in His creative work and we do not question Him on that point. Therefore, what right do we have to question Him on any other matter (Job 37:14-20)? We cannot understand God's thoughts, power or manner of operation – He is too great for the human mind to comprehend (Rom 11:33). Yet, God is just and will deal with man according to His mercy. And if man will meet Him by faith, he can find forgiveness (Heb 11:6). Thus, we must worship Him in obedience (Job 37:23-24; Ps 134).

With these verses, Elihu's speeches ended. Unlike the three friends of Job, Elihu did not insist that Job's suffering came because of secret sin. Elihu claimed Job's suffering was extended by his lack of humility. Job had sinned in not accepting his suffering and accusing God of being overly harsh. He challenged Job to repent and accept God's effort to teach him. If he would do this, there would be restoration and blessing from the Lord. Elihu did not deal with the reason for Job's suffering, but he assured Job that God is always just and works all things for good for His people (Heb 12:11).

In pointing out to Job his sin, Elihu was leading him to repentance. We suspect, by Job's lack of response to Elihu, that he had seen his error and was prepared to hear the voice of God.

THOUGHT: What was Elihu's major challenge to Job?

PRAYER: Father, help me to submit to Thy will because Thy way is the best way.

SATURDAY, JUNE 18

JOB 38:1-11

PSALM 73:24-28

*The fear of God
is the soul of godliness.
(J Murray)*

GOD SPEAKS

Through almost the entire book of Job, we have seen men arguing their positions. Job's three friends were so sure their position was right that they called on God to judge those who had different views (Job 11:5). Job was so sure that he was right that he actually questioned God's actions.

Job longed for God to speak, but now, as He did, He did not say what Job had expected. He did not speak concerning His righteousness or allow Job to question Him concerning his suffering. Instead, God's voice thundered out of the whirlwind and questioned Job's unwise speech. God demanded that Job prepare to answer the questions He had for him (Job 38:1-3).

Job had his own wisdom and that of his friends, but he lacked God's counsel which is the only path to eternal truth. The Lord will provide His counsel if we will listen to Him (Prov 19:21).

Two questions were directed at Job by the Almighty God. First: Job, where were you when the foundation of the earth was laid? Second: Job, who was it that determined the boundaries of the oceans and holds them in their place (Job 38:4-11)? We remember from Scripture that it is the power of God's voice that locks the oceans in their place (Gen 1:9). Awareness of this mighty power should cause men to stand in awe and worship the Almighty God. God asked Jeremiah, "*Fear ye not me?*" (Jer 5:22). Job and his friends had lost the reverential fear of God. It is in this fear that we find the beginning of wisdom.

As we walk along life's way, may we be careful not to lose our reverential trust in God. May we constantly think of His mighty power in creation and remember that this power is working on our behalf. This should cause us to have a spirit of humility so that we can learn from God's holy Word.

THOUGHT: What are two questions that God asked Job?

PRAYER: Father, guard my reverential trust in Thee. May I never lose it.

GOD'S MAJESTY

God continued to question Job in order to reveal His majesty and Job's insignificance so far as creation is concerned. God asked Job if he had ever sent forth the sun so that its light would disturb evil man. Or if he had ever caused the light of the sun to shine across the face of the globe like a seal on clay. These figures of speech describe the effect of the sun moving across the sky, marking the world like a seal and causing features to stand out like figures on a garment.

We notice that the sun has another effect in that it robs the wicked of their light. Their light, the Scriptures say, is actually darkness which hides their evil deeds. Men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil (Job 38:12-15; 24:16-17; John 3:19).

God asked another question, "Does Job understand the size of the earth, or the power of God which divides the day and the night" (Job 38:18-21; Gen 1:16-18)?

God asked Job to consider the cycles of nature. This ancient book gives us a detailed description of how the earth is watered, something scientists would not discover for countless centuries, showing once again God's inspiration of His Word (Job 38:22-30).

God questioned Job concerning the heavens. Could he understand the amazing power that controls the universe? Today, scientists equipped with the most modern technical devices marvel at the heavenly bodies which are too numerous to count. Yet, God not only knows how many there are but knows each one by name (Job 38:31-33; Ps 147:4). God continued with another series of questions concerning the instincts He created in animals. Can any man conceive of such wisdom (Job 38:39-41; Ps 147:9)?

No doubt, as Job thought of God's majesty and power, he felt very humble. We too should feel a sense of awe of God's majesty and His love for creatures such as ourselves (Ps 8:4).

THOUGHT: Why did God ask Job these questions?

PRAYER: Father, may I spend more time dwelling on Thy majesty.

THE WONDERS OF NATURE

The entire thirty-ninth chapter contains the descriptions of the characteristics of wild animals. Who taught them how to act? God asked Job to speak concerning his knowledge of such things. Can any man rule with care and gentleness over such varied creatures? The intricacies of birds' nests alone are a never-ending source of amazement to scientists. They look for all kinds of reasons for the uniformity of animal activity. The Scriptures say it lies with God who created these creatures to act as they do. These facts were brought before Job for consideration as he faced his Creator.

Perhaps, when God spoke, Job had expected to hear something new. He was, no doubt, disappointed as God unfolded knowledge about Himself which Job already possessed (Job 9:4-10; 12:7-25).

The truth of the matter was that Job did not so much need new knowledge as he needed to put into practice that which he had already possessed. His failure is common to many of God's people today. It is true that we must study God's Word to know more about Him, but it is also true that this study holds little value if we do not put it into practice.

Job fully recognised the power and majesty of God. He said that if a man would dispute with God, he could not answer even one question in a thousand (Job 9:3-4). Despite his knowledge of God's greatness, Job still had questioned God's dealings. He had failed to use his knowledge of God's majesty to give him confidence in God's relationship with him. Until Job began to apply his knowledge of God to his life, he could not grow spiritually. We also must use what we learn or we will never learn more. Spiritual growth depends on sharing what we know and obedience to what we understand. May we be faithful to the Lord in these things (Heb 5:11-14).

THOUGHT: Why did God repeat things Job already knew?

PRAYER: Father, help me to be a doer of Thy Word, not just a hearer.

THE DANGER OF DISOBEDIENCE

God now demanded that Job gave an explanation for his conduct. In Job 40:2, the word “*contendeth*” means to find fault with, and “*instruct*” means to continue to argue. Hence, God asked Job if, after having caught a glimpse of His glory and power, he would continue to accuse Him of being unjust. God demanded that Job give an answer for his lack of trust and humility (Job 40:1-2). Job stood in abject humility and shame, being moved to silence. Now God wanted him to move on to confession (Job 40:3-5; Ps 32:8).

When Job stood humble and silent before God, God spoke further with Job. God charged, “*Thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous*” (Job 40:8). “*Deck thyself now with majesty and excellency; and array thyself with glory and beauty*” (Job 40:10). However, unlike Satan, Job was not aspiring to take the place of God. Job had questioned God on only one point, but God was slowly bringing Job to realise the enormity of such a sin and the foolishness of ever questioning God. When we fall, we need to remember that the Lord is willing to guide our steps through His Word if we will listen and obey (Ps 37:23-24; 119:133).

Having spoken of His greatness as displayed through the forces of nature, God then began the final presentation of His majesty. He spoke of one of the greatest and most fearsome beasts known in Job’s time, the “*behemoth*” (Job 40:15).

God took time to describe this amazing animal clearly which was but a very small part of His tremendous creation. We are reminded again of the Psalmist when he said that, looking at the wonder of God’s power, he was amazed that God would even notice man (Ps 8:4). However, God has noticed man and, in His love, He meets every need of His children so we can have joy, a sense of fulfilment and purpose in life.

May we constantly look toward Him for the strength that we need each day as we await His soon return!

THOUGHT: What was Job’s condition after seeing God’s majesty?

PRAYER: Father, may I always stand before Thee in humility.

TUESDAY, JUNE 21

JOB 41

PSALM 145:1-9

*The holy God calls
His people to holy living.*

GOD'S LEVIATHAN

God continued to speak to Job with regard to His power shown in creation. He now spoke of an animal even more fearsome than the behemoth – the “*leviathan*” (Job 41:1). The word “*leviathan*” means “twisted long-tailed monster.” At times, it is used to refer to mythical animals. At other times, the context demands a translation of whale or crocodile. From the description here, the gigantic sea-going crocodile could be implied. It was an animal well-known in Egypt and used as a sign of Pharaoh’s power. This animal was dangerous to catch, and, as an adult, impossible to tame. God creates and cares for these great beings while men dare not even touch them.

As God presented to Job a renewed understanding of His majesty and power, Job remained silent. God did not talk to him about his problems. In fact, God would not talk to Job about him until he repented of his sin. As the Psalmist said, “*If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me*” (Ps 66:18). The fact that Job had asked for vindication was not sin. In truth, it was evidence of Job’s faith in God, his Redeemer. Job’s problem was that he could only see suffering as being a result of sin. Hence, in asking for vindication, he was actually trying to prove that his suffering was unjust. Job could rightly say he was innocent, but when he claimed God was still punishing him, this was questioning God’s justice and this was sin.

God now had brought Job to a place of repentance and restoration by showing him His greatness. Job had failed to recognise God’s power and justice as it applied to his personal life. Proper Bible doctrine results in proper action. If we really have faith in God and are saved by His grace, this will be reflected in the way we live, think and act. When it is not, there is then the problem of sin which needs to be dealt with before the Lord.

THOUGHT: What does proper doctrine produce?

PRAYER: Father, may my life be holy because Thou art holy.

JOB WORSHIPS GOD

When we see God in His glory, we inevitably feel unworthy. This was true of Job when he was reminded of the power of God by having his attention drawn to creation. The prophet Isaiah saw the Lord God when he was being prepared for special service (Isa 6:5); John saw Him when he was being prepared to record the book of Revelation (Rev 1:17). God is always willing to forgive when, on understanding His righteousness, His obedient children see their own sin. Thus, the prophets Isaiah and John were cleansed and raised to a place of special service (Isa 6:6-7; Rev 1:19). God also cleansed Job because he was willing to repent and call out for God's mercy. When we as God's people fail, we can have confidence that when we repent and call upon Him, He will hear us. He will forgive us and restore us to fellowship once again (1 John 1:9).

Job now acknowledged that God could do anything no matter how difficult it might seem to man. God's knowledge was unlimited so no thought ever escaped Him. Job confessed that he had questioned and expounded on things he knew no more than the power which God unfolded in His creation (Job 42:2-3).

He asked God to listen to him now so that he could ask questions and be instructed. We must note the word "*demand*" (Job 42:4) here would mean "ask." Job had entered into a new and deeper relationship with the Lord. He had heard of Him before but now he had seen Him. True repentance is accompanied by deep sorrow and a change of attitude, and we clearly see this in Job from the time God met with him (Job 42:4-6; 2 Cor 7:9).

As God's people, we need to feel a greater sorrow over sin. A real concern about sin causes us to have a clearer view of the Lord. This, in turn, brings about spiritual strength and greater faith in God. We can then serve Him better.

THOUGHT: What was Job's greatest need?

PRAYER: Father, increase my faith in Thee so that I may trust Thee more.

THURSDAY, JUNE 23

JOB 42:7-9

PSALM 119:169-176

*God gives his anger by weight
but His mercy without measure.*

(Anon.)

A DAY OF RECKONING

As God dealt with Job regarding his failures, his friends were evidently standing by. God now turned to Eliphaz and his two other friends and expressed His anger at what they had done. They had tried to defend God's justice but with false statements. As they did not understand that suffering may not be a result of sin, they did not speak the truth concerning Job's relationship with God (Job 42:7).

It is a very serious matter to pretend to be a teacher of truth but not know that truth. The Lord Jesus warned that a blind teacher only leads others into a ditch (Luke 6:39). He condemned the teachers of Israel because by not knowing the truth, they had misused the Word of God (Matt 23:16).

There is also a warning to those within the church not to be too quick to desire to be teachers. Those who teach God's Word fall under stricter standards than others (James 3:1). Let us be careful when we speak about the Lord, ensuring that we speak the truth from His revealed Scripture at all times. Furthermore, may all teachers remember the necessity of constant study of God's Word and obedience to it in order to remain qualified to teach.

Job's friends had not spoken correctly, but God was gracious and willing to forgive them, as He is to everyone who comes to Him in faith. Job was totally vindicated. By faith and obedience, he had a proper relationship with God. When his friends denied this truth, they had to approach God with sacrifices for sin. How wonderful it was for these friends of Job to be able to bring their sacrifices and be assured of forgiveness before the Lord despite the enormity of their sin (Job 42:8-9)!

May we, too, rest in God's gracious forgiveness in times of need.

THOUGHT: Why was God angry with Job's friends?

PRAYER: Father, may I be a diligent student of Thy Word, and be obedient to it.

GOD BLESSES HIS SERVANT

Although at that time he did not understand it, Job had been drawn into the universal conflict between God and Satan. This happened because of his own dedication to the Lord. He had been a captive of the suffering and trials caused by Satan, but God having proven Job faithful now released him from his suffering. Satan's ability to persecute the people of God is limited. It was at the time Job was praying for his friends that he was released from his trials. His suffering started when he was in full fellowship with God. Now, it ended with Job understanding God much better than he did before (Job 42:10).

When God's blessing appeared to have left Job, his friends and relatives also left. When God's blessing returned, his friends also returned. The Scriptures tell us that wealth makes many friends but poverty sees friends depart. Job would enjoy having his friends and relatives back, but now he knew that God was the only one who could really be depended upon (Job 42:11; Prov 19:4).

In every area of life, Job was more greatly blessed than before. This blessing was God's testimony that Job had served Him and won a great victory. It was a testimony to the world that Job's trust was in his Redeemer. God rewarded His servant Job with a full life with which to serve Him. He not only had blessing here on earth, but would receive rewards in heaven that the human mind cannot comprehend (Job 42:12-16).

Job had exhibited confidence that his faith in God was enough to meet every need. This faithfulness brought victory in the universal conflict, proving God true and Satan to be a defeated foe. Job's trust in the Lord brought a victory he could not see or even understand. May we exhibit this same confidence in God. In this way, He will bless us and count us as His faithful servants.

THOUGHT: Why did Job have a special relationship with God?

PRAYER: Father, all praise and thanks be to Thee for Thou hast given me the victory through Jesus Christ.

SATURDAY, JUNE 25

JOB 15:20-25

PSALM 108:1-6

Worldlings make gold their god,

saints make God their gold.

(M Henry)

THE PROSPERITY OF THE WICKED

Job's friends insisted that the wicked never prospered while the righteous always did. However, Job insisted that this idea was not born out of the obvious facts of life. The Christian faith is realistic. If we are poor, we do not pretend to be otherwise. Many Christians have been poor. If we are sick, we do not pretend to be well. Christians in the Scriptures have often suffered illnesses. If God blesses a Christian with wealth, they do not pretend to be poor or embarrassed by their prosperity but use this blessing of God for His glory.

In like manner, we do not pretend that God always makes sinners poor because, despite the contention of Job's friends, some very wicked men have been extremely wealthy. This fact has bothered God's people down through the ages (Jer 12:1; Ps 73:2-3).

We see the prosperous wicked in this world in three types of situations. First, there are those who prosper and seem to be really enjoying life. Although they do not suffer on this earth, their day of reckoning comes when their soul is required by God. At that time, they must give an account of their rejection of His salvation (Luke 12:16-20).

Second, there are the wicked who are prosperous but even in their prosperity, suffer anguish of soul and spirit. After gathering for themselves the wealth and power that this world offers, they find that they will not get satisfaction. Proof of this can be seen in the many powerful, wealthy and famous people who, at the very time they possess all the world, are driven to commit suicide.

Then, there are the wicked who lose their ill-gotten gains. We see them caught up in their sin, losing all their wealth and often spending time in prison, only to emerge broken in body and in spirit.

THOUGHT: In what situations do we find the prosperous wicked?

PRAYER: Father, may I not labour for things which have no eternal value.

AN UNREVEALED TRUTH

Why God permits some wicked to prosper throughout their lifetime on earth and causes others to suffer is a truth which, in His eternal wisdom, He has chosen not to reveal. Yet, all the wicked wealthy, whether they seem happy or are suffering, must be pitied by the Christian.

The Psalmist said he almost fell into sin because of his envy toward the wicked who were so prosperous while he was poor and suffering (Ps 73:2-3). However, when he entered into fellowship with God concerning the matter, he understood the horror of their final destiny. The wicked will be shut off from the face of God throughout all the ages of eternity (Ps 73:17-19; 37:16). At this point, the Psalmist began to learn the lesson of real spiritual contentment which was later to be clearly taught in the New Testament (1 Tim 6:6-8).

As we go through life, let us keep in mind the words of the book of wisdom. The writer says it is better to have just a little in this life and know the fear of the Lord than to have great treasure and the sorrow that comes from being without God (Prov 15:16).

We come into this world with nothing and will leave it the same way (Job 1:21). Only the treasures which have eternal value will be worth something on that day of final accounting. Therefore, let us not spend our allotted time on earth labouring for things that will not endure (John 6:27). Instead, let us lay up our treasures in heaven where they will last throughout eternity (Matt 6:19-21).

With this in mind, let us praise the Lord for His blessings and live with joy in whatever situation He has chosen to place us in, looking forward to that glorious day when all the riches of heaven will be ours (Prov 15:16).

THOUGHT: What is the most important thing in life?

PRAYER: Father, help me to be willing to leave all to serve Thee, because my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ left all He had to save me.

MONDAY, JUNE 27

JOB 1:6-12

ROMANS 8:28-32

*You learn your theology most where
your sorrows take you.*

(M Luther)

SUFFERING WHICH BRINGS BLESSING

Suffering can come into the Christian's life for three basic reasons. In our devotional today, we will consider one of these.

Suffering can come to the Christian living for God as a result of the universal conflict. We see such suffering in the book of Job. God pointed to Job as evidence of His power not only to save the sinner but also to enable him to live a holy life (Job 1:8; 2:3). Job, unaware of this heavenly scene, was then subjected to Satan's attack (Job 1:12; 2:6). Satan was allowed to test Job to prove that God does have power to make a sinner His child of consistent faith. However, God's hand remained on Job throughout this time. When the point was clearly proven, Job was freed from Satan's attack (Job 42:10).

This type of suffering is difficult for the believer to understand. We cannot see the reason for it by looking at our lives. It is only through a study of the Scriptures that we can be prepared for such times of difficulty. We must remember that our battle is not against flesh and blood but against unseen spirit powers (Eph 6:12). Since this battle rages around us, Christians must be prepared to be part of it.

Suffering, which comes as a result of the universal conflict, is used by God to bring spiritual growth and blessing into the life of a believer. We are reminded that everything that happens to us as we walk in obedience to God works for our spiritual good (Rom 8:28). Before being drawn into the universal conflict, Job knew the Lord. However, as a result of all of his suffering, he came to know Him far better (Job 42:5).

All of us who walk in obedience and go through such times of suffering will come to know the Lord better. This knowledge should give us greater strength to live for Him and encourage other Christians in their suffering. May we be faithful to the Lord in order that He may bring such blessings upon us.

THOUGHT: Why was Job's suffering hard to understand?

PRAYER: The obedient Christian is always blessed by Thee, Father. Help me to be one.

TUESDAY, JUNE 28

1 PETER 4:12-16

JAMES 1:1-5

Grace grows best in winter.

(S Rutherford)

SUFFERING CAUSES SPIRITUAL GROWTH

A second reason for suffering is that which is the normal outcome of living for God in a sinful world. Those who practise evil hate the light (John 3:20). We, as Christians, are to be the light of the world (Matt 5:14). Therefore, it stands to reason that if evil men hate the light, which we represent, they will also hate us. We are reminded by the Lord that when the world hates us, it hated Him first. We should not be surprised at the persecution and suffering which comes because we know and love the Lord (1 John 3:13).

This suffering that comes into a Christian's life is used by God to strengthen us in the faith. Those who are active in the Lord's work often see this suffering come when their work is especially blessed. We should not be discouraged because testing can actually be faced with joy when we realise it is meant to strengthen our faith (James 1:2-4). When one endures "*temptation*" (James 1:2, 12) or testing, one is blessed and rewarded by the Lord (James 1:12).

Sometimes, the trials of life seem to almost overcome us. However, the Lord assures us that our testing is never too difficult and God provides a way of escape. In 1 Corinthians 10:13, "*escape*" means "to pass through unharmed" rather than "to get away from." The Lord understands our human limitations and He helps us during times of trial (Heb 4:15-16).

Suffering, then, can come into the Christian's life despite obedience and loving service to God. However, it comes permitted by the Lord so that our faith can be tested and we will grow to be more like Him. We can be encouraged by the fact that final victory is completely in the hands of God. Furthermore, we are assured that we will reap the rewards of faithfulness if we do not become discouraged in our Christian life (2 Pet 2:9; 2 Cor 4:16-17).

THOUGHT: In times of suffering, what must we remember?

PRAYER: Father, Thy grace is sufficient for my every need; help me to rely on Thy grace.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 29

HEBREWS 12:6-11

PSALM 93

*God sends us miseries not to make
us worse but better.*

(T Manton)

SUFFERING CAUSES OBEDIENCE

In our last two devotions, we considered two reasons why Christians suffer. The third reason for suffering is our deliberate unconfessed sin. Such sin destroys our fellowship with God. The Lord will not consider our prayers if such sin is in our hearts (Ps 66:18). Furthermore, unconfessed sin destroys our souls, i.e. our well-being and sense of accomplishment are taken away. The Psalmist said that there was a groaning within his heart and the heavy hand of God was upon him. All of his joy was gone because he kept quiet about his sin (Ps 32:3-4; 1 Pet 2:11).

Finally, sin causes us to neglect the worship of the Lord and fellowship with His people. We gradually drift into a situation where our companions are those who are not Christians and we lose the joy of our faith (Ps 1:1).

God brings suffering into the lives of wilfully disobedient Christians to bring them back to the right way and to restore the joy of their salvation (Heb 12:6). It is important to note that God's punishment is never capricious. He does not bring punishment upon His children, as human parents sometimes do, just because they feel the need to justify themselves (Heb 12:10). Job's friends were sure that he was hiding sin because otherwise God would not punish him. Job was just as sure that his punishment was not because of sin since he had no known unconfessed sin in his heart. We can say with assurance that if difficulties that are caused by unconfessed sin come, we will immediately know why God is causing the suffering.

It is never pleasant to be punished. However, if we accept God's correction, it will bring us back to the path of obedience and blessing (Heb 12:11; Prov 3:11-12). May all of us be careful to confess our sin that God brings to our attention so that we will have the full joy and satisfaction that God wants every Christian's life to have.

THOUGHT: What are the three reasons Christians suffer?

PRAYER: Father, I thank Thee for Thy dealing with me, for it shows forth Thy love for me.

THURSDAY, JUNE 30

JOB 42:1-5

PSALM 31:1-5

*“...behold the upright: for the
end of that man is peace.”*

THE MAJOR LESSON OF JOB

The greatest lesson of the book of Job is to have an implicit trust in God. Job and his friends were deeply involved with a problem. They thought their greatest need was to understand the reasons for this problem. However, when God spoke, He did not even mention the problem. He saw their greatest need as not the solving of a particular problem but a proper relationship with Himself. This would result in their having a greater faith and trust in Him. Since this was God's greatest concern, it should be ours also.

God turned Job's mind to the wonders of creation and caused him to recognise his own insignificance. Both the Old and New Testaments speak of God's greatness. This inspired message should cause us to fall on our knees in worship, as Job did. When our attitude toward God and our relationship with Him are proper, He will take care of everything else (Matt 6:33). Often, Scripture tells God's people to stand with reverence and trust before Him. This reverent attitude expresses our love and respect for God, resulting in faith and obedience. The fear of the Lord is the basis for all spiritual wisdom (Prov 9:10).

God knew that if Job would keep His majesty before his eyes, he would enter into a spirit of repentance, humility, and complete trust. This would result in a spiritual maturity that would enable Job to meet any test (Ps 34:9). When we see God in His greatness, we become aware of His power that works in us. We then have the assurance that we can meet any of life's problems. With this in mind, the Apostle Paul prayed that believers would fully understand the greatness of God (Eph 1:18-20).

Hence, Job came to understand the power of God who is able to meet every need. Today, through His Word, God shows Himself to us as the same Almighty Creator. As we bow before Him, He is ready to meet every need and give us spiritual victory.

THOUGHT: What is the greatest lesson of the book of Job?

PRAYER: Father, because Thou art with me, no one can stand against me.

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