

Lesson 17 Lecture

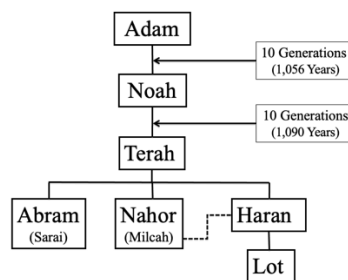
Job 8-14

Welcome! This is the third section in our tour through Job – we’ve seen the true cause of Job’s suffering, and we’ve been introduced to the first of Job’s so-called friends Eliphaz. These guys are truly the epitome of the saying, “With friends like you, who needs enemies?” Now you may not know that I am down with all that is hip and cool. I’m dialed into what the modern culture is speaking, ya dig? Just the mere fact that I used the words, “Ya dig?” should tell you that I’m lying through my teeth. However, I do have a 19-year-old son who is insistent that I not remain completely out of touch of the “real world”.

Have you heard of the word “Frienemy”? Apparently, this is now a legitimate word. Therefore, I went to the source that I consider one of my more regular sources of reliable information, the Urban Dictionary, and found that Frienemy is an enemy disguised as a friend. Given the things that these guys say to Job, it would seem clear that these knuckleheads could be aptly viewed as frienemies.

For me, an astonishing thing as we read through the Book of Job is his knowledge of God. How? He is believed to have lived around the time of Jacob and Joseph. Genesis 46:13 mentions a Job as a son of Issachar – a brother of Joseph’s. There is no mention of the law which may lead us to the assumption he was around before the Book of Exodus.

The below chart is one we used when we were going through Genesis.



There’s a 2,000-year span between Adam and Abraham – but only 4 generations need to link the period. If Job is truly a relative of Joseph’s, that’s only another 3 generations to get the story from the horse’s mouth. Still, Job has no Scriptures (that we know of) to develop a remarkable understanding of God – but he did not have it all correct.

So, today's lesson covers six chapters, which is tough to cover in 30 minutes. I try to focus on keeping things simple – comes with the territory of being a man – right, ladies? So, we're going to break the reading into three categories:

- What Job got right
- What Job got wrong
- What Job needed

We'll provide quotes from the reading and then offer Scripture that either supports or corrects the statement, so let's get started with what Job got right.

God is powerful

He spoke many times during this reading regarding the power of God, so he had a very healthy respect for God's power Job 12:13-16, "To God belong wisdom and power; counsel and understanding are his. What he tears down cannot be rebuilt; those he imprisons cannot be released. If he holds back the waters, there is drought; if he lets them loose, they devastate the land. To him belong strength and insight; both deceived and deceiver are his." This truth of God's power is confirmed in Psalm 62:11, "One thing God has spoken, two things I have heard: Power belongs to you, God."

God is sovereign

Job 14:5: A person's days are determined; you have decreed the number of his months and have set limits he cannot exceed. What does Sovereign mean? - One that exercises supreme authority within a limited sphere. This character trait can stumble both believer and non-believer because we want to think we have some kind of control on things. Sovereignty implies a supreme authority – meaning that no matter what we want, the sovereign ruler will dictate what he desires.

The reason we as believers can come to grips with this character trait of God's is we've come to trust in the core character trait of God – love. 1 John 4:16 confirms this, "God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them."

Jeremiah 29:11 confirms why we can be at rest being subject to this love-driven sovereignty of God, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

Isaiah 46:9b-10 confirms God's sovereignty, "I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say, 'My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.'

God is holy

Job 14:4, "Who can bring what is pure from the impure? No one!" Job knew that God is pure, and he was not; therefore, he saw the folly in approaching a holy God in an unholy state.

Leviticus 19:2 confirms this, "Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: 'Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.'"

There are consequences to sin

Job 9:28-31, "I still dread all my sufferings, for I know you will not hold me innocent. Since I am already found guilty, why should I struggle in vain? Even if I washed myself with soap and my hands with cleansing powder, you would plunge me into a slime pit so that even my clothes would detest me." Now Scripture tells us Job was blameless and upright, so if he's blameless, why is he thinking about the consequences of sin? Anyone here believe they are blameless? Without fault? Without sin? I hope not because you would be denying the truth of Romans 3:23, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

During this book, Job several times presents himself pridefully as a righteous man, and that is a dangerous place to be – especially as a Christian. J. Vernon McGee summed up the Book of Job as it is not so much a book about suffering but that it's a book about repentance. Repenting from pride is something I have more experience with than I would like to admit. Romans 6:23a confirms Job's understanding that sin comes with consequences, "For the wages of sin is death."

There is no point disputing with God

Job 9:3, "Though they wished to dispute with him, they could not answer him one time out of a thousand." Have you ever heard someone make a statement something like, "When I get to heaven, I'm going to have a few things to talk to God about!"? Really? Good luck with that pride, pal. We need to suggest Proverbs 14:3 to those who think they're going to have an argument with the Creator, "A fool's mouth lashes out with pride, but the lips of the wise protect them." Isaiah 55:8-9 confirms Job's thoughts about the foolishness of disputing with God, "For

my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

He wanted to know what his sin is

Job 13:23, “How many wrongs and sins have I committed? Show me my offense and my sin.” When was the last time you asked God to show you your sin? It’s not a fun question to ask, because the answer isn’t pleasant, is it? Satan doesn’t want us to be aware of our sin because it makes us aware of his influence on our lives. He prefers to operate quietly and then, after we sin, puts the voice of condemnation in our heads. Moreover, he doesn’t want us asking this question because he realizes it is an effort on our part to repent from our sin and grow closer to God. If we do this, that makes us a bigger enemy of his. For those of us who don’t want to ask God to reveal our sin because of the pain it brings, we need to believe that the ultimate benefit of being forgiven of that sin and gaining victory over it is that we are that much closer to God. There is no greater thing we can ask for as humans but being in an intimate relationship with our Creator.

King David, known as a ‘Man After God’s Own Heart’ knew the importance of asking God to show him his sin in Psalm 139:23, “Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.”

He knew the LORD is his Maker

Job 8a, 9a, 12, “Your hands shaped me and made me. Remember that you molded me like clay. You gave me life and showed me kindness, and in your providence watched over my spirit.” Remembering God as our Creator is crucial. Especially in terms of dealing with Satan. What do we learn about Satan – the first time we learn about him – in Genesis 3:1? “Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals *the LORD God had made*.” (emphasis added) Satan is a **created** being. We need to remember that the Creator is **ALWAYS** greater than the creation, and the creation is **ALWAYS** subject to the creator.

We saw that in the beginning of Job, right? Satan could do nothing to Job without God allowing it. As believers in Christ, we have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us – an equal member of God the Creator. What does that mean to us? We have the power, via the Holy Spirit, to gain victory over Satan’s attempts to rob us of the joy we have as followers of Jesus Christ. Satan doesn’t want us to know or remember this, because he knows he’s toast when we do remember.

Deuteronomy 32:6 confirms Job's understanding that the LORD is his Maker, "Is this the way you repay the LORD, you foolish and unwise people? Is he not your Father, your Creator, who made you and formed you?"

God has power over darkness

Job 12:22, "He reveals the deep things of darkness and brings utter darkness into the light." Darkness is a big deal to Job – the word is used over 30 times in this book. This is really a follow-up to what I just talked about – God having authority over the Kingdom of Darkness. What's the worst thing about darkness? - You can't see. I have to wear glasses to see what I'm reading. Without them, I'm "in the dark" as to what I'm looking at. I am relieved of the fear of not being able to read when I put them on. This is the case with those of us who come to faith in God.

1 John 1:5, "This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all."

Isaiah 42:16, "I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them."

What a great promise! Do you believe this? I hope you do. Remember, God cannot lie.

God is kind

Job 10:12, "You gave me life and showed me kindness, and in your providence watched over my spirit." This is an extraordinary statement given Job's circumstances! What is he doing here? He's reminding himself the mountain of evidence of blessings of Divine kindness to reinforce what he knows and believes? Why? Because his circumstances are challenging this belief. That is what we need to do when we don't understand what is going on in our lives. We need to rely on the truths of the Word of God – what we know, when we're confronted with temptation to not believe or sin. That is what Jesus Himself did when He was tempted by the Devil. He quoted Scripture, the truth, to refute the lie. Psalm 117:2 confirms the kindness of God that Job knows and believes, "For His merciful kindness is great toward us, And the truth of the LORD *endures forever. Praise the LORD!*" (NKJV)

Job remained faithful

Job 13:15a, “Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him.” What an amazing statement in light of what he’s going through. What’s he saying here? Ok God, you can kill me – that’s ok – because I know I’ll still be with you. That is what we have as followers of Jesus Christ. Jesus Himself confirms the reward for those who choose to remain faithful in Revelation 2:10, “Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor’s crown.” Being faithful unto death is a tall order, but remember that is exactly what Jesus did – He was faithful to His Father’s plan, and the Father raised Him up and seated Him at His right hand. God never asks anything of us that He hasn’t already done for us.

Ok – we’ve covered a lot of what Job got right, but he didn’t get everything right, did he? There’s plenty he got wrong. First thing that came to my mind in reading this lesson is he picked the wrong friends, right? Now, out of my love for you all and extreme curiosity about these guys, I spent a lot of time researching them, and I was able to uncover a never before seen picture of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. Are you ready?



Seriously, these guys were stooges, but they weren’t very funny. Regarding these “friends”....

They had no compassion

Job 13:12, “Your maxims are proverbs of ashes; your defenses are defenses of clay.” This verse is the centerpiece for the title to this lesson. Maxims are expressions of truths and principles, so what Job is telling his buddy Zophar is that his accusations against him are garbage – they don’t hold up. One of the questions

that was in last week's homework was whether you would like sympathy or advice if you were hurting. Regardless of your answer, if neither is accompanied with compassion, what you're offering isn't helpful – in fact, it's making things worse. As we have been going through our trials, some of the most hurtful comments have come from compassionless Christians – they have either asked us what have we done to deserve what has happened, or they have lobbed a Bible verse at us like a grenade. I'm not saying the Word of God is not helpful – it definitely is – but when you're hurting, you're looking for someone who truly cares enough to try to relate enough to remind you you're not alone.

If you run across someone who is suffering – you shouldn't have to look far these days – take the time to listen. That may be all you need to do – just listen. Though Job's friends had no compassion, God does. Psalm 86:15 tells us, “But you, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.”

He thought God was limited to mercy and judgment

Job 9:15b; 10:3a, “I could only plead with my Judge for mercy. Does it please you to oppress me, to spurn the work of your hands.” Job knew God was capable of mercy, and He was clearly capable of Judgment. But that was it. The God that we serve and love IS a God of mercy and judgment, but He is also a God of grace. Mercy is not getting what we deserve. Grace is getting what we don't deserve. When we're in the middle of a season of suffering, it's easy to forget that God is merciful – much less a God of grace. However, we can remind ourselves of the truths that have held us firm in God – such as what is promised in John 1:14, “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

Out of His goodness comes His grace. If we look close enough at our lives, there's always signs of grace. God's grace didn't just appear when Jesus came. 2 Timothy 1:9 tells us, “He has saved us and called us to a holy life – not because of anything we have done but because of His own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time.”

Job didn't know about Satan

Job 9:15b; 10:3a, “When a land falls into the hands of the wicked, he blindfolds its judges. If it is not he, then who is it?” I mentioned earlier that Satan doesn't want us to know about him. What he wants to do is to cast his character traits onto God

and let God get the blame for the suffering in life. Job has no knowledge of Satan, and he certainly has no knowledge of the arrangement God has with Satan. The cause of suffering is a huge topic to people – especially Christians. I’m aware that there are many in this room who dismiss the notion that God is capable of initiating suffering. I’m here to tell you that is NOT what the Bible says. More importantly, that is not what Jesus says in Matthew 5:45b, “He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.”

Now I do believe that in the original plan for humanity, before the fall, the concept of suffering never was part of God’s plan. However, BECAUSE of the fall and the ever-presence of sin in this world, God has *caused* or *allowed* suffering even on His own children. I know that is hard to accept, but all you have to do is look at the cross. The Father *sent* His Son to suffer. He didn’t have to, but He wanted to. Why? Because there was a purpose to Jesus’ suffering – our salvation. There is always a purpose to suffering. I know it’s hard to see when you’re in the middle of it, but for those of us who have suffered – God will at some point reveal the purpose of the suffering. He may not do it until we get to heaven, but He will.

That being said, we do have an enemy, and it is Satan. But as I said, earlier. We have the power to deal with him. Paul tells us in Romans 16:20 the ultimate destiny of Satan, “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.”

Job’s suffering gave him the right to complain

Job 10:1, “I loathe my very life; therefore, I will give free rein to my complaint and speak out in the bitterness of my soul.” Job was at the end of his rope, and he needed to vent. Anyone ever been there? Now for those of you ladies who are out there thinking, “Great – another man up there telling us to stuff our feelings!” That is not at all what I am saying. It is healthy to be in touch with what we feel. It is also healthy to find a way to express it. However, while we are feeling human beings, as followers of Jesus Christ, we are more importantly witnesses to Him. Therefore, if we’re suffering and doing nothing but complaining about our circumstances, where is the hope in God in that witness? Going on and on about our suffering isn’t helping people see Christ in us. How is that different from those who don’t know Jesus? Where’s the attraction in that kind of faith? Where’s the victory?

My wife gave me a great suggestion the other day about how to respond to inquiries about our situation. She said to respond with, “We’re waiting on God’s

goodness.” There’s no lie that we’re fine, and there’s a statement of hope that only is available in Christianity. Psalm 39:1 offers advice about the importance of containing our tongues, “I said, “I will guard my ways, Lest I sin with my tongue; I will restrain my mouth with a muzzle, While the wicked are before me.”

Job thought God keeps track of the sins of the righteous

Job 13:26, “For You write bitter things against me, and make me inherit the iniquities of my youth.” It is so easy to think that suffering is a result of our sin. In some cases it is, and if it is, we need to repent in order for the LORD to consider easing up. However, suffering is not always being caused by our sin, but Satan will whisper in your ears that we deserve our suffering. We need to remember that he is the father of lies, and the **TRUTH** is found in Romans 8:1, “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” Furthermore, God DOES NOT remember forgiven sin. Hebrews 8:12 confirms this, “For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.” The notion that God is keeping a scorecard of our sins is an assault on the purpose of Christ crucified.

He didn’t believe in his innocence

Job 9:20a, 29, “Even if I were innocent, my mouth would condemn me; Since I am already found guilty, why should I struggle in vain?” Do you believe you are innocent before God? Satan wants you to think that is impossible. Guess what? That’s a lie. Romans 5:1 tells us, “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,” Justified means declared not guilty. By your faith in Jesus’ work at the cross and His resurrection, you are declared “NOT GUILTY” before God. Romans 5:9 (Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him!) connects the work on the cross to our being justified. That knowledge should bring a peace to those who believe this. The Word of God proclaims we are Not Guilty because of our faith in Jesus. Any information that casts doubt on that is NOT coming from God. Psalm 32:1 confirms the peace that comes from being forgiven, “Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.”

Job is suffering terribly. He’s crying out for help. He didn’t get it from his frienemies. So, what did Job need? The better question is WHO did Job need? Jesus Christ.

He is our Advocate: 1 John 2:1: My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.

He is our Deliverer: Psalms 18:2: The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

He has forgiven us by grace: Ephesians 1:7: In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace

By knowing that we have a Deliverer, and Advocate, and that we're forgiven out of His free grace, we as believers in Christ should experience an explosion of freedom from the burdens of our past and battles with the enemy. Galatians 5:1 validates this freedom, "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."

A big component of Job's suffering was his wrong understanding of God. Had he known what we know – or Who we know – imagine how much better he could have handled the suffering. Suffering is never easy, but the Bible tells us that God is love and God is good. With that truth coupled with the revelation of Jesus on the cross, suffering has a purpose - it gives us hope. And hope does not disappoint. Let's give thanks in prayer for the hope of God.