

JOB

“You have heard of Job’s perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy” (James 5:11).

Introduction:

The *Book of Job* is unique in the canon of Scripture, both in form and content. It has been the subject of much critical analysis as to historicity, date, place, and application. Some consider it an allegory, a drama that portrays fictitious characters; others interpret it as the biography of a historical person. It is not necessary to take a stand on these issues in order to appreciate the contents of the *Book of Job*. The fact that Ezekiel mentions Job in the same breath with two other historical figures, Noah and Daniel, strongly suggests that Job was a real person.¹

Some Bible scholars have suggested that, although Job may have been a historical person, the book that deals with his experiences is a drama in which the author has taken liberties that are not backed up by history. There are some scenes that seem to serve the purpose of poetical symmetry, rather than represent historical facts. If that is true, the *Book of Job* could be compared to a historical novel. But even if we were to treat the person of Job as the figment of a poet’s imagination, the message of this book would not be lost on us.

The fact that the whole book is written in the form of a poem, with the exception of the first two chapters and the last ten verses, does not mean that it does not deal with historical people or events.

The Importance of the Book in the Canon:

It is always a good principle to see how much Biblical revelation would be lost if one of the books of the Bible would be removed from the Canon of Scripture. In the case of the *Book of Job*, the loss would be immense.

First of all, *The Problem of Pain*, to use the title of C. S. Lewis’ book, would remain as incomprehensible to us as it was to Job as he went through his afflictions. We would miss the background against which every human life develops on earth. We would fail to understand the important role every individual plays in the cosmic struggle between God and Satan. We would be unable to comprehend that man is more than a pawn in a chess game played between God and Satan. Job’s experience indicates that the war is played out in every human life. We are a battlefield, but at the same time our choices tip the balance.

1. Ezek. 14:14

Date and Place of Job's Experience:

Although the consensus is that Job may be the earliest book of the Bible, it is impossible to pinpoint a date. Nor can it be determined where Uz could be found on the map.

The Message of Job:

The main theme of the book is about human suffering and man's struggle to understand it. Job's story accentuates the paradoxes of human life. Some answers are given, but the question as to why suffering occurs is never fully answered. The answers that are given only deepen the mystery. *The Keil and Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament* observes: "The real contents of the Book of Job is the mystery of the Cross: the Cross on Golgotha is the solution of the enigma of every cross; and the Book of Job is a prophecy of this ultimate solution."

Part of our problem in understanding the "why" of human suffering is that we do not know the essence of the controversy between God and Satan and the actual reason for the fall of Lucifer. In Ezekiel's prophecy about the king of Tyre we read words that are usually applied to Satan: "You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you. Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor. So I threw you to the earth; I made a spectacle of you before kings."¹

The fact that God withheld knowledge from Job about the dialogue that transpired between God and Satan accounts for a great part of Job's suffering. If Job had had access to the first two chapters of his own biography, he would have better understood the reason for his painful experiences, which would have lightened the burden of his suffering.

One other message of the *Book of Job* pertains to the art of counseling and comforting those who suffer. Job's three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar give a clear demonstration of how not to do it. It is difficult to place Elihu's comments in any category; they obviously do not fit the mold of the remarks of the other three of Job's friends, but whether they rise much above it is a matter of debate.

1. Ezek. 28:15, 17

Outline of the Book:

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I. The Background of Job's suffering originating from the Dialogue in Heaven and Satan's double attack on Job - Chapters 1 and 2.

A. Introduction to Job and His Family. 1:1-5

1 In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil.

2 He had seven sons and three daughters,

3 and he owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred donkeys, and had a large number of servants. He was the greatest man among all the people of the East.

4 His sons used to take turns holding feasts in their homes, and they would invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them.

5 When a period of feasting had run its course, Job would send and have them purified. Early in the morning he would sacrifice a burnt offering for each of them, thinking, "Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." This was Job's regular custom.

As stated above it is difficult to determine Job's place in history. The land of Uz has been variously suggested as being in the south of Palestine, close to Edom, or bordering the Euphrates River far to the northeast. Jeremiah mentions "all the kings of Uz" as being the subject of God's wrath in a context of Pharaoh of Egypt and the kings of the Philistines,¹ which would place it in the neighborhood of Edom.

The name Job is spelled *Iyowb* in Hebrew. Some Bible scholars believe that it is related to a word meaning "hate." Like Melchizedek of old, he is introduced to us without the usual genealogy. There is, however, in Job's story no suggestion that he would be anything but human. But it is understandable that the omission of Job's ancestry could be construed as an argument against its historicity, as if Job would be merely the character in a play, like Hamlet.

1. Jer. 25:20

We proceed on the assumption that Job was a person who lived in history; his suffering and the lesson of it for us would greatly diminish in value if all that happened to him merely happened on stage.

These verses represent the testimony about Job, probably as other people saw him and as Job saw himself as blameless and upright, fearing God and shunning evil. "Blameless and upright" pertain to the outward form of his religion as well as to the attitude of his heart. "Fearing God and shunning evil" refer to his desire to give God the first place in his life and to the practice of staying away from "shady deals." Added to this Job had fared well materially.

Job also made serious efforts to transfer his religion to his children. He obviously lived in constant fear that his efforts were not successful and he tried to make up by his own piety what was lacking in theirs. This suggests that Job's concept of God and the way God wanted to be served may have been rather perfunctory. Job acted as if he could make deposits of grace for his children in order to keep their books balanced by God.

B. Job's Name introduced in the Conversation between God and Satan. 1:6-12

6 One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them.

7 The LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the LORD, "From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it."

8 Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil."

9 "Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied.

10 "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land.

11 But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face."

12 The LORD said to Satan, "Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger." Then Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

These verses lift a tip of the veil of the mystery of human suffering in this world. We find some answers here, but there are also many questions left unanswered. It becomes clear, though, that there is a direct link between Job's conflict on earth and the great controversy between God and Satan in heaven.

We have to leave open the question as to whether this encounter between God and His opponent really took place in the way it is described here. It seems that Satan could hardly have stood in God's presence in the way it is depicted here, let alone give the answers that are written here. We may look at this section as a human effort to reconstruct a cosmic spiritual conflict in human terms. Even though the picture of this encounter in

heaven may not have occurred literally as described here, the basic principle, that the great contention between God and Satan is being fought out in the life of every human being, cannot be taken literally enough. In these verses Satan performs the only task he can perform in heaven, which is accusing the brothers. We read in Revelation: "Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: 'Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.'"¹ We see him play the same role in Zechariah's vision where he accused the high priest Joshua.²

Job's life, of which God Himself testified that it was good, gave Satan no ground for any accusation. Satan tried, therefore, to hurt God in highlighting Job's reasons for his good behavior. "Does Job fear God for nothing?" insinuates that Job's religion was not based on love for God but on self-interest. In this, the devil shows that he has a clear understanding of God's plan for man, that man would serve God out of love. This is the point on which the controversy hinges.

In the same way as God is love, Satan is the source of all egoism and seeking of self. The whole account of Job's suffering and his reaction to it must be seen against this background.

It is almost beyond our comprehension that the whole struggle hinges on Job's choices and decisions. It seems that God is taking supernatural risks with His creatures. If it were possible for God to force Job to love Him, Satan would have won the war. It is only when Job freely chooses to remain true to his Creator that the case is won for God. The things that are at stake are the eternal values of loving God and of human dignity.

It would have been so much easier for Job if he had known that the cause of his suffering was not in God. Satan suggested that God would stretch out His hand and strike everything that Job possessed, but God forces Satan to do that himself. This confirms James' words: "When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone."³

C. Satan's First Strike. 1:13-22

13 One day when Job's sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house,

14 a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys were grazing nearby,

15 and the Sabeans attacked and carried them off. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"

1. Rev. 12:10

2. See Zech. 3:1,2.

3. James 1:13

16 While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, "The fire of God fell from the sky and burned up the sheep and the servants, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"

17 While he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, "The Chaldeans formed three raiding parties and swept down on your camels and carried them off. They put the servants to the sword, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"

18 While he was still speaking, yet another messenger came and said, "Your sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house,

19 when suddenly a mighty wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house. It collapsed on them and they are dead, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"

20 At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship

21 and said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised."

22 In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.

The mandate God had given Satan was “everything he has is in your hands” (v.12). This Satan grabbed with both hands. He struck four times in one day. In the first strike Job loses all his oxen, donkeys and the servants that herded them in an attack by the Sabeans. Only one shepherd escaped to tell Job about it (vv.13-15).

The second disaster, in which all of Job's sheep are killed, is described by the servant who escaped as “The fire of God” (v.16). It is interesting to observe that Satan had thunder and lightning at his disposal for this purpose. Evidently, not all natural disasters are “an act of God.” Hurricanes, tornadoes and the like are satanic aberrations in God's perfect creation. Just as God does not force man to be lost so He doesn't destroy His own creation. This does not mean either that thunderstorms and lightening are Satan's invention or that he can demonstrate his own majesty in them, but God allows him to use these in some instances. We find a good illustration of this principle in the Gospel of Mark: “That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, ‘Let us go over to the other side.’ Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, ‘Teacher, don't you care if we drown?’ He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, ‘Quiet! Be still!’ Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. He said to his disciples, ‘Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?’ They were terrified and asked each other, ‘Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!’ ”¹

The next tragedy is described in v. 17 where an enemy band of Chaldeans carried off all Job's camels, killing the shepherds except one.

1. Mark 4:35-41

The heaviest blow, however, is the one in the next verse. Not only is the life of his children infinitely more precious than all other possession, but the question arises if the devil, who assumed that the lives of Job's children were included in the mandate God had given him, didn't simply take what already belonged to him. In the loss of his children Job saw part of his own spiritual endeavor for their salvation go down in the waves. Satan struck Job in his own spiritual life.

Job's reaction to all this in verses 20-22 is noble and beyond reproach. He grieves, bows down, and submits. He sees himself as naked in God's hand, as on the day he came into the world. The emphasis in the words "The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away" is not on "gave" and "taken away" but on "the LORD." In this Job appeals to his Creator and confesses that he cannot see his life apart from the person of God, the Almighty. Job's reaction was healthy, healing, and good. In this Satan lost his first coup.

D. Satan's Second Mandate. 2:1-8

1 On another day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them to present himself before him.

2 And the LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?"

Satan answered the LORD, "From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it."

3 Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. And he still maintains his integrity, though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason."

4 "Skin for skin!" Satan replied. "A man will give all he has for his own life.

5 But stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face."

6 The LORD said to Satan, "Very well, then, he is in your hands; but you must spare his life."

7 So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the top of his head.

8 Then Job took a piece of broken pottery and scraped himself with it as he sat among the ashes.

As it has become clear that Job did not serve God for the benefits, Satan tries to take a step further, but for that he needs another mandate from God. The second heavenly scene is almost word for word the same as the first one, described in Chapter One, verses six through twelve. God comments again on Job's piety and He acknowledges that the devil has been successful in inciting God against Job. Important in this context are the words "without any reason." Job's ruin had no ground in God. If there was any ground for the disasters that struck Job it was in Satan. These words justify God and they condemn the devil and his strategy. God is being forced to allow mankind to suffer in order to prove

to His opponent that real love is gratis. Satan acts as if he doesn't hear those words. He renews his attack by insinuating that Job clings to God because the suffering has not touched him personally, in a physical way. So far it has not been for Job a struggle for survival. According to Satan, Job will cast all religious ballast overboard as soon as he sees that his ship is sinking. The devil suggests that God give him a free hand, which God gives with the exception of Job's life, which remains in God's hand alone.

The expression "skin for skin" is an interesting one. The devil's intent was obviously to say that, in spite of all Job lost, his suffering was only skin-deep. The idiom, if that is what it is, seems to be derived from the snake's habit to shed its skin, which would make it more familiar to Satan than he would care to admit.

As long as Job's skin remained in tact, his flesh and bones remained unaffected and his pain would remain superficial. So God allowed Satan to attack Job's skin within limits; he would have no power over Job's life. The Hebrew word used is *nepesh*, meaning "soul." We find it in the verse "the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being."¹

We read that Satan "afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the top of his head." This leaves Job sitting as a heap of misery, foreshadowing the Man of Sorrow. All of Job's human dignity was gone and nothing of the image of God in him remained visible. It seems that he suffered more from a terrible itch than from pain, since we read that he tried to find relief in scratching himself with a piece of broken pottery. The symbolism of the picture that is painted of Job is clear enough: ashes and broken pieces! Job's whole existence had been reduced to ashes and brokenness.

E. The Third Degree of Job's suffering. 2:9-13

9 His wife said to him, "Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!"

10 He replied, "You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?"

In all this, Job did not sin in what he said.

11 When Job's three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite, heard about all the troubles that had come upon him, they set out from their homes and met together by agreement to go and sympathize with him and comfort him.

12 When they saw him from a distance, they could hardly recognize him; they began to weep aloud, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads.

13 Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights. No one said a word to him, because they saw how great his suffering was.

1. Gen. 2:7

This leads to the third phase of Job's suffering: that which one person does to another for lack of love and compassion. At this point Satan seems to try to get control over that part of Job's life that God had excluded from the mandate: Job's own life. When Job's wife says to him: "Curse God and die," she suggests that Job commit suicide. As long as Job's life remained in God's hand, this would be the devil's only chance to get a hold of Job. A human being has the liberty to take his own life. But it is impossible to do so without first severing the bond with God. Suicide is the ultimate form of rebellion against God; it is a conscious surrender to God's enemy.

For this purpose Satan uses the person who is closest to Job: his wife. This reminds us how much we depend upon our relationship with the Lord in our love for one another as husband and wife. Satan also uses Job's intimate friends. Their comfort and compassion turns out to be nothing else but a demonic effort to worsen Job's suffering. From the following chapters, it appears that in this attempt Satan books his greatest success.

F. The Arrival of Job's Three Friends and their Initial Reaction. 2:11-13

11 When Job's three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite, heard about all the troubles that had come upon him, they set out from their homes and met together by agreement to go and sympathize with him and comfort him.

12 When they saw him from a distance, they could hardly recognize him; they began to weep aloud, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads.

13 Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights. No one said a word to him, because they saw how great his suffering was.

Bible scholars have tried to connect the names of Job's friends and their places of origin to historic persons and locations. There is, for instance, an Eliphaz in Genesis, who was the son of Esau.¹ If Job's friend is in fact that person, it would put his place of origin in Edom. It is, however, impossible to state for sure that the two were identical. Efforts have also been made to relate Bildad the Shuhite, to Abraham who married Keturah who bore him six sons, one of whom was called Shuah.² For Zophar, Naamah has been connected to a place Joshua allocated to the tribe of Judah.³ None of this has any importance as far as the content of the *Book of Job* is concerned.

The fact that these three men heard about Job's affliction and contacted each other for the purpose of paying Job a visit would indicate that they were within reasonable distance of each other. Connecting their names to known historical persons and places seems to rule out that possibility because of the rather widespread area covered by them.

1. Gen. 36:15

2. See Gen. 25:1,2.

3. Josh. 15:41

We must compliment Job's three friends for their spontaneous reaction upon seeing Job's suffering. He had been disfigured by his affliction and they burst out in tears. Their seven-day silence must have been the best comfort they could have given Job. The seven days and seven nights must be interpreted as symbolic. It would have been a physical impossibility to sit that long and be completely silent. One would wish though, that these friends had limited their efforts to comfort Job to what they did when they first arrived.

II. Job's Dialogues with Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar - Chapters 3-31

A. Job's complaint. 3:1-26

1 After this, Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth.

2 He said:

3 "May the day of my birth perish, and the night it was said, 'A boy is born!'

4 That day — may it turn to darkness; may God above not care about it; may no light shine upon it.

5 May darkness and deep shadow claim it once more; may a cloud settle over it; may blackness overwhelm its light.

6 That night — may thick darkness seize it; may it not be included among the days of the year nor be entered in any of the months.

7 May that night be barren; may no shout of joy be heard in it.

8 May those who curse days curse that day, those who are ready to rouse Leviathan.

9 May its morning stars become dark; may it wait for daylight in vain and not see the first rays of dawn,

10 for it did not shut the doors of the womb on me to hide trouble from my eyes.

11 "Why did I not perish at birth, and die as I came from the womb?

12 Why were there knees to receive me and breasts that I might be nursed?

13 For now I would be lying down in peace; I would be asleep and at rest

14 with kings and counselors of the earth, who built for themselves places now lying in ruins,

15 with rulers who had gold, who filled their houses with silver.

16 Or why was I not hidden in the ground like a stillborn child, like an infant who never saw the light of day?

17 There the wicked cease from turmoil, and there the weary are at rest.

18 Captives also enjoy their ease; they no longer hear the slave driver's shout.

19 The small and the great are there, and the slave is freed from his master.

20 "Why is light given to those in misery, and life to the bitter of soul,

21 to those who long for death that does not come, who search for it more than for hidden treasure,

22 who are filled with gladness and rejoice when they reach the grave?

23 Why is life given to a man whose way is hidden, whom God has hedged in?

24 For sighing comes to me instead of food; my groans pour out like water.

25 What I feared has come upon me; what I dreaded has happened to me.

26 I have no peace, no quietness; I have no rest, but only turmoil."

We observe that this part of the *Book of Job* occupies three-fourth of the whole book. Yet, we tend to consider it the least important piece of the story, since the moralizing of Job's friends actually holds no water. But why then does the author pay so much attention to it? Maybe the moral lies in the way Job's friends tried to comfort him.

Job's complaint serves also as an introduction to the following dialogues. It is given in the form of a poem. We must take into account when we read the flowery language that we are in fact reading poetry. This poem can be divided into two sections, Job's cursing of the day of his birth (vv.1-10), and Job's five questions "why?" (vv. 11, 12, 16, 20, 23). The double "why" in v.12 is counted as one, since it is a poetic parallel.

1. Job curses the day of his birth.

Cursing the day of one's birth, or the night of a fetus' conception, or of any day in the past is of course an exercise in futility. Cursing of days must pertain to the future to have any effect, if days are to be marked to produce disaster. What Job did poetically was projecting his present suffering on a day in the past. He may have wanted to convey the concept that suffering was an inherent part of his existence. That which he experienced as a climax had been present as a hidden seed from the day of his coming into being. We can ask whether this is true, and the answer must be "yes," and "no." There are in each human life elements of heaven and hell. Man's destiny is determined by that element that gains the most strength. No one ever lives a life of pure joy or total suffering. But if the one overshadows the other, the lesser element will seem to become completely negligible.

Job had ceased to understand the meaning of his birth. The knees that received him, the breasts that fed him, light and life itself seemed to have become utterly meaningless and swallowed up in the immense shadow of his suffering. Yet, the apostle Paul, who suffered no less than Job, could say: "For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all,"¹ and, "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us."²

2. Job's Five Questions.

Job's five questions are probably the most tragic questions ever asked. Particularly the subjects on which Job focuses, which are among the most precious things in human life, emphasize the heartrending aspect. From the things Job picks out of everything that can be said about human life in general, it becomes evident that Job had always held a deep respect for and appreciation of life. What is more precious and thrilling than the first

1. II Cor. 4:17

2. Rom. 8:18

cry of a newborn baby? All happiness and satisfaction we can ever experience in life cannot be matched and surpassed by the warmth and security of the knees that received us a birth and the breasts that fed us. What has the miracle of the birth of a healthy baby in common with a miscarriage? We may take it for granted that every organ in our body functions normally, but that doesn't diminish the miracle of our existence.

The bitterness of Job's complaint is not only in that he puts a question mark behind everything that is beautiful in life and that gives it meaning, but in the alternative. Being born dead or coming into this world in an imperfect manner is not the same as coming to nothing. Job speaks about being at rest, but in whose company? The dead cannot be separated from what they were in life. Kings and princes spent their lives in making themselves rich. The godless are there with those who have become exhausted, with prisoners and slaves. The shadow of mangled life falls over the whole kingdom of death. It seems as if the meaninglessness of life simply continues after death. In his questions, Job seems to equalize life and death, with the only difference that there is no more pain in death. Job knew that the way out was to God, but he closed that one. What it amounts to is that Job thought that God had forsaken him. Thus Job moved in the direction of the One who was crucified.

Had Job known about the scene in heaven, he would have known that it was not God who put him in the crucible. As is evident from the following chapters, that was Job's greatest problem.

B. Eliphaz' First Discourse. 4:1-5:27

1 Then Eliphaz the Temanite replied:

2 "If someone ventures a word with you, will you be impatient? But who can keep from speaking?

3 Think how you have instructed many, how you have strengthened feeble hands.

4 Your words have supported those who stumbled; you have strengthened faltering knees.

5 But now trouble comes to you, and you are discouraged; it strikes you, and you are dismayed.

6 Should not your piety be your confidence and your blameless ways your hope?

7 "Consider now: Who, being innocent, has ever perished? Where were the upright ever destroyed?

8 As I have observed, those who plow evil and those who sow trouble reap it.

9 At the breath of God they are destroyed at the blast of his anger they perish.

10 The lions may roar and growl, yet the teeth of the great lions are broken.

11 The lion perishes for lack of prey, and the cubs of the lioness are scattered.

12 "A word was secretly brought to me, my ears caught a whisper of it.

13 Amid disquieting dreams in the night, when deep sleep falls on men,

14 fear and trembling seized me and made all my bones shake.

15 A spirit glided past my face, and the hair on my body stood on end.

16 It stopped, but I could not tell what it was. A form stood before my eyes, and I heard a hushed voice:

17 'Can a mortal be more righteous than God? Can a man be more pure than his Maker?

18 If God places no trust in his servants, if he charges his angels with error,

19 how much more those who live in houses of clay, whose foundations are in the dust, who are crushed more readily than a moth!

20 Between dawn and dusk they are broken to pieces; unnoticed, they perish forever.

21 Are not the cords of their tent pulled up, so that they die without wisdom?'

5:1 – "Call if you will, but who will answer you? To which of the holy ones will you turn?

2 Resentment kills a fool, and envy slays the simple.

3 I myself have seen a fool taking root, but suddenly his house was cursed.

4 His children are far from safety, crushed in court without a defender.

5 The hungry consume his harvest, taking it even from among thorns, and the thirsty pant after his wealth.

6 For hardship does not spring from the soil, nor does trouble sprout from the ground.

7 Yet man is born to trouble as surely as sparks fly upward.

8 "But if it were I, I would appeal to God; I would lay my cause before him.

9 He performs wonders that cannot be fathomed, miracles that cannot be counted.

10 He bestows rain on the earth; he sends water upon the countryside.

11 The lowly he sets on high, and those who mourn are lifted to safety.

12 He thwarts the plans of the crafty, so that their hands achieve no success.

13 He catches the wise in their craftiness, and the schemes of the wily are swept away.

14 Darkness comes upon them in the daytime; at noon they grope as in the night.

15 He saves the needy from the sword in their mouth; he saves them from the clutches of the powerful.

16 So the poor have hope, and injustice shuts its mouth.

17 "Blessed is the man whom God corrects; so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty.

18 For he wounds, but he also binds up; he injures, but his hands also heal.

19 From six calamities he will rescue you; in seven no harm will befall you.

20 In famine he will ransom you from death, and in battle from the stroke of the sword.

21 You will be protected from the lash of the tongue, and need not fear when destruction comes.

22 You will laugh at destruction and famine, and need not fear the beasts of the earth.

23 For you will have a covenant with the stones of the field, and the wild animals will be at peace with you.

24 You will know that your tent is secure; you will take stock of your property and find nothing missing.

25 You will know that your children will be many, and your descendants like the grass of the earth.

**26 You will come to the grave in full vigor, like sheaves gathered in season.
27 "We have examined this, and it is true. So hear it and apply it to yourself."**

We can imagine the satisfaction the devil, who was the scriptwriter of this speech, must have had in preparing this script. In a refined way, referring to Job's position as instructor and supporter of the weak, he rubs salt in Job's wounds. These are no words of comfort or help; they are an expression of sadistic rejoicing in someone else's misery.

In verses 7-11 Eliphaz plainly insinuates that what happened to Job was punishment for his sin. Verses 12-16 reveal the source of this admonition, clothed in pious language. The spooky shadows Eliphaz saw in the night resemble more a spiritists' séance than a divine revelation. The content of this vision (vv.17-21) does no justice to God's goodness and righteousness. Who are those servants in whom God places no trust and the angels He charges with error, other than the archangel who is speaking? God doesn't crush humans like moths merely because they are human. Who gave Eliphaz the right to curse the house of a fool? Where did he learn this black magic? Having effectively blocked Job's way of escape, Satan is free to show Job the "evangelical" way out. After all, Job wouldn't be able to go that way. Chapter 5, Verses 8-27 is beautiful poetry, but it is nothing but words. The words may be true but the message is a lie. These words are not the living and active double-edged sword of the Word of God. They are a cudgel that bludgeons to death. Eliphaz' mouth is like the spring from which flows both fresh and salt water.

C. Job's First Answer to Eliphaz. 6:1-7:21

1 Then Job replied:

2 "If only my anguish could be weighed and all my misery be placed on the scales!

3 It would surely outweigh the sand of the seas — no wonder my words have been impetuous.

4 The arrows of the Almighty are in me, my spirit drinks in their poison; God's terrors are marshaled against me.

5 Does a wild donkey bray when it has grass, or an ox bellow when it has fodder?

6 Is tasteless food eaten without salt, or is there flavor in the white of an egg?

7 I refuse to touch it; such food makes me ill.

8 "Oh, that I might have my request, that God would grant what I hope for,

9 that God would be willing to crush me, to let loose his hand and cut me off!

10 Then I would still have this consolation — my joy in unrelenting pain — that I had not denied the words of the Holy One.

11 "What strength do I have, that I should still hope? What prospects, that I should be patient?

12 Do I have the strength of stone? Is my flesh bronze?

13 Do I have any power to help myself, now that success has been driven from me?

14 "A despairing man should have the devotion of his friends, even though he forsakes the fear of the Almighty.

15 But my brothers are as undependable as intermittent streams, as the streams that overflow

16 when darkened by thawing ice and swollen with melting snow,

17 but that cease to flow in the dry season, and in the heat vanish from their channels.

18 Caravans turn aside from their routes; they go up into the wasteland and perish.

19 The caravans of Tema look for water, the traveling merchants of Sheba look in hope.

20 They are distressed, because they had been confident; they arrive there, only to be disappointed.

21 Now you too have proved to be of no help; you see something dreadful and are afraid.

22 Have I ever said, 'Give something on my behalf, pay a ransom for me from your wealth,

23 deliver me from the hand of the enemy, ransom me from the clutches of the ruthless'?

24 "Teach me, and I will be quiet; show me where I have been wrong.

25 How painful are honest words! But what do your arguments prove?

26 Do you mean to correct what I say, and treat the words of a despairing man as wind?

27 You would even cast lots for the fatherless and barter away your friend.

28 "But now be so kind as to look at me. Would I lie to your face?

29 Relent, do not be unjust; reconsider, for my integrity is at stake.

30 Is there any wickedness on my lips? Can my mouth not discern malice?

7:1 "Does not man have hard service on earth? Are not his days like those of a hired man?

2 Like a slave longing for the evening shadows, or a hired man waiting eagerly for his wages,

3 so I have been allotted months of futility, and nights of misery have been assigned to me.

4 When I lie down I think, 'How long before I get up?' The night drags on, and I toss till dawn.

5 My body is clothed with worms and scabs, my skin is broken and festering.

6 "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and they come to an end without hope.

7 Remember, O God, that my life is but a breath; my eyes will never see happiness again.

8 The eye that now sees me will see me no longer; you will look for me, but I will be no more.

9 As a cloud vanishes and is gone, so he who goes down to the grave does not return.

10 He will never come to his house again; his place will know him no more.

11 "Therefore I will not keep silent; I will speak out in the anguish of my spirit, I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.

12 Am I the sea, or the monster of the deep, that you put me under guard?

*13 When I think my bed will comfort me and my couch will ease my complaint,
14 even then you frighten me with dreams and terrify me with visions,
15 so that I prefer strangling and death, rather than this body of mine.
16 I despise my life; I would not live forever. Let me alone; my days have no meaning.
17 "What is man that you make so much of him, that you give him so much attention,
18 that you examine him every morning and test him every moment?
19 Will you never look away from me, or let me alone even for an instant?
20 If I have sinned, what have I done to you, O watcher of men? Why have you made me your target? Have I become a burden to you?
21 Why do you not pardon my offenses and forgive my sins? For I will soon lie down in the dust; you will search for me, but I will be no more."*

(1) Job admits that his words were impetuous and he begs for understanding. He spoke thus because of the depth of his suffering. What was the essence of Job's suffering? First of all it was the sadness of loss of possessions and family, the loss of value and dignity, the loss of fellowship with God and man. All this had become unbearable because of the addition of physical pain.

(2) Job asks God to shorten his life. He fails to recognize the meaning of his suffering. He was never unfaithful to God's Word, but his body can no longer bear it.

(3) Job is disappointed in his friends. He realized that he couldn't lean on them. They have become unreliable. He believes them to be afraid. They may think that Job expects them to give him help they cannot provide. He appeals to them to become real and stop their war of words.

D. Bildad's First Discourse. 8:1-22

*1 Then Bildad the Shuhite replied:
2 "How long will you say such things? Your words are a blustering wind.
3 Does God pervert justice? Does the Almighty pervert what is right?
4 When your children sinned against him, he gave them over to the penalty of their sin.

5 But if you will look to God and plead with the Almighty,
6 if you are pure and upright, even now he will rouse himself on your behalf and restore you to your rightful place.
7 Your beginnings will seem humble, so prosperous will your future be.
8 "Ask the former generations and find out what their fathers learned,
9 for we were born only yesterday and know nothing, and our days on earth are but a shadow.
10 Will they not instruct you and tell you? Will they not bring forth words from their understanding?
11 Can papyrus grow tall where there is no marsh? Can reeds thrive without water?
12 While still growing and uncut, they wither more quickly than grass.*

*13 Such is the destiny of all who forget God; so perishes the hope of the godless.
14 What he trusts in is fragile; what he relies on is a spider's web.
15 He leans on his web, but it gives way; he clings to it, but it does not hold.
16 He is like a well-watered plant in the sunshine, spreading its shoots over the garden;
17 it entwines its roots around a pile of rocks and looks for a place among the stones.
18 But when it is torn from its spot, that place disowns it and says, 'I never saw you.'
19 Surely its life withers away, and from the soil other plants grow.
20 "Surely God does not reject a blameless man or strengthen the hands of evildoers.
21 He will yet fill your mouth with laughter and your lips with shouts of joy.
22 Your enemies will be clothed in shame, and the tents of the wicked will be no more."*

Bildad appeals to God's righteousness. How terribly heartless is righteousness without love! Righteousness without love is only found among people fallen in sin. In the person of God the two are like molecules in one element.

It may be true that Job's children perished because of their own iniquity. But that fact constitutes a major part of Job's suffering. If Bildad mentions this in order to comfort Job, he failed miserably. Bildad's words are a subtle suggestion that serves to make Job concentrate upon himself alone. Suffering always become more desperate if one thinks only of oneself. The devil intensifies our pain by making us feel the pain of how much it hurts.

We ask why Bildad refers to the former generations. If Job's story dates from before Noah's flood, we would think of the genealogy of Genesis, Chapter Five, of whom some might still have been alive. It could also refer to some writings about previous generation that were still in existence. Or it may refer to some oral traditions. Another possibility is that Bildad suggests that Job consult the dead by means of spiritualism. If that is the case, it would determine the spiritual value of everything Bildad is saying here.

E. Job's answer to Bildad. 9:1-10:22

1 Then Job replied:

2 "Indeed, I know that this is true. But how can a mortal be righteous before God?

3 Though one wished to dispute with him, he could not answer him one time out of a thousand.

4 His wisdom is profound, his power is vast. Who has resisted him and come out unscathed?

5 He moves mountains without their knowing it and overturns them in his anger.

6 He shakes the earth from its place and makes its pillars tremble.

7 He speaks to the sun and it does not shine; he seals off the light of the stars.

8 He alone stretches out the heavens and treads on the waves of the sea.

9 He is the Maker of the Bear and Orion, the Pleiades and the constellations of the south.

10 He performs wonders that cannot be fathomed, miracles that cannot be counted.

11 *When he passes me, I cannot see him; when he goes by, I cannot perceive him.*
12 *If he snatches away, who can stop him? Who can say to him, 'What are you doing?'*
13 *God does not restrain his anger; even the cohorts of Rahab cowered at his feet.*
14 *"How then can I dispute with him? How can I find words to argue with him?"*
15 *Though I were innocent, I could not answer him; I could only plead with my Judge for mercy.*
16 *Even if I summoned him and he responded, I do not believe he would give me a hearing.*
17 *He would crush me with a storm and multiply my wounds for no reason.*
18 *He would not let me regain my breath but would overwhelm me with misery.*
19 *If it is a matter of strength, he is mighty! And if it is a matter of justice, who will summon him?*
20 *Even if I were innocent, my mouth would condemn me; if I were blameless, it would pronounce me guilty.*
21 *"Although I am blameless, I have no concern for myself; I despise my own life.*
22 *It is all the same; that is why I say, 'He destroys both the blameless and the wicked.'*
23 *When a scourge brings sudden death, he mocks the despair of the innocent.*
24 *When a land falls into the hands of the wicked, he blindfolds its judges. If it is not he, then who is it?*
25 *"My days are swifter than a runner; they fly away without a glimpse of joy.*
26 *They skim past like boats of papyrus, like eagles swooping down on their prey.*
27 *If I say, 'I will forget my complaint, I will change my expression, and smile,'*
28 *I still dread all my sufferings, for I know you will not hold me innocent.*
29 *Since I am already found guilty, why should I struggle in vain?*
30 *Even if I washed myself with soap and my hands with washing soda,*
31 *you would plunge me into a slime pit so that even my clothes would detest me.*
32 *"He is not a man like me that I might answer him, that we might confront each other in court.*
33 *If only there were someone to arbitrate between us, to lay his hand upon us both,*
34 *someone to remove God's rod from me, so that his terror would frighten me no more.*
35 *Then I would speak up without fear of him, but as it now stands with me, I cannot.*
Chapter 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.
2 *I will say to God: Do not condemn me, but tell me what charges you have against me.*
3 *Does it please you to oppress me, to spurn the work of your hands, while you smile on the schemes of the wicked?*
4 *Do you have eyes of flesh? Do you see as a mortal sees?*
5 *Are your days like those of a mortal or your years like those of a man,*
6 *that you must search out my faults and probe after my sin—*
7 *though you know that I am not guilty and that no one can rescue me from your hand?*
8 *"Your hands shaped me and made me. Will you now turn and destroy me?"*
9 *Remember that you molded me like clay. Will you now turn me to dust again?*

*10 Did you not pour me out like milk and curdle me like cheese,
11 clothe me with skin and flesh and knit me together with bones and sinews?
12 You gave me life and showed me kindness, and in your providence watched over my spirit.
13 "But this is what you concealed in your heart, and I know that this was in your mind:
14 If I sinned, you would be watching me and would not let my offense go unpunished.
15 If I am guilty — woe to me! Even if I am innocent, I cannot lift my head, for I am full of shame and drowned in my affliction.
16 If I hold my head high, you stalk me like a lion and again display your awesome power against me.
17 You bring new witnesses against me and increase your anger toward me; your forces come against me wave upon wave.
18 "Why then did you bring me out of the womb? I wish I had died before any eye saw me.
19 If only I had never come into being, or had been carried straight from the womb to the grave!
20 Are not my few days almost over? Turn away from me so I can have a moment's joy
21 before I go to the place of no return, to the land of gloom and deep shadow,
22 to the land of deepest night, of deep shadow and disorder, where even the light is like darkness."*

Job is searching here for God's identity. His stumbling block is that he cannot find the boundaries between what God does as a result of what He is and what the devil does because God gave him the freedom to act. This is evinced in Job's remark, "When a land falls into the hands of the wicked, he blindfolds its judges. If it is not he, then who is it?"¹ This lack of discernment causes Job, on the one hand, to sense the truth about God and, on the other hand, to miss the mark completely.

(i) 9:1-4 – In comparison with man, God is "the totally Other." It is impossible for man to prove God wrong. If God could be wrong, He would no longer be God. The norm of the absolute would be dead.

(ii) Job sketches God's hand in creation as both destructive and creative. In vv. 5-7 Job describes the destructive part and in vv. 8 and 10 the creative side. Job's grandiose vision of God deserves our attention. Those who see God in the awesome majesty of the universe with millions of light-years between us and the stars, in the glow of the planets, have a God who is not too small.

(iii) In v. 11 Job describes the depth of his suffering. Maybe he tries to say that he is too small for such a great God. Grace means that the eternal great God is, at the same time, the God of the infinitely small. If Job cannot see God when He passes him, it means that Job has isolated himself in his suffering.

1. Job 9:24

(iv) In v. 13 Job returns to his point of departure. But his observation gains in depth because of his vision of God's greatness. Beginning with vv. 15-20, Job speaks hypothetically, "Though I were innocent..." in order to indicate that he speaks about a general principle. No human being could ever call God to account. In v. 21 Job begins to make the application personal: "Although I am blameless..." What Job probably means to say is that he did not sin in the way his three friends suggested. From a human point of view he is innocent. A human court of law would declare him "not guilty." But God's judgment goes well beyond human verdicts. People who are declared guilty or not guilty by a human jury are still guilty before God, because they fall short of the glory of God.¹ This facet of what is called guilty in the eyes of men and that which is guilty before God plays a more important role in this book than appears on the surface. The final solution for Job's problem consists in the fact that Job acknowledges the guilt that comes from the difference in being between God and himself. On that basis Job retracts everything he has said and repents. The fact that a human being can acknowledge his guilt in falling short of the glory of God implies that something can be done about that. How could God declare guilty of falling short of His glory a human being who is conceived and born in sin and who is incapable of any good, unless that human being bears responsibility for his condition? Human responsibility consists, on the one hand, in the fact that God, seeing all of humanity as represented by one individual, holds us all responsible for the original break Adam made with God. On the other hand, God opens a way for all by means of faith in Jesus' blood to become partakers of the divine nature. We demonstrate by the change of our behavior whether we walk the way of faith completely, or partially, or not at all.

For Job it was, of course, impossible to see and understand the secret of God's atonement, but he could reach the conclusion about what constituted his guilt before God. It is amazing to see how much spiritual intuition Job possessed. He understood that the solution could only be found in an arbitrator, someone who could lay his hand both on God and on Job. This, as we know, was God's own solution to the problem in the person of Jesus Christ.

We saw that at the beginning of the book Satan asked the question: "Does Job fear God for nothing?"² This makes us ask "Why does man serve God?" It seems that, in this chapter, Job deals with the question in a minor key. The "why" is not in man's court but in God's. What use is it for God to put man to the test? The question remains unanswered here. If the answer to the first question is that it is a matter of love, the answer to the second ought to be sought in the same direction. It is God's love for man that urges Him to lead man to perfection. This love is so strong that it does not shrink from suffering, if that is what it takes to bring out in man what has value for God. This answer remained hidden for Job. Yet, Job demonstrates in this chapter a lofty vision of who God is. God is not like a mortal human being. The description Job gives of the process of creation reveals his awe and wonder. "You molded me like clay." "Did you not pour me out like milk and curdle

1. See Rom. 3:23.

2. Job 1:9

me like cheese, clothe me with skin and flesh and knit me together with bones and sinews?" V. 12 is one of the golden verses in the Bible: "You gave me life and showed me kindness, and in your providence watched over my spirit." How wonderful is human life! But this marvelous and beautiful life is being muddled and polluted. Satan succeeds in sowing suspicion in Job's mind. A cord of doubt has begun to vibrate in his soul and Job has become suspicious of God. It sounds as if Job had been able to catch a glimpse of the scene in heaven, described in Chapter One, but by means of an optical illusion the images of God and Satan were superimposed. It seems that the enemy had been successful in his tactics of sowing suspicion. When he suggests to man that God may have had ulterior motives, man reacts by thinking: "That's what I thought." Israel had come to the conclusion that God had led them into the desert in order to kill them there. We tend to suspect that God possesses a cruelty and sadism as we seldom observe in fellow human beings. It is a mystery why we are so susceptible to that kind of demonic thoughts. Faith in God stands in direct opposition to any kind of suspicion regarding God's motives. Faith is certainty that God consists of absolute love, truth and reliability.

F. Zophar's reply. 11:1-20

1 Then Zophar the Naamathite replied:

2 "Are all these words to go unanswered? Is this talker to be vindicated?

3 Will your idle talk reduce men to silence? Will no one rebuke you when you mock?

4 You say to God, 'My beliefs are flawless and I am pure in your sight.'

5 Oh, how I wish that God would speak, that he would open his lips against you

6 and disclose to you the secrets of wisdom, for true wisdom has two sides. Know this: God has even forgotten some of your sin.

7 "Can you fathom the mysteries of God? Can you probe the limits of the Almighty?

8 They are higher than the heavens — what can you do? They are deeper than the depths of the grave—what can you know?

9 Their measure is longer than the earth and wider than the sea.

10 "If he comes along and confines you in prison and convenes a court, who can oppose him?

11 Surely he recognizes deceitful men; and when he sees evil, does he not take note?

12 But a witless man can no more become wise than a wild donkey's colt can be born a man.

13 "Yet if you devote your heart to him and stretch out your hands to him,

14 if you put away the sin that is in your hand and allow no evil to dwell in your tent,

15 then you will lift up your face without shame; you will stand firm and without fear.

16 You will surely forget your trouble, recalling it only as waters gone by.

17 Life will be brighter than noonday, and darkness will become like morning.

18 You will be secure, because there is hope; you will look about you and take your rest in safety.

19 You will lie down, with no one to make you afraid, and many will court your favor.

20 But the eyes of the wicked will fail, and escape will elude them; their hope will become a dying gasp."

The Naamathite Zophar takes the stand here. He lectures Job about God. Most of what he says is true but it is not original. He speaks in platitudes and clichés. His concept of God is flat and small. Compared with Job's vision of God in Chapter 9:5-9 and the measurements Zophar used to describe God, (higher than the heavens, deeper than the depths of the grave, longer than the earth and wider than the sea)¹ Zophar's God is too small. His words are pious and maybe well intended but, without fellowship with God, they become the most dangerous weapons Satan can use. A person who knows God ought never to take them in his mouth.

G. Job's reply

12:1 Then Job replied:

2 "Doubtless you are the people, and wisdom will die with you!

3 But I have a mind as well as you; I am not inferior to you. Who does not know all these things?

4 "I have become a laughingstock to my friends, though I called upon God and he answered — a mere laughingstock, though righteous and blameless!

5 Men at ease have contempt for misfortune as the fate of those whose feet are slipping.

6 The tents of marauders are undisturbed, and those who provoke God are secure — those who carry their god in their hands.

7 "But ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds of the air, and they will tell you;

8 or speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish of the sea inform you.

9 Which of all these does not know that the hand of the LORD has done this?

10 In his hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind.

11 Does not the ear test words as the tongue tastes food?

12 Is not wisdom found among the aged? Does not long life bring understanding?

13 "To God belong wisdom and power; counsel and understanding are his.

14 What he tears down cannot be rebuilt; the man he imprisons cannot be released.

15 If he holds back the waters, there is drought; if he lets them loose, they devastate the land.

16 To him belong strength and victory; both deceived and deceiver are his.

17 He leads counselors away stripped and makes fools of judges.

18 He takes off the shackles put on by kings and ties a loincloth around their waist.

19 He leads priests away stripped and overthrows men long established.

20 He silences the lips of trusted advisers and takes away the discernment of elders.

21 He pours contempt on nobles and disarms the mighty.

1. See Job 11:8-9.

22 He reveals the deep things of darkness and brings deep shadows into the light.

23 He makes nations great, and destroys them; he enlarges nations, and disperses them.

24 He deprives the leaders of the earth of their reason; he sends them wandering through a trackless waste.

25 They grope in darkness with no light; he makes them stagger like drunkards.

Job's sarcasm toward his friends almost turns into sarcasm toward God. Job observes God's work of destruction around him. The scene reminds us of Jeremiah's prophecy to Baruch. We read: "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says to you, Baruch: You said, 'Woe to me! The LORD has added sorrow to my pain; I am worn out with groaning and find no rest.' [The LORD said,] 'Say this to him: ' 'This is what the LORD says: I will overthrow what I have built and uproot what I have planted, throughout the land. Should you then seek great things for yourself? Seek them not. For I will bring disaster on all people, declares the LORD, but wherever you go I will let you escape with your life.'"¹ Job's complaint borders on despair. That which he had considered to be the solid foundation of his life turns out to be quicksand. He almost came to the point some modern theologians came to, saying, "God is dead." We must not belittle such a confession of despair; it could catch up with us! This is a shadow of Jesus' sense of being forsaken by the Father when He hung on the cross. It is useless to say that Job's vision is based on an optical illusion. Job hit the lowest point of the wave. We cannot make declarations of certainty about the eternal God based upon one instance in our existence as mortals. We cannot judge eternity according to our experiences at one point in time. As James writes in his epistle: "You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy."²

H. Job's Reply (continued). 13:1-13

1 "My eyes have seen all this, my ears have heard and understood it.

2 What you know, I also know; I am not inferior to you.

3 But I desire to speak to the Almighty and to argue my case with God.

4 You, however, smear me with lies; you are worthless physicians, all of you!

5 If only you would be altogether silent! For you, that would be wisdom.

6 Hear now my argument; listen to the plea of my lips.

7 Will you speak wickedly on God's behalf? Will you speak deceitfully for him?

8 Will you show him partiality? Will you argue the case for God?

9 Would it turn out well if he examined you? Could you deceive him as you might deceive men?

10 He would surely rebuke you if you secretly showed partiality.

1. Jer. 45:2-5

2. James 5:11

11 Would not his splendor terrify you? Would not the dread of him fall on you?

12 Your maxims are proverbs of ashes; your defenses are defenses of clay.

13 "Keep silent and let me speak; then let come to me what may.

Job's accusation of his friends cuts much deeper than their own complaint about Job. What they had said was, generally speaking, true. But truth never consists in words alone. As long as they fell short of the glory of God in their own lives, they were sinners, just like Job. Instead of admitting this, they accused Job on the level of inter-human relations. In blaming Job they mainly tried to justify themselves. Job correctly identifies this as a lie. They had drawn a line of separation between Job and themselves and thus believed themselves to be on God's side. Without realizing this, they locked themselves in the same cage with the lion. Their position in relationship with God was not different from Job's. They were in danger of being swallowed alive. As the author of Hebrews writes: "It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."¹

I. Job's Reply (continued). 13:14-28

14 Why do I put myself in jeopardy and take my life in my hands?

15 Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him; I will surely defend my ways to his face.

16 Indeed, this will turn out for my deliverance, for no godless man would dare come before him!

17 Listen carefully to my words; let your ears take in what I say.

18 Now that I have prepared my case, I know I will be vindicated.

19 Can anyone bring charges against me? If so, I will be silent and die.

20 "Only grant me these two things, O God, and then I will not hide from you:

21 Withdraw your hand far from me, and stop frightening me with your terrors.

22 Then summon me and I will answer, or let me speak, and you reply.

23 How many wrongs and sins have I committed? Show me my offense and my sin.

24 Why do you hide your face and consider me your enemy?

25 Will you torment a windblown leaf? Will you chase after dry chaff?

26 For you write down bitter things against me and make me inherit the sins of my youth.

27 You fasten my feet in shackles; you keep close watch on all my paths by putting marks on the soles of my feet.

28 "So man wastes away like something rotten, like a garment eaten by moths.

What Job's friends had done without being aware of the danger, Job does consciously. In an act that demonstrates exceptional courage, he removes the bolt, opens the door and enters the lion's cage. "Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him" (v.15). What Job says in the following verses are words spoken in the sanctuary. The conflict is

1. Heb. 10:31

still going on, but by this step of faith Job forces the crisis. He says the same things as before, but what in first instance sounded like bragging and a lack of vision sounds like pure truth in the light of God's presence. "I know I will be vindicated" (v. 18) is a glorious confession of faith. Job cannot have understood sufficiently the secret of God's justification of a person in Jesus Christ. But the Holy Spirit uses Job's faith and endues his words with prophetic eloquence. Job still finds himself under the pressure of circumstance, which he describes as the hand of God upon him. But he professed to hope in the hand that could kill him. Shortly after this instance darkness will envelop Job anew, but at the moment he catches enough light to be able to live on. Like Job, we may stand in God's presence, but with full knowledge of a salvation of which Job can only have had a vague notion.

J. Job's Reply (concluded). 14:1-22

- 1 "Man born of woman is of few days and full of trouble.*
- 2 He springs up like a flower and withers away; like a fleeting shadow, he does not endure.*
- 3 Do you fix your eye on such a one? Will you bring him before you for judgment?*
- 4 Who can bring what is pure from the impure? No one!*
- 5 Man's days are determined; you have decreed the number of his months and have set limits he cannot exceed.*
- 6 So look away from him and let him alone, till he has put in his time like a hired man.*
- 7 "At least there is hope for a tree: If it is cut down, it will sprout again, and its new shoots will not fail.*
- 8 Its roots may grow old in the ground and its stump die in the soil,*
- 9 yet at the scent of water it will bud and put forth shoots like a plant.*
- 10 But man dies and is laid low; he breathes his last and is no more.*
- 11 As water disappears from the sea or a riverbed becomes parched and dry,*
- 12 so man lies down and does not rise; till the heavens are no more, men will not awake or be roused from their sleep.*
- 13 "If only you would hide me in the grave and conceal me till your anger has passed!
If only you would set me a time and then remember me!*
- 14 If a man dies, will he live again? All the days of my hard service I will wait for my renewal to come.*
- 15 You will call and I will answer you; you will long for the creature your hands have made.*
- 16 Surely then you will count my steps but not keep track of my sin.*
- 17 My offenses will be sealed up in a bag; you will cover over my sin.*
- 18 "But as a mountain erodes and crumbles and as a rock is moved from its place,*
- 19 as water wears away stones and torrents wash away the soil, so you destroy man's hope.*

20 You overpower him once for all, and he is gone; you change his countenance and send him away.

21 If his sons are honored, he does not know it; if they are brought low, he does not see it.

22 He feels but the pain of his own body and mourns only for himself."

After the flaring up of hope and courage inspired by faith, Job sinks anew in the absurdity of his suffering. He compares his ideal with that of a day laborer whose highest satisfaction is in lighting up a cigarette during a break or drinking a glass of beer in the evening hour. That is his reason for living. Job has become, what we would call in modern terms, an existentialist. He sees man in his limitation. Realizing God's eye upon him is disturbing. This mood is obviously connected to Job's lack of vision of God. Job demonstrates that he has no notion of a resurrection from the dead (see v.14). He looks at the consequences of the resurrection, if that were to happen. It is the hope of the resurrection which makes the difference between the day laborer whose highest satisfaction is his tobacco and God's statement about man, "You are 'gods'; you are all sons of the Most High."¹ A Dutch poet once wrote: "I am a god in the depths of my thoughts." He did not believe in God but he uttered the most evangelical words of his age.

K. Eliphaz Second Reply. 15:1-35

1 Then Eliphaz the Temanite replied:

2 "Would a wise man answer with empty notions or fill his belly with the hot east wind?

3 Would he argue with useless words, with speeches that have no value?

4 But you even undermine piety and hinder devotion to God.

5 Your sin prompts your mouth; you adopt the tongue of the crafty.

6 Your own mouth condemns you, not mine; your own lips testify against you.

7 "Are you the first man ever born? Were you brought forth before the hills?

8 Do you listen in on God's council? Do you limit wisdom to yourself?

9 What do you know that we do not know? What insights do you have that we do not have?

10 The gray-haired and the aged are on our side, men even older than your father.

11 Are God's consolations not enough for you, words spoken gently to you?

12 Why has your heart carried you away, and why do your eyes flash,

13 so that you vent your rage against God and pour out such words from your mouth?

14 "What is man, that he could be pure, or one born of woman, that he could be righteous?

15 If God places no trust in his holy ones, if even the heavens are not pure in his eyes,

16 how much less man, who is vile and corrupt, who drinks up evil like water!

17 "Listen to me and I will explain to you; let me tell you what I have seen,

1. Ps. 82:6

*18 what wise men have declared, hiding nothing received from their fathers
19 (to whom alone the land was given when no alien passed among them):
20 All his days the wicked man suffers torment, the ruthless through all the years stored
up for him.
21 Terrifying sounds fill his ears; when all seems well, marauders attack him.
22 He despairs of escaping the darkness; he is marked for the sword.
23 He wanders about — food for vultures; he knows the day of darkness is at hand.
24 Distress and anguish fill him with terror; they overwhelm him, like a king poised to
attack,
25 because he shakes his fist at God and vaunts himself against the Almighty,
26 defiantly charging against him with a thick, strong shield.
27 "Though his face is covered with fat and his waist bulges with flesh,
28 he will inhabit ruined towns and houses where no one lives, houses crumbling to
rubble.
29 He will no longer be rich and his wealth will not endure, nor will his possessions
spread over the land.
30 He will not escape the darkness; a flame will wither his shoots, and the breath of
God's mouth will carry him away.
31 Let him not deceive himself by trusting what is worthless, for he will get nothing in
return.
32 Before his time he will be paid in full, and his branches will not flourish.
33 He will be like a vine stripped of its unripe grapes, like an olive tree shedding its
blossoms.
34 For the company of the godless will be barren, and fire will consume the tents of
those who love bribes.
35 They conceive trouble and give birth to evil; their womb fashions deceit."*

Eliphaz is afraid that Job discredits piety. His concern looks strange if we consider that, at the end, God condemns Eliphaz for his words and declares Job “not guilty” (Job 42:7). Some people’s concern about piety has nothing to do with God. The Sanhedrin was so distressed about Jesus’ blasphemy that they crucified Him. Stephen was stoned to death because he spoke defamatorily about the sanctuary. It appears that the Holy Spirit has little admiration for this kind of piety. We could say that God can sometimes be rather blasphemous Himself.

Although Eliphaz’ second speech lacks the demonic references found in the chapters 4 and 5, he does not deviate significantly from his original theme. He demonstrates little understanding of God’s faith in man. After all, the whole drama of this book is rooted in the fact that God believes that Job will pull through his suffering. The actual difference between Job’s attitude of resistance and Eliphaz’ submission is that Job understands that sin is not something that is specifically human. But Eliphaz believes that to be human means to be fundamentally sinful and weak. Job’s vision does more justice to God’s plan for mankind than Eliphaz’.

L. Job's Second Reply to his friends and to God. 16:1-22

1 Then Job replied:

2 "I have heard many things like these; miserable comforters are you all!

3 Will your long-winded speeches never end? What ails you that you keep on arguing?

4 I also could speak like you, if you were in my place; I could make fine speeches against you and shake my head at you.

5 But my mouth would encourage you; comfort from my lips would bring you relief.

6 "Yet if I speak, my pain is not relieved; and if I refrain, it does not go away.

7 Surely, O God, you have worn me out; you have devastated my entire household.

8 You have bound me — and it has become a witness; my gauntness rises up and testifies against me.

9 God assails me and tears me in his anger and gnashes his teeth at me; my opponent fastens on me his piercing eyes.

10 Men open their mouths to jeer at me; they strike my cheek in scorn and unite together against me.

11 God has turned me over to evil men and thrown me into the clutches of the wicked.

12 All was well with me, but he shattered me; he seized me by the neck and crushed me. He has made me his target;

13 his archers surround me. Without pity, he pierces my kidneys and spills my gall on the ground.

14 Again and again he bursts upon me; he rushes at me like a warrior.

15 "I have sewed sackcloth over my skin and buried my brow in the dust.

16 My face is red with weeping, deep shadows ring my eyes;

17 yet my hands have been free of violence and my prayer is pure.

18 "O earth, do not cover my blood; may my cry never be laid to rest!

19 Even now my witness is in heaven; my advocate is on high.

20 My intercessor is my friend as my eyes pour out tears to God;

21 on behalf of a man he pleads with God as a man pleads for his friend.

22 "Only a few years will pass before I go on the journey of no return.

Except for the first few words, Job now no longer speaks to his friends but he addresses God alone. There is something in the psychology of pastoral counseling that is liberating to the counselor himself. The shortcomings one discovers in oneself can be compensated for and sometimes overcome by witnessing the struggle in the life of someone else. Although there are subtle dangers, we can say in general that counseling has a healing effect, both for the doctor and the patient. This can be a blessing.

Job demonstrates his sharp insight in this matter in that he declares this blessing that his friends are in the process of reaping for themselves to be invalid and one-sided. As we said before, Job was unable to distinguish between the source of good and evil. If he had known about the scene that was played out in heaven, it would have reduced his

suffering to normal proportions. More than the loss of his family, his possessions and his health, it was the belief that God had done this to him that made his suffering so unbearable. Job found it difficult to accept this in the depth of his heart. This is the basis of his prophetically inspired utterances in which he states that God is his intercessor, his witness and his advocate who will plead his rights in God's own presence. This glorious insight in the divine mystery proves that Job had not completely forgotten that "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows."¹

M. Job's Second Reply to his friends and to God (continues). 17:1-16

- 1 My spirit is broken, my days are cut short, the grave awaits me.*
- 2 Surely mockers surround me; my eyes must dwell on their hostility.*
- 3 "Give me, O God, the pledge you demand. Who else will put up security for me?"*
- 4 You have closed their minds to understanding; therefore you will not let them triumph.*
- 5 If a man denounces his friends for reward, the eyes of his children will fail.*
- 6 "God has made me a byword to everyone, a man in whose face people spit.*
- 7 My eyes have grown dim with grief; my whole frame is but a shadow.*
- 8 Upright men are appalled at this; the innocent are aroused against the ungodly.*
- 9 Nevertheless, the righteous will hold to their ways, and those with clean hands will grow stronger.*
- 10 "But come on, all of you, try again! I will not find a wise man among you.*
- 11 My days have passed, my plans are shattered, and so are the desires of my heart.*
- 12 These men turn night into day; in the face of darkness they say, 'Light is near.'*
- 13 If the only home I hope for is the grave, if I spread out my bed in darkness,*
- 14 if I say to corruption, 'You are my father,' and to the worm, 'My mother' or 'My sister,'*
- 15 where then is my hope? Who can see any hope for me?*
- 16 Will it go down to the gates of death? Will we descend together into the dust?"*

In the beginning of this chapter, Job demonstrates the same amazing messianic insight as in the end of the previous chapter and in Chapter 13. Who else could have given these words to Job than the Holy Spirit Himself? They bear the mark of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The pledge and security in v.3 mean that God Himself would pay for Job's bankruptcy. That is the way in which God bought each one of us by the blood of His Son.

Beginning with v.10 Job resigns himself to that part of his suffering which his friends have caused. Job entertains the thought that it does not really matter anymore, since he is dying anyway.

1. James 1:17

N. Bildad's second reply to Job. 18:1-21

1 Then Bildad the Shuhite replied:

2 "When will you end these speeches? Be sensible, and then we can talk.

3 Why are we regarded as cattle and considered stupid in your sight?

4 You who tear yourself to pieces in your anger, is the earth to be abandoned for your sake? Or must the rocks be moved from their place?

5 "The lamp of the wicked is snuffed out; the flame of his fire stops burning.

6 The light in his tent becomes dark; the lamp beside him goes out.

7 The vigor of his step is weakened; his own schemes throw him down.

8 His feet thrust him into a net and he wanders into its mesh.

9 A trap seizes him by the heel; a snare holds him fast.

10 A noose is hidden for him on the ground; a trap lies in his path.

11 Terrors startle him on every side and dog his every step.

12 Calamity is hungry for him; disaster is ready for him when he falls.

13 It eats away parts of his skin; death's firstborn devours his limbs.

14 He is torn from the security of his tent and marched off to the king of terrors.

15 Fire resides in his tent; burning sulfur is scattered over his dwelling.

16 His roots dry up below and his branches wither above.

17 The memory of him perishes from the earth; he has no name in the land.

18 He is driven from light into darkness and is banished from the world.

19 He has no offspring or descendants among his people, no survivor where once he lived.

20 Men of the west are appalled at his fate; men of the east are seized with horror.

21 Surely such is the dwelling of an evil man; such is the place of one who knows not God."

In Chapter Eight Bildad had already demonstrated how he could use subtle cruelty to suggest to Job that his children had perished because of their sin. In this chapter he is angry and insulting. There is no longer any subtlety in his choice of words. Who does Job think he is? Would the earth be abandoned for Job's sake (probably not!) Or would Job's plight move mountains? (Why not? If Job possessed a faith that moves a mountain!) Bildad pours out his whole cruel soul in the following description of the calamity that will come upon the ungodly. He does not state directly that Job is ungodly, but he must have looked at Job the whole time he said these things.

O. Job's Third Reply. 19:1-29

1 Then Job replied:

2 "How long will you torment me and crush me with words?

3 Ten times now you have reproached me; shamelessly you attack me.

4 If it is true that I have gone astray, my error remains my concern alone.

*5 If indeed you would exalt yourselves above me and use my humiliation against me,
6 then know that God has wronged me and drawn his net around me.
7 "Though I cry, 'I've been wronged!' I get no response; though I call for help, there is no justice.
8 He has blocked my way so I cannot pass; he has shrouded my paths in darkness.
9 He has stripped me of my honor and removed the crown from my head.
10 He tears me down on every side till I am gone; he uproots my hope like a tree.
11 His anger burns against me; he counts me among his enemies.
12 His troops advance in force; they build a siege ramp against me and encamp around my tent.
13 "He has alienated my brothers from me; my acquaintances are completely estranged from me.
14 My kinsmen have gone away; my friends have forgotten me.
15 My guests and my maidservants count me a stranger; they look upon me as an alien.
16 I summon my servant, but he does not answer, though I beg him with my own mouth.
17 My breath is offensive to my wife; I am loathsome to my own brothers.
18 Even the little boys scorn me; when I appear, they ridicule me.
19 All my intimate friends detest me; those I love have turned against me.
20 I am nothing but skin and bones; I have escaped with only the skin of my teeth.
21 "Have pity on me, my friends, have pity, for the hand of God has struck me.
22 Why do you pursue me as God does? Will you never get enough of my flesh?
23 "Oh, that my words were recorded, that they were written on a scroll,
24 that they were inscribed with an iron tool on lead, or engraved in rock forever!
25 I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth.
26 And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God;
27 I myself will see him with my own eyes — I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!
28 "If you say, 'How we will hound him, since the root of the trouble lies in him,'
29 you should fear the sword yourselves; for wrath will bring punishment by the sword, and then you will know that there is judgment."*

As in Job's previous responses, we find here a mixture of doubt and hope. Job hits his head hard against the wall of "God has wronged me" (v.6). As mentioned before, Job's suffering would have been different if he had been able to read the first chapter of his own story. This fact makes a difference between Job's suffering and the suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus' sinless spirit had access to God's complete revelation to the point where He could keep His own soul pure even when He hung on a cross as one who had been cursed by God. Jesus had read all the chapters of Job's book and He knew what was in store for Him. It was, among others, Job's story that made Him say to the two men on their way to Emmaus: "Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?"¹ The very fact that suffering is a "must" both for Christ and for Christians never ceases to amaze us. This proves that we don't have full access to God's revelation either.

Job describes the deepest part of his suffering as: “He has stripped me of my honor and removed the crown from my head” (v.9). Satan intends to dishonor God in His creatures. But in trying to dishonor Him who is the perfect expression of God’s image, our Lord Jesus Christ, the devil hurt himself fatally in lifting the weight of the crown.

The flare-up of Job’s hope in vv. 25-27 constitutes one of the highpoints in the whole Old Testament. Although we must distinguish between the color these verses acquire in the light of the New Testament and the actual meaning of what Job is saying, no one can fail to note the remarkable prophetic insight Job that demonstrates. There is only a difference between the New Testament “I know that my Redeemer lives” and Job’s use of the word *ga’al* (the redeemer kinsman) that Job thinks of a next of kin who could restore the pawned heritage to the original owner. In saying “I know that my Redeemer lives,” Job only means “he is here.” There is no allusion to a resurrection from the dead in Job’s words. It is the Holy Spirit who urged Job to express himself so poetically that we can see the double meaning of the words and become aware of the presence of One who was dead and was raised to life; One who does not only restore property but who provides a complete salvation.

In Job’s use of the word *ga’al* he establishes a blood relationship between God and himself. This has a profound meaning. We find here one of the first traces in the Old Testament of a line of revelation that will end up in verses such as: “ ‘For in him we live and move and have our being.’ As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’ ”¹ “Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.”² “For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.”³

It is difficult to determine whether Job thought of the death and resurrection of his own body. His words can mean that he believed that God would appear to him before his death. That would mean that his deliverance would consist, not in his death, of which he had said earlier that no return was possible, but that he would have a personal encounter with God, which meant salvation. It is clear, however, that Job’s words reach higher than what he may have intended to say. Without in any way wanting to diminish the power of Job’s prophecy, I prefer to see in these words a parallel of David’s statement: “I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.”⁴ This is the strength of Job’s hope, that he expected to see a restoration of fellowship with God in this life. He expected a miracle in a personal encounter with God. In this Job is for us an example and an encouragement.

1. Luke 24:26

1. Acts 17:28

2. II Peter 1:4

3. John 5:18

4. Ps. 27:13

P. Zophar's Second Reply. 20:1-29

1 Then Zophar the Naamathite replied:

2 "My troubled thoughts prompt me to answer because I am greatly disturbed.

3 I hear a rebuke that dishonors me, and my understanding inspires me to reply.

4 "Surely you know how it has been from of old, ever since man was placed on the earth,

5 that the mirth of the wicked is brief, the joy of the godless lasts but a moment.

6 Though his pride reaches to the heavens and his head touches the clouds,

7 he will perish forever, like his own dung; those who have seen him will say, 'Where is he?'

8 Like a dream he flies away, no more to be found, banished like a vision of the night.

9 The eye that saw him will not see him again; his place will look on him no more.

10 His children must make amends to the poor; his own hands must give back his wealth.

11 The youthful vigor that fills his bones will lie with him in the dust.

12 "Though evil is sweet in his mouth and he hides it under his tongue,

13 though he cannot bear to let it go and keeps it in his mouth,

14 yet his food will turn sour in his stomach; it will become the venom of serpents within him.

15 He will spit out the riches he swallowed; God will make his stomach vomit them up.

16 He will suck the poison of serpents; the fangs of an adder will kill him.

17 He will not enjoy the streams, the rivers flowing with honey and cream.

18 What he toiled for he must give back uneaten; he will not enjoy the profit from his trading.

19 For he has oppressed the poor and left them destitute; he has seized houses he did not build.

20 "Surely he will have no respite from his craving; he cannot save himself by his treasure.

21 Nothing is left for him to devour; his prosperity will not endure.

22 In the midst of his plenty, distress will overtake him; the full force of misery will come upon him.

23 When he has filled his belly, God will vent his burning anger against him and rain down his blows upon him.

24 Though he flees from an iron weapon, a bronze-tipped arrow pierces him.

25 He pulls it out of his back, the gleaming point out of his liver. Terrors will come over him;

26 total darkness lies in wait for his treasures. A fire unfanned will consume him and devour what is left in his tent.

27 The heavens will expose his guilt; the earth will rise up against him.

28 A flood will carry off his house, rushing waters on the day of God's wrath.

29 Such is the fate God allots the wicked, the heritage appointed for them by God."

Job's friends are in full agreement with each other: Job's suffering is the result of his sin. Job may not want to admit this, but he is not suffering as a righteous person. Words of comfort and demonstration of compassion are, therefore, out of place. The friends have tried that route in their previous addresses, but they had no success. The only thing they can do for Job is make him afraid and preach hellfire and brimstone to him. Thus far they have been too polite to call Job godless, but it must be clear to Job to whom Zophar is speaking when he pronounces his anonymous curses.

Q. Job's Fourth Reply. 21:1-34

1 Then Job replied:

2 "Listen carefully to my words; let this be the consolation you give me.

3 Bear with me while I speak, and after I have spoken, mock on.

4 "Is my complaint directed to man? Why should I not be impatient?

5 Look at me and be astonished; clap your hand over your mouth.

6 When I think about this, I am terrified; trembling seizes my body.

7 Why do the wicked live on, growing old and increasing in power?

8 They see their children established around them, their offspring before their eyes.

9 Their homes are safe and free from fear; the rod of God is not upon them.

10 Their bulls never fail to breed; their cows calve and do not miscarry.

11 They send forth their children as a flock; their little ones dance about.

12 They sing to the music of tambourine and harp; they make merry to the sound of the flute.

13 They spend their years in prosperity and go down to the grave in peace.

14 Yet they say to God, 'Leave us alone! We have no desire to know your ways.

15 Who is the Almighty, that we should serve him? What would we gain by praying to him?'

16 But their prosperity is not in their own hands, so I stand aloof from the counsel of the wicked.

17 "Yet how often is the lamp of the wicked snuffed out? How often does calamity come upon them,

the fate God allots in his anger?

18 How often are they like straw before the wind, like chaff swept away by a gale?

19 [It is said,] 'God stores up a man's punishment for his sons.' Let him repay the man himself, so that he will know it!

20 Let his own eyes see his destruction; let him drink of the wrath of the Almighty.

21 For what does he care about the family he leaves behind when his allotted months come to an end?

22 "Can anyone teach knowledge to God, since he judges even the highest?

23 One man dies in full vigor, completely secure and at ease,

- 24 his body well nourished, his bones rich with marrow.**
25 Another man dies in bitterness of soul, never having enjoyed anything good.
26 Side by side they lie in the dust, and worms cover them both.
27 "I know full well what you are thinking, the schemes by which you would wrong me.
28 You say, 'Where now is the great man's house, the tents where wicked men lived?'
29 Have you never questioned those who travel? Have you paid no regard to their accounts—
30 that the evil man is spared from the day of calamity, that he is delivered from the day of wrath?
31 Who denounces his conduct to his face? Who repays him for what he has done?
32 He is carried to the grave, and watch is kept over his tomb.
33 The soil in the valley is sweet to him; all men follow after him, and a countless throng goes before him.
34 "So how can you console me with your nonsense? Nothing is left of your answers but falsehood!"

Job's answer to Zophar is wrought with irony. *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* introduces this chapter with the comment: "The accusers, blind to Job's transparent sincerity, have denied rather than explained the mystery of his afflictions. But stronger now in hope, Job rises above his disappointment in them and takes the initiative in the debate. His eyes, once opened by his own strange experience to the fallacy of the tidy traditional notion of retribution, perceive that history abounds in 'exceptional' cases. After a prefatory request for attention (vv. 2-6), he proceeds to undermine the opposition by exposing the fallacy in their analysis of the fortunes of the wicked (vv. 7-34)."

The Pulpit Commentary states that Job's speech is made in "a language of unparalleled boldness." Outlining the content of this chapter, the commentary states: "The wicked, he says, live, grow old, attain to great power, have a numerous and flourishing offspring, prosper, grow rich, spend their time in feasting and jollity — nay, openly renounce God and decline to pray to him — yet suffer no harm, and when they die, go down to the grave without suffering, 'in a moment' (vers. 5-15). To the suggestion that from time to time they are cut off suddenly in a signal way, he answers, 'How often is this?' or rather, 'How seldom!' (vers. 17, 18). To the further suggestion that they are punished in their children he replies, 'How much better if they were punished in their own persons!' (vers. 19-21). As it is, he argues, one event happens to all (vers. 23-26). In conclusion, he observes that common opinion supports his view (vers. 29-33), and denounces as futile the attempts of his comforters to convince him, since his views and theirs respecting the facts of God's government are diametrically opposed to each other (ver. 34)."

It is not true that all wicked people go through life without any checks and setbacks and that none of them are punished on the spot. Neither is it true that all suffering is proof of a sinful life. Job's suggestion that there is no punishment for wickedness does

not hold water. The most serious flaw in Job's rhetoric is that he does not take the resurrection from the dead into account.

Although Job must have looked at Zophar while speaking, his speech was actually directed to God. He says: "Is my complaint directed to man?" Not much is left of his initial reaction: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised."¹ He had by now forgotten how he had answered his wife: "Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?"²

Job's rhetoric about the wicked would later be taken up by Asaph, who stated about the wicked in one of his psalms: "They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong. They are free from the burdens common to man; they are not plagued by human ills. This is what the wicked are like — always carefree, they increase in wealth."³ But Job was not at the point where Asaph was when he entered into the presence of the Lord and realized that what he had in fellowship with God gave him the assurance of eternal happiness which set him apart from all other sinners on earth.

Job's observation that no one can teach God anything is not the same kind of worshipful exclamation of the Apostle Paul: "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen."⁴ Job does admit God's position as the supreme judge, but there is a suggestion of unfairness in the verdicts. Job sees himself as the victim of abuse. Like Asaph he concludes that his righteous acts have not been given the consideration they deserve. In stating this Job uses death as the ultimate equalizer that erases all differences between the righteous and the unjust.

The obvious conclusion Job's friends had jumped to was that Job's physical and material ruin was proof of his unrighteousness. In answer, Job tells his accusers that they have not been around long enough. "Have you never questioned those who travel? Have you paid no regard to their accounts ..." is an ironic way of saying that they don't know what they are talking about. They have not seen enough of the world and its injustice.

Both Job and his friends have a clear concept of what life on earth ought to be like. Job has concluded that life is not fair; his friends maintain the opposite view that life is fair but that Job receives due punishment for injustice and hypocrisy. *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* observes here: "The conclusion inherent in the three friends' theory from the beginning and ever more broadly hinted at is now blurted out unashamedly. This open accusation of Job was their only alternative to capitulation after Job's considered denial in God's treatment of men. The lamentable fact is that the friends endorsed Satan's view of

1. Job 1:21

2. Job 2:10

3. Ps. 73:4,5,12

4. Rom. 11:34-36

Job as a hypocrite. Thinking to defend God, they became Satan's advocates, insisting that he whom God designated as His servant belonged to the devil."

R. Eliphaz' third reply. 22:1-30

1 Then Eliphaz the Temanite replied:

2 "Can a man be of benefit to God? Can even a wise man benefit him?

3 What pleasure would it give the Almighty if you were righteous? What would he gain if your ways were blameless?

4 "Is it for your piety that he rebukes you and brings charges against you?

5 Is not your wickedness great? Are not your sins endless?

6 You demanded security from your brothers for no reason; you stripped men of their clothing, leaving them naked.

7 You gave no water to the weary and you withheld food from the hungry,

8 though you were a powerful man, owning land — an honored man, living on it.

9 And you sent widows away empty-handed and broke the strength of the fatherless.

10 That is why snares are all around you, why sudden peril terrifies you,

11 why it is so dark you cannot see, and why a flood of water covers you.

12 "Is not God in the heights of heaven? And see how lofty are the highest stars!

13 Yet you say, 'What does God know? Does he judge through such darkness?

14 Thick clouds veil him, so he does not see us as he goes about in the vaulted heavens.'

15 Will you keep to the old path that evil men have trod?

16 They were carried off before their time, their foundations washed away by a flood.

17 They said to God, 'Leave us alone! What can the Almighty do to us?'

18 Yet it was he who filled their houses with good things, so I stand aloof from the counsel of the wicked.

19 "The righteous see their ruin and rejoice; the innocent mock them, saying,

20 'Surely our foes are destroyed, and fire devours their wealth.'

21 "Submit to God and be at peace with him; in this way prosperity will come to you.

22 Accept instruction from his mouth and lay up his words in your heart.

23 If you return to the Almighty, you will be restored: If you remove wickedness far from your tent

24 and assign your nuggets to the dust, your gold of Ophir to the rocks in the ravines,

25 then the Almighty will be your gold, the choicest silver for you.

26 Surely then you will find delight in the Almighty and will lift up your face to God.

27 You will pray to him, and he will hear you, and you will fulfill your vows.

28 What you decide on will be done, and light will shine on your ways.

29 When men are brought low and you say, 'Lift them up!' then he will save the downcast.

30 He will deliver even one who is not innocent, who will be delivered through the cleanness of your hands."

This is Eliphaz' final word. The words sound good, at least in the beginning, but something appears to be lacking. It is not true that God, whom he describes as independent and self-sufficient, is not interested in mankind, since He has no need of them. The topic of the *Book of Job* proves exactly the opposite. God needs Job's love and righteousness in order to win the case against Satan.

It is true that God's omnipotence is in no need of human power and God's love can exist without man being the object of it, as was the case before creation. But ever since the creation God bound Himself to man in such a way that He could not abandon man without being untrue to Himself. And God cannot be unfaithful to Himself and His divine attributes without ceasing to be God. In saying these things Eliphaz hauled upon himself the anger of the Lord, who said: "you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has."¹

Eliphaz finally comes to the point where he accuses Job of specific sins. Thus far there had only been insinuations. Now it is suggested that Job's suffering is the result of provable criminal acts. "Is it for your piety that he rebukes you?" Yes, Job does not suffer for his sins but for his godliness!

Eliphaz presents a list of three sins that Job was supposed to have committed. He had taken advantage of his position of wealth by loaning money at exorbitant rates (v.6), he had withheld help to the thirsty and hungry (vv.7,8), he had taken advantage of widows and orphans (v.9). It may be that these were not specific accusations, but images borrowed from the general way rich people behave in society. But the insinuation is clear that Job suffers for his sin.

The rendering of v.21 in *The New International Version* sounds as good spiritual advice: "Submit to God and be at peace with him." The Hebrew text reads literally: "Acquaint yourself now with Him and be at peace thereby." The Hebrew word used is *cakan*, which means "to be familiar with." The idea seems to be "get used to God!" The word is used in the story of Balaam, where the donkey said to Balaam: "Am I not your own donkey, which you have always ridden, to this day? *Have I been in the habit of doing this to you?*"² Eliphaz is being sacrilegious in saying this.

The only way one can "acquaint" oneself with God is by allowing the wounds in life to turn into scars that become calloused. Becoming hardened this way, we can enter into God's presence and sing psalms without giving up our sins and our selves. The soul that places itself on God's altar will never cease to be ecstatic about the miracle of God's grace. May God keep us from ever getting used to that!

S. Job's reply to Eliphaz – Part One. 23:1-17

1 Then Job replied:

2 "Even today my complaint is bitter; his hand is heavy in spite of my groaning.

1. Job 42:7

2. Num. 22:30

- 3 If only I knew where to find him; if only I could go to his dwelling!**
4 I would state my case before him and fill my mouth with arguments.
5 I would find out what he would answer me, and consider what he would say.
6 Would he oppose me with great power? No, he would not press charges against me.
7 There an upright man could present his case before him, and I would be delivered forever from my judge.
8 "But if I go to the east, he is not there; if I go to the west, I do not find him.
9 When he is at work in the north, I do not see him; when he turns to the south, I catch no glimpse of him.
10 But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold.
11 My feet have closely followed his steps; I have kept to his way without turning aside.
12 I have not departed from the commands of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread.
13 "But he stands alone, and who can oppose him? He does whatever he pleases.
14 He carries out his decree against me, and many such plans he still has in store.
15 That is why I am terrified before him; when I think of all this, I fear him.
16 God has made my heart faint; the Almighty has terrified me.
17 Yet I am not silenced by the darkness, by the thick darkness that covers my face.

This is Job's third answer to Eliphaz. Or is it? Job is more soliloquizing in these verses than answering anyone. He tries to speak to God, but he cannot find Him anymore. This makes him rebellious and in his rebellion he utters words that he cannot really account for. Yet, his attitude speaks of an honest effort to find out what is going on with him and why God treats him the way He does. His desire to find God, to speak directly to Him and plead his cause, is a healthy one. Job's futile effort to find God, makes us realize how different our position is in this present dispensation in which we can approach God any time and anywhere and have fellowship with Him in Jesus Christ.

Job's certainty that God would not crush him, but would give him justice proves again his believing and prophetic intuition that he had demonstrated earlier. If we compare Job's unsuccessful efforts with David's consciousness of God's presence, as expressed in "Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. If I say, 'Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,' even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you,"¹ we wonder why one seeks and does not find and the other cannot imagine himself without the presence of God. Something we find in David's confession, "O Lord, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar,"² is lacking in Job's transparency.

1. Ps. 139:7-12

2. Ps. 139:1,2

When Job says, “He knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold” he seems to be saying the same as David, but unlike David, Job tries to hide behind his own moral purity. From Job’s statement in vv.13 and 14 we could gather that Job was right and God is wrong. But if that were true, humanity would be left without hope. If God proved to be a sinner we would all be lost eternally.

Job considered himself to be upright and as such he believed that he ought not to be judged at all. Although that is not what Job intends to say here, there is in his words an expression of the hope we find realized in the New Testament where Jesus says: “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”¹

T. Job’s reply to Eliphaz – Part Two. 24:1-25

1 "Why does the Almighty not set times for judgment? Why must those who know him look in vain for such days?

2 Men move boundary stones; they pasture flocks they have stolen.

3 They drive away the orphan’s donkey and take the widow’s ox in pledge.

4 They thrust the needy from the path and force all the poor of the land into hiding.

5 Like wild donkeys in the desert, the poor go about their labor of foraging food; the wasteland provides food for their children.

6 They gather fodder in the fields and glean in the vineyards of the wicked.

7 Lacking clothes, they spend the night naked; they have nothing to cover themselves in the cold.

8 They are drenched by mountain rains and hug the rocks for lack of shelter.

9 The fatherless child is snatched from the breast; the infant of the poor is seized for a debt.

10 Lacking clothes, they go about naked; they carry the sheaves, but still go hungry.

11 They crush olives among the terraces; they tread the winepresses, yet suffer thirst.

12 The groans of the dying rise from the city, and the souls of the wounded cry out for help. But God charges no one with wrongdoing.

13 "There are those who rebel against the light, who do not know its ways or stay in its paths.

14 When daylight is gone, the murderer rises up and kills the poor and needy; in the night he steals forth like a thief.

15 The eye of the adulterer watches for dusk; he thinks, ‘No eye will see me,’ and he keeps his face concealed.

16 In the dark, men break into houses, but by day they shut themselves in; they want nothing to do with the light.

17 For all of them, deep darkness is their morning; they make friends with the terrors of darkness.

1. John 5:24

18 "Yet they are foam on the surface of the water; their portion of the land is cursed, so that no one goes to the vineyards.

19 As heat and drought snatch away the melted snow, so the grave snatches away those who have sinned.

20 The womb forgets them, the worm feasts on them; evil men are no longer remembered but are broken like a tree.

21 They prey on the barren and childless woman, and to the widow show no kindness.

22 But God drags away the mighty by his power; though they become established, they have no assurance of life.

23 He may let them rest in a feeling of security, but his eyes are on their ways.

24 For a little while they are exalted, and then they are gone; they are brought low and gathered up like all others; they are cut off like heads of grain.

25 "If this is not so, who can prove me false and reduce my words to nothing?"

Job's question is "Why does the Almighty not set times for judgment? Why must those who know him look in vain for such days?" His intent, obviously, is that if he would stand before the judgment seat of God, he would be cleared and pronounced innocent. We read in the opening verses of this book, that Job was in the habit of bringing sacrifices for his children. We may assume that he had done the same for himself. Job believed himself to be pure because his sins had been atoned for. But the examples he mentions in this chapter of people who go through life, acting as if God does not exist, implies that those people do not worry about atonement.

As *The Pulpit Commentary* observes: "The general subject of this chapter is the prosperity of the wicked, whose proceedings and their results are traced out in detail (vers. 2-24). A single note of perplexity (ver. 1) forms a sufficient introduction; and a single note of challenge a sufficient epilogue (ver. 25)."

Job asks to be judged and he hopes that God will place him next to people who have committed crimes and who have gotten away with it. This judgment, in Job's opinion, ought to be carried out during life on earth. But Job does not see evil being punished. What Job describes in these verses is social injustice in which the poor are oppressed by the rich.

"O Lord, the God who avenges, O God who avenges, shine forth. Rise up, O Judge of the earth; pay back to the proud what they deserve. How long will the wicked, O Lord, how long will the wicked be jubilant? They pour out arrogant words; all the evildoers are full of boasting. They crush your people, O Lord; they oppress your inheritance. They slay the widow and the alien; they murder the fatherless. They say, 'The Lord does not see; the God of Jacob pays no heed.'"¹

V.13 seems to speak of God's revelation of Himself on earth. Job may be referring here to what can be known about God in creation. Paul would later state: "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men

1. Ps. 94:1-7

who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities — his eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse."¹ But Job cannot see this revelation of God's wrath, although he believes that the wicked will eventually be punished. "God drags away the mighty by his power; though they become established, they have no assurance of life."

U. Bildad's third speech. 25:1-6

1 Then Bildad the Shuhite replied:

2 "Dominion and awe belong to God; he establishes order in the heights of heaven.

3 Can his forces be numbered? Upon whom does his light not rise?

4 How then can a man be righteous before God? How can one born of woman be pure?

5 If even the moon is not bright and the stars are not pure in his eyes,

6 how much less man, who is but a maggot — a son of man, who is only a worm!"

Bildad's third speech has the advantage of being brief. He does formulate the core of the problem correctly, but he does not give the impression of being himself aware of this. He states that no one is righteous before God. This is a change from his previous words with which he accused Job of certain crimes he had not committed. The embarrassing part of this speech is that he repeats what Eliphaz had already said before and had said better.

V. Job's third answer to Bildad. 26:1-14

1 Then Job replied:

2 "How you have helped the powerless! How you have saved the arm that is feeble!

3 What advice you have offered to one without wisdom! And what great insight you have displayed!

4 Who has helped you utter these words? And whose spirit spoke from your mouth?

5 "The dead are in deep anguish, those beneath the waters and all that live in them.

6 Death is naked before God; Destruction lies uncovered.

7 He spreads out the northern [skies] over empty space; he suspends the earth over nothing.

8 He wraps up the waters in his clouds, yet the clouds do not burst under their weight.

9 He covers the face of the full moon, spreading his clouds over it.

10 He marks out the horizon on the face of the waters for a boundary between light and darkness.

1. Rom. 1:18-20

11 The pillars of the heavens quake, aghast at his rebuke.

12 By his power he churned up the sea; by his wisdom he cut Rahab to pieces.

13 By his breath the skies became fair; his hand pierced the gliding serpent.

14 And these are but the outer fringe of his works; how faint the whisper we hear of him! Who then can understand the thunder of his power?"

Having poured out the full measure of his sarcasm over Bildad in the first four verses, Job falls back upon a description of God's revelation of Himself in the realm of nature.

The Pulpit Commentary introduces Job's last answer with: "The long discourse of Job now begins, which forms the central and most solid mass of the book. It continues through six chapters (Job 26-31.). In it Job, after hastily brushing aside Bildad's last speech as superfluous and out of place (vers. 1-4), proceeds to deliver his real sentiments apart from controversial issues. He sets forth, first of all, the might and majesty of God (vers. 5-14), after which he proceeds to deal with the questions which concern his own integrity, and God's dealings with mankind. The former he still maintains; with respect to the latter, he recants his earlier argumentative contention (... Job 24:2-24), and admits that retribution always or almost always comes upon the wicked at last (Job 27.). In ch. 28., after paying a deserved tribute of admiration to man's intelligence and ingenuity in regard to earthly things and physical phenomena, he pronounces the spiritual world and the principles of the Divine government to be inscrutable by him, and his only true wisdom to be right conduct. Finally, he returns to himself, and having given a pathetic description of his old life, with its prosperity and honor (ch. 29.), and contrasted it with his actual life of degradation, contempt, and suffering (ch. 30.), he concludes with a solemn protestation of his integrity in all the various duties and obligations imposed upon man by natural law and natural religion (ch. 31.). In this way he brings to its termination the colloquy begun with his three friends in ch. 3., and, emphatically to mark that here he closes his own part in the debate, he winds up with the statement, 'The words of Job are ended' (... Job 31:40)."

In v.5 Job speaks of the dead and the kingdom of death, *rapha'*, "dead" and *Sheol*, "the abode of the dead." Job considers the dead to be very much aware of the deeds of God. This sounds contrary to David's conclusions in some of his psalms where he states: "No one remembers you when he is dead. Who praises you from the grave?"¹ And: "It is not the dead who praise the Lord, those who go down to silence; it is we who extol the Lord, both now and forevermore."² There may be in Job's words another reference to Bildad's ignorance, as if he wants to say that the dead are more realistic in their knowledge of God than Bildad is, although he is still alive.

From there Job proceeds to describe the miracle of God's creation of the universe and of our planet. The northern skies may be a reference to heaven, which was envisioned as being somewhere in the northern section beyond the constellations.

1. Ps. 6:5

2. Ps. 115:17,18

The whole tone of Job's discourse reveals features of God's wrath. The trembling of the dead is caused by the judgment that awaits them. But even the words that seem to describe God's acts of creation are heavy with trepidation. It is true that the earth seems to be suspended in empty space, but this is complimented by the fact that the foundation is lacking, which causes anxiety. Clouds are heavy with rain, threatening cloudburst, the moon's face is hidden and heaven and earth are made to quake. The ocean is agitated by the breath of God. All this causes fear and trembling in the human heart.

There may, at this point, already be signs of a nearing thunderstorm in which God would answer Job's arguments. We read there: "Then the Lord answered Job out of the storm."¹

W. Job's continuing discourse. 27:1-23

1 And Job continued his discourse:

2 "As surely as God lives, who has denied me justice, the Almighty, who has made me taste bitterness of soul,

3 as long as I have life within me, the breath of God in my nostrils,

4 my lips will not speak wickedness, and my tongue will utter no deceit.

5 I will never admit you are in the right; till I die, I will not deny my integrity.

6 I will maintain my righteousness and never let go of it; my conscience will not reproach me as long as I live.

7 "May my enemies be like the wicked, my adversaries like the unjust!

8 For what hope has the godless when he is cut off, when God takes away his life?

9 Does God listen to his cry when distress comes upon him?

10 Will he find delight in the Almighty? Will he call upon God at all times?

11 "I will teach you about the power of God; the ways of the Almighty I will not conceal.

12 You have all seen this yourselves. Why then this meaningless talk?

13 "Here is the fate God allots to the wicked, the heritage a ruthless man receives from the Almighty:

14 However many his children, their fate is the sword; his offspring will never have enough to eat.

15 The plague will bury those who survive him, and their widows will not weep for them.

16 Though he heaps up silver like dust and clothes like piles of clay,

17 what he lays up the righteous will wear, and the innocent will divide his silver.

18 The house he builds is like a moth's cocoon, like a hut made by a watchman.

19 He lies down wealthy, but will do so no more; when he opens his eyes, all is gone.

20 Terrors overtake him like a flood; a tempest snatches him away in the night.

21 The east wind carries him off, and he is gone; it sweeps him out of his place.

1. See Job 38:1.

22 It hurls itself against him without mercy as he flees headlong from its power.

23 It claps its hands in derision and hisses him out of his place.

The Hebrew text uses the unusual word *maskoreth* for “discourse.” The word is derived from the word for “wages,” or “reward.” *The King James Version* renders it “parable.” *The Pulpit Commentary* comments: “It is thought to ‘comprehend all discourses in which the results of discursive thought are concisely or figuratively expressed.’ The introduction of a new term seems to imply that the present discourse occupies a position different from that of all the preceding ones. It is not tentative, controversial, or emotional, but expresses the deliberate judgment of the patriarch on the subjects discussed in it. Note the repetition of the term in ... Job 29:1.”

Barnes’ Notes adds: “A parable properly denotes a comparison of one thing with another, or a fable or allegorical representation from which moral instruction is derived. It was a favorite mode of conveying truth in the East, and indeed is found in all countries; see the notes at Matt 13:3. It is evident, however, that Job did not deliver his sentiments in this manner; and the word rendered ‘parable’ here *maashaal* means, as it often does, a sententious discourse or argument. The word is used in the Scriptures to denote a parable, properly so called; then a sententious saying; an apothegm; a proverb; or a poem or song ... It is rendered here by the Vulgate, parabolam; by the Septuagint, *prooimioo* – ‘Job spoke by preface;’ ... The meaning is, that Job continued his discourse; but there is in the word a reference to the kind of discourse which he employed, as being sententious and apothegmatical.”

Job answers the accusation of his friends with the statement: “I will never admit you are in the right; till I die, I will not deny my integrity.” The Hebrew word used is *tummah*, which is found only five times in Scripture, four of which are in *The Book of Job* and once in *Proverbs*. God was the first one to use it in His second meeting with Satan: “Then the Lord said to Satan, ‘Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. And he still maintains his *integrity*, though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason.’”¹ *The Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines integrity as “adherence to a code of values,” “incorruptibility.” The dictionary does not define the character of the code of values that constitutes integrity. Such definition would fall outside its field of expertise. From the context of the conversation between God and Satan, we deduct that integrity means fearing God and shunning evil, that is to take God’s character as the Magna Charta of human behavior and to keep one’s distance from Satanic lies and practices.

The Wycliffe Bible Commentary observes about Job’s words in this chapter: “After once again declaiming his righteousness, with a strong oath (27:1-7), he contrasts his own experience with that of the wicked (27:8-23). Chapter 28 is an artistic introduction to the way of wisdom. Modern critics have argued forcefully that the text from 27:7 on has suffered disarrangement. They contend that the sentiments expressed contradict Job’s

1. Job 2:3

previous remarks, or, in the case of chapter 28, are incompatible with the sequel. It seems possible, however, to defend the originality of the present textual arrangement, and the following exposition is based upon it ... This oath remarkably epitomizes Job's spiritual dilemma. On the one hand, it proclaims God the God of truth, and on the other, charges that his treatment of Job is unjust. Surely my lips do not speak unrighteousness (v. 4 a, ASV, marg.). This is not a vow (AV); it is a declaration that Job's unshakable claim to integrity (vv. 5,6) is true to conscience and fact. Let mine enemy be as the wicked (v.7a). The reader of the Prologue appreciates how diabolical was the accusation that Job's piety was not genuine."

What Job seems to be saying is that God treats him as if he were wicked, but that this does not mean that he is in reality. Job's friends misjudged him on the basis of outward appearance.

Although Job began his talk with a remarkable oath, his words depict the paradox of his suffering in a clear and exact manner. Paradoxes are the quintessence of suffering. The essence of Christ's agony on the cross was that He knew Himself to be innocent, yet He also knew Himself to be cursed by God, because He was hanging on a tree.¹ Peter explains in his epistle that this paradox of suffering is, at the same time, the essence of grace. We read: "But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God."² Job's obvious lack of grace is due to his confusion about God's character, which prevents him from distinguishing between the sources of good and evil.

What Job says about the fate of the wicked seems to contradict what he had said earlier.³ Job's fever may have caused him to contradict himself. It has been suggested that Job put himself into Zophar's place, whose turn it would have been to speak. In that way, Job would have indicated, sarcastically, that he knew exactly what the next speaker would come up with. That would explain why Zophar kept quiet.

X. Job meditates about wisdom. 28:1-28

1 "There is a mine for silver and a place where gold is refined.

2 Iron is taken from the earth, and copper is smelted from ore.

3 Man puts an end to the darkness; he searches the farthest recesses for ore in the blackest darkness.

4 Far from where people dwell he cuts a shaft, in places forgotten by the foot of man; far from men he dangles and sways.

5 The earth, from which food comes, is transformed below as by fire;

6 sapphires come from its rocks, and its dust contains nuggets of gold.

7 No bird of prey knows that hidden path, no falcon's eye has seen it.

1. Deut. 21:23; Gal. 3:13

2. I Peter 2:20

3. Job 21:7-34

*8 Proud beasts do not set foot on it, and no lion prowls there.
9 Man's hand assaults the flinty rock and lays bare the roots of the mountains.
10 He tunnels through the rock; his eyes see all its treasures.
11 He searches the sources of the rivers and brings hidden things to light.
12 "But where can wisdom be found? Where does understanding dwell?
13 Man does not comprehend its worth; it cannot be found in the land of the living.
14 The deep says, 'It is not in me'; the sea says, 'It is not with me.'
15 It cannot be bought with the finest gold, nor can its price be weighed in silver.
16 It cannot be bought with the gold of Ophir, with precious onyx or sapphires.
17 Neither gold nor crystal can compare with it, nor can it be had for jewels of gold.
18 Coral and jasper are not worthy of mention; the price of wisdom is beyond rubies.
19 The topaz of Cush cannot compare with it; it cannot be bought with pure gold.
20 "Where then does wisdom come from? Where does understanding dwell?
21 It is hidden from the eyes of every living thing, concealed even from the birds of the air.
22 Destruction and Death say, 'Only a rumor of it has reached our ears.'
23 God understands the way to it and he alone knows where it dwells,
24 for he views the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens.
25 When he established the force of the wind and measured out the waters,
26 when he made a decree for the rain and a path for the thunderstorm,
27 then he looked at wisdom and appraised it; he confirmed it and tested it.
28 And he said to man, 'The fear of the Lord — that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding.'"*

Job's meditation about wisdom is poetic, beautiful and profound. But if we look at the context in which Job spoke these words, we understand that Job's magnificent statement was only meant to prove that Job had been unable to find wisdom in anything his friends had to say. Job's sarcasm, which underlies this poem, contrasts sharply with its beautiful content. That fact sharpens the paradox.

What Job is saying is that man finds ways to treasures that are hidden to all other of God's creatures. Yet, wisdom is beyond man's grasp. Job compares wisdom to material possessions. There is no precious metal, or any other matter, in whatever quantity it can be gathered, that could compare to the value of wisdom. Wisdom belongs to God. For man, the only way to wisdom is via God. God determines the accessibility to wisdom by the measure of intimacy with Him.

Job succeeds in making his point by comparing wisdom to other material possessions, a comparison which is doomed to fail. Job speaks here as someone who has the right to speak. After all, he has been robbed of all earthly possessions. No one can accuse Job of easy talk.

Why is it that wisdom and material possessions cannot be compared? One cannot add trees to animals as if they belong to the same category (10 trees + 15 cows = 25, makes no sense). Money constitutes material possession, wisdom is a spiritual entity. The

two categories cannot be bridged. Man's tragedy is that he believes that money is power that bridges everything. There is, however, a bridge between wisdom and fellowship with God. Blessed is the person who understands that wisdom is linked to fellowship with the Creator and who is able to keep that possession separated from the earthly goods he possesses!

Y. Job continues his meditation about wisdom. 29:1-25

1 Job continued his discourse:

*2 "How I long for the months gone by, for the days when God watched over me,
3 when his lamp shone upon my head and by his light I walked through darkness!
4 Oh, for the days when I was in my prime, when God's intimate friendship blessed my house,*

*5 when the Almighty was still with me and my children were around me,
6 when my path was drenched with cream and the rock poured out for me streams of olive oil.*

*7 "When I went to the gate of the city and took my seat in the public square,
8 the young men saw me and stepped aside and the old men rose to their feet;
9 the chief men refrained from speaking and covered their mouths with their hands;
10 the voices of the nobles were hushed, and their tongues stuck to the roof of their mouths.*

*11 Whoever heard me spoke well of me, and those who saw me commended me,
12 because I rescued the poor who cried for help, and the fatherless who had none to assist him.*

13 The man who was dying blessed me; I made the widow's heart sing.

14 I put on righteousness as my clothing; justice was my robe and my turban.

15 I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame.

16 I was a father to the needy; I took up the case of the stranger.

17 I broke the fangs of the wicked and snatched the victims from their teeth.

18 "I thought, 'I will die in my own house, my days as numerous as the grains of sand.

19 My roots will reach to the water, and the dew will lie all night on my branches.

20 My glory will remain fresh in me, the bow ever new in my hand.'

21 "Men listened to me expectantly, waiting in silence for my counsel.

22 After I had spoken, they spoke no more; my words fell gently on their ears.

23 They waited for me as for showers and drank in my words as the spring rain.

24 When I smiled at them, they scarcely believed it; the light of my face was precious to them.

25 I chose the way for them and sat as their chief; I dwelt as a king among his troops; I was like one who comforts mourners.

In introducing this chapter, *The Pulpit Commentary* states: "From these deep musings upon the nature of true wisdom, and the contrast between the ingenuity and

cleverness of man and the infinite knowledge of God, Job turns to another contrast, which he pursues through two chapters (ch. 29. and 30.) — the contrast between what he was and what he is — between his condition in the period of his prosperity and that to which he has been reduced by his afflictions. The present chapter is concerned only with the former period; and gives a graphic description of the life led, in Job's time and country, by a great chieftain, the head of a tribe, not of mere nomads, but of persons who had attained to a considerable amount of civilization. The picture is one primitive in its features, but not rude or coarse. It is entirely un-Jewish, and has its nearest parallel in some of the early Egyptian records."

Job's mentioning of "the good old days" is more than a sentimental effort to recapture the past. Job wants to prove that his present low state is not the result of unrighteousness and insensitivity in dealing with people who came in contact with him. People respected him, not merely because of his status of prosperity, but because of his spiritual testimony of intimate fellowship with God and his compassionate treatment of the underprivileged.

We may consider Job's reminiscence of his past glory to be the deepest point of his moral misery and decay. Spiritual victories are only won in the present, never in the past. We only tend to go back to the past when we feel unable to face the present. It appears that this self-portrait of his early days is painted in colors that are a little too bright to be true. It is true that fellowship with God endues us with royal dignity. But Job makes it sound as if his present lack of this dignity weighs heavier upon him than his broken fellowship with God. A little modesty in the account would have served Job better.

Z. Job continues his reminiscing. 30:1-31

1 "But now they mock me, men younger than I, whose fathers I would have disdained to put with my sheep dogs.

2 Of what use was the strength of their hands to me, since their vigor had gone from them?

3 Haggard from want and hunger, they roamed the parched land in desolate wastelands at night.

4 In the brush they gathered salt herbs, and their food was the root of the broom tree.

5 They were banished from their fellow men, shouted at as if they were thieves.

6 They were forced to live in the dry stream beds, among the rocks and in holes in the ground.

7 They brayed among the bushes and huddled in the undergrowth.

8 A base and nameless brood, they were driven out of the land.

9 "And now their sons mock me in song; I have become a byword among them.

10 They detest me and keep their distance; they do not hesitate to spit in my face.

11 Now that God has unstrung my bow and afflicted me, they throw off restraint in my presence.

12 On my right the tribe attacks; they lay snares for my feet, they build their siege ramps against me.

13 They break up my road; they succeed in destroying me — without anyone's helping them.

14 They advance as through a gaping breach; amid the ruins they come rolling in.

15 Terrors overwhelm me; my dignity is driven away as by the wind, my safety vanishes like a cloud.

16 "And now my life ebbs away; days of suffering grip me.

17 Night pierces my bones; my gnawing pains never rest.

18 In his great power [God] becomes like clothing to me; he binds me like the neck of my garment.

19 He throws me into the mud, and I am reduced to dust and ashes.

20 "I cry out to you, O God, but you do not answer; I stand up, but you merely look at me.

21 You turn on me ruthlessly; with the might of your hand you attack me.

22 You snatch me up and drive me before the wind; you toss me about in the storm.

23 I know you will bring me down to death, to the place appointed for all the living.

24 "Surely no one lays a hand on a broken man when he cries for help in his distress.

25 Have I not wept for those in trouble? Has not my soul grieved for the poor?

26 Yet when I hoped for good, evil came; when I looked for light, then came darkness.

27 The churning inside me never stops; days of suffering confront me.

28 I go about blackened, but not by the sun; I stand up in the assembly and cry for help.

29 I have become a brother of jackals, a companion of owls.

30 My skin grows black and peels; my body burns with fever.

31 My harp is tuned to mourning, and my flute to the sound of wailing.

In contrast to the glorious picture of the past, Job now describes his present condition and the reaction of some people to his suffering. He is being mocked by those younger in years and of lower background. He had expected double respect from those he describes here in rather derogatory terms. With a flair for poetic exaggeration Job describes a certain class of people that hardly differ from the animal. We could ask if it is right for one person to pronounce such a verdict upon fellowmen. It is true that sin robs an individual of his royal dignity. But Job himself was not completely sinless either. It is difficult to read this chapter and not catch the picture of Jesus, who “was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.”¹ When we apply Job's suffering to the suffering of Christ, we join the despicable riffraff Job is talking about here.

The Pulpit Commentary comments: “As Job had been speaking last of the honor in which he was once held, he bears his contrast by showing how at present he is disgraced

1. Isa. 53:3

and derided. Men who are outcasts and solitary themselves, poor dwellers in caves (ver. 6), who have much ado to keep body and soul together (vers. 3, 4), and not men *only*, but youths, mere boys, scoff at him, make him a song and a byword (ver. 9). nay, 'spare not to spit in his face' (ver. 10). There seem to have been in his vicinity weak and debased tribes, generally contemned and looked down upon, regarded as thieves (ver. 5) by their neighbors, and considered to be of base and vile origin (ver. 8), who saw in Job's calamities a rare opportunity for insulting and triumphing over a member of the superior race which had crushed them, and thus tasting, to a certain extent, the sweetness of revenge. *Whose fathers I would have disdained (rather, I disdained) to have set with the dogs of my flock.* Job had not *thought* their fathers *worthy of employing* even as the lowest class of herdsmen, those reckoned on a par with the sheep-dogs."

All human beings are, by reason of their birth, destined to royal dignity. We lost this right because of sin. Jesus lost His, not because of His own sin, but because of our.

Beginning with v.15, Job turns his gaze from his fellowmen and ceases the comparison. He fixes his eye anew on God. As in his answer to his friends, Job manages to isolate himself almost completely from his surrounding and to be totally absorbed by the thought of speaking to God. He sees himself standing before his Creator, naked and totally miserable. Yet, it seems that God pays no attention to Job at all.

Job insinuates that God is more callous than Job could ever be. If he had met anyone in the same condition as he finds himself to be, he would have shown compassion to that person (v.25). But God shows Himself to be deaf to Job's plea. This slanted picture of a God, who would be crueller than any human being, is the fruit of Satan's insinuation. The thought that we could be more righteous than God, or that God would be less compassionate than we are, takes God out of the picture of human suffering and make it harder to bear. That philosophy of life is the result of demonic propaganda.

ZZ. Job rests his case. 31:1-40

- 1 "I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl.**
- 2 For what is man's lot from God above, his heritage from the Almighty on high?**
- 3 Is it not ruin for the wicked, disaster for those who do wrong?**
- 4 Does he not see my ways and count my every step?**
- 5 "If I have walked in falsehood or my foot has hurried after deceit—**
- 6 let God weigh me in honest scales and he will know that I am blameless—**
- 7 if my steps have turned from the path, if my heart has been led by my eyes, or if my hands have been defiled,**
- 8 then may others eat what I have sown, and may my crops be uprooted.**
- 9 "If my heart has been enticed by a woman, or if I have lurked at my neighbor's door,**
- 10 then may my wife grind another man's grain, and may other men sleep with her.**
- 11 For that would have been shameful, a sin to be judged.**
- 12 It is a fire that burns to Destruction; it would have uprooted my harvest.**

13 "If I have denied justice to my menservants and maidservants when they had a grievance against me,

14 what will I do when God confronts me? What will I answer when called to account?

15 Did not he who made me in the womb make them? Did not the same one form us both within our mothers?

16 "If I have denied the desires of the poor or let the eyes of the widow grow weary,

17 if I have kept my bread to myself, not sharing it with the fatherless—

18 but from my youth I reared him as would a father, and from my birth I guided the widow—

19 if I have seen anyone perishing for lack of clothing, or a needy man without a garment,

20 and his heart did not bless me for warming him with the fleece from my sheep,

21 if I have raised my hand against the fatherless, knowing that I had influence in court,

22 then let my arm fall from the shoulder, let it be broken off at the joint.

23 For I dreaded destruction from God, and for fear of his splendor I could not do such things.

24 "If I have put my trust in gold or said to pure gold, 'You are my security,'

25 if I have rejoiced over my great wealth, the fortune my hands had gained,

26 if I have regarded the sun in its radiance or the moon moving in splendor,

27 so that my heart was secretly enticed and my hand offered them a kiss of homage,

28 then these also would be sins to be judged, for I would have been unfaithful to God on high.

29 "If I have rejoiced at my enemy's misfortune or gloated over the trouble that came to him—

30 I have not allowed my mouth to sin by invoking a curse against his life—

31 if the men of my household have never said, 'Who has not had his fill of Job's meat?'—

32 but no stranger had to spend the night in the street,

for my door was always open to the traveler—

33 if I have concealed my sin as men do, by hiding my guilt in my heart

34 because I so feared the crowd and so dreaded the contempt of the clans that I kept silent and would not go outside

35 ("Oh, that I had someone to hear me! I sign now my defense — let the Almighty answer me; let my accuser put his indictment in writing.

36 Surely I would wear it on my shoulder, I would put it on like a crown.

37 I would give him an account of my every step; like a prince I would approach him.)—

38 "if my land cries out against me and all its furrows are wet with tears,

39 if I have devoured its yield without payment or broken the spirit of its tenants,

40 then let briars come up instead of wheat and weeds instead of barley." The words of Job are ended.

The Pulpit Commentary introduces this chapter as follows: “The conclusion of Job’s long speech (ch. 26-31.) is now reached. He winds it up by a solemn vindication of himself from all the charges of wicked conduct which have been alleged or insinuated against him. Perhaps it may be said that he goes further, maintaining generally his moral rectitude in respect of all the principal duties which a man owes either to God (vers. 4-6, 24-28, 35-37) or to his fellows (vers. 1-3, 7-23, 29-34, 38-40). He protests that he is innocent of impure thoughts (vers. 1-4); of false seeming (vers. 5-8); of adultery (vers. 9-12); of injustice towards dependants (vers. 13-15); of hardness towards the poor and needy (vers. 16-23); of covetousness (vers. 24, 25); of idolatry (vers. 26-28); of malevolence (vers. 29, 30); of want of hospitality (vers. 31, 32); of hiding his transgressions (vers. 33, 34); and of injustice as a landlord (vers. 38-40). In conclusion, he once more makes a solemn appeal to God to pronounce judgment on his case (ver. 35), promising to give a complete account of every act in his life (ver. 37), and calmly to await his sentence.”

We conclude from Job’s opening statement that polygamy was considered a sin. This may be an indication of the early date of the book. Job makes a survey of his whole life, considering the times when he could have easily fallen into sin, and concluding that he was kept from it. He had kept himself clean in his marriage (vv.1-12) and righteous in his inter-human relations. He had never treated his slaves as sub-human beings. It could be that slavery at that time was not the plague it became later on in society. In vv. 16-22 Job depicts his social concern for the fate of the widows and the orphans. Although he was fabulously rich, his riches never went to his head.

He never committed idolatry (vv.26-28). He kept control over his feelings toward his enemies (vv.29-31) and practiced hospitality (vv.31^b, 32).

Before we get the impression that Job considered himself perfect and without sin, we read words that may be taken as a confession: “if I have concealed my sin as men do, by hiding my guilt in my heart because I so feared the crowd and so dreaded the contempt of the clans that I kept silent and would not go outside ...” (vv.33,34). Job had been careful to confess his sins and bring the sacrifices to God that would cover his guilt. He kept a short record of his failings.

In his defense Job did not limit himself to refute Eliphaz’s accusations. Satan had tried to push Job to the limit. Job was a human being of the same kind as we all are. Job’s record consisted, on the one hand, of human frailty and shortcomings; on the other hand there was a deep faith in God. His own position was somewhere in the middle. Satan could, of course, not reveal to Job the real reason for his suffering. It was important for him to put Job’s test in the light of God’s punishment of sin. Job’s friends had been used slyly and effectively to present this viewpoint in a forceful manner.

Satan also counted on Job’s sharp insight. Job knew the accusation to be untrue. But his lack of understanding of the reason for his testing almost leads to his fall. If Job could have kept his “middle-of-the-road” position, nothing would happen. But his friends’ accusation that Job had veered to the left, forced him too far to the right. Satan risked

everything on the assumption that Job would see through his friends' position, but not through his own. In this Satan turns out to have been right.

So there is Job, seeming to be too holy and making himself a martyr. This makes his less than the martyr he actually is. As was mentioned earlier in connection with Chapter 9:21, where we read: "Although I am blameless, I have no concern for myself; I despise my own life," there is confusion about the essence of sin. Sin is merely considered to be within inter-human relations. It was what one human being does wrong to someone else. While, in reality, sin is the incongruence between God and us; it is our falling short of the glory of God. It is this misconception that Satan is trying to perpetuate.

III. Elihu's Monologue. Chapters 32-37

The person of Elihu is a mystery in the book of Job. He remains an enigma all the way through. His name means: "He is God." One of the strange features in his appearance is, so to speak, that "we did not hear him come in." We do not find his name among the friends of Job that were introduced to us in Chapter 2:11-13. That means probably that he was not yet there. But he cannot have come in too much later, since he is aware of all that had been said in the dialogues. One possibility is that he was there but his name was not mentioned because he was too young to speak.

A. Elihu's introduction. 32:1-22

- 1 So these three men stopped answering Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes.***
- 2 But Elihu son of Barakel the Buzite, of the family of Ram, became very angry with Job for justifying himself rather than God.***
- 3 He was also angry with the three friends, because they had found no way to refute Job, and yet had condemned him.***
- 4 Now Elihu had waited before speaking to Job because they were older than he.***
- 5 But when he saw that the three men had nothing more to say, his anger was aroused.***
- 6 So Elihu son of Barakel the Buzite said: "I am young in years, and you are old; that is why I was fearful, not daring to tell you what I know.***
- 7 I thought, 'Age should speak; advanced years should teach wisdom.'***
- 8 But it is the spirit in a man, the breath of the Almighty, that gives him understanding.***
- 9 It is not only the old who are wise, not only the aged who understand what is right.***
- 10 "Therefore I say: Listen to me; I too will tell you what I know.***
- 11 I waited while you spoke, I listened to your reasoning; while you were searching for words,***
- 12 I gave you my full attention. But not one of you has proved Job wrong; none of you has answered his arguments.***
- 13 Do not say, 'We have found wisdom; let God refute him, not man.'***

14 But Job has not marshaled his words against me, and I will not answer him with your arguments.

15 "They are dismayed and have no more to say; words have failed them.

16 Must I wait, now that they are silent, now that they stand there with no reply?

17 I too will have my say; I too will tell what I know.

18 For I am full of words, and the spirit within me compels me;

19 inside I am like bottled-up wine, like new wineskins ready to burst.

20 I must speak and find relief; I must open my lips and reply.

21 I will show partiality to no one, nor will I flatter any man;

22 for if I were skilled in flattery, my Maker would soon take me away.

It appears that the discussion have come to a dead end. Job clings to his righteousness and Job's friends maintain that he is guilty, although they find themselves unable to prove this. It is at this point that Elihu makes his appearance, although he seems to have been present all the time.

The Pulpit Commentary comments on the appearance of Elihu: "A new speaker now appears upon the scene. Elihu, a comparatively young man, who has been present at all the colloquies, and heard all the arguments, dissatisfied alike with the discourses of Job and with the replies made to them by his 'comforters' (... Job 32:2, 3), interposes with a long harangue (... Job 32:6 - 37.), addressed partly to the 'comforters' (... Job 32:6-22), but mainly to Job himself (Job 33, 35-37), and having for its object to shame the 'comforters,' to rebuke Job, and to vindicate God's ways from the misrepresentations of both parties to the controversy. The speech is that of a somewhat arrogant and conceited young man. It exaggerates Job's faults of temper and language, and consequently censures him unduly; but it adds one important element to the controversy by its insistence on the view that calamities are sent by God, for the most part, *as chastisements*, not punishment, in love, not in anger, and have for their main object to warn, and teach, and restrain from evil courses, not to take vengeance on past sins. There is much that is elevating and instructive in Elihu's arguments and reflections (... Job 33:14-30; 34:5-11; 36:7 - 16; 37:2-13, etc.); but the tone of the speech is harsh, disrespectful, and presumptuous, so that we feel no surprise at Job not condescending to answer it, but meeting it by a contemptuous silence."

The commentary's judgment upon Elihu sounds a little harsh and extreme. The fact that, at the end, God does not rebuke him should allow us to give him more credit than can be given to either Job himself or to his three friends.

On the name Elihu, *Barnes' Notes* comments: "The name Elihu `Eiyhuw` means, 'God is he'; or, since the word He *huw`* is often used by way of eminence to denote the true God or YAHWEH, the name is equivalent to saying, 'God is my God,' or 'my God is JEHOVAH.' On what account this name was given to him, is now unknown. The names which were anciently given, however, were commonly significant, and it was not unusual to incorporate the name of God in those given to human beings ... This name was probably given as an expression of piety on the part of his parents."

The circumstances are clearly in Elihu's favor. Being young and vocal he finds fault in both parties present. His attitude is a classic example of youthful reaction against the phoniness of convention. Elihu speaks the language of any young generation. There is a certain amount of sarcasm in the introductory remarks about the wisdom Elihu expected to find in the statements of the older generation. No one has an answer to Job's problem of pain. Everyone has questions, but there are no answers. One difference between Elihu and modern generation youth is that Elihu says he has the answer. We cannot say, though, that Elihu baffles either Job or his friends by his wisdom. But Elihu is certain that he will be able to show Job to have the wrong attitude. In general, people are rarely convinced by reason alone.

B. Elihu's argument for God. 33:1-33

- 1 "But now, Job, listen to my words; pay attention to everything I say.*
- 2 I am about to open my mouth; my words are on the tip of my tongue.*
- 3 My words come from an upright heart; my lips sincerely speak what I know.*
- 4 The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life.*
- 5 Answer me then, if you can; prepare yourself and confront me.*
- 6 I am just like you before God; I too have been taken from clay.*
- 7 No fear of me should alarm you, nor should my hand be heavy upon you.*
- 8 "But you have said in my hearing — I heard the very words —*
- 9 'I am pure and without sin; I am clean and free from guilt.*
- 10 Yet God has found fault with me; he considers me his enemy.*
- 11 He fastens my feet in shackles; he keeps close watch on all my paths.'*
- 12 "But I tell you, in this you are not right, for God is greater than man.*
- 13 Why do you complain to him that he answers none of man's words?*
- 14 For God does speak — now one way, now another — though man may not perceive it.*
- 15 In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on men as they slumber in their beds,*
- 16 he may speak in their ears and terrify them with warnings,*
- 17 to turn man from wrongdoing and keep him from pride,*
- 18 to preserve his soul from the pit, his life from perishing by the sword.*
- 19 Or a man may be chastened on a bed of pain with constant distress in his bones,*
- 20 so that his very being finds food repulsive and his soul loathes the choicest meal.*
- 21 His flesh wastes away to nothing, and his bones, once hidden, now stick out.*
- 22 His soul draws near to the pit, and his life to the messengers of death.*
- 23 "Yet if there is an angel on his side as a mediator, one out of a thousand, to tell a man what is right for him,*
- 24 to be gracious to him and say, 'Spare him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom for him'—*
- 25 then his flesh is renewed like a child's; it is restored as in the days of his youth.*

26 He prays to God and finds favor with him, he sees God's face and shouts for joy; he is restored by God to his righteous state.

27 Then he comes to men and says, 'I sinned, and perverted what was right, but I did not get what I deserved.

28 He redeemed my soul from going down to the pit, and I will live to enjoy the light.'

29 "God does all these things to a man — twice, even three times —

30 to turn back his soul from the pit, that the light of life may shine on him.

31 "Pay attention, Job, and listen to me; be silent, and I will speak.

32 If you have anything to say, answer me; speak up, for I want you to be cleared.

33 But if not, then listen to me; be silent, and I will teach you wisdom."

Elihu takes Job's arguments one by one and submits them to a closer look. A digest of Job's complaints is given in vv.9-11, where Job claimed to be innocent, yet declared guilty. Elihu's statement that God is greater than man captures a biblical truth that the Apostle John also proclaimed, saying: "This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything."¹

Although, in his youthful enthusiasm, Elihu loses himself in verbosity, the core of his argument is sound. In all matters that lie outside the scope of our understanding, we must retain the assumption that God is good and just and that "every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows."²

Elihu places Job's suffering in a completely new light by asking the question how God speaks to Job in this experience. Before the written Word of God's revelation came into existence, God used other means of revelation, such as dreams and, in some cases sickness. As C. S. Lewis states: "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world." The fact that in our present dispensation God reveals Himself in the written Word does not mean that the way of dreams and pain is completely closed. It is certainly not the only way, and often not even the most effective. In whatever way God communicates, says Elihu, the important part is that we get the warning.

There are in Elihu's description of suffering and pain some remarkable nuggets of truth regarding the "mediator, one out of a thousand, to tell a man what is right for him." He stands between the sufferer and God to plead his case. The ransom the mediator pays in behalf of the sufferer, places Job's suffering on a level of universality. Man, in his sinful condition, has no reason to believe that God owes him health and prosperity. The only way of salvation is in the ransom the mediator pays. Elihu, we could say, places Job's painful experiences in a New Testament light.

1. I John 3:19,20

2. James 1:17

He shows that Job was not brought close to death so that he would come to despair. But for most people, the only place where they can see “angel on his side” is at the gate of death. Elihu’s angel is a clear image of Jesus Christ, who says to us: “You are innocent. I have paid the price.” And to the Father: “Save him ... I paid his ransom.”

In vv.25-28 Elihu describes the life of a redeemed person. Seeing God’s face brings about more than physical healing. There is answer to prayer and God clothes man with righteousness. There are songs of praise.

Elihu says that Job’s suffering ought to have brought him to reflect on God’s grace toward him. Now, it was easy for Elihu, who had not suffered, to say this to the suffering Job. It takes a good amount of God’s grace to sing psalms in prison with bleeding backs, as Paul and Silas did.¹

C. Elihu examines Job’s statements. 34:1-37

1 Then Elihu said:

2 "Hear my words, you wise men; listen to me, you men of learning.

3 For the ear tests words as the tongue tastes food.

4 Let us discern for ourselves what is right; let us learn together what is good.

5 "Job says, 'I am innocent, but God denies me justice.

6 Although I am right, I am considered a liar; although I am guiltless, his arrow inflicts an incurable wound.'

7 What man is like Job, who drinks scorn like water?

8 He keeps company with evildoers; he associates with wicked men.

9 For he says, 'It profits a man nothing when he tries to please God.'

10 "So listen to me, you men of understanding. Far be it from God to do evil, from the Almighty to do wrong.

11 He repays a man for what he has done; he brings upon him what his conduct deserves.

12 It is unthinkable that God would do wrong, that the Almighty would pervert justice.

13 Who appointed him over the earth? Who put him in charge of the whole world?

14 If it were his intention and he withdrew his spirit and breath,

15 all mankind would perish together and man would return to the dust.

16 "If you have understanding, hear this; listen to what I say.

17 Can he who hates justice govern? Will you condemn the just and mighty One?

18 Is he not the One who says to kings, 'You are worthless,' and to nobles, 'You are wicked,'

19 who shows no partiality to princes and does not favor the rich over the poor, for they are all the work of his hands?

20 They die in an instant, in the middle of the night; the people are shaken and they pass away; the mighty are removed without human hand.

1. Acts 16:25

21 *"His eyes are on the ways of men; he sees their every step.*
22 *There is no dark place, no deep shadow, where evildoers can hide.*
23 *God has no need to examine men further, that they should come before him for judgment.*
24 *Without inquiry he shatters the mighty and sets up others in their place.*
25 *Because he takes note of their deeds, he overthrows them in the night and they are crushed.*
26 *He punishes them for their wickedness where everyone can see them,*
27 *because they turned from following him and had no regard for any of his ways.*
28 *They caused the cry of the poor to come before him, so that he heard the cry of the needy.*
29 *But if he remains silent, who can condemn him? If he hides his face, who can see him? Yet he is over man and nation alike,*
30 *to keep a godless man from ruling, from laying snares for the people.*
31 *"Suppose a man says to God, 'I am guilty but will offend no more.*
32 *Teach me what I cannot see; if I have done wrong, I will not do so again.'*
33 *Should God then reward you on your terms, when you refuse to repent? You must decide, not I; so tell me what you know.*
34 *"Men of understanding declare, wise men who hear me say to me,*
35 *'Job speaks without knowledge; his words lack insight.'*
36 *Oh, that Job might be tested to the utmost for answering like a wicked man!*
37 *To his sin he adds rebellion; scornfully he claps his hands among us and multiplies his words against God."*

In this chapter Elihu attacks Job's pronouncement in vv.5 and 6: "I am innocent, but God denies me justice. Although I am right, I am considered a liar; although I am guiltless, his arrow inflicts an incurable wound." Job had not said that God was unjust. But Elihu acts as if that is the meaning of the statement. Apart from this misinterpretation, Elihu is correct in what he says. "It is unthinkable that God would do wrong, that the Almighty would pervert justice." God could not govern the universe if He would deviate from justice. As Abraham said: "Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?"¹ Although all this is true, Elihu fails to connect God's justice to Job's suffering. He can only see a link between suffering and sin, not between suffering and grace, like the Apostle Paul pointed out to the church in Philippi. Writing to the Philippians, he stated: "For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him."²

The fact that God is our guide proves His righteousness. If God were corrupt Himself, life would have no meaning. What Elihu says from v.18 onward is an illustration of the statement in v.12 – "It is unthinkable that God would do wrong, that the Almighty would pervert justice." God judges according to man's deeds and repays them

1. Gen. 18:2

2. Phil. 1:29

accordingly. God does not use double standards; He “shows no partiality to princes and does not favor the rich over the poor.”

There is no escape. We have no place to hide. Vv.21-30 elaborate on the fact that God sees all and knows all. There is no darkness in which man can remain invisible. There never is a time when we can “let our hair down.” Judgment can come at any time of life.

Past obedience does not help in the present either. God will treat a believer who turns aside as an atheist. Elihu does not believe in the perseverance of the saints! This is an obvious jibe to Job.

In a sense Elihu does not deviate from the viewpoint of Job’s other friends. Job is yet guilty. What distinguishes Elihu from the others is that Elihu shows some compassion with Job. He does not use Job’s sufferings as a shield for himself. His security is in fellowship with God; he does not need Job’s misery to feel safe himself. That makes him more objective than Job’s other friends were.

In vv.31-33 Elihu seems to address Job’s friends rather than Job. He leaves open the possibility that Job would repent, which means that they ought to change their position also. But Elihu insinuates that they would probably hold on to their verdict of Job being guilty. We have no way of find out.

In vv.24-37 Elihu expresses the hope that Job’s suffering will not end until he is completely purified by it. This sounds like an extreme opinion, which only youth can express. Yet, there is compassion in Elihu’s statement.

D. Elihu continues – the validity of righteousness. 35:1-16

1 Then Elihu said:

2 "Do you think this is just? You say, 'I will be cleared by God.'

3 Yet you ask him, 'What profit is it to me, and what do I gain by not sinning?'

4 "I would like to reply to you and to your friends with you.

5 Look up at the heavens and see; gaze at the clouds so high above you.

6 If you sin, how does that affect him? If your sins are many, what does that do to him?

7 If you are righteous, what do you give to him, or what does he receive from your hand?

8 Your wickedness affects only a man like yourself, and your righteousness only the sons of men.

9 "Men cry out under a load of oppression; they plead for relief from the arm of the powerful.

10 But no one says, 'Where is God my Maker, who gives songs in the night,

11 who teaches more to us than to the beasts of the earth and makes us wiser than the birds of the air?'

12 He does not answer when men cry out because of the arrogance of the wicked.

13 Indeed, God does not listen to their empty plea; the Almighty pays no attention to it.

14 How much less, then, will he listen when you say that you do not see him, that your case is before him

and you must wait for him,

15 and further, that his anger never punishes and he does not take the least notice of wickedness.

16 So Job opens his mouth with empty talk; without knowledge he multiplies words."

Here Elihu focuses on Job's remarks about the profit of being righteous. Job had said that there was none. He had done all the right things, but none of them worked. In this part of his reply to Job, Elihu strays furthest from the truth. The whole theme of *The Book of Job*, the case between God and Satan argues against what Elihu says. It is true that God's attributes are not affected by human sin. But God has linked the honor of His Name to the testimony of those who confess His Name. In this Elihu misses the mark.

It is also not true, as Elihu says, that Job whines about his sufferings, but does not seek God in all of this. It was Job's hope in the midst of his despair that made each of his answers to his friends end in a prayer addressed to God. Even before his sufferings began, Job must have known a solid fellowship with God. Otherwise the things of earth would not have turned strangely dim for Job as he was drawn every time irresistibly into the arms of his Creator.

Elihu's lack of understanding becomes particularly clear in vv.12-16, where he says about God: "He does not answer when men cry out because of the arrogance of the wicked. Indeed, God does not listen to their empty plea; the Almighty pays no attention to it. How much less, then, will he listen when you say that you do not see him, that your case is before him and you must wait for him, and further, that his anger never punishes and he does not take the least notice of wickedness." Did Job not put his plea before God? Did Job not ask to be heard? Elihu interprets God's delay as a postponement of punishment for Job's sins. In the end there is little or no difference between Elihu's lack of understanding of Job's plight as there was with Job's other friends

E. Elihu has a way with words. 36:1-33

1 Elihu continued:

2 "Bear with me a little longer and I will show you that there is more to be said in God's behalf.

3 I get my knowledge from afar; I will ascribe justice to my Maker.

4 Be assured that my words are not false; one perfect in knowledge is with you.

5 "God is mighty, but does not despise men; he is mighty, and firm in his purpose.

6 He does not keep the wicked alive but gives the afflicted their rights.

7 He does not take his eyes off the righteous; he enthrones them with kings and exalts them forever.

8 But if men are bound in chains, held fast by cords of affliction,

9 he tells them what they have done — that they have sinned arrogantly.

10 He makes them listen to correction and commands them to repent of their evil.

11 If they obey and serve him, they will spend the rest of their days in prosperity and their years in contentment.

12 But if they do not listen, they will perish by the sword and die without knowledge.

13 "The godless in heart harbor resentment; even when he fetters them, they do not cry for help.

14 They die in their youth, among male prostitutes of the shrines.

15 But those who suffer he delivers in their suffering; he speaks to them in their affliction.

16 "He is wooing you from the jaws of distress to a spacious place free from restriction, to the comfort of your table laden with choice food.

17 But now you are laden with the judgment due the wicked; judgment and justice have taken hold of you.

18 Be careful that no one entices you by riches; do not let a large bribe turn you aside.

19 Would your wealth or even all your mighty efforts sustain you so you would not be in distress?

20 Do not long for the night, to drag people away from their homes.

21 Beware of turning to evil, which you seem to prefer to affliction.

22 "God is exalted in his power. Who is a teacher like him?

23 Who has prescribed his ways for him, or said to him, 'You have done wrong'?

24 Remember to extol his work, which men have praised in song.

25 All mankind has seen it; men gaze on it from afar.

26 How great is God — beyond our understanding! The number of his years is past finding out.

27 "He draws up the drops of water, which distill as rain to the streams;

28 the clouds pour down their moisture and abundant showers fall on mankind.

29 Who can understand how he spreads out the clouds, how he thunders from his pavilion?

30 See how he scatters his lightning about him, bathing the depths of the sea.

31 This is the way he governs the nations and provides food in abundance.

32 He fills his hands with lightning and commands it to strike its mark.

33 His thunder announces the coming storm; even the cattle make known its approach.

Elihu does have a way with words! In his youthful enthusiasm, he vacillates between some rather superficial remarks and other more profound observations. The fact that, at the end, he shows himself to be wrong, must not cause us to like him less. One thing is sure, he loves God. That is the reason God does not judge him. His statement "I will show you that there is more to be said in God's behalf" borders on banality. But "God is mighty, but does not despise men; he is mighty, and firm in his purpose" is profound Gospel truth. Elihu's stream of words flows between these two extremes. It is true that, in God's plan, man is destined to the throne (v.7). That is the reason God reminds a person of his sin, so that he can break the bonds that separate him from God. God speaks to us in our pain (v.15). As C. S. Lewis has said, God shouts to us in our pain. Pain is God's

megaphone. James writes: "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds."¹ Although Elihu gets close to the mystery of suffering and grace, he does not succeed in finding the answer to it. His eye is open to the purifying effect and the positive outcome suffering can have on a person. He condemns Job for his negative reaction to his suffering. "Remember to extol his work, which men have praised in song." Job did not sing psalms in the darkness of his night of suffering. Job could have sublimated his suffering by submitting to it to the glory of God.

From the section that begins in v.27, we conclude that the thunderstorm is approaching and that this introduces the presence of God. Thick clouds are forming and flashes of lightning begin to appear; there is the rumbling of thunder. The scene is set for God's appearance.

F. Elihu's last words as the storm begins. 37:1-24

1 "At this my heart pounds and leaps from its place.

2 Listen! Listen to the roar of his voice, to the rumbling that comes from his mouth.

3 He unleashes his lightning beneath the whole heaven and sends it to the ends of the earth.

4 After that comes the sound of his roar; he thunders with his majestic voice. When his voice resounds, he holds nothing back.

5 God's voice thunders in marvelous ways; he does great things beyond our understanding.

6 He says to the snow, 'Fall on the earth,' and to the rain shower, 'Be a mighty downpour.'

7 So that all men he has made may know his work, he stops every man from his labor.

8 The animals take cover; they remain in their dens.

9 The tempest comes out from its chamber, the cold from the driving winds.

10 The breath of God produces ice, and the broad waters become frozen.

11 He loads the clouds with moisture; he scatters his lightning through them.

12 At his direction they swirl around over the face of the whole earth to do whatever he commands them.

13 He brings the clouds to punish men, or to water his earth and show his love.

14 "Listen to this, Job; stop and consider God's wonders.

15 Do you know how God controls the clouds and makes his lightning flash?

16 Do you know how the clouds hang poised, those wonders of him who is perfect in knowledge?

17 You who swelter in your clothes when the land lies hushed under the south wind,

18 can you join him in spreading out the skies, hard as a mirror of cast bronze?

1. James 1:2

19 "Tell us what we should say to him; we cannot draw up our case because of our darkness.

20 Should he be told that I want to speak? Would any man ask to be swallowed up?

21 Now no one can look at the sun, bright as it is in the skies after the wind has swept them clean.

22 Out of the north he comes in golden splendor; God comes in awesome majesty.

23 The Almighty is beyond our reach and exalted in power; in his justice and great righteousness, he does not oppress.

24 Therefore, men revere him, for does he not have regard for all the wise in heart?"

The storm has burst upon the people as Elihu speaks. His words must have been drowned out from time to time by thunderclaps. Rain, and maybe hail, pours down upon the company of people. The temperature drops. Everything present turns Elihu's speech into an object lesson. This majestic setting cannot have failed to make an overwhelming impression.

People make promises to God during thunderstorms. The thunder also brings Elihu closer to Job and the two of them find themselves on the same level before God. There is now no longer any basic difference between one and the other; all are creatures before their Creator.

In vv.22-24 Elihu is still speaking, describing to us all the appearance of the glory of God. A blinding light appears from the north, representing the awesome majesty of God. Several times the Bible indicates the direction from which God's glory appears as being the north.

IV. God's Revelation to Job and Job's Repentance and Remorse. 38-42:6

A. God's first answer to Job. 38:1-41

1 Then the Lord answered Job out of the storm. He said:

2 "Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge?

3 Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me.

4 "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand.

5 Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it?

6 On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone—

7 while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?

8 "Who shut up the sea behind doors when it burst forth from the womb,

9 when I made the clouds its garment and wrapped it in thick darkness,

10 when I fixed limits for it and set its doors and bars in place,

11 when I said, 'This far you may come and no farther; here is where your proud waves halt'?

12 "Have you ever given orders to the morning, or shown the dawn its place,

13 that it might take the earth by the edges and shake the wicked out of it?

14 The earth takes shape like clay under a seal; its features stand out like those of a garment.

15 The wicked are denied their light, and their upraised arm is broken.

16 "Have you journeyed to the springs of the sea or walked in the recesses of the deep?

17 Have the gates of death been shown to you? Have you seen the gates of the shadow of death?

18 Have you comprehended the vast expanses of the earth? Tell me, if you know all this.

19 "What is the way to the abode of light? And where does darkness reside?

20 Can you take them to their places? Do you know the paths to their dwellings?

21 Surely you know, for you were already born! You have lived so many years!

22 "Have you entered the storehouses of the snow or seen the storehouses of the hail,

23 which I reserve for times of trouble, for days of war and battle?

24 What is the way to the place where the lightning is dispersed, or the place where the east winds are scattered over the earth?

25 Who cuts a channel for the torrents of rain, and a path for the thunderstorm,

26 to water a land where no man lives, a desert with no one in it,

27 to satisfy a desolate wasteland and make it sprout with grass?

28 Does the rain have a father? Who fathers the drops of dew?

29 From whose womb comes the ice? Who gives birth to the frost from the heavens

30 when the waters become hard as stone, when the surface of the deep is frozen?

31 "Can you bind the beautiful Pleiades? Can you loose the cords of Orion?

32 Can you bring forth the constellations in their seasons or lead out the Bear with its cubs?

33 Do you know the laws of the heavens? Can you set up [God's] dominion over the earth?

34 "Can you raise your voice to the clouds and cover yourself with a flood of water?

35 Do you send the lightning bolts on their way? Do they report to you, 'Here we are'?

36 Who endowed the heart with wisdom or gave understanding to the mind?

37 Who has the wisdom to count the clouds? Who can tip over the water jars of the heavens

38 when the dust becomes hard and the clods of earth stick together?

39 "Do you hunt the prey for the lioness and satisfy the hunger of the lions

40 when they crouch in their dens or lie in wait in a thicket?

41 Who provides food for the raven when its young cry out to God and wander about for lack of food?

Even in the age of space travel in which we live, this two-dimensional description of the universe is amazingly modern and up-to-date. We may have moved farther in space exploration and have more understanding about the way the constellations are put together than Job had, but there is nothing in this chapter that needs to be updated.

We may consider Job 38 to be a “primitive poetic meditation.” And as in all “primitive art,” the soul of the painting is depicted in a form that belongs to the period in which it was created. Our appreciation is based on the fact that we recognize the soul as being timeless. So it is with the picture God paints for Job. The fact that man has set foot on the moon does not lessen the mystery of the creation of our own planet. It actually makes the miracle greater. The fact that man penetrates deeper into space does not make him greater; it actually makes him smaller. “When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?”¹

God reveals Himself to man, first of all, as the Creator. The basis of all knowledge of God for all of mankind, Jew or Greek, is the fact that God is the Creator of heaven and earth. It is this kind of knowledge of God that brings Job to the turning point in his suffering. When people do not respond to the light that shines from this mode of God’s revelation of Himself, the life of the individual as well as of society becomes corrupt. God’s first claim upon me, as an individual, is the fact that He made me, body, soul and spirit.

God’s question to Job, “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation?” determines the relationship between God and man. The whole history of salvation can be expressed in three questions:

- Job 38:4 – “Job, where were you?”
- Genesis 3:9 – “But the Lord God called to the man, ‘Where are you?’”
- Hebrews 10:7 – “Then I said, ‘Here I am — it is written about me in the scroll — I have come to do your will, O God.’”

The confrontation of man with God as his Creator always brings one to the place of David who said: “What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?”

What amazes us in *The Book of Job* is this emphasis on God as Creator and the healing effect this discovery has upon the life of Job. We would have expected God to reveal Himself in His wrath over sin, and eventually His grace of forgiveness. The emphasis upon God, the Creator, is reason enough to place the book at the beginning of the history of salvation. There is no indication here that God revealed Himself in the law. And obviously, the full revelation of God in Jesus Christ could not come until later.

It is clear, however, that seeing God as the great Creator of the universe makes the miracle of grace so much the greater. How is it possible that this great God would pay attention to someone so insignificant as I!

1. Ps. 8:3,4

B. God, Creator of the animal world. Job 39:1-30

1 "Do you know when the mountain goats give birth? Do you watch when the doe bears her fawn?

2 Do you count the months till they bear? Do you know the time they give birth?

3 They crouch down and bring forth their young; their labor pains are ended.

4 Their young thrive and grow strong in the wilds; they leave and do not return.

5 "Who let the wild donkey go free? Who untied his ropes?

6 I gave him the wasteland as his home, the salt flats as his habitat.

7 He laughs at the commotion in the town; he does not hear a driver's shout.

8 He ranges the hills for his pasture and searches for any green thing.

9 "Will the wild ox consent to serve you? Will he stay by your manger at night?

10 Can you hold him to the furrow with a harness? Will he till the valleys behind you?

11 Will you rely on him for his great strength? Will you leave your heavy work to him?

12 Can you trust him to bring in your grain and gather it to your threshing floor?

13 "The wings of the ostrich flap joyfully, but they cannot compare with the pinions and feathers of the stork.

14 She lays her eggs on the ground and lets them warm in the sand,

15 unmindful that a foot may crush them, that some wild animal may trample them.

16 She treats her young harshly, as if they were not hers; she cares not that her labor was in vain,

17 for God did not endow her with wisdom or give her a share of good sense.

18 Yet when she spreads her feathers to run, she laughs at horse and rider.

19 "Do you give the horse his strength or clothe his neck with a flowing mane?

20 Do you make him leap like a locust, striking terror with his proud snorting?

21 He paws fiercely, rejoicing in his strength, and charges into the fray.

22 He laughs at fear, afraid of nothing; he does not shy away from the sword.

23 The quiver rattles against his side, along with the flashing spear and lance.

24 In frenzied excitement he eats up the ground; he cannot stand still when the trumpet sounds.

25 At the blast of the trumpet he snorts, 'Aha!' He catches the scent of battle from afar, the shout of commanders and the battle cry.

26 "Does the hawk take flight by your wisdom and spread his wings toward the south?

27 Does the eagle soar at your command and build his nest on high?

28 He dwells on a cliff and stays there at night; a rocky crag is his stronghold.

29 From there he seeks out his food; his eyes detect it from afar.

30 His young ones feast on blood, and where the slain are, there is he."

This description of some prominent species of the animal world reminds us of the fact that the whole fauna used to be part of the kingdom of man. God had said to Adam and Eve: "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the

ground.”¹ Apart from some animal that have been domesticated, the wilderness of this world is full of creatures that no longer listen to their master’s voice. They only depend upon their Creator. As the psalmist sings: “The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food at the proper time. You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing.”² In this way the fall of man provides proof of God’s glory. Looking at God’s fauna, man recognizes what he could have been and no longer is.

Yet, the pictures drawn here are far removed from what God originally intended this world to be. This is not the perfect creation of the first chapters of Genesis. Nor is it the kingdom of peace of which Isaiah says: “The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper’s nest.”³ Creation, in this context, is torn and it is tearing itself to pieces. One animal devours the other. But even in this tragic distortion of God’s original plan, the hand of the Almighty is seen clearly enough to bring human beings back to themselves and to their Creator. Nature’s cruelty is no obstacle to God’s revelation of Himself. If it turns Job around, why wouldn’t it do so to others!

C. Job’s confession and God’s reply. 40:1-24

1 The Lord said to Job:

2 "Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him? Let him who accuses God answer him!"

3 Then Job answered the Lord:

4 "I am unworthy — how can I reply to you? I put my hand over my mouth.

5 I spoke once, but I have no answer — twice, but I will say no more."

6 Then the Lord spoke to Job out of the storm:

7 "Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me.

8 "Would you discredit my justice? Would you condemn me to justify yourself?

9 Do you have an arm like God’s, and can your voice thunder like his?

10 Then adorn yourself with glory and splendor, and clothe yourself in honor and majesty.

11 Unleash the fury of your wrath, look at every proud man and bring him low,

12 look at every proud man and humble him, crush the wicked where they stand.

13 Bury them all in the dust together; shroud their faces in the grave.

14 Then I myself will admit to you that your own right hand can save you.

15 "Look at the behemoth, which I made along with you and which feeds on grass like an ox.

1. Gen. 1:28

2. Ps. 145:15,16

3. Isa. 11:6-8

- 16 What strength he has in his loins, what power in the muscles of his belly!**
17 His tail sways like a cedar; the sinews of his thighs are close-knit.
18 His bones are tubes of bronze, his limbs like rods of iron.
19 He ranks first among the works of God, yet his Maker can approach him with his sword.
20 The hills bring him their produce, and all the wild animals play nearby.
21 Under the lotus plants he lies, hidden among the reeds in the marsh.
22 The lotuses conceal him in their shadow; the poplars by the stream surround him.
23 When the river rages, he is not alarmed; he is secure, though the Jordan should surge against his mouth.
24 Can anyone capture him by the eyes, or trap him and pierce his nose?

In these verses there is no divine sarcasm. The topic is about the cause of all failure, which is that man has sinned and falls short of the glory of God.¹ The point of it all is that God is greater than all. If this were not the case, if there were any other beings more glorious and perfect than God, God would have to cede the throne of the universe. It is obvious that Job does not qualify. At this point, Job recants all he has said about God, saying “I am unworthy.”

As an example of Job’s inability to govern God’s creation, God uses an animal that is called the behemoth. A footnote in *The New International Version* states that the hippopotamus or the elephant may be meant. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* states this about the behemoth: “According to some, the word behemoth, occurring in Job 40:15, is not a Hebrew word, the plural of behemah, but a word of Egyptian origin signifying ‘water ox.’ The word has by various writers been understood to mean rhinoceros and elephant, but the description (Job 40:15-24) applies on the whole very well to the hippopotamus (*Hippopotamus amphibius*) which inhabits the Nile and other rivers of Africa. Especially applicable are the references to its great size, its eating grass, the difficulty with which weapons penetrate its hide, and its frequenting of streams.”

Some Bible scholars believe that the behemoth refers to the hippopotamus or the crocodile. *The Living Bible* reads: “Take a look at the hippopotamus!” Whatever animal is meant, we are looking at one of God’s masterpieces. The fact that modern man compensates for his natural impotence with guns and ammunition, does in no way take away anything from the marvel of His creation. *The Pulpit Commentary* observes: “The mammoth, the rhinoceros, the hippopotamus, and the elephant have been suggested. Of these the mammoth is precluded by the want of any evidence that it existed in Job’s day, and the rhinoceros by the absence of any allusion to its peculiar feature. Authorities are divided almost equally between the elephant and the hippopotamus; but the best recent Hebraists and naturalists incline rather to the latter.”

1. Rom. 3:23

The point of the argument seems to be that, in comparison with Job, or any other human being, the animal described is far superior in brute strength. Yet, God can approach him and he depends on his Creator, as Job does.

D. One more example out of the animal world. 41:1-34

- 1 "Can you pull in the leviathan with a fishhook or tie down his tongue with a rope?*
- 2 Can you put a cord through his nose or pierce his jaw with a hook?*
- 3 Will he keep begging you for mercy? Will he speak to you with gentle words?*
- 4 Will he make an agreement with you for you to take him as your slave for life?*
- 5 Can you make a pet of him like a bird or put him on a leash for your girls?*
- 6 Will traders barter for him? Will they divide him up among the merchants?*
- 7 Can you fill his hide with harpoons or his head with fishing spears?*
- 8 If you lay a hand on him, you will remember the struggle and never do it again!*
- 9 Any hope of subduing him is false; the mere sight of him is overpowering.*
- 10 No one is fierce enough to rouse him. Who then is able to stand against me?*
- 11 Who has a claim against me that I must pay? Everything under heaven belongs to me.*
- 12 "I will not fail to speak of his limbs, his strength and his graceful form.*
- 13 Who can strip off his outer coat? Who would approach him with a bridle?*
- 14 Who dares open the doors of his mouth, ringed about with his fearsome teeth?*
- 15 His back has rows of shields tightly sealed together;*
- 16 each is so close to the next that no air can pass between.*
- 17 They are joined fast to one another; they cling together and cannot be parted.*
- 18 His snorting throws out flashes of light; his eyes are like the rays of dawn.*
- 19 Firebrands stream from his mouth; sparks of fire shoot out.*
- 20 Smoke pours from his nostrils as from a boiling pot over a fire of reeds.*
- 21 His breath sets coals ablaze, and flames dart from his mouth.*
- 22 Strength resides in his neck; dismay goes before him.*
- 23 The folds of his flesh are tightly joined; they are firm and immovable.*
- 24 His chest is hard as rock, hard as a lower millstone.*
- 25 When he rises up, the mighty are terrified; they retreat before his thrashing.*
- 26 The sword that reaches him has no effect, nor does the spear or the dart or the javelin.*
- 27 Iron he treats like straw and bronze like rotten wood.*
- 28 Arrows do not make him flee; slingstones are like chaff to him.*
- 29 A club seems to him but a piece of straw; he laughs at the rattling of the lance.*
- 30 His undersides are jagged potsherds, leaving a trail in the mud like a threshing sledge.*
- 31 He makes the depths churn like a boiling caldron and stirs up the sea like a pot of ointment.*
- 32 Behind him he leaves a glistening wake; one would think the deep had white hair.*

33 *Nothing on earth is his equal — a creature without fear.*

34 *He looks down on all that are haughty; he is king over all that are proud.*"

If it was difficult to identify the animal meant in the previous chapter, how about the leviathan! Most Bible scholars believe that the crocodile is meant. The Hebrew word suggests an animal that twists. The name "leviathan" occurs six times in the Old Testament, of which appears twice in *The Book of Job*. The other four instances are in Ps. 74:14 – "It was you who crushed the heads of Leviathan and gave him as food to the creatures of the desert." Ps. 104:26 – "There the ships go to and fro, and the leviathan, which you formed to frolic there." And twice in Isa. 27:1 – "In that day, the Lord will punish with his sword, his fierce, great and powerful sword, Leviathan the gliding serpent, Leviathan the coiling serpent; he will slay the monster of the sea."

The New Unger's Bible Dictionary states: "Leviathan (Heb. liweyatan). A word signifying an animal writhing or gathering itself into folds; used for the 'crocodile' (Job 3:8, 'Leviathan,' NASB, NIV, but 'their mourning,' KJV; 41:1, 'leviathan,' or 'Leviathan,' NASB, NIV, KJV, with marg. 'crocodile,' NASB, NIV; also Ps 74:14); for a 'serpent' (Isa 27:1); for some 'sea monster' (Ps 104:26), possibly the whale. However, leviathan may be purely a mythical concept adapted to biblical usage (as dragon used to prefigure Satan). Since the discovery of the Ras Shamra religious texts in Syria on the site of ancient Ugarit, it has become evident that there is a parallel between the seven-headed Canaanite monster Lotan of prevailing mythology, 1700 B.C. - 1400 B.C., and the biblical leviathan. Isaiah seems to employ this ancient mythological idea of the destroyed leviathan poetically (Isa 27:1) to symbolize the Judgment Day when God will triumph over the threatening evil of this world system."

The Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary states about the leviathan that it was an image of God's enemies. We read: "a sea monster represented as a cruel enemy defeated by God (Job 3:8). Some interpreters see Leviathan as a symbol of the cruel enemies of God's people: as Egypt (Ps 74:13-14) and as the AssyroBabylonian Empire (Isa 27:1). In 'that day'-the day of the Lord's judgment-the Lord 'will punish Leviathan... that twisted serpent; and He will slay the reptile that is in the sea.'"

Francis I. Andersen, in his commentary on *Job*, writes: "*Leviathan* is the name of a seven-headed sea dragon in the old myths, particularly those of Canaan before the Israelite occupation. Scraps of this ancient literature survive in the Old Testament, and are undoubtedly the source of the name used here. But it does not prove that Leviathan is still a mythological monster in this poem. The extravagant picture fits the crocodile well enough, but other identifications have been proposed, some of which involve dividing the poem into smaller portions. NEB has settled for the whale, at least in verses 1-6, which it transfers to the end of chapter 39. The style of the first speeches is more prominent here, since the discourse begins with a string of questions, aimed at convincing Job how helpless he is in the presence of such a frightening creature. How could you catch him (verses 1ff., balanced by verses 7, 8 by and introverted structure)? And even if you could,

what would you do with him? The suggestions are silly. Make him a servant (4) – but what use would he be? A pet (5)? Sell him (6)?”

It would be difficult to accept the fact that God would use a mythological figure as an illustration of God’s own creative power and of Job’s inability to rule over that sort of animal. There are, however, some features that could point in that direction, which is what make interpretation of these verses so difficult. Vv. 18-21 – “His snorting throws out flashes of light; his eyes are like the rays of dawn. Firebrands stream from his mouth; sparks of fire shoot out. Smoke pours from his nostrils as from a boiling pot over a fire of reeds. His breath sets coals ablaze, and flames dart from his mouth” do provide a vivid picture of any dragon, mythological or not.

The Pulpit Commentary comments on these verses: “According to Aristotle, the crocodile is in the habit of sneezing ... *And his eyes are like the eyelids of the morning.* This probably does not mean more than that his eyes flash with light upon occasion, which is no doubt true, though the eyes, being small, have not generally attracted very much attention. Ver. 19. — *Out of his mouth go burning lamps, and sparks of fire leap out. The description now becomes highly poetical, and it would be a mistake to endeavor to substantiate it.* The intention is to represent the impression which the animal would make on an impressible but unscientific observer viewing it in its native haunts for the first time. Splashing, snorting, and throwing up spray all around, it would seem to be breathing out steam and smoke, from which the idea of fire is inseparable (see the next verse). Ver. 20. — *Out of his nostrils goeth smoke, as out of a seething pot or caldron; rather, as from a seething pot and rushes; i.e. as from a pot heated by burning rushes.* Ver. 21. — *His breath kindleth coals, and a flame goeth out of his mouth.* All the representations of dragons breathing smoke and flames, found in the myths and sagas of so many countries, probably rest upon the observed fact of steam or spray streaming forth from the mouth and widely opened nostrils of the crocodile. The steam has seemed to be smoke, and smoke has naturally suggested flame and fire.”

In the opening verses of Chapter Forty-two, Job recants and confesses his sin in response to the revelation God gave him about Himself as the Creator. Job takes God’s accusations one-by-one and answers them with a confession of guilt. “My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you.” Job confesses that he only knew about God in a vague, impersonal way. He never had entered into a personal relationship with his Creator. Now, his eyes had been opened and he recognized the greatness of Him who created everything, himself included.

The question is, what did Job see? As far as we know, he only saw the lightning and heard the thunder of the storm. Actually, he only saw what he knew already to be true. Job already knew the animals God described to him. God’s revelation did not consist of anything new, of new factors that had not been revealed before. For all those years Jobs had lived in this world, in a familiar surrounding, in a creation he thought he knew, but the God who had always surrounded him, in whom he lived, moved and had his being,¹ he

1. See Acts 17:28.

only knew indirectly. Like Jacob, Job could have said: “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it.”¹

Often, we think about revelation in terms of God not being there and then coming toward us. Revelation is more a matter of “I was blind but now I see!”²

Francis I Anderson, in *Job*, states about Job’s repentance: “In verse 3a Job repeats the question that the Lord had asked him in 38:2. Now he answers it. He admits that he spoke out of limited knowledge, speaking too confidently about things *too wonderful* for him to understand. This is the cry of a liberated man, not one who has been broken and humiliated. In verse 4 Job quotes the words that the Lord had spoken twice (38:3; 40:7) and to which he had declined to respond at the end of the third speech. Now he answers, and his reply is positive. It has two sides, as inseparable as the sides of a coin. He has gained knowledge of God and of himself. God comes first, and fills his vision: *now my eye has seen thee*. The hope of 19:24-27 has found its fulfillment. Since what Job says about himself in verse 6 is all-important as the last word on the whole matter, it is a pity that ancient versions, including the new Qumran Targum, show considerable deviation at this point. There seems to be contrition, for Job says *I despise* (and translations usually supply *myself* as the object not found in the Hebrew). This does not go as far as the abject self-loathing of that radical repentance that requires admitting known sins. If we are to connect it with verse 3, Job could be expressing regret at his foolish words, uttered hastily and in ignorance (this is how TEV takes it) – a fault deserving correction, but not a wickedness deserving punishment. Job never says: ‘Now, at last, I concede that I deserved that punishment. If he is sorry about what he said, such behavior after the catastrophe cannot be the sin it was intended to punish. Such a discovery could, however, be the spiritual growth it was intended to promote, and Job now recognizes this. Many alternate renditions of the word *despise* have been proposed. It is equally important not to misunderstand the word *repent* by reading into it too many conventional connotations of penitence for sins which weigh one the conscience. The whole story would collapse if this is the outcome. Job would have capitulated at last to the friends’ insistent demand that he confess his sins. Job confesses no sins here. And, even if this is implied, it is one thing to repent before God and another thing to disown one’s integrity before men. Job’s reference to *dust and ashes* reminds us of Abraham’s words when he was praying to God (Gn. 18:27). As a humble suppliant, he knows his status. But, next to Job, Abraham is the righteous man of the Old Testament, and to kneel thus before God is an honor that exalts him above other men.”

V. Job’s Rehabilitation. 42:7-17

1. Gen. 28:16

2. John 9:25

7 After the Lord had said these things to Job, he said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "I am angry with you and your two friends, because you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has.

8 So now take seven bulls and seven rams and go to my servant Job and sacrifice a burnt offering for yourselves. My servant Job will pray for you, and I will accept his prayer and not deal with you according to your folly. You have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has."

9 So Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite did what the Lord told them; and the Lord accepted Job's prayer.

10 After Job had prayed for his friends, the Lord made him prosperous again and gave him twice as much as he had before.

11 All his brothers and sisters and everyone who had known him before came and ate with him in his house. They comforted and consoled him over all the trouble the Lord had brought upon him, and each one gave him a piece of silver and a gold ring.

12 The Lord blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the first. He had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen and a thousand donkeys.

13 And he also had seven sons and three daughters.

14 The first daughter he named Jemimah, the second Keziah and the third Keren-Happuch.

15 Nowhere in all the land were there found women as beautiful as Job's daughters, and their father granted them an inheritance along with their brothers.

16 After this, Job lived a hundred and forty years; he saw his children and their children to the fourth generation.

17 And so he died, old and full of years.

If we did not have this text in *Job* in which God condemns the speeches of Job's "friends," there would be many difficulties of interpretation of the previous chapters. Now, as God's light shines upon those speeches, we see that those words that sounded nice are, in reality false and empty. Job's friends were even more wrong than Job was. But as Job recanted before God, God forgave him. God says to them: "You have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has." God considers Job to be pure and clean after his confession. Job's one single phrase has cancelled out everything he said earlier in the preceding chapters.

The last verses of this book are full of rich truths. First of all there is a reversal of roles among Job and his friends. They are being humiliated in that their salvation is made dependent upon Job's prayer of intercession for them. They had condemned Job; now Job prays for them! Nowhere is Job so clearly an image of Jesus Christ as at this point in his life. Christ has redeemed us from the curse by becoming a curse for us.¹ Our salvation consists in our identification with Him, who "had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him,

1. Gal. 3:13

nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.”¹ Thus Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar get a taste of the shame of the cross.

One of the beauties of these verses is in the fact that Job’s intercession for others marks the beginning of his own rehabilitation. Job had to learn to love these people who had found pleasure in his misery. This love for others became the balm for his own soul. In the same way as hatred for others harms us more than the others, so is love for other more beneficial to our own soul than to theirs.

Job traveled a long and difficult way from prayer for his own children, who must have failed him, to prayer for his three friends, which was the prayer the Lord answered. This illustrates the relationship between understanding what grace is all about and receiving answers to prayer.

It is important to note that Job is not healed instantly and that his good fortune is not restored overnight. It began with visits from his brothers and sisters who all contributed some of their own possessions to get him back on his feet. Job rebuilt his fortune with the pieces of silver and the gold rings his brothers and sisters gave him. We do not know how large the family was, but there will not have been more than ten or twelve brothers and sisters. God seems to prefer a gradual mode over instantaneous ones. But the end result is double what it used to be!

Job’s family is rebuilt with ten children, seven sons and three daughters. Since Job appears to have had one wife, this must have taken several years. Job’s daughters receive special mention because of their outstanding beauty. They shared equally with their brothers in the inheritance Job left behind, which sounds like the first signs of emancipation.

Finally, Job receives the blessing that would later be considered by the Israelites to be the greatest a person could experience on earth: he saw his grandchildren and his grandchildren’s grandchildren. This was symbolic of eternal life that would be enjoyed in heaven.

1. Isa. 53:2