

Outline of Job: Wrong Questions, Wrong Assumptions

by Ed Miller

The book of Job explores the theme of whether God is enough when the hedge comes down, and teaches us that God's sufficiency is not dependent on external circumstances but on His intrinsic worthiness.

Duration: 1:20:19

Scripture: Psalm 37:5-6, Proverbs 14:29, Matthew 27:14, Galatians 5:16, James 1:19

Topics: "Suffering And Faith", "Gods Sovereignty"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses three debates that occur in the book of Job. The first debate, chapters four to 14, is described as 'hot' with strong words being spoken. The second debate, chapters 15 to 21, is said to be even hotter. The third debate is described as the hottest of all, with the strongest words being spoken. The speaker emphasizes the importance of choosing the will of God over engaging in endless debates and accumulating more facts. They highlight that people remain in ignorance because they do not want God's will, not because they lack information. The sermon also touches on Job's three friends and their attempts to answer the wrong question of why Job is suffering. The speaker warns about the fickleness of man and the need to trust in the present Savior rather than relying on past experiences. The sermon concludes by emphasizing the theme of the book of Job and the importance of seeking God's will.

Transcript

As we come again this morning to the study of God's Word, though you know it and know it well, I'm convinced, let me state it for you again, that principle of Bible study that is absolutely indispensable, and that is total reliance upon God's Holy Spirit. Only the Lord is able to reveal Himself. He delights to do it.

This is His book. Like our Lord Jesus, there's a human side, and we need to get that. Like our Lord Jesus, the Bible also has a divine side, and we must get that as well.

And only the Holy Spirit can unveil Christ in terms of who He is. Now let me share this little verse before we go to prayer, and then we'll go to Job. It's from Daniel chapter 2, verses 22 and the last part of 23.

22 says, It is He who reveals profound and hidden things. He knows what's in the darkness, and light dwells with Him. The last part of 23 says, Even now you've made known to me what we have requested of

you.

And so those two verses together, we see that light dwells with the Lord, but then He waits for a request. And He's willing to grant when we request. And so let's bow together and request of Him the light that dwells with Him.

Our Heavenly Father, this morning again, we want to bless Your name and praise You for the Holy Spirit who lives in our hearts. You've given us Your life. How we praise You.

And we thank You that according to Your Word, it is His privilege to unveil the Lord Jesus in a living way to us. And so once again this morning, we would ask You, Lord, to take the veil away. Our eyes are so earthbound so often.

Turn our eyes, we pray, in a fresh way to our Lord Jesus Christ. We pray that as we meditate on these wonderful truths from Your Word, that You would give us a liberating discovery of the sufficiency of who You are. We thank You, Lord, that You're going to meet with us.

You have prepared our hearts, and now we just wait. I pray that You would deliver these brothers, every one, from everything which is not from You. We thank You in advance, in the matchless name of our Lord Jesus.

Amen. As we continue to behold our Lord in this wonderful book of Job, let me review just the theme that we touched on, just enough to get us back in the direction. I believe the theme of Job rises from that double insinuation that Satan made in the first two chapters.

If you'll follow along, please, these verses. Job chapter 1, beginning at verse 8. And the Lord said to Satan, Have you considered My servant Job? There's no one like him on the earth, a blameless and an upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil. Verse 10.

Have you not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has on every side? You've blessed the work of his hands. His possessions have increased in the land. But put forth your hand now and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse you to your face.

And then if you'll go to chapter 2, please, beginning at verse 3. And the Lord said to Satan, Have you considered My servant Job? There's no one like him on the earth, a blameless and an upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil. And he still holds fast his integrity, although you incited Me against him to ruin him without a cause. Satan answered the Lord and said, Skin for skin, yes, all a man has he'll give for his life.

However, put forth your hand now, touch his bone and his flesh, and he'll curse you to your face. Now, the double insinuation is this. The insinuation that Satan made against Job was that he was a mercenary.

In other words, the only reason he served the Lord was because God put a hedge of blessing around his life. God blessed him. God was a protector, a giver of gifts.

And Satan suggested that if God did not act like a glorified Santa Claus and give him all of these gifts, take away the hedge and you'd have no following, says Satan. The only reason that Job or anyone serves you is because you're good, you're generous, you give gifts. If you took your gifts away, you'd have no followers.

In fact, people would curse you. That was this insinuation against Job. Now, the flip side of that was his insinuation against God.

He didn't state it right out, but it's implied. And that is that God is not wonderful enough in himself, apart from his blessings, apart from his gifts, apart from the hedge that he puts around a person's life, that God is not attractive by himself. He's not lovely enough to be adored and to be chosen and to be served and to be worshiped.

That was the double insinuation. The only reason man serves you is because he gets something out of it. And by yourself, no one would ever serve you.

You are not intrinsically lovely. You are not intrinsically attractive. There's nothing in you.

You're not worthy. And that's why you have to keep giving out gifts or you'd have no following. I believe the theme comes out of that double insinuation.

Is God intrinsically wonderful apart from the hedge? Is there enough in the Lord himself, apart from any blessing, to choose him and embrace him and trust him and love him and serve him and adore him and worship him? That's what Job deals with. The book, I believe, gives a resounding yes to that question. God is enough.

Job doesn't see that at first. And that's really the genius of this wonderful book, because God is now going to take Job step by step and stage by stage to the place where that double insinuation is completely answered and Job comes to believe that, I want God just for God. The way God took Job there, that's the way he takes me there.

That's the way he takes you there, and that's the way he leads all of his people. Those are the things this weekend, God gracing us, we want to see. Now, I suggested last evening to drive home that great theme.

God had preserved a revelation of himself for this book, a title of God two-thirds of the time it's mentioned in the Bible, it's mentioned in Job, and that is that great title, El Shaddai. El Shaddai, the God who's more than enough. He's not only the God that enables you to survive and get by when the hedge is down.

Ah, the opposite's true. He's the God that's more than enough and that without the hedge brings you to completeness and fullness and rest and satisfaction in himself. This morning, we're going to look at a great portion of that book, this book, where that truth, that God himself, El Shaddai, is everlastingly enough and more than enough when the hedge comes down.

From chapter 3 to 37 in the book, they were asking the wrong question. From chapter 3 to 37, they tried to answer the question, why does this man suffer so? Why does Job suffer so? And the larger question, why do the godly suffer? If you glance at the sheet of notes, you'll see that they had three debates, and in debate after debate, they're trying to unravel the mysteries of suffering. Why does God allow suffering like this? Now, many studied Job with that very error.

They go through the whole book asking the wrong question, and if you ask the wrong question, no matter what answer you come up with, you're going to end up with the wrong answer. The book of Job does not solve for us the mysteries of suffering. It doesn't answer that question.

It never tries to give the answer, why is Job suffering or why do the godly suffer? The question of the book, and this is where we're heading, is El Shaddai, is God enough when the hedge comes down? Now that question the book answers, and so that's the question that we're going to follow. When we left off last evening in our introduction, I was trying to show you how God, in order to drive home the truth that he's enough when any part or all of the hedge comes down by himself, apart from anything else, he is enough. In order to illustrate that, he found a man like Job whose hedge was high, whose hedge was full, whose hedge was beautiful, and step by step he dismantled that hedge in order to have an illustration forever to put into the Bible that God is enough when the hedge comes down.

He completely, by removing Job's hedge, answered the double insinuation of the Lord, but more than that, he brought Job to the place where he saw God and God alone as his sufficiency. I won't develop it again, I'm not going to go through all the details, but just in an overview, recall the hedge that came down. This man was certainly blessed by the Lord, and in a moment of time he lost all of his possessions, and he was a wealthy man.

He lost his ten children. He lost his health. He lost the support of his life partner.

He lost the respect of all of his friends and family and neighbors and servants and everybody. He lost his reputation. He lost his ministry.

And when we ended up, I showed you how he lost the sense of the presence of the Lord. And so much did he rely on the sense of God's presence that after a while he began to have hard thoughts about the Lord, hold his love and his wisdom in suspicion. And he actually began to think that God had become his enemy, his best friend in the universe, he thought had become his worst enemy.

Now I have no doubt that I could start right here with Jerry and go through row by row by row, and you'd all have testimonies that yes, there'd been a time in my life when God came after my hedge, and I have found that God was enough. I heard one of those testimonies last night. He was sufficient.

He took the place of my wife. He took the place of my child. When I had to bury my parents and my grandparents, the Lord was enough.

He was sufficient. When my children were unexpectedly tried, the Lord was enough. More than enough when I got that doctor's report.

More than enough when I lost my health. More than enough when my employment fell through. But Job, it wasn't one or two things.

It was everything. It was everything. God not only mowed his hedge down, he uprooted his hedge, completely dismantled it and pulled it up by the roots.

Now you know the Lord, and I know the Lord, and God is a planter and blesser of hedges. He's not primarily a blaster of hedges. But when the hedge comes down, this is the question of Job.

Brothers, is he enough? Now see, do you know that up here? Do you know that here? Is he enough? That's the message of Job. That brings us then this morning to the second part of the book. Now remember where we're heading.

I don't want to lose this, especially in this part of the book. We're heading to Job 42, 5 and 6. Job 42, 5 and 6, I have heard of you with the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you. Therefore I retract, I repent in dust and ashes.

The book of Job goes to the place where Job was able to say, now my eye sees you. That's, I'm praying, where this weekend will go. That's the end of this.

That's what we're looking for. Now my eye sees the Lord, therefore I repent. Oh may God help us.

Now I'll be honest with you brothers this morning. If you have gone through Job, and I'm sure you have, you're students of the word of God. When you come to these three debates, have you found it tedious? I have.

Okay, try teaching it. It's like running through quicksand sometime, getting through the arguments of all of these different people. I don't want to stand here and bog everybody down by going through this section, which just reading it is very heavy, because it's all worldly wisdom.

I have the same struggle going through Ecclesiastes that I had going through this particular section. In fact, I had a struggle with the Lord about this. I toyed with saying a few words about this, and jumping over all of these chapters, and then doubling up on my eye sees thee.

Because that's where my heart is. That's what I want to talk about. But honestly, to bring Job to the place where his eye saw God, he had to be dragged through this.

And so I don't want that heavy. Please pray for me today, because that's a little bit on my mind that this is tedious, but I don't want it to be tedious. So pray for me in terms of that.

I don't mean to apologize for this lesson, because I believe it's God's will. So I'm not apologizing for the lesson. You say, well, it's not very liberating.

Well, maybe not, but it leads to liberation. And so that's why we need to touch it. Without the Lord's mercy, I could never attempt to try to look at these particular chapters.

For one reason, it's a big block of Scripture. I mean, to take all of that in one little session, that's an impossibility. But what I'd like to do, God helping, is give an overview of chapters 3 to 31 this morning.

That's a lot of material, but I told you in this section, they're attempting to answer the wrong question. They're trying to figure out why Job is suffering. And that question is way off base.

And if you glance at the sheet, or if you know the book of Job, you know that they had three great debates. In other words, one spoke, and then Job answered, and another spoke, and Job answered, and another spoke, and Job answered. Then they started all over again.

One spoke, and Job answered, and another spoke, and Job answered. Third debate, they started all over again, except this time only two of them spoke, and Job gave a very long answer. And at the end of it all, chapter 38, 1 and 2, God speaks, and the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge? And in one sentence, he looked over all of the debates, and he made this comment, after all of those mental gymnastics, and all of that debating back and forth, you are actually further from the truth than you were when you began the debates.

You have darkened counsel. You haven't gotten any light, hasn't come any closer to the truth. The mystery now is darker than when you started reasoning and discussing it.

Now, I told you the true question of the book is about El Shaddai. Is he enough? When the hedge comes down, does Job answer that question? He actually answers it twice. The first time he answered it, he wasn't trying to answer it.

He was trying to answer the wrong question. But in answering the wrong question, he gave an answer to the right question. But the answer he gave to the right question was the wrong answer.

Are you still with me? The wrong, right, and all that kind of stuff. In the three debates, Job gives an answer while he's trying to answer, Why am I suffering? He also gives an answer to, Is God enough when my hedge comes down? And he gives the wrong answer. Here's his first answer.

At the end of the book, he answers it again, and he gives the right answer. But first, he gives the wrong answer. All right, Job, is God enough when the hedge comes down? Here's the wrong answer he gave at the beginning of the book.

Yes, God is enough, if, and he added that if, if what? If I have God plus an answer to the question, Why? I need both. God's not enough by himself, but God with an explanation would be enough. He wasn't angry at God for doing all of this, but he wanted to know why.

And so he said, God alone plus nothing is not going to satisfy. I need the Lord plus some kind of an explanation. What is going on in my life? Why did God allow this? What is God doing? I would gladly yield to the Lord.

I've already yielded, but he must show me his purpose. How does he expect me to walk in faith if I don't know what he's doing? If I don't know what's happening, if I don't know what's going on, if I knew in advance, then it would be easier for me to trust him and I wouldn't go through all these mental gymnastics. Brothers, may I suggest that is the wrong answer to the right question.

Is God enough when the hedge comes down? May God enable us not to say yes. If with you, Lord, you also give me some explanation. If I have some light on what he's doing, then it'll be a lot easier.

I'll never know the Lord as El Shaddai as long as I supplement him. He will not be supplemented. To supplement God is to change him completely.

You can't add to him, I can't add to him. Even the desire for the answer why is supplementing the Lord. And until I can get through that, and look what he had to go through to get through that, I'll never give the right answer to the right quest.

Well, I'd like to set before you the folly of those three debates. I will not analyze everything. I just want to give you an overview.

So let me just say, let me give several observations about the debates as a whole and Job's three friends and so on. Just an overview. It's the most surface of all things.

You have the factual divisions there on the sheets that I handed out. I think it would have been easier if I had charted it rather than outlined it, but it is what it is. My first observation is this.

The first debate, chapters 4 to 14, was hot. That's my first observation. The first debate was hot.

Many strong words were spoken in that first debate and some I'm sure they wished they could have taken back later. The second debates in chapter 15 to 21, the second debate was hotter. That's my observation of the second debate.

Guess what my observation of the third debate is? Hotter yet hottest. Exactly right. Strongest words of all were in that third debate.

I might say that one thing I get from that is you can debate and debate and debate with those who are convinced against their will and it'll get hotter and hotter and hotter as you go through and you're going to end up darker and darker and darker than when you began. Now you remember that poem, this great poem? Sticks and stones will break my bones but names will never hurt me. Don't believe it.

I'll tell you, words are very powerful. They do a lot of damage and a lot of damage was done. Many bones were broken by the words in these debates.

I'm not sure anything is really gained by debate. In this connection, let me just give you John 7, 17. You familiar with that wonderful verse? If anyone is willing to do his will, he shall know of the teaching whether it is of God or whether I speak of myself.

Now what I like about that verse is it makes knowing not a matter of the mind but a matter of the will. If any man is willing to do his will, he'll know. You see, the idea is we think before we can know, we need more information.

We've got to study harder and gather more facts. According to God, what you need is to choose the will of God. Then you'll know.

What I need is to choose the will of God. People remain in ignorance because they don't want God's will. Not because they don't have enough facts.

You don't need more facts. If anyone is willing to do his will, he'll know. We don't need strong arguments.

We don't need proof texts. We don't need a deeper study of a catechism. We need a heart that says, I want you, Lord.

I want to do your will. And you'll be amazed at how the light will come on when you have a heart set to do his will. Well, that's my first observation.

The first debate is hot, the second's hotter, and the third is the hottest of all. My second observation has to do with Job's three friends, Eliphaz and Bildad and Zophar and the three debates. G. Campbell Morgan points out three good things about these three friends.

So I've got to tell you that because I don't have much else good to say about them. So let me give you what G. Campbell Morgan says about these guys. His first observations from chapter 2-11, when Job's three friends heard of all the adversity that had come upon him, they came each one from his own place.

Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, Zophar the Namathite, and they made an appointment together to come to sympathize with him and comfort with him, comfort him. Well, Brother Morgan was impressed that these three friends came to sympathize and comfort someone who was suffering. Many find it very

awkward to be in the presence of suffering, not because they're mean, they just don't know what to say.

It's an uncomfortable place. And G. Campbell Morgan said, at least they came. And according to Morgan, he said by verse 11, they were also courteous.

They made an appointment to come. They didn't just show up. Well, when I read that, I'm not dead sure if they made an appointment with each other or they made an appointment with Job.

But like I say, they're in so much trouble in this book, we'll give them the benefit of the doubt. Maybe Morgan is right. And to their credit, they didn't just show up unannounced.

They made an appointment. Then Brother Morgan makes this point from verse 12 and 13 of chapter 2. When they lifted up their eyes at a distance, they did not recognize him. And they raised their voices and they wept.

Each one tore their robe and they threw dust over their heads toward the sky. Then they sat down on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights with no one speaking a word, for they saw that his pain was very great. G. Campbell Morgan points out that they were burdened.

They sat there in silence. They had come to sympathize. And it was real.

I had a friend who is now with the Lord Jesus. And he had MS. And for very many years, the Lord gave me the privilege of being his therapist. I don't know anything about therapy, but I went over and stretched his limbs several times a week.

And then we had Bible study together. That was my main reason for going and how we enjoyed the Lord. But of all the Christians I've ever met in my life, and I've met quite a few, I have never met a man like this who was more honest, whatever he felt he said.

And it was almost abrasive. I mean, when he would talk, they say first impressions, that's important how your first impression. I've never met anybody who met this man who wanted to be his friend.

His first impression was terrible. I'll give you one example. I was stretching his leg one time, and a brother had come to see him who hadn't seen him for about two years.

And he came in, and I welcomed him, and I was happy to see him. And my brother laying there on the bed said, what brings you here? Guilt? Well, according to G. Campbell Morgan, at least they didn't come out of guilt. They came out of a genuine heart.

They wanted to comfort their brother, and they wanted to give him some kind of an encouragement. The third thing that he mentions for their credit is they had a lot to say. And you'll see that in the debates.

G. Campbell Morgan points out they said it to his face and not behind his back. There wasn't gossip. Well, I guess that's a good thing to be said about them.

They came, they sympathized, and said what they had to say right to his face. And as I said, I had to bring that up because from here on in, I struggle to find anything else positive to say about these guys. Job, throughout the three debates, had some choice words about his three friends.

See, it started off, they'd come, they're silent, they want to sympathize, they want to comfort him. But I'm just going to spot check the record. Listen to some of Job's comments about these guys.

Job 6, 15 to 18. My brothers have acted deceitfully like a wadi, like the torrents of wadis which vanish. They're turbid because of ice into which the snow melts.

They've become waterless. They're silent. When it's hot, they vanish from their place.

Their paths of their course wind along. They go into nothing and perish. To Job, his friends were just like a dry riverbed.

Chapter 12, 1 and 2. Job responded, truly then, you are the people, and with you, wisdom will die. Job 13, verse 4 and 5. You smear with lies. You are all worthless physicians.

Oh, that you would be completely silent, that will become your wisdom. Job 13, 12. Your memorable sayings are proverbs of ashes, and your defenses are defenses of clay.

Job 16, 1 and 2. And Job answered, I've heard many such things. Sorry comforters are you all. Is there no limit to windy words? Chapter 17, 2. Surely mockers are with me.

My eye gazes on their provocation. Job 19, 2 and 3. How long will you torment me and crush me with your words? These ten times you have insulted me. You are not ashamed to wrong me.

Shameless tormentors. Well, that's Job's opinion. He didn't agree with Morgan on everything.

That was his opinion of these comforters. I have another dear friend who is also suffering, but with Crohn's disease. And I study with him every week.

We study together. It's a beautiful time to study with this brother. And when I started to study Job, I said to Lillian, I said, I got to go see Lenny, because he knows about suffering.

And maybe he can give me some light on Job. Well, we were there in our first session. Here's what he said.

He said, Satan couldn't ruin or couldn't win when he took Job's possessions. And he couldn't win when he took Job's children. And he couldn't win when he took the support of Job's life partner.

And he couldn't win when he took Job's health. And so Satan came to a last resort and sent in his friends. Well, I don't know how much truth there is in that.

Often our friends are a real test to our faith, you know. Job's, if it weren't for his friends, I don't think he would have ever come to see God as El Shaddai. Now, these friends, you're going to see it.

They're uncharitable. They have unfounded suspicions against Job. That was very painful.

They use false reasoning. They said cruel things. A word in season is precious.

And a word of a friend may wound, but it's a healthy wound. But some of the reproofs that Job gets here are harsh and very bitter and unwarranted. But I believe that God sent these friends to expose some very important things that needed to be brought up in Job's heart.

If it weren't for Satan's insinuations, if it weren't for the removal of the hedge, if it weren't for Job's friends, I wonder if he would have ever come to the place where he said, I've heard of thee with the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees thee. When it was all over, I believe he praised God because of all of the darkness that are in these chapters. Let me tell you a little bit about Eliphaz and Bildad and Zophar, the three debates.

In a general way, all three debates have the same theme. Don't forget now, they're answering the wrong question. Why is Job suffering? The three friends, though they're different and they're coming at it from a different angle, they all have the same argument.

And it's this, Job is suffering because he's a sinner, because he's wicked. They all took turns arguing that. And in all three debates, they give the same answer.

The reason for suffering is punitive. God is punishing him. He's done something wrong, and though we don't see what it is, and he won't admit what it is, yet we know that's why the hedge comes down.

It's all punitive. Every debate had that same idea. Now, each one had a slightly different focus.

In the first debate, the attention is on how holy God is, and therefore man is so sinful. Job, you must see it just in the light of God's holiness. Here's what Eliphaz said in the first debate, 419, how much more those who dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is dust, who are crushed before them all.

And then Bildad picks up the same idea. God is holy, verse 6 of 8. If you were pure, if you were upright, he would rouse himself for you. He would restore your righteous estate.

God doesn't rescue you, Job, because you've sinned. Zophar, he comes at it again in chapter 11. He knows false men.

He sees iniquity without investigating. That's debate one. God is holy.

Job, you're sinful. That's why you're suffering. I told you the first debate was hot.

The second one's hotter. Here's the focus on the second debate, a logical conclusion. This time the emphasis is not on how holy God is.

This time the emphasis is on how wicked man is. Every man. In fact, some of the greatest descriptions of wicked men are found in this second debate in the book of Job.

Wicked men suffer. Are you suffering, Job? Ergo, you're suffering. Why? Because you're wicked.

And then the third debate's the hottest of all. They keep the same line of reasoning. In debate two, they said the wicked suffer.

You suffer, you're wicked. In debate three, they said great suffering comes to really wicked men. You have a lot of suffering, and therefore you are very wicked.

And all of those good things that were said about you, to add to your wickedness, there must be hypocrisy. You were lying all about those good things. That never happened.

And so they come right out with bold-faced lies and go after Job. Job 22.5, Eliphaz says, is not your wickedness great, and your iniquities are without end. The last words Zophar says to Job are in chapter 25

and verse 6, and he closes his debate by calling him a worm and a maggot.

Aren't you glad your friends come to counsel you and to comfort you in your time of distress? In passing, let me just say this. I'm sure you know it, but there's a great danger to look at suffering and say it's punitive. Great danger in that.

For one thing, the world's greatest sufferer, our Lord Jesus Christ, was sinless. And there goes that argument right down the drain, that it's because of sin. Also, there's a difference, you know, between punishment and chastening.

How often someone has come to me and said, such and such has happened. Why is God punishing me? You know, and I know, as a believer, God will never punish you. Now, chastening is something else altogether, and we're not going to get into that, but that's different.

You say, why won't He punish me? Because He's already punished you in the person of Jesus Christ, your substitute. And He's already punished me in the person of Jesus Christ, my substitute, and He would be dishonest to collect for the same debt twice. He will not do that.

He's a holy God. He's a just God. It's wrong to think of God's approval in terms of blessing.

Just because God blesses you, it doesn't mean He approves of you. And just because there's lack of blessing in your life, it doesn't mean that He disapproves of you. Satan tried to whisper that lie in the ear of the Lord Jesus as He hung on the cross.

The tormentors were going by and shouting things at the Lord, and one of them said, let God deliver him if he delights in Him. And they put deliverance and delight in the same sentence. In other words, if he's not delivered, that means God didn't delight in him.

Well, I'll tell you, God delivers some people He doesn't delight in. And God doesn't deliver some people He does delight in. And so their whole argument is off base.

But that was the essence of the first three debates. Job's suffering is punitive. Now, Job argues against that in those three debates.

He doesn't believe that he's done anything wrong. He can't put his finger on one thing. He has searched his heart.

Now, I'm not going to read all of the arguments in all of the verses, but here in a nutshell was Job's reasoning in the three debates. You say, this is his first argument, you say the wicked suffer. You say the wicked have their heads removed.

Well, I've had my eyes open, and I see some wicked men that are not suffering. What do you do with that? Job 21, 30, the wicked prosper. They're reserved for the day of judgment.

Their hedge is not in jeopardy now, says Job. How do you answer that? Now, there's no question all through the three debates. Job claims his innocence.

He claims to be righteous, that he's done nothing. And at the end, God himself says in chapter 40, verse 8, will you condemn God that you might be justified? Listen to these words. Here's Job's opinion.

Chapter 33, 9 and 10. I am pure. I am without transgression.

I am innocent. There is no guilt in me. And then of God, he says, he invents pretexts against me.

He has counted me as his enemy. But to reason with his three sorry counselors and miserable comforters, he tries to figure it out. And I think he really did think this thing through.

Job asks this question. If I have sinned, I've searched my heart, can't find it. If I have sinned, then let me ask you this, my three friends.

Why won't God reveal it to me? Chapter 13, 23. How many are my iniquities and sins? And then he prays, make me know my transgression and my sin. If I did, why won't God tell me what it is? That was his reasoning.

And then he goes this far and says, and if you're right, why won't he forgive me? He forgives other sinners. If I have sinned, why won't he forgive me? Job 7, 21. Why do you not pardon my transgression? Why do you not take away my iniquity? And then as they debated, he began to think and he came up with something else.

He said, wait a minute, wait a minute. You say I've sinned. I can't find it.

He won't show me what it is. And if it's there, he won't forgive me. I don't understand this.

And then he thinks maybe, maybe you're right boys. If, if he's going way back in my life, when I was a young man, maybe he's getting me now for the sins of my youth. That could be, I can't remember that.

Job 13, 26. You write bitter things against me. Do you make me inherit the iniquities of my youth? He said, that's possible.

If there was something when I was a young man, that might be why he's doing this now. But the strength of Job's argument, as he contemplates all these things, he said, I've looked at my heart. He won't reveal it.

If it's there, he won't forgive it. If he's doing something when I was young, then I have no choice. And he makes this conclusion.

God has no reason. He's just capricious. It's arbitrary.

There's no cause. Job 9, 17. He bruises me with a tempest.

He multiplies my wounds without a cause. There's no reason except he decided to do that. I told you last evening, it's a dreadful thing to come to believe, to hold God in suspicion.

I hope no one here ever comes to even start to think that God is his enemy. Job came that far. And sometimes you just say, well, the Lord's against me.

But it's a big step here. Let me give an illustration. Try to get into, as I read this, I wanted to understand Job.

I tried to enter into the reasoning of what was going through. He was going through a real trial. And at that point, he hadn't seen the Lord.

He didn't say, I need God plus my hedge. He just said, I need God plus a reason. Just tell me why.

If my sweet Lillian, some of you know her, she's God's gift on the earth. She's wonderful. If she walked through the door one day, and without warning, I just smacked her down.

I just gave her a big wallop, and she went right to the floor. And she got up, and she said, why did you do that? And I didn't answer. And a day went by, and I didn't answer.

And a week went by, and I didn't answer. If I smacked her down today, how do you think my relationship would be on Wednesday with her, or on Friday? After a while, she'd be terrified of me. She'd be afraid.

Every time she'd walk in the room, she'd cower, and she'd duck. She'd never know when I'm going to let her have it again. That's what Job was.

He was enjoying the Lord, having this great relationship with God. He walked through the door, and God whacked him. And down he went.

He said, why? Silence. Try to enter into Job's heart some of the things that he went through. And he's trying to reason.

He's digging in his heart. He's looking. He can't find it.

These guys are saying, it's because you're wicked, because you're hiding it. You're a big hypocrite. You're a wicked sinner.

You've been lying all this time. He said, that's not true. I've been real as far as I know my heart.

God, show me my heart. Forgive me my sin. Forgive me the sins of my youth.

It must be that you have no reason. You just decided one day to take target practice, and you set me up, and there I am. And what choice do I have? If you're trying to prove you're stronger, you win.

That's what he argued. God wins. There's nothing I can do about it.

If God decides to go against me, how can I fight? How can I resist? He's God, and I'm man. At first, he just said, God did it with no cause. But as the debates got hotter and hotter, God dug deeper through using his friends, and the secrets of his heart were exposed.

And then he finally said this, God did it for no reason. And after all that reasoning, all that thinking, all that digging, all that trying to understand, God did it. No reason.

And then he added this, he did it, and he's wrong. You see, now he's not questioning God's right, but God's righteousness. Chapter 10 verse 3, is it right for you indeed to oppress? To reject the labor of your hands to look favorably on the schemes of the wicked? If you're convinced that it's God's hand in your life, never ask the question, is God right to do that? Psalm 119, 75 and 76.

I know, O Lord, that your judgments are righteous. In faithfulness you have afflicted me. Oh, may your lovingkindness comfort me.

Psalm 119, 128. I esteem right all your precepts concerning everything. Oh, what a verse.

Deuteronomy 32, 4. The Rock, his work is perfect. All his ways are just. A God of faithfulness, without injustice, righteous and upright is He.

In chapter 19 and verse 6 of Job, he comes right out and says it. Job 19, 6. Know then that God has wronged me. He's closed his net about me.

How deep Job fell. How far from, is El Shaddai enough when the hedge comes down? Because he needed to know the answer why. And he was brought to this that God did it and God did it for no reason.

And he's wrong. He had no right to do that. Almost as if to say, I don't deserve this.

What a contradiction of Lamentations 3, 39. Why should any living mortal or any man offer complaint in view of his sin? Brothers, if you got what you deserved, you wouldn't be sitting here now. If I got what I deserved, I wouldn't be standing here now.

Because of our sin, God doesn't deal with us according to our sin. Bless His name. Everything short of hell is mercy.

Praise God. No matter what comes into your life, don't come to the place Job did. Say, God's wronged me.

You're getting off easy if your whole hedge comes down. I'm getting off easy if my whole hedge comes down. He charged God with wrongdoing.

You know here, he says, God has wronged me. He's closed his net about me. Yeah, now God's doing wrong because you're surrounded with a net.

You didn't have any complaints when you're surrounded with a hedge, did you Job? You think you deserve that hedge? To think like this and reason like this? To hold our God, His love, His wisdom in suspicion? I'll tell you, that leads to despair. You know, some of the saddest prayers I've ever read as I went through Job this time, I read in the book of Job. It'd tear your heart out to see what he prayed.

Chapter 7, 16, he prays, leave me alone. Imagine a Christian saying to the Lord, leave me alone. Listen to Job 10, 20.

Would He not let my few days alone withdraw from me, that I may have some cheer? He looks for a little cheer in the absence of the Lord, instead of in the presence of the Lord. What a terrible place for a Christian to be in. Say, the only way I'm going to get rest is if I don't have God.

Get out of my life. Leave me alone. Depart from me so I can have a little cheer, a little happiness.

That's where Job had come. How far from El Shaddai, at this point, did his reasoning take him? To the place where God's his enemy. God's picked him out for no reason, and he's wrong because of what he allowed.

Well, so much for the three debates. Before we close, let me show you a couple more things about these three guys. In their reasoning, although they all had the same basic argument, Job sinned, therefore he suffers.

Each one came with a different foundation of worldly wisdom, and he's basing his arguments on a different thing. Now, I made a little acrostic because that's easier for me to remember, so I'll pass that on to you.

Eliphaz begins with an E, and he based his arguments on experience.

When you read just what Eliphaz said in all of the debates, over and over again, he says, according to what I have seen. Chapter 4, verse 8, according to what I've seen. 1517, what I have seen I will declare.

He had no word from God, but he said, this is my observation. I've looked around. I've seen a lot of things.

And then he says, Job, you better listen to me because I've had this vision. Job 4, 12, now a word was brought to me stealthily. My ear received a whisper of it.

Amid disquieting thoughts from the visions of the night when deep sleep falls on men, dread came upon me. Trembling made my bones shake. Then a spirit passed by my face.

The hair of my flesh bristled up. It stood still. I could not discern its appearance.

A form was before my eyes. Then there was silence. Then I heard a voice.

Job, you're a sinner. It's amazing. It's based on experience.

I saw this, and I saw that, and I observed this, and I had this great vision. Bildad, B, he based his arguments on books. Well, really, he talks about the ancestors and tradition.

Job 8, verses 8 to 10, inquire of past generations. Consider the things searched out by the fathers. We are only of yesterday.

We know nothing. Our days on earth are a shadow. Will they not teach you? They will tell you.

They will bring forth words from their minds. Bildad stands on tradition, the talk of the ancestors. He had a big library, and he's quoting this one, and this one, and this one, and this.

That's why you're a sinner, because he said this, and he said this, and he said this, and so on, based on just his education, no word from God. Tradition is like having a watch that tells you what time it was. Now, in the New Testament, tradition is used 10 times, and 5 times in a favorable way, 5 times in an unfavorable way, so there's a right kind of tradition.

I don't want to just be blasting tradition. Then Zophar, the Z, stands for zeal. He was zealous.

He had no foundation at all. He wasn't even wise enough to say, I've seen, I've observed. He wasn't smart enough to read a book.

Zophar, this guy, is unbelievable. He's just dogmatic. He comes in with his bright ideas.

Chapter 20, verse 3, I listened to the reproof which insults me, says Zophar. The spirit of my understanding makes me answer. He knows it all.

And you say, how do you know? Because. Because what? Because it's true. I know.

And he, Zophar, is the worst one, honestly. The only good thing I have to say about him is he only spoke twice in the last debate. That's the only thing I could think about Zophar.

Eliphaz, he starts off good, basing it on this experience. He's a flatterer. He strokes Job.

Oh, we know. We've heard how you did this. You helped the widow.

You were such a nice guy. By the time he ends up, he's a bold-faced liar. This Eliphaz is unbelievable.

He's just using all this psychology to try to get to Job. Bildad, his words are like a razor. He is so sharp.

Job just lost his kids. And you know what Bildad told him? Bildad said, the reason you lost, you know, you're a great sinner, but you're still alive. They're dead.

What do you think they did? They are so wicked. That's why your sons died. That's what he told them in one of the debates.

And Zophar, he's just annoying. I don't know how, go through the debates, if you can get through Zophar. This guy drives me crazy.

He's so dogmatic. He knows it all, and he has no reason, no foundation of anything. It's just that this is how it is.

I know it because that's how it is. Now, perhaps there are some good things to be said about some of these brothers, but that's basically what I have on that. Now, let me make one final observation on these chapters as a whole.

I don't know if you're in the same boat I am, brothers. I love the Lord Jesus. I know you're there in that boat.

And I love his word. And it grieves my spirit when I find myself neglecting parts of this book. Now, there are parts of this book where I've not had the revelation of Christ, and I make a studied effort not to neglect those parts, because maybe God will show me the revelation of Christ.

But when I come to these chapters 3 to 37, I don't want to read them. I find myself neglecting. And so I know any view of Scripture that causes me to neglect Scripture, there's something wrong with my view.

God doesn't want me to neglect these. I have the same trouble with Ecclesiastes. It's worldly wisdom.

And I don't trust myself. I can't read these chapters and say, well, I'll discern what's good in there. And maybe Eliphaz said something worthwhile.

Maybe Bildad said something worthwhile. Maybe Zophar. Forget that.

But I don't know how to discern. I can't find out what that is. And so I ask the Lord, to give me some way to be profited in these chapters 3 to 37.

And here's what I came up with, and I'm going to suggest it as we close this lesson. These chapters are all on worldly wisdom. It's all under the sun.

It's all man's wisdom. These chapters are filled with warnings. They're filled with warnings.

And I think one practical way to study these chapters is to study these chapters in order to be warned. In this regard, notice that this is all poetry. I'll just say this in passing.

When God wants to communicate different parts of his word, he uses different forms. When he wants to show union with Jesus Christ, he uses letters, epistles. Because there's a way that a letter, a personal letter, can communicate that truth.

And so he chooses letters. When he wants to teach mourners how to mourn, he gives us lamentation. You know, usually if I were to lose my wife, for example, the Lord took her to heaven, and then you came and said, hey, I'd like to talk to you about this business deal.

I'd say, hey, you know, not now. I've just gone through a lot. I've lost my wife.

My head is spinning. I can't think one thought in a row. I'm just in a dilemma.

God, teaching lamentations, he gave that book in an acrostic. I don't know if you've ever written poetry or tried to do an acrostic. You have to take a studied effort.

Every chapter has to do with the Hebrew alphabet in the book of Lamentations. And it ends with the faithfulness of God. And God says you have no excuse in the day of mourning to be scattered brain.

Sit down and meditate and be logical. And he uses that form on purpose. He uses negatives and positives.

He could have given the Ten Commandments positively. Be honest. But there's something more powerful about thou shalt not steal, and thou shalt not bear false witness.

Could have said be pure, but he said thou shalt not commit adultery. He could have said be honest, but he says thou shalt not bear false witness. He's strong language to show that.

And so he uses poetry in this section on the debates. Now, they didn't get up there. They're debating.

They're arguing. In fact, when you read the debates, you say, how hot did it get? They spit at him in one of the debates. One of them went up and struck Job.

Here he is. He's dying. He's a sick man.

They actually hit him. That's how hot these debates got. And God puts it in poetry.

And I'm saying, why would he put this in poetry rather than in prose? Poetry is the strongest possible language. It's an extreme language. It goes down deep.

It takes the most profound things. And I believe when God wanted to warn us, he couldn't come up with a stronger language than poetry. Let me end by giving you, I'm not going to develop it, things that I've been warned about in these debates.

I'll just mention them. Number one, Job 626. Do you intend to reprove my words when the words of one in despair belong to the wind? Listen to that verse, brothers.

The words of one in despair belong to the wind. And it's a warning not to take too seriously the words of those who are under pressure. They belong to the wind.

The words of one in despair belong to the wind. Don't put a lot of stock. Don't be sensitive.

Don't be hurt when someone under pressure says something to you. Sometimes that could be your wife or your children. Don't put a lot of stock in that.

Don't hold a grudge in that. There's a great warning. We're so sensitive.

My favorite verse on the tongue is Psalm 31:20. It says, you hide them in the secret place of your presence. From the conspiracies of man, you keep them secretly in a shelter from the strife of tongues.

The presence of God is a soundproof pavilion from the strife of tongues. If you live in the presence of the Lord, you don't have to worry what anybody says about you. And then when they do and it gets through, don't put a lot of stock in that.

These chapters have been a great warning to me about partial truths. These debates are filled with half-truths. For example, all suffering is because of sin.

Now that's a partial truth. All suffering is indirectly because of sin. Some suffering is because of sin.

Job says, he's chosen me as his target. If you mean, Job, that God has singled you out because of his affection on you, he even told Satan, have you considered myself? Yeah, you're his target, but not like you think. The chapters are full of partial truths.

Be careful of a half-truth. And then it's a great warning against human reasoning. All debating, I think, is not worth it.

I don't want to raise more snakes than I can kill here, but I don't know what some of you might be apologists, but I don't have a lot of room in my heart for this apologies, you know, where you have this Christian apologetics and you got to defend God and defend the truth and all that kind of thing. The Apostle Paul wouldn't do that. 1 Corinthians 2, verse 4, my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, in demonstration of spirit and power, so your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.

The reason Paul refused to argue, he was qualified. There was a big aperceptive mass in his cranial cavity. He could argue, he could debate, he was brilliant, but he wouldn't do it.

And his reason was because then your faith would stand in the strength of my argument. And someone will come along with a better argument, and your faith will be standing in the argument of the last person you talked to. And he said, I won't do that.

We had a young man, Ben, you know this guy, come to my door, and he had this problem with the deity of Christ. He didn't believe Jesus was God, but he believed that Christ had died for his sins and paid for his sins. He was in that cult, The Way, I don't know if you're familiar with all of that.

And he had a book under his arm, Jesus is not God. And he said, will you sit down with me and go through every argument and show me from the Bible how every time they say this, this is the real answer. I was ready to do it, and the Lord checked me on that.

And I said, no, I will not do that. Only God can reveal God. I'll convince you, and someone else will convince you the other way.

A couple days later, he came back, knocked at the door, Lillian answered the door. He said, is that around? I got to tell him something. I came, Lillian was there, I was there.

He said, I just wanted you to know Jesus is God. Jesus is God. You know who showed him? God.

God showed him from the book of Colossians. He was reading Colossians, and the Lord revealed it to him. You're not going to get anywhere by just giving this argument and that argument.

And so it's a great warning against argument. Eliphaz based his whole argument on experience. It's a warning against basing your argument on experience.

You need a word from God. Bildad based his on books and tradition. You need a word from God.

Great warning. Zophar based his thoughts on nothing. Don't do that.

These chapters are also a great warning against self-pity. When you read the book, after a while Job is so involved, you read chapter three and so on. We got to trust the Lord to enable us to sympathize with those who suffer in the will of God.

But let's not encourage self-pity. That's what these brothers did. Great warnings.

These chapters are also a warning against interference in the lives of others, fleshly interference in the lives of others. When Job's friends tried to convict him of sin, they actually drove him to self-righteousness. We can't tone down God's word, but we can't tone it up either.

And we need to walk in the Spirit when we're dealing with those who are being dealt with by God. These chapters are a great warning against self-defense, against self-vindication and self-justification. In this connection, I love Psalm 37, 5 and 6. I think in this particular verse, the context of this verse is as little known as the verse is well known.

Commit your way to the Lord. Trust also in Him. He will do it.

He'll bring forth your righteousness as the light, your judgment as the noonday. I believe the passage teaches that we ought to trust our reputation to the Lord. He'll take care of it.

You don't need to defend yourself. That was the testimony of Jesus before Pilate. He opened not his mouth.

Silence. You say, well, I need to defend myself. No, you don't.

God's your defender. The Lord is your defender. You see how valuable these chapters are as warnings.

Don't put a lot of stock when someone says something and they're under pressure. Be careful of partial truths. Be careful of arguing and debating.

Be careful of self-pity, fleshly interference in the life of others. Self-defense. The seventh warning is connected with the fourth warning.

Not only self-pity, but these chapters are a great warning against self-righteousness. I think chapter 29 to 31 are the greatest passages in the whole Bible on self-righteousness. How suffering reveals that hidden sin of self-righteousness.

It's amazing what is in us. May God help us. God, we say, is not the author of sin.

That's for sure. Man is not the author of good. That's also for sure.

Another warning is the fickleness of man. How he changes under pressure. It starts off, The Lord gave.

The Lord took away. Blessed be the name of the Lord. Just because you said that once, doesn't mean you'll say it again.

We change. We're fickle. The Lord doesn't change.

Just because I trust God today, that doesn't mean I'm going to trust Him tomorrow. At any moment in my life, I can take my eyes off the Lord. And any moment in your life, you can too.

We've got to trust the present Savior, not a past experience. Psalm 39, 4, Lord, make me know my end. What is the extent of my days? Let me know how transient I am.

A fool trusts his own heart. Brothers, we can't trust ourselves for a lonely moment. All right, let me give you the final warning and sort of wrap it all up.

Brings us back to the theme of the book. Job is asking the question, why? And the final warning is this. These chapters warn me against the danger of supplementing God.

Saying that I need the Lord plus an explanation, plus the reason why. God is going to use this. This was a dark time in Job's life.

This was a terrible time. He was brought to such despair through these debates. But God is about to turn things.

And you know with Elihu coming on the scene and so on, God is going to change things. A person needs to come to the end, the futility of human reasoning, before he's going to see El Shaddai as enough. Enough by himself, without the hedge, without the reason why.

Just the Lord. God is taking Job there. And brothers, I pray He's taking us there.

Now I know that was heavy and I just pray God will be able to weed through that and give you some light. Let's pray. Father, thank you for these wonderful chapters.

Lord, there's so much in these chapters and yet so much on the level of earth, the low, low level of earth. We want to go upstairs. We want to go to the heavenlies.

We want to have our eyes open to who you are. Pray that you'd use this section to prepare our hearts for where you're taking Job and where you're taking us. We want to answer without hesitation, without clearing our throats.

God is enough, more than enough, when the hedge comes down. Show us yourself, we ask in Jesus name. Amen.

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