

AUGUST 22

The length today is a little long since we are still getting grounded in Job, and because 1 Corinthians 14 is a little complex. When you're finished with the notes on 1 Corinthians 14, you might need a friend to give you the Heimlich maneuver.

Job 4-7

Up until now it looks like Job has passed this terrible test and it's over. Not so. Although Satan is not mentioned again in the book, his influence against Job continues in the form of his friends misrepresenting God. Many things Job's friends say are good; but in terms of really understanding God or understanding Job's situation, they are completely off base. Because of their misapplication of the truth, God will tell them that they are wrong and that Job is right. They all get an education into the depth of God's wisdom. And we are led to understand that what is going on in reality is larger than just us and our peril here on this planet. The answer in all of this is to have absolute and fearless trust in God. He Himself, His love and wisdom, has to be enough.

Job 4

Vs. 1-6 We'll see this over and over. Job was known for his ability to help and to strengthen others. This guy is accusing Job of not being able to take his own advice and be calm while suffering. His friends, though acknowledging that Job strengthened others, do the opposite in their dealing with Job. Do you notice the subtle rebukes in Eliphaz's words to Job? Would you dare do this to someone who had suffered such losses?

Vs. 7-11 This statement is actually both their problem and Job's. All of them believed that disaster was punishment. They were all wrong. Job will contend that he didn't sin, and rightly so. His friends will contend that he did sin. Job will eventually slip, by saying that God was unfair. No one but Elihu, at the end, will suggest that God in His wisdom uses disaster for reasons other than punishment. God's wisdom is what none of them could grasp. So for us, it is good to keep in mind that bad things are not necessarily a sign of punishment in our lives or in the lives of others. That may be the first thing we feel, but the message of this book says something more.

Vs. 12-21 This is the "truth" that Satan shared with Eliphaz that now drives the thinking of Job's friends. What is sobering is that these friends received "spiritual" information that is empowering, driving them to ruin their friend. This doesn't happen in the church, does it? *And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil,* ²⁵ *correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth,* ²⁶ *and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.* (2 Timothy 2:24-26) Paul wrote this to Timothy in dealing with believers in the church in Ephesus.

V. 17 In my mind this is the key to understanding the attack on Job and the lie that Satan gave Job's friends. The answer is assumed to be "no." But that's not true, is it? Since the fall in the garden, God has known, but kept secret, the way the answer would be "yes" in Christ. Even in the OT, those who drew near to God in faith sensed and understood in the very character of God, that salvation and righteousness were possible. This didn't come through religion or just through the Scriptures, but by being close to God. They knew it by faith. It's like, you don't know how He will do it, but you know Him, His love and His wisdom, and that He will and can do it. When it all works out, we don't understand all the events or reasons, but knowing God has to be enough.

Vs. 17-21 All of these words are from Satan. Knowing what you know of the Lord and the Bible, how many half-truths can you find here? The attempt is to destroy all hope. Thankfully, the things he says are not the full truth, and our hope is in the Lord.

As disciples saved by grace, our following is not because of what we expect God to give us on this earth or any other ideas of justice or fairness. All that is gone. We live knowing our Father, serving His Son, following His Spirit, who indwells us. Regardless of what happens in life, knowing God in Christ is enough.

Job 5

Notice that all of what Eliphaz says is right and good, but it is terribly misapplied to Job. Much of what he says is consistent with God's words elsewhere. Tomorrow we'll read Psalm 38, and this sounds just like that psalm.

Vs. 1-7 Eliphaz really wanted Job to see the one-to-one correlation between what had happened to him and his sin.

Vs. 8-16 Notice in this section that the first verse says to seek God, and the rest of the verses tell you why to do that. It was all good advice, but applied to the wrong guy. He was insisting on Job's sin and understanding God's actions as very one-dimensional.

V. 13 This verse blows my mind, because Paul quotes the first part of this verse in 1 Corinthians 3, showing Paul's breadth of knowledge in the OT and showing that these guys were saying good stuff and eternal truth. This is like singing a happy song at an execution. It can be a great song, but it doesn't fit the situation.

Vs. 17-27 Verses 17-18 sound like something out of Hebrews. All of this is good stuff. (Keep in mind that although only one "friend" is speaking at a time, they are all in agreement, having probably discussed this matter and made their judgment on their way to visit and "comfort" Job.) But you see here the subtle charge Eliphaz and Co. are making against Job. They are saying Job's troubles are God's reproof because of sin. This isn't something Christians do to each other, is it? What if it is simply God's will to allow something to happen for His greater purpose in reality and for some fine tuning in our lives? Pruning, as in John 15, doesn't mean reproof because of sin. It means that the Father is helping us and furthering His own plans for us and others.

Job 6

Vs. 1-7 This is the bitter weight of his emotional and physical anguish.

Vs. 8-13 This is a good question. Of course we see what is happening behind the scenes spiritually and we know the end of the book. We could yell to Job, "Don't wish for death; it will all get better." But from Job's perspective there is this thing that has come upon him that has shaken some of his understanding of God.

V. 9 is asking why God doesn't just take him. At the end of the book, Job will understand God's wisdom in not allowing him to die. If God doesn't take life needlessly and lets life linger on purpose, we need to wait on Him and not "play" God on earth. All of the talk of "mercy killing" is misguided.

Vs. 14-23 This seems like a warning to his friends, that they will get in trouble for approaching Job like this. Job was right.

Vs. 24-30 It looks like Job is appealing to them to stop before they are guilty of injustice. They couldn't prove Job was guilty; they could only accuse him. In v. 30 Job says that he would know if he was guilty.

Job 7

Vs. 1-6 This gives you the idea that months have gone by and Job is tired of suffering.

Vs. 7-10 And, when Job finally dies there will be no memory of him. Verse 7 seems to be an appeal to his friends for mercy and consideration.

Vs. 11-21 These words seem to be directed toward the Lord. Because Job was lingering and anticipating death, he felt justified in questioning and venting against the Lord. He never cursed God, but he greatly misunderstood God's actions. Of course that is easy for me to say. I do the same thing when I'm in pain or when I face bad news.

Vs. 14-16 It seems like the effect of hearing about Eliphaz's vision was that it made Job's desire to die even more intense. Job had great temptation bearing on him to take his own life and not wait for God's vindication. That was Satan's work and Satan still does the same today.

Vs. 17-21 Job's understanding of God was that if we sin, He forgives. Of course Job was one of a kind and close to God. He understood God's grace and mercy. So then, this was strange to him that God would so demolish him and not forgive him. But Job knows he hasn't sinned. He doesn't have a category for understanding God or what is happening to him at this point in time.

It is interesting that Job wasn't allowed to die and that the impulse to desire death came through Satan. Our own troubles, the plight of the dying, and the lives of the mentally challenged fulfill God's purposes. We are not God. He can end things whenever He desires. Often He is working through these things to accomplish purposes on so many levels, in so many lives, that we cannot comprehend it. We are not God. The impulse to end these things is not from God, since God is the One who gives and takes away. If we really want to "play God," we need to show love and comfort until He takes life away. We know His wisdom, His goodness, His love, His character. That is enough. Our trust in waiting and living needs to be totally in Him. He needs to be enough.

1 Corinthians 14:18-40

In showing the abuse of the gift of tongues in Corinth, Paul has also been saying that the purpose of their gatherings should be to edify, strengthen and encourage one another. Paul has shown that tongues is impractical in terms of edification, unless others are there who understand what is being said. Now Paul and the Spirit will show that tongues had/has a very narrow purpose.

Vs. 18-19 These verses really conclude what Paul was saying yesterday. Notice the exaggeration in what he says. There is a hint of rebuke in these words. The Corinthians should have been more focused on building up others instead of showing their stuff. They were acting like they were lost on earth, living for themselves and not engaged in the harvest.

Vs. 20-21 Paul is quoting Isaiah 28:11-12, *For by people of strange lips and with a foreign tongue the Lord will speak to this people,* ¹²*to whom he has said, "This is rest; give rest to the weary; and this is repose"; yet they would not hear.*

In Isaiah, the people in view are Jews. The gift of tongues was a sign to the Jews that God was taking His offer of "rest" and redemption to others. They would know this because a foreign people would be declaring the praise of God to them, the Jews, the people of God. My opinion is that this was and is the only purpose of the gift of tongues. It was a sign to the Jews. This is how it was used in Acts, and I think the reason it was so prevalent (and misused) in Corinth is that the church was next to the synagogue and the church was very, very Jewish in membership. Think this through. In which other churches/letters do you find any teaching about tongues?

V. 22 This is Paul's conclusion and you have to follow his reasoning closely. Notice that Paul says "sign," not "gift."

A sign not for believers seems to mean that unbelievers are *shown* something by this sign. Believers do not have anything revealed to them, so it is not "for" them. In Acts, this "unbelief" took the form of not believing that the gospel was going beyond the Jews. In Acts 10-11, that "unbelief" was demonstrated by Jewish believers of the circumcision party who took Peter to task for visiting a Gentile. The gift of tongues was a sign to them of their unbelief, to show them God's working beyond them and to help them conquer their unbelief. It showed them something. You notice that the gift had a very specialized purpose, because even in talking about "unbelievers," it meant a very specific group of unbelievers and a specific kind of unbelief. The message of redemption was given, for a time, to the Gentiles. The Jews were now hearing the message of redemption that had been theirs to tell, through the stammering lips of Gentiles.

So then, what does it mean that prophecy is *for believers*, showing or revealing something to them?

Vs. 23-25 Hang on to your hats. This will be funny.

V. 23 I thought tongues were supposed to speak to unbelievers. But tongues only speak to a particular kind of unbelief and a particular kind of unbeliever, that is, "unbelievers" who do not believe that the gospel has gone beyond the Jews. Here, the unbelievers, who were probably Gentiles, have no concern about the gospel going out beyond the Jews and are only listening for the message. They say Christians are mad.

V. 25 But now doesn't it seem that the gift of prophecy "spoke" to the unbeliever? Here, an unbeliever falls on the ground, worshipping God (apparently coming to faith in Christ), yet notice that through the work of prophecy bringing life to this person, it **shows or reveals to the church and Christians that God is really among them**. The effect of prophecy in the church is that it leads the church to bear fruit and that is the sign to believers that Christ is among them. Notice the effects of this prophecy on the unbeliever: conviction, called to account, heart disclosed, falls on face (repentance), *worships God*. But the "sign" is for believers, showing them that they are on the right track, in the harvest, and that God is among them. All of that can happen through "prophetic" preaching.

Notice the word *really*. Can it be that we "think" we have God among us because of the emotion of worship music and because we hold a service, but that He's *really* not there? How do you understand what Paul is saying here? The effect of "prophecy" is changed lives and fruit in the harvest. This seems to be how you know *God is really among you*.

I know this is radical; and, admittedly, it is my take on things. Notice that the only place worship is mentioned in this service is from an unbeliever coming to faith in Christ in the service. Paul apparently thought that the service of the church should be understandable to a lost person. If you follow the definition of prophecy that Paul is using, it is one part revelation and three parts teaching, instruction, and encouragement. I think the last three parts are a part of a particular kind of teaching and preaching that the church still needs.

Vs. 26-33 Notice that there is a slight change here. Up until now, Paul has been teaching about the gifts and the purpose of the service. Now, Paul is directing, giving commands to the leaders on how to arrange the service. These letters were written first to elders, and then to the congregation. In a case like this where Paul is giving orders, we are now reading the part for elders who serve and direct the church. If you catch this change and understand the different tone here, it will make the next section about women more understandable.

V. 26 Notice the parts, and notice the purpose is still edification.

V. 31 This is a way to understand the purpose of prophecy and edification, *that all may learn and all be encouraged*.

V. 32 Following the Spirit is no excuse for disorder. I love this, *the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets*.

Vs. 34-36 Earlier Paul said women could pray or prophesy publicly, if they wore a head covering. So, what is this? Often, people who are ardent for women's rights either disregard these verses or claim Paul is quoting someone in the church. You've read enough of 1 Corinthians to know that when Paul quotes an opponent, it is very clear what he is quoting, and he gives a good, clear answer. As we've seen in chapter 11, the newfound freedom of the Jewish women was, in some cases, taken too far. In chapter 11 it was expressed in not showing submission to their husbands publicly; and here, I think, it is in publicly arguing with and not submitting to the elders of the church.

I believe the difference here is in v. 26. Paul is now speaking to the elders, giving them orders, and talking about leading the church as only the elders are to lead the church. In meetings where elder level decisions are being made and expressed, women were apparently arguing. Paul says if it was a congregational meeting and women were present during these discussions, they were to be silent and subordinate at this level of leadership,

I try to be as broad as I can be without violating what God says, but the last church meeting I was in showed the truth and wisdom behind what Paul is saying here as two vocal women made quite a show. One was a single woman who wasn't a member and whose spiritual maturity was very questionable. The other was an elder's wife who chided her husband (who was leading the meeting) in front of the group. Her contribution was the "cherry on the top" to an already tragic meeting.

I think both here and in 1 Timothy 2, the silence and submission of women is seen in the context of church leadership, specifically, leading the church as elders lead the church. Note that in 1 Timothy 2 after Paul talks about a woman's silence, he immediately talks about elder leadership. The context of the silence here in 1 Corinthians 14 is criticizing and not submitting to the elders' leadership in the church.

Vs. 37-38 Talk about Paul declaring his spiritual authority. This is a command of the Lord. That means it is binding on us too. And if they didn't agree with Paul and couldn't recognize the Lord in what he was saying, Paul said they were not recognized as leaders or as spiritual people. And of course, it wasn't Paul, it was and is the Spirit who is speaking. O Weh!

Vs. 39-40 Paul said not to forbid speaking in tongues, I think, because the gift still did have some validity in their situation next to the synagogue.

Sorry for the teaching here. You don't have to agree with me. If you are feeling choked by all of this, have someone stand behind you, with their arms around you and put their hands together into a big fist just below your sternum. Now have them hug you tight, jump up and pull the fist into your diaphragm when they hit the ground. Better?

Psalm 37:30-40

Vs. 30-31 Notice the connection between the *mouth* and the *heart*. What ultimately is determined are the actions or direction of that person. They are following the Lord.

Vs. 32-33 I think we can agree that this is true in an ultimate sense in reality, and in a general sense on earth. As we are seeing in Job, there are times that the Lord allows His own to suffer. There is love involved and there is the wisdom of God bringing forth His plan of redemption.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." ³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. (Romans 8:35-37)

V. 34 The first part of this verse is what I want to be content to do, without needing to see the second or third part of this verse in my lifetime.

Vs. 35-36 Understanding of course, that we might not see this in our lifetime.

Vs. 37-38 This is certainly true in the ultimate sense of the kingdom of God. Paul wrote the following verse knowing that his death and departure were near. *The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.* (2 Timothy 4:18)

Vs. 39-40 This is true of all who know and love the Lord, yet it may be true as we fulfill the Lord's mission for us in dying for His name in the face of mocking unbelief, just as our Lord died. Life doesn't end at death, and our vindication and salvation are ever present.

Reading Job and reading this psalm is interesting. I want to say I know all of this is true, but really I need to trust the Lord, not my expectation of what this justice will look like or when it will come. God and who He is has to be enough.

Proverbs 21:27

Amen.