

AUGUST 26

Job 20-22

As I read this again today, it reminded me how some of the stuff Job's friends say is really good. The last part of what Eliphaz says in chapter 22 reads like a psalm. But what are we learning here? Life on earth is not heaven on earth. The global, spiritual, and earthly drama is deadly. In the plan of redemption and purpose of God, He works in complete love and justice and wisdom. We don't see that, but that doesn't change Him. In His plan, He didn't even spare His Son. If it is His will for His purpose to lead us to be *killed all the day long* (Rom. 8:36), that should be OK; because it is offset by another reality. As Paul says in Romans 8:31-32, *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things?*

Job 20

Vs. 1-19 Zophar is determined that the wicked never win on earth. As he describes their demise and their crimes, he is probing to see if he can touch a nerve with Job. I'm sure he is trying to mention things that Job had done. Nice guy.

Vs. 20-29 Interestingly, this wicked man is rich, just like Job. What a coincidence. Not only that, God's judgment on this man is revealed in physical agony. Hmmm.

Because Job's friends are so black and white about God's justice, it will force Job to consider if God really does judge like that on earth. The answer will stretch all of them. The reason why God prospers the wicked and allows the suffering of the righteous on earth all has to do with the harvest. In heaven there is pure and simple justice.

Job 21

Vs. 1-7 This is Job being very dark in his words. Although justice will be executed by God, that doesn't mean it happens on the earth. Job is telling them to really look around instead of just spouting religious baloney.

V. 5 The key here is that Job is righteous, and look what happened to him. If the only things that matter in the world are blessing and justice, then they should *be appalled* at what happened to Job.

V. 7 What Job said here made me think of what Paul said in Romans 9:17, ***For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth."***

Job asked "Why?" In God's redemptive purpose He allows the ungodly to prosper for His reasons. Surely one of the reasons God allowed William Randolph Hearst to have the influence he had was to tell his reporters to "puff Graham" (give big exposure) during a crusade in 1949. The media exposure helped propel Billy and his crusades onto the front page and into the front rooms of America. That example is visible and obvious. There are millions of examples happening around us where God allows those who hate Him to prosper, but He is using them for His ultimate purpose. And in His wisdom and power, God is able to do this with perfect righteousness, justice and love, honoring our free will to whatever degree that free will exists.

Vs. 8-13 God allows them to have pleasure.

Vs. 14-16 God allows them to disrespect Him.

Vs. 17-26 God allows things to look unfair.

Vs. 27-34 Job says their words are empty and false, I think, because of the extreme exaggeration. They were exaggerating to try to show Job that he was a sinner. In v. 31 Job says that his friends

had the boldness to say this against him, but not the boldness to say this against those to whom it might really apply.

Job 22

This begins round 3.

Vs. 1-4 Here we go again. Eliphaz is sure that God only makes bad things happen if there is sin. Bad things happened; therefore, Job sinned.

Vs. 5-9 is Eliphaz just guessing as to what Job might have done. There is good truth in much of what he says, but he is completely wrong about Job. These blind accusations were criminal. And we know Job is innocent.

Vs. 10-11 Therefore, Eliphaz is saying, it has happened to you.

Vs. 12-20 Here, he is using some of Job's words against him. No one hides from God, and no one tells God to depart from them. The cruelty of these guys is beyond belief. Now, after thinking he has jolted Job by verbally beating him, it is time for some love.

Vs. 21-30 This would have given Job hope if this destruction in his life had been because of sin; but because there was no sin, these words would only hurt Job instead of heal him.

2 Corinthians 1:1-11

Paul was no stranger to suffering. In fact, when Jesus called Paul He said to Ananias in Acts 9:15-16, *But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name."* A lot of Paul's deep suffering came from believers, and particularly from this church.

Corinth was a trial for Paul. Not only did Paul speak strongly in 1 Corinthians, but he will speak strongly here too, though only at the end. In both letters he had to defend himself; in fact, some say that 2 Corinthians is nothing but Paul having to defend himself, not for his sake, but to correct and balance the church. No other church that we know of received this many letters. According to what we find in both letters, there were actually four letters written and two were lost. In 1 Corinthians 5 Paul mentions a letter he had written, and then came the writing of 1 Corinthians. Later Paul wrote a letter mentioned in 2 Corinthians 2:2-3 which was very strong, and got lost, and now he is writing 2 Corinthians. This was a high maintenance church. This is the only church where Jesus appeared to Paul to encourage him to persevere.

But, like Job, as a result of the problems and Paul's suffering, we get some amazing teaching and we see into the heart of this model disciple following Christ in the harvest, making disciples, who make disciples. Just like Job's confrontation with his friends, much of what Paul expresses here from his heart would never have been put on paper if he hadn't suffered emotionally because of these people. God had a purpose for Paul and for the Corinthians and for us in what happened here. Basically in chapters 1-9, Paul shares how God has soothed him and made sense of this in his heart. It is like Paul explaining how God has helped him. Chapters 10-13 are Paul taking up the challenge against him by the Jewish super-apostles who were ruining Corinth.

How do you start a letter of correction? Paul begins by focusing on how this entire trauma made sense to Paul. God was working in him, molding him through suffering and adversity to make him a minister for Christ and a blessing for others.

Vs. 1-2 Paul was an apostle *by the will of God*, not by the consensus of others. The calling and love of Christ wouldn't let him quit.

Vs. 3-7 Job couldn't yet see that his sufferings were going to be used by God to encourage many generations of men and women. Paul was experiencing this as it was happening, and unlike Job, was given spiritual insight into why God was allowing the suffering to happen. As disciples,

nothing happens to us that is random. The Father prunes us, not because of disobedience, but so we will be more fruitful. In Paul's case, the suffering was not just a part of following Christ, it was making him more skilled in following Christ and nurturing disciples. In fact, the suffering that Paul had endured had newly quieted his heart and was tempering the tone of this letter.

Vs. 8-11 This might have been the horrible night of shouting in Ephesus in Acts 19. The effect was that they thought they would die. In addition to this fun, Paul was deeply worried for the church in Corinth. Apparently he had made a quick unplanned visit to Corinth after sending 1 Corinthians, and that meeting must have been a fight and very upsetting. So he sent them a very strong letter via Titus (a letter written after 1 Corinthians, but was later lost), and then he was terribly worried about the response of the church. Oh, and did I mention he thought he was going to die?

Somehow we get the idea that if we are really, really, really mature in Christ we won't get stressed and we will never enter into conflict. I always think of Paul here, the guy who had been in the third heaven, getting rattled in the danger and heat of the moment, thinking he would surely die. But even in that emotion and fear, God used it to teach Paul what we're reading here, equipping us for the harvest. There was no way to burn this on Paul's heart except to take him through the furnace of adversity. Reading books and attending seminary classes only go so far. And we are no exception. The Father will prune us to be fruitful, and even more fruitful, for the harvest and making disciples.

Psalm 40:11-17

You feel David's desperation in this psalm. Reading this psalm along with Job and Paul gives you a sense of the weight of needing God and His help. You sense the hope and understanding of eventual victory, but David was straining under the present weight of danger. In this danger you see the weakness of the body of death in its despair, its fear, its loneliness, and its desire to run and seek immediate comfort and security. That is us too, even as disciples.

Vs. 11-12 We went from the victorious tone of the last verses to this desperate cry. David was fearful of the imminent danger, and he was struggling with a losing heart.

Vs. 13-15 David didn't just want deliverance and vindication; he wanted the Lord to take pleasure in saving those who wait on Him.

Vs. 16-17 David hoped that this deliverance would be a source of rejoicing and confidence for all who witnessed it, yet the work that God was doing in David's heart and life had brought him to the place of humility and need. The Father was pruning him.

Proverbs 22:2-4

We're OK up until v. 4. How do we understand this? I would understand this with Jesus' words about our treasure being in heaven and living here, serving in humility. Paul had riches, honor, and life in Christ, though as he told the Corinthians, *To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless...* Working in the harvest makes you rich in the closeness of Christ and the blessings of the gospel.