

● Sometimes I want to rest my eyes as I’m reading the Bible, but I still want to make progress. At those times, on my computer or my phone, I go to YouTube and search for Sir David Suchet. His clear, expressive British voice often helps me get a better understanding of a passage or book.

It takes him two hours to read through all 42 chapters of the *Book of Job*.

● Last week we managed to get through the first round of the debate between Job and his three friends. Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar each had their chance to lecture Job. They’d come to comfort him, but instead, they’d got him angry. Which in his despairing condition, was probably a good thing.

Today, we’ll try to get through the other two rounds in this contentious theological discussion between friends. At the end of the book, God Himself will declare the winner of this long debate.

● Let’s ask God to help us hear His truths in chapters 15 through 26.

Our Father God,

Your Psalms teach us that <sup>Ps 37:30</sup> **The mouth of the righteous man utters wisdom, and his tongue speaks what is just.** Help us hear and understand the wisdom You share with us through the words of righteous Job. For You’ve told us, <sup>Prov 8:11</sup> **wisdom is more precious than rubies, and nothing we desire can compare with her.** — Amen

Let’s listen in as Eliphaz confronts Job for a second time. In round one, Eliphaz started his discussion with Job with kind and complimentary words, lauding Job for his good works. But here in his second address, he begins with a darker tone.

**<sup>5</sup> "For your guilt teaches your mouth,  
And you choose the language of the crafty.  
<sup>6</sup> "Your own mouth condemns you, and not I;  
And your own lips testify against you.**

Eliphaz makes the assumption that because Job’s friends are older than he is — they are therefore wiser. <sup>10</sup> **"Both the gray-haired and the aged are among us, Older than your father.**

● Eliphaz just can’t accept that Job is righteous in God’s eyes. In his view, nobody is as upright before God as Job claims for himself.

**<sup>14</sup> "What is man, that he should be pure,  
Or he who is born of a woman, that he  
should be righteous?**

**<sup>15</sup> "Behold, He puts no trust in His holy  
ones,  
And the heavens are not pure in His sight;  
<sup>16</sup> How much less one who is detestable  
and corrupt,  
Man, who drinks iniquity like water!**

He’s right when he doubts Job’s righteousness — men and women — try as they might, fail to love, honor, and obey their Maker on a daily — even a moment-by-moment basis. But there is a righteousness from above — one imputed or granted on the basis of genuine faith.

Indeed, Job has admitted he’s not sinless — but his righteous state is one that God had repeatedly declared in the presence of the angels.

In the rest of chapter 15, Eliphaz describes the life of the man who rebels against God. It's over-the-top but there's a measure of truth here.

●  
20 **"The wicked man writhes in pain all his days,  
And numbered are the years stored up for the ruthless.**

21 **"Sounds of terror are in his ears;  
While at peace the destroyer comes upon him.**

22 **"He does not believe that he will return from darkness,  
And he is destined for the sword.**

23 **"He wanders about for food, saying,  
"Where is it?"  
He knows that a day of darkness is at hand.**

Back in eastern Arabia before the time of the Patriarchs — this description of life Eliphaz shares here is likely accurate.

The words of Thomas Hobbes in the 1600's would hold true.

*No arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.*

Most people choose to disbelieve the history recorded in the Bible. For a myriad of reasons, they shut God out of their lives. And while their day-to-day existence (at least in First World countries) may not seem as miserable as that painted here by Eliphaz, there remains a real fear of death that haunts them when they face its inevitability.

●  
Job's reply to Eliphaz includes the seemingly obligatory criticism of his advice. **2 "I have heard many such things; Sorry comforters are you all. 3 "Is there no limit to windy words?** But nearly all of chapter 16 has Job bemoaning his dire circumstances.

12 **"I was at ease, but He shattered me,  
And He has grasped me by the neck and shaken me to pieces;  
He has also set me up as His target.**

The "He" in Job's lament is God Himself. But still, Job is not about to curse Him. In fact, chapter 16 ends with an amazing affirmation.

●  
19 **"Even now, behold, my witness is in heaven,**

**And my advocate is on high.**

20 **"My friends are my scoffers;  
My eye weeps to God.**

21 **"O that a man might plead with God  
As a man with his neighbor!**

22 **"For when a few years are past,  
I shall go the way of no return.**

Job does not have a grasp of God as a Trinity — but it's the triune God who is his advocate. I also see a change in Job's expectations. Rather than a quick death — he's expecting a few more years this side of the grave.

In chapter 17, Job says he has become a byword. And in this he's prophetic. Thousands of years later, we speak of the trials of Job and the patience of Job.

And in a way, the story of Job offers a foretaste of our Suffering Savior.

●  
6 **"But He has made me a byword of the people,**

**And I am one at whom men spit.**

7 **"My eye has also grown dim  
because of grief,**

**And all my members are as a shadow.**

●  
Job finds his life in shambles. All he has to look forward to is his new home in Sheol.

**11 "My days are past, my plans are torn apart, Even the wishes of my heart.**

...

**13 "If I look for Sheol as my home, I make my bed in the darkness;**

But despite his self-pity — Job is not ready to throw in the towel in his verbal sparring with his three friends. Of them he says,

**10 "But come again all of you now, For I do not find a wise man among you.**



Originally, the plan of the three visitors was to comfort their friend. But in chapter 18, Bildad follows up on this idea that Job expects to make his home in Sheol. He devotes his entire speech to describing the fate of the person who does not know God. And it's implied that he lumps Job in with that group.

**16 "His roots are dried below, And his branch is cut off above.**

**17 "Memory of him perishes from the earth,**

**And he has no name abroad.**

**18 "He is driven from light into darkness, And chased from the inhabited world.**

**19 "He has no offspring or posterity among his people,**

**Nor any survivor where he sojourned.**

**17 "Memory of him perishes from the earth,**

**And he has no name abroad.**

**Oh, really?**

Consider which name and whose story is better known in cultures all over the world perhaps 4,000 years after these events — Bildad or Job? Sorry Bildad, the fate of the godless man is indeed tragic — but Job is not one of them.



In Job's reply to Bildad he says, "ten times you have insulted me;" but nevertheless, <sup>6</sup> **Know then that God has wronged me And has closed His net around me.**

That God is against him — Job has no doubt. Again, he is blind to the fact that he is playing the part of a chess piece for a contest being waged in Heaven.

But Job also sees that everyone else who knows him has turned their backs on him.

**16 "I call to my servant, but he does not answer;**

**I have to implore him with my mouth.**

**17 "My breath is offensive to my wife,**

**And I am loathsome to my own brothers.**

**18 "Even young children despise me;**

**I rise up and they speak against me.**

**19 "All my associates abhor me,**

**And those I love have turned against me.**

There's an old Blues standard written in 1923, *Nobody Knows You When You're Down And Out*, covered by Bessie Smith in 1929 and Eric Clapton in the 1970s and later. Job has experienced the reality of that song.

♪ ♪ Cause no, no, nobody knows you when you're down and out.

In your pocket, not one penny, and as for friends, you don't have any.

Two weeks ago, I made the observation that what Shakespeare is to the English language, the *Book of Job* is to the Hebrew language. But it's also true that many hundreds of ideas and phrases from the Bible have found their way into many languages. Here's one example — from chapter 19 verse 20.

**20 "My bone clings to my skin and my flesh,**

**And I have escaped only**

**by the skin of my teeth.**

But just when things seem the darkest for Job — when he claims all the world and God Himself are against him — suddenly he launches into one of the most magnificent statements of faith that can be found in the Old Testament.

●  
23 **"Oh that my words were written!  
Oh that they were inscribed in a book!  
24 "That with an iron stylus and lead  
They were engraved in the rock forever!  
25 "As for me, I know that my Redeemer  
lives,  
And at the last He will take His stand on  
the earth.  
26 "Even after my skin is destroyed,  
Yet from my flesh I shall see God;  
27 Whom I myself shall behold,  
And whom my eyes will see and not  
another.  
My heart faints within me!**

Well, first of all Job, your words are inscribed in the best-selling book of all time. By the early 1800s nearly one billion copies had been printed and today that number is nearing seven billion. The Quran has less than half that, and Chairman Mao's Little Red Book hasn't yet sold one billion copies.

By the way — I was especially happy to see that the Boy Scout Handbook has just barely outsold the Book of Mormon.

Beyond this, Job makes two amazing exclamations that could easily be mistaken for passages from the New Testament.

25 **"As for me, I know that my Redeemer  
lives,  
And at the last He will take His stand on  
the earth.**

Job has faith in a personal Redeemer — One who will walk the earth at some far distant

time. The Hebrew word is basically "a next of kin." He will be the one Moses and the Prophets will repeatedly point forward to — and of which the Apostles will offer their powerful eyewitnesses testimony.

And that Redeemer is no ordinary man. Centuries in the future He would make his appearance here on Earth — but Job speaks of Him in the present tense — **my Redeemer lives** — Job believes Him to be alive in his own day.

Job's second revelation followed the first — another truth that could only have come to him with the aid of the Holy Spirit —

26 **"Even after my skin is destroyed,  
Yet from my flesh I shall see God;**

Even after this body of flesh, this temporary tent in which Job lived had long since returned to dust — in a new body, Job will behold God.

The *Book of Job* was one of the earliest and most trusted books in the Jewish cannon. Other books were questioned, but not Job. The Sadducees only discounted this remarkable statement of faith by Job prophesying the resurrection of the dead — because they only accepted the Torah — the five books penned by Moses.

●  
We'll hear from Eliphaz and Bildad one more time —

but chapter 20 records the last words from Zophar the Nā'•ā•mā•thite. Zophar had a single parting message for Job. And we can sum it up with the common saying, "Crime doesn't pay."

●  
Although he doesn't say it in so many words, Zophar implies that Job must be counted among the corrupt and criminal men of which he speaks.

**4 "Do you know this from of old,  
From the establishment of man on earth,  
5 That the triumphing of the wicked is  
short,  
And the joy of the godless momentary?"**

It makes me think that Zophar has pictured God in his own image — impatient, judgmental, and harsh.

I've sub-titled this series on the *Book of Job* — A "Good" Man Suffers — with the word 'good' in quotes. As Jesus reminded a certain ruler <sup>Luke 18:18</sup> **"No one is good-except God alone."** But by human standards, Job's righteousness was legendary. When Job's friends first came to comfort him — they all would have agreed on what an upstanding, generous, wise, and noble person Job was. But because of their faulty understanding of God — one that excluded God's grace and mercy — they had reversed their opinion of Job.

●  
**27 "The heavens will reveal his iniquity,  
And the earth will rise up against him.  
28 "The increase of his house will depart;  
His possessions will flow away in the day  
of His (that is God's) anger.  
29 "This is the wicked man's portion from  
God,  
Even the heritage decreed to him by God."**

Even Jesus' own disciples carried the germ of Zophar's bad theology — which Jesus had to correct.

We read in John 9 —

**1 As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. 2 His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"  
3 "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.**

Such was the case with righteous Job. His human failings — his sins — were not the cause of his dire condition, but rather, it was as Jesus said — **so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.**

Zophar, in his parting shot at Job, falsely claimed that the justice of God always catches up with the wicked in this life. If that were the case, we wouldn't need faith — we'd all see God's wrath toward evil doers and His blessing toward faithful and obedient believers. The catch is that we are all unfaithful and disobedient more often than we care to confess. Zophar's limited understanding of God is only matched by his not understanding the fallen state of mankind.

If it were all smooth sailing in this life for faithful saints, why would James have to write, <sup>James 1:2-3</sup> **2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.**

●  
In chapter 21, Job can see what Zophar and his friends choose not to see, that you can't always discern God's hand of blessing or cursing in this life.

**23 "One dies in his full strength,  
Being wholly at ease and satisfied;  
24 His sides are filled out with fat,  
And the marrow of his bones is moist,  
25 While another dies with a bitter soul,  
Never even tasting anything good.  
26 "Together they lie down in the dust,  
And worms cover them.**

More often than not (at least for those of us who are well off in this life), the broad road that leads to eternal separation from God is a smooth and a relatively easy decent into an eternity <sup>Matt 8:12b</sup> **"...where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."**

Jesus said, <sup>Matt 7:13-14</sup> <sup>13</sup> **"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. <sup>14</sup> But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.**

But the debate went on. Zophar has rested his case, but Eliphaz and Bildad both want to go one more round with Job.

● Eliphaz, who began this long debate by praising Job's honorable life, has now sided with the others and is sure Job's awful state is the result of reprehensible deeds on his part — behavior for which he is now suffering God's just wrath.

**4 "Is it because of your reverence that He reproves you, That He enters into judgment against you?**

Eliphaz responds with sarcasm. — No, this makes no sense to Eliphaz. God blesses the upright and curses the evil doer — it's like God's blessing and cursing runs on automatic.

But, again, Eliphaz is as blind as Job is to the whole reason for Job's suffering — it has everything to do with Job's praise-worthy righteousness — and God's confidence in Job that his faith will not falter.

And so far, it's God 1 Satan 0. Because back in chapter 13 Job exclaimed, <sup>15</sup> **"Though He slay me, I will hope in Him.**

But Eliphaz is a slave to his theology. Job must be a great offender to have earned the full force of God's punishment. Eliphaz goes on to speculate about Job's moral crimes. His imaginings amount to vicious slander.



**5 "Is not your wickedness great, And your iniquities without end?**

**6 "For you have taken pledges of your brothers without cause, And stripped men naked.**

**7 "To the weary you have given no water to drink,**

**And from the hungry you have withheld bread.**

**8 "But the earth belongs to the mighty man,**

**And the honorable man dwells in it.**

**9 "You have sent widows away empty, And the strength of the orphans has been crushed.**

How contrary to reality are these claims by Eliphaz. Job did none of the evil things Eliphaz listed. And as for the earth belonging to the mighty man — Jesus corrected Eliphaz when he said in His Sermon on the Mount <sup>Matt 5:5</sup> **Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.**

But Jesus wasn't saying something new. Read Psalm 37 as your homework. In the end, the earth will belong not to the mighty but to the meek.

Psalm 37:11 says, <sup>11</sup> **But the meek will inherit the land and enjoy great peace.**

● I'm reminded again of Jimmy Stewart's role as George Bailey in *It's a Wonderful Life*. He was the most righteous man in Bedford Falls. Yet tragedy struck that drove him to despair.

George Bailey was always putting the needs of others ahead of his own. The banker, Mr. Potter, must have sounded to George Bailey like Eliphaz' parting words sounded to Job.

**23 "If you return to the Almighty, you will be restored;  
If you remove unrighteousness far from your tent,**

Job did not deserve his fallen circumstances, nor could he explain them. But they certainly were not the result of the reprehensible deeds Eliphaz slandered him with. He knew of nothing for which he needed to repent.

Rather than repent — Job wanted to take his case to God. The sudden loss of his wealth, his children, and his health had God's fingerprints all over them. If there was a way to take God to court, Job thought that would be the only way he could find relief.

**3 "Oh that I knew where I might find Him,  
That I might come to His seat!**

**4 "I would present my case before Him  
And fill my mouth with arguments.**

Job says he has no way of finding God, but God surely knows exactly where He can find Job. And if Job could only get a hearing before God, his plea to any charges against him would be, "innocent."

**10 "But He knows the way I take;  
When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.**

**11 "My foot has held fast to His path;  
I have kept His way and not turned aside.**

**12 "I have not departed from the command of His lips;  
I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.**

Job admits that the actual possibility of facing his Creator terrifies him, but nevertheless, he can't keep silent. He ends chapter 23 by saying, **17 But I am not silenced by the darkness,  
Nor deep gloom which covers me.**

For the first half of chapter 24, Job describes many of the evils of his day. For example . . .

**2 "Some remove the landmarks;  
They seize and devour flocks.**

**3 "They drive away the donkeys of the orphans;**

**They take the widow's ox for a pledge.**

**4 "They push the needy aside from the road;**

**The poor of the land are made to hide themselves altogether.**

But despite all the bad things that happen, Job says God does not seem to take notice.

**12 "From the city men groan,  
And the souls of the wounded cry out;  
Yet God does not pay attention to folly.**

Consider this — if someone were to live to be 100 years old, that is still an infinitely small space of time compared to eternity. That God disciplines us in this life for our own good is well documented in the Psalms (Ps 89:30-34) (2 Sam 7:14) (Heb 12:5-8), Proverbs, and elsewhere. But if judgement waits until people have passed into eternity in their existence to come, that only magnifies God's longsuffering and patience. We depend on the fact that He is the "compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness," as it says in Exodus, Numbers, Nehemiah, the Psalms, and the minor Prophets.

Peter explains it this way in 2 Peter 3:9: **He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.**

Chapter 25 brings us back to Bildad for a final parting shot at Job.

Some scholars believe that some part of this speech was lost. But even though it's just six verses long — it conveys a complete idea. Compared to the perfection and might of God, how can any human expect to be blameless in His sight?

**Then Bildad the Shuhite answered,  
2 "Dominion and awe belong to Him  
Who establishes peace in His heights.  
3 "Is there any number to His troops?  
And upon whom does His light not rise?  
4 "How then can a man be just with God?  
Or how can he be clean who is born of  
woman?  
5 "If even the moon has no brightness  
And the stars are not pure in His sight,  
6 How much less man, that maggot,  
And the son of man, that worm!"**

The truth is, Bildad is absolutely right, at least this time.

Isaiah says, <sup>Isa 64:6</sup> **6 All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags;**

Jeremiah, speaking for God says, <sup>Jer 17:9</sup> **9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?**

And Paul cribbed from the Psalms in Roman 3, writing <sup>Rom 3:10-11</sup> **"There is no one righteous, not even one; 11 there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God — and he concludes — <sup>Rom 3:23</sup> "...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,"**

So, if human righteousness is a fallacy — an impossibility — how can Job go on asserting his innocence?

Job will give his answer to that in chapter 27, but he first prefaces his defense with words of praise for God's greatness.

● I want to focus on just two of Job's examples of God's perfection.

**7 "He stretches out the north over empty space  
And hangs the earth on nothing.**

Atheists have long claimed that the Bible is not a book of science. Yes — it's first and foremost a book of history — but occasionally it makes scientific statements that are just shocking in their brilliance. Assuming this line was probably first recorded nearly 4,000 years ago — this is an incredible statement.

It wasn't until the 1940s that we had proof that space was a vacuum. But scientists in the 1700s were already quite sure it was. And here is Job crediting the Creator with hanging the earth on nothing. Incredible. Further in chapter 26, Job says it's God who quiets the sea with His power. So, we should not be surprised when Jesus does the same.

And back in chapter 9, we read this other bread crumb dropped by Job: **... and [God] treads on the waves of the sea.** Job alludes to things that only God can do that long after Job's time Jesus would do.

These are just two of the many hundreds of signs pointing forward in the Old Testament to the Messiah Himself. Is this surprising? We should expect Jesus to do what it says only God can do — forgiving sins and raising the dead being just the most famous of Jesus' divine abilities.



Jesus tried to explain his identity to the Jews in the Temple area, recorded in John 10:36-38.

**Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, 'I am God's Son'? <sup>37</sup> Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does. <sup>38</sup> But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father."**



Job returned from describing God's magnificence in chapter 26 to the defense of his own righteousness in chapter 27.

**<sup>5</sup> "Far be it from me that I should declare you right;  
Till I die I will not put away my integrity from me.**

**<sup>6</sup> "I hold fast my righteousness and will not let it go.  
My heart does not reproach any of my days.**

I'm going to leave Job's defense, made to his three friends here in chapter 27, until next week. Job has five more chapters where he recounts his plight — and among them throws in a chapter on wisdom while he's at it. Remember, the *Book of Job* is the first one in what's called the Wisdom books of the Old Testament.

Then we'll hear from a mysterious young man who's been waiting ever so patiently yet anxiously to give his input to this whole debate. He's listened to his elders all this time — but young Elihu (one of my own all-time favorite persons in the Bible) will have his say for six chapters. Then in two weeks — we'll hear from God Himself and wrap up the book of Job with the epilogue which reads like a Paul Harvey news account — we'll hear — 'the rest of the story.'

Let me close with a prayer I need to hear — after considering the righteousness of Job — righteousness that puts me to shame. This was written by Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury in the early 11<sup>th</sup> century.



O Lord our God,  
grant us grace to desire you  
with our whole heart,  
that so desiring we may seek and find you;  
and so finding you we may love you;  
and loving you we may hate those sins  
from which you have redeemed us;  
for the sake of Jesus Christ.

Amen.

St. Anselm of Canterbury