

**Considering Job
(Week 7)
Job 19:28-24
“Whoever said that Life was Fair?”**

Introduction

“Disaster pursues sinners, but good rewards the righteous.”

Proverbs 13:21

As far back as I can remember, I have been a fan of sports. I suppose, I just like the whole concept of struggling to overcome obstacles and coming out victorious. One thing that I have learned as a sports fan, it doesn't matter if your team is ahead at half-time. The only time that the score actually matters is when the final buzzer sounds at the end of the game. Life is a lot like that. We often look at the world around us, and it seems that the other side is way ahead, but just be patient. Keep the faith. “Team Righteous” has been predestined to emerge victorious in the end!

I think that it must be imprinted upon our DNA, that mankind has a desire to overcome. After all, life isn't easy, and I do not believe that it was ever designed to be. Even before the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, Adam had to work for a living. Yes, it became much more difficult after the curse, but still, I do not believe that God destined us to always have it easy. Some may disagree, but I think there would have always been obstacles to living, even if mankind had never sinned. But regardless of whether or not that is the case, we can all most certainly agree that circumstances being as they are... life is hard. And it is a requirement as such that we learn to adapt and overcome.

Job's three friends had an extremely naive conception of life's struggles. Any person of faith knows that in the end God will indeed reward the righteous and punish the sinners. But Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar actually were convinced that God handed out judgments and rewards almost instantaneously. When in fact, sometimes, judgment for sin is a long time in coming. Can I get a witness?

I read a story about a farmer who didn't believe in God. In fact, he despised the notion that he was dependent upon God to make his living. His disdain for reliance upon anyone but himself made him so belligerent that he would plow his fields on Sunday, so that the noise of his tractor would disrupt the church services of his farming neighbors as they tried to gather for worship.

At the end of a particularly successful harvest, the farmer wrote a letter to the local newspaper to argue his case that there was no God. He pointed out that he purposefully worked his farm every Sunday, while the other farmers wasted their time in church, just so he could prove that he could be just as successful as they were. The other farmers in his community thought that it was God Who had blessed their harvest, but they were just deluding themselves, he declared. After all, his October harvest had been just as good as any of those men of faith, and in fact, better than some. To his way of thinking, this proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that God had nothing to do with any of it. His October harvest was proof that he could prosper without God. The editor of the paper responded to his letter with this simple statement, “Just remember, God does not settle all His accounts in October.”

You see, just because life may seem unfair, we must never forget, that the final trumpet has not yet sounded. At times, it truly does feel like the wrong side is winning, but just wait upon The LORD and be patient. Life isn't always fair, but then, this life isn't all that there is. Job's three friends viciously attacked him, saying that the only reasonable explanation for his suffering was because of his sin. They mistakenly believed that only sinners have hard times, while the righteous continuously prosper. This helped them to rationalize it all. For, if this were not true, then they too might be called upon someday to suffer as well. Job warned them that because of their unjust accusations, one day they might indeed find themselves being judged as harshly as they had judged him.

**“If you say, ‘How will we pursue him, since the root of the problem lies with him?’
Then be afraid of the sword, because wrath brings punishment by the sword, so that
you may know there is a judgment.”**

Job 19:28-29

You see, those who would presume to make judgments about others, actually open themselves up to being judged :

**“For you will be judged by the same standard with which you judge others, and you
will be measured by the same measure you use.”**

Matthew 7:2

Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar thought that they had God all figured out. They had their theology of suffering tied up neatly in a box. “The righteous **always** prosper, while the wicked **always** suffer.” Sounds simple enough doesn’t it? But it was really just a question of timing. While it is true that the righteous will **ultimately** be blessed, and the wicked will **ultimately** perish. We will all have to wait until the end to see this reality. This is an immutable truth that Job would attempt to point out to his friends, but they simply weren’t ready to accept it. The fact remains, however, that this life often does seem to be unfair. There are three absolute realities of our pilgrimage here on earth that we must become aware of, lest we lose heart. **1.** Sinners do often prosper. **2.** Good people do often suffer. **3.** But the saints of God will indeed persevere, and all will be made right in the end.

The Prosperity of Sinners

Job’s friends were incensed at the very idea that they could be judged by God for falsely accusing Job of sin (**20:2-3**). So, rather than admitting that they didn’t have all the answers, when it came to the The Sovereign LORD and His ways, they doubled down. Zophar in particular became increasingly belligerent in his treatment of Job. He unequivocally asserts that the wicked never prosper in this life, and therefore, Job is in fact wicked and his sufferings stand as proof of this fact.

“Don’t you know that ever since antiquity, from the time a human was placed on earth, the joy of the wicked has been brief and the happiness of the godless lasted only a moment? Though his arrogance reaches heaven, and his head touches the clouds, he will vanish forever like his own dung. Those who know him will ask, ‘Where is he?’ He will fly away like a dream and never be found; he will be chased away like a vision in the night. The eye that saw him will be no more, and his household will no longer see him. His children will beg from the poor, for his own hands must give back his wealth. His frame may be full of youthful vigor, but it will lie down with the dust.”

Job 20:4-11

This will ultimately be true, but Zophar makes it sound like the judgment of God comes instantly upon the wicked. Any of us who have actually been around to observe the goings on of this world should be able to attest to the fact that sometimes sinners do quite often go on seemingly unimpeded for a long, long time. Can I get a witness? Zophar was either being disingenuous, or incredibly naive, to try and convince Job that sinners derive no pleasure from their sin.

“Though evil tastes sweet in his mouth, and he conceals it under his tongue, though he cherishes it and will not let it go but keeps it in his mouth, yet the food in his stomach turns into cobra’s venom inside him. He swallows wealth but must vomit it up; God will force it from his stomach.”

Job 20:12-15

Nice try Zophar, but there are many wicked, wealthy people who live out their entire lives without going bankrupt. Not everyone is punished on this side of death. God dispenses judgment on His timetable. It would be presumptuous for anyone to make such a blanket statement by saying that God always keeps the wicked from enjoying the fruits of their labor. It simply is not so. It is as if Zophar is saying to us all, “Who are you going to believe, me or your own eyes?” Fortunately for us, Job doesn’t let him get away with making such foolish observation.

“Why do the wicked continue to live, growing old and becoming powerful? Their children are established while they are still alive, and their descendants before their eyes. Their homes are secure and free of fear; no rod from God strikes them. Their bulls breed without fail; their cows calve and do not miscarry. They let their little ones run around like lambs; their children skip about, singing to the tambourine and lyre and rejoicing at the sound of the flute. They spend their days in prosperity and go down to Sheol in peace. Yet they say to God, ‘Leave us alone! We don’t want to know Your ways. Who is The Almighty that should serve Him, and what will we gain by pleading with Him?’”

Job 21:7-15

We must admit, it’s pretty hard to argue with Job’s reasoning. After all, we have **all** seen this. Year after year, decade after decade, century after century, the wicked seem to prosper, bearing little or no consequences for their godlessness. I cannot help but think of a very famous late night talk show host

who has repeatedly mocked God, and the people of faith for as long as I can remember. Yet, his show goes on, and he seems to be doing quite well. He has an incredibly large following and is often quoted in the daily news. As far as I can see, he has suffered no ill effects from his continuous blasphemies... yet. But sadly for him, it's not over... yet. Would to God that he would repent while he still has time.

I love what Job says to Zophar after he tells him that he has often seen the wicked continue to prosper for a lifetime:

"For you say, 'Where now is the nobleman's house?' And 'Where are the tents the wicked lived in?' Have you never consulted those who travel the roads?"

Job 21:28-29

In essence, Job is saying to Zophar, "Do you really believe that wicked people are always quickly destroyed? Dude, you need to get out more often!" All of us know full well that there are plenty of very wicked people in this world, who are doing quite well indeed. As a matter of fact, I would be willing to wager that the biggest majority of them are currently residing in the United States. But keep your heart set on this one thing; This life is not all that there is. The wicked who reject the gospel of Christ will ultimately stand before The Great White Throne of Judgment and be soundly condemned (**Revelation 20:11-15**). The judgment there will be final, and there shall be no appeal. The wicked may indeed prosper on this earth, but they shall not prosper for one moment when this life is over. This life may at times not seem fair, but make no mistake, the afterlife most definitely will be.

The Perpetuation of Suffering

After the "silencing of Zophar", Eliphaz makes a final attempt to suggest that Job should count himself among the wicked.

"Does He (God) correct you and take you to court because of your piety? Isn't your wickedness abundant and aren't your iniquities endless? For you took collateral from your brothers without cause, stripping off their clothes and leaving them naked. You gave no water to the thirsty and withheld food from the famished, while the land belonged to a powerful man and an influential man lived on it. You sent widows away empty handed, and the strength of the fatherless was crushed. Therefore snares surround you, and sudden dread terrifies you, or darkness, so you cannot see, and a flood of water covers you."

Job 22:5-11

Wow. Now Eliphaz is just making stuff up. It is like he is throwing accusations against the wall just to see if something sticks. In those days, hospitality was considered the ultimate duty of those who had wealth. If Job had been cruel in his dealings or unwilling to share what he had with those in need, then God would never have declared him to be righteous. Job had been a generous man, who had been well respected before all this tragedy had struck. Eliphaz had absolutely no idea what he was talking about.

After accusing Job violently, he then calls on Job to cry out to God and be forgiven (**vs. 21-30**). What a hypocritical thing to do. First to accuse someone of crimes against humanity with no proof whatsoever, and then invoking the Name of The LORD as a remedy for the imagined offenses. Eliphaz was a real piece of work indeed.

Job's response to Eliphaz is two fold. First he declares that he has indeed been calling out to God, but He cannot be found.

"If only I knew how to find Him, so that I could go before His throne. I would plead my case before Him and fill my mouth with arguments. I would learn how He would answer me; and understand what He would say to me."

Job 23:3-5

By this time, the poor man is really struggling in his faith. He sees what he perceives as inequities all around him, and yet, God is seemingly silent. He longs for God to reveal Himself. In his despair, Job exclaims that he cannot find God anywhere, when the truth of the matter is that God is everywhere! I heard a story about a young man, who went to college and was mocked by his professor for being a Believer. The professor asked him if he truly believed in God. To which the young man responded, "Absolutely." The professor responded by saying, "Then show me where He is." The young man said, "Why don't you show me where He isn't?"

Job's despair had caused him to doubt that God was indeed with him. He thought that God was not to be found, but as we can plainly discern by reading this book, God was there to take down every word that was said.

When we feel abandoned and are convinced that God is far from us, we would do well to remember that He has revealed Himself to us continuously in three ways. First, we have God's Word in which He has revealed Himself to us. Second, we have the person of Jesus Christ, Who has revealed God to us in human flesh.

"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." John 1:14

And thirdly, The Holy Spirit indwells every believer to remind them of the very presence of God (**John 16:13-15**).

In his despair, Job had lost sight of God's continual presence. When he looked around, he saw not only his own suffering, but the suffering of others as well. Those that Eliphaz had mentioned; the poor, the widows, and the disenfranchised. Job had witnessed firsthand their sufferings. This also led him to believe that God was being unfair. For just as the wicked were seen prospering, the innocent were often left in constant struggle.

"Why does the Almighty not reserve times for judgment? Why do those who know Him never see His days? The wicked displace boundary markers. They steal a flock and provide pasture for it. They drive away donkeys owned by the fatherless and take the widow's ox as collateral. They push the needy off the road; the poor of the land are forced into hiding. Like wild donkeys in the wilderness, the poor go out to their task of foraging for food; the desert provides nourishment for their children. They gather their fodder in the field and glean the vineyards of the wicked. Without clothing, they spend the night naked, having no covering against the cold."

Job 24:1-7

Job describes the plight of the poor and downtrodden in heartbreaking detail. It is absolutely true that the righteous do indeed suffer in this life, while the guilty amass their fortunes by taking advantage of them. It is a fact of life. Job even goes so far as to accuse God of not noticing (**vs. 12**). But rest assured, He most certainly does. Life on earth does at times seem to be extremely unfair, but God is a great record-keeper. This life is not all that there is. And God Himself will indeed set things right in due time. In this, we must never lose faith.

The Perseverance of The Saints

One of my favorite things to say, when I need a bit of encouragement is simply this, "I have read to the back of the book... and we win!" *The Bible* is filled with verses that command us to endure to the end, such as:

"Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved."

Matthew 24:13 (NIV)

When we read verses like these out of context, it almost seems that our salvation is dependent upon our own ability to endure. But nothing could be further from the truth! We do not hold on to Christ, but it is He that keeps us. When you surrendered your life to Jesus, He made a commitment to hold you fast, and He isn't about to let you go before the end. So, your endurance does not depend upon your strength, but rather upon His. In short, you don't keep Him, it is He that keeps **you**! Job was able to withstand all that he suffered, for through it all, The LORD never left his side. Job in his despair had temporarily lost sight of God, but God had never for a second lost sight of Job. When we face difficult times, we must rely on the fact that even when our faith is weak, if we truly belong to Christ, then we have nothing to fear. The saints of God shall overcome (**Daniel 7:18**).

Throughout *The New Testament*, epistle after epistle is addressed to "the saints" of God. Do you realize this morning that if you belong to Christ then you are a saint? Well... you are according to the Scriptures! And the saints of God will overcome. When everything around you falls apart, reassure yourself with this truth, we will overcome, because our LORD has overcome. He will see to it that the work that He began in us will be completed (**Philippians 1:6**). Yes, life is hard... But God is good. Do you belong to Christ? Has there been a time when you confessed your sins and surrendered your life to Him? Then rest assured, that in the end: **Disaster pursues sinners, but good rewards the righteous.**

And ALL of God's people said... **TRUTH!!!**