

# THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

## JOB 18-24

A woman had gone to a new dentist and was waiting for her appointment.

She noticed the dentist's diploma on the wall, and read his full name. It caused her to remember a tall, handsome, dark-haired boy from High School – an *old flame* by the *same name*. Could her dentist be the boy she had a crush on?

When the dentist walked into the examination room she quickly dismissed the thought. He was a balding, gray-haired man with deep lines etched in his face.

She thought, **“He’s much too old to be my age.”**

Still her curiosity got the best of her, and after the examination, she asked him, **“Did you attend Morgan High School?”** He said, **“Yes, I’m a former Mustang.”**

She said, **“What year did you graduate?”** He answered, **“1968.”** She thought, **“The same year - this has to be him!”** She was excited, **“You were in my class!”**

He looked at her closely, and replied, **“Really, what class did you teach?”**

From *her* perspective – *he looked much too old to be her age.*

From *his* perspective – *she looked much too old to be his age.* Isn't it interesting how the view is changes depending on your perspective?

From God's perspective – Job was God's ally in a contest with Satan.

He could be counted on to worship God despite his circumstances. Satan threw all kinds of hardship at Job, yet Job still worshipped God.

Job praised God - not because He buttered Job's bread with blessing – but because God was worthy to be praised. Job's faith was sincere and unselfish.

But Job and his friends never read the first two chapters of the book of Job.

From their perspective - they never got the whole story. They had a limited, earth-bound perspective. In heaven Job was a *hero*. On earth Job was a *zero*.

*In heaven*, God, and the angels, and probably even Satan – were amazed by the sincerity and unselfishness of Job's faith. *On earth*, his friends were sure of his evil. They argued that Job had sinned and was being judged by God.

But his friends were wrong... In the beginning of the story God Himself says Job was blameless. Throughout the story Job maintains his innocence. At the close of the story God rebukes Job's mates for falsely accusing him.

Job's three friends were trapped in a restrictive, kindergarten theology that failed to embrace God's sovereignty... It assumes bad stuff happens to bad people and good folks always prosper. *The story of Job proves otherwise.*

Sometimes life doesn't turn out the way we'd planned. God uses both the good and the evil – *and He doesn't always*

*reveal His purposes.* At times God expects us to trust Him where we can't trace Him. Our faith doesn't always get a reason.

Remember Job's dialogue with his friends consisted of three rounds. Eliphaz was probably oldest so he spoke first – followed by Bildad and Zophar...

By chapter 18, Eliphaz has gone twice. Not it's Bildad's turn to speak again...

**“Then Bildad the Shuhite answered and said: “How long till you put an end to words?”** Job had just spent two chapters disagreeing with their conclusions.

Bildad wants to know, when is Job going to shut-up and listen to them?

**“Gain understanding, and afterward we will speak.**

**Why are we counted as beasts, and regarded as stupid in your sight?**

**You who tear yourself in anger, shall the earth be forsaken for you? Or shall the rock be removed from its place?”** They had based their lives on theological assumptions – *God rewards good, God punishes evil.* These were rocks.

What are they suppose to do, forsake their assumptions for Job's sake?

The answer was ultimately, “Yes.” Their kindergarten theology didn't account for God's sovereignty. God is in control even when life takes terrible turns.

The Bible teaches God is just and merciful. He rules over the good and evil.

Tony Snow was a former White House Press Secretary for President Bush. Several years ago Tony contracted cancer. Just before he died, he wrote, “We want lives of simple, predictable ease – smooth, even trails as far as the eye can see – but God likes to go off-road. He provokes us with twists and turns.”

God has reasons for all He does, but often they’re hidden from view.

Life can be perplexing – circumstances seem inexplicable – and we’re tempted to doubt God. Because of our limited perspective and our false assumptions we question God’s love and fairness. We wonder if He’s fallen asleep at the wheel.

Paul writes in Romans 8:28 “We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”

Everything happens for a reason – even when we don’t see His purpose.

Bildad expresses more of his false assumptions in verse 5 “The light of the wicked indeed goes out, and the flame of his fire does not shine. The light is dark in his tent, and his lamp beside him is put out.” The wicked man will fall on hard times. His light will be extinguished. He’ll eventually fall victim to his ignorance.

“The steps of his strength are shortened, and his own counsel casts him down. For he is cast into a net by his own

feet, and he walks into a snare.” He ends up trapped. “The net takes him by the heel, and a snare lays hold of him.

A noose is hidden for him on the ground, and a trap for him in the road.”

“Terrors frighten him on every side, and drive him to his feet. His strength is starved, and destruction is ready at his side. It devours patches of his skin; the firstborn of death devours his limbs.” Bildad was probably describing Job. The boils on his body – and the patches of his skin - were devouring his limbs.

“He is uprooted from the shelter of his tent, and they parade him before the king of terrors.” He becomes the poster child for the penalties of wickedness.

Verse 15 “They dwell in his tent who are none of his; brimstone is scattered on his habitation.” Remember Job lived during the time of the patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And it was during the days of Abraham and his nephew, Lot, that God rained down fire and brimstone on the perverted cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. The destruction of these twin sin cities was still headline news...

Bildad is comparing Job’s calamity to the destruction of Sodom. I’m sure the fall of an honored man like Job was also a headline. Scandals usually make big news.

In verses 16-19, Bildad says the wicked will wither. They’re disgraced and forgotten - driven into darkness. They have no heirs to carry on their legacy.

Verse 20 “Those in the west are astonished at his day, as those in the east are frightened. Surely such are the dwellings

of the wicked, and this is the place of him who does not know God." What a brutal accusation for Bildad to hurl.

He accuses Job of being a heathen – he doesn't even know God.

Chapter 19, "Then Job answered and said: "How long will you torment my soul, and break me in pieces with words? These ten times you have reproached me; You are not ashamed that you have wronged me." Only 3 rounds of dialogue are recorded in the book, but Job says, "Ten times you have reproached me."

Three rounds were tough enough. Imagine going 10 rounds with these guys.

They're relentless in their attempts to wrongly *pin a sin* on Job.

Yet Job says to them, "If indeed I have erred, my error remains with me." He's saying you guys haven't proven a thing. So far all your accusations are untrue.

"If indeed you magnify yourselves against me, and plead my disgrace against me, know then that God has wronged me, and has surrounded me with His net."

Remember, we mentioned last week, [a restricted theology creates a crisis of faith](#). Hold to a kindergarten theology and it leaves you with only two choices...

If God is just, and fair, and loving – and settles the score in the here and now... then how do you explain it when the good person misses his flight, and the bad person gets to take his seat in first class? Why would God let that happen?

In a restricted theology there're only two choices... either *God failed to do the right thing*, or *the person in question actually sinned*. This is why Job's counselors insist that Job must've sinned – if not, it means God has failed and they're not about to entertain that possibility – that would be a blasphemous thought.

But where his friends draw the line, Job is not so reverent. In essence Job says in verse 6, if my only two choices are God failed or I'm a failure – *then God failed*.

Job says, “**God has wronged me, and has surrounded me with His net.**”

This is why I said earlier, “**In asking why Job loses his way.**” Job accuses God! He loses his perspective. *Arrogance* replaces Job's *innocence*. **Here a humble man becomes a hurting man and ends up a haughty man.**

Job loses His respect and reverence for God. He forgets who God is - His holiness, His righteousness, His justice. Job *borders on blasphemy*.

Verse 7 “**If I cry out concerning wrong, I am not heard. If I cry aloud, there is no justice.**” Job had asked for his day in court. He accuses God of denying justice.

CS Lewis once wrote, “**The ancient man approached God... as the accused person approaches a judge. For the modern man the roles are reversed.**”

Man is the judge: God is in the dock (*or the place of the accused*). Man is quite a kindly judge: if God has a reasonable defense for being the god who permits war,



poverty and disease, man is ready to listen. God may even be acquitted.

But the important thing is that Man is on the Bench and God is in the Dock.”

This is why Job is such a contemporary book. For Job assumes the attitude of modern man. He becomes God’s critic. He dares to tell God - how to be God.

He becomes so preoccupied with wanting to know why – with demanding an explanation *from God* – he ends losing his reverence *for God*. *Knowing why* becomes more important to Job than *knowing Who*. Job puts God on trial.

Right now Job is on the bench and God is in the dock. At the end of the book God will turn the tables. He’ll take the bench and put Job back in the dock.

Job continues his accusations against God in verse 8, “**He has fenced up my way, so that I cannot pass; and He has set darkness in my paths.**

**He has stripped me of my glory, and taken the crown from my head. He breaks me down on every side, and I am gone; my hope He has uprooted like a tree. He has also kindled His wrath against me, and He counts me as one of His enemies.** “

Again Job assumes that God considers him an enemy. Just the opposite was true. God was so proud of Job He staked His honor on Job’s reactions.



“His troops come together and build up their road against me; they encamp all around my tent.” Job really feels as if he’s under attack. He’s surrounded.

Job not only feels that God has abandoned him, he’s been rejected by everyone else. Verse 13 “He has removed my brothers far from me, and my acquaintances are completely estranged from me. My relatives have failed, and my close friends have forgotten me. Those who dwell in my house, and my maidservants, count me as a stranger; I am an alien in their sight. I call my servant, but he gives no answer; I beg him with my mouth.” His own employees no longer return his calls, *and he pays for their cell phones.*

“My breath is offensive to my wife (which is often my problem... but a different subject), and I am repulsive to the children of my own body.” Job is as low as he can go... His wife won’t kiss him and his kids won’t hug him. He’s untouchable.

“Even young children despise me; I arise, and they speak against me. All my close friends abhor me, and those whom I love have turned against me.”

“My bone clings to my skin and to my flesh (you could count his ribs he’d grown so thin), and I have escaped by the skin of my teeth.” Ever heard the expression, “escaped by the skin of my teeth” - did you know it originated in the Bible?

Here’s a list of common expressions that come from Scripture...

“Read the handwriting on the wall...” Daniel 5:5

“The apple of one’s eye...” Deuteronomy 32:10

“He brought the house down...” Samson in Judges 16:30

“There’s a fly in the ointment...” Ecclesiastes 10:1

“A little bird told me...” Ecclesiastes 10:20

“Seeing eye to eye...” Isaiah 52:8

“Like mother, like daughter...” Ezekiel 16:44

“Go the extra mile...” Matthew 5:41

“My hair stood on end...” That was from Job 4:15.

“He’s nothing but skin and bones...” Any guesses? This same verse!

Verse 21 "Have pity on me, have pity on me, O you my friends, for the hand of God has struck me! Why do you persecute me as God does, and are not satisfied with my flesh? "Oh, that my words were written! Oh, that they were inscribed in a book! That they were engraved on a rock with an iron pen and lead, forever!"

Job’s words were written! We’re reading them 4000 years later.

Apparently, what God chose to write in Scripture lasts longer than what’s engraved in a rock with hammer and chisel. God’s Word will last forever.

Verse 25 “For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth...” Job’s pain and agony have put him on an emotional rollercoaster. One moment he borders on *blasphemy* – the next moment he utters a *prophecy*.

Job ends his frustration with God by rising up and reiterating his faith.

He believes there is a Mediator who will embrace his cause and vindicate Him before God and his counselors. A Go-between will come to Job's defense.

This Redeemer Job sees is none other than Jesus. The second person of the Trinity was alive in Job's day - and would stand on the earth 2000 years later.

In verse 26 he says, "And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, Whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another." Job believed in a literal resurrection of the body. His boil-covered, disease-wrecked flesh will be made whole. "In my flesh I shall see God."

What an encouragement to anyone who suffers from a terminal disease.

"How my heart yearns within me!

If you should say, 'How shall we persecute him?' - since the root of the matter is found in me, be afraid of the sword for yourselves; for wrath brings the punishment of the sword, that you may know there is a judgment."

Job's counselors had concluded the root of Job's calamity would be found in Job. His suffering was the result of the sin in his life. But Job warns them, be careful when you judge me... for you too are destined for God's judgment.

Job foresaw his Redeemer standing on the earth to judge all men. This means he didn't just see Jesus' first advent, he also saw His second coming. Evidently, the patriarchs knew a lot more of the Gospel than we might at first assume...

Remember Enoch was the seventh generation from Adam. Yet according to Jude 14-15 Enoch preached about Jesus' second coming, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all..."

In the Old Testament everyone who died went to a holding tank called Sheol.

The believers were sent to the good side – *Abraham's bosom*. The unbelievers were placed in a torture cell called the *abuso* or *bottomless pit*. Job longed for the day when he would see God – and get answers to his questions - but he knew it wouldn't happen at his death, he'd have to wait for the resurrection of his body.

In contrast, as members of the Church we have a better hope – Jesus emptied out the pit-stop of Sheol. Now when we vacate the body we move in with the Lord.

Chapter 20 "Then Zophar the Naamathite answered and said: "Therefore my anxious thoughts make me answer, because of the turmoil within me. I have heard the reproof that reproaches me, and the spirit of my understanding causes me to answer." Job's willingness to defy the conventional logic and hold to his innocence even in the face of his calamity made Zophar angry. It created turmoil within him.

"Do you not know this of old, since man was placed on earth, that the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment?" Zophar contends the wicked might triumph, but it's short-lived.

Eventually everyone reaps what they sow – even in this life.

“Though his haughtiness mounts up to the heavens, and his head reaches to the clouds, yet he will perish forever like his own refuse...” For a moment the wicked might prosper, but eventually he perishes like his own garbage.

“Those who have seen him will say, 'Where is he?' He will fly away like a dream, and not be found; yes, he will be chased away like a vision of the night.

The eye that saw him will see him no more, nor will his place behold him anymore. His children will seek the favor of the poor... A wicked man's family will become so impoverished his kids will turn to the poor man for a hand-out.

His young bones turn to dust. Food goes down sweet, but turns sour in his stomach. Verse 15, “He swallows down riches and vomits them up again; God casts them out of his belly.” He eats fine foods, but his stomach can't hold them down. The wicked man chokes on his own riches. Wealth becomes his poison.

Verse 18 says his business makes a profit, but it yields no enjoyment.

Verses 19-20, he forecloses on the poor – but has no peace in his heart.

According to the next verses, God interrupts the wicked man's self-sufficiency with distress. God's fury comes upon him even as he stuffs his stomach. He's pierced through with an iron spear – its sharp point exposes his intestines.

The inhabitants of his tent fair no better. Verses 27-29 sum it up...

“The heavens will reveal his iniquity, and the earth will rise up against him.

The increase of his house will depart, and his goods will flow away in the day of His wrath. This is the portion from God for a wicked man, the heritage appointed to him by God.” And here’s Zophar’s main point... *Job is this wicked man.*

Chapter 21 “Job answered and said: “Listen carefully to my speech, and let this be your consolation. Bear with me that I may speak, and after I have spoken, keep mocking.” Job is being sarcastic. “As for me, is my complaint against man?”

Job’s beef was not with his friends at all. His complaint was with God.

Job is saying, “In the past, I also believed the prevailing assumptions – I had a kindergarten theology - but now I see that life isn’t so clear cut or straightforward.”

“And if (my complaint was with you) - why should I not be impatient?” They hadn’t listened or faced facts... Life isn’t fair. Justice doesn’t always prevail.

Verse 5 “Look at me and be astonished; put your hand over your mouth. Even when I remember I am terrified, and trembling takes hold of my flesh.

Why do the wicked live and become old, yes, become mighty in power? If God always judges the wicked, why not do so before they grow old and powerful?

“Their descendants are established with them in their sight, and their offspring before their eyes. Their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them. Their bull breeds without failure; their cow calves without miscarriage.”

The wicked somehow escape God’s judgment. Good stuff happens to them.

“They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance.” The drug dealer’s kids go to the finest private schools. They get the best parts in the school play. “They sing to the tambourine and harp, and rejoice to the sound of the flute.”

“They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave. Yet they say to God, ‘Depart from us, for we do not desire the knowledge of Your ways.’” The wicked thumb their nose at God and still seem to prosper.

“Who is the Almighty, that we should serve Him? And what profit do we have if we pray to Him?” If the wicked rebel against God - and still enjoy the good life – *then why serve God?* If they ignore God and prosper – *why bother to pray?*

Job is about to unravel the victory he won earlier in heaven. The contest between God and Satan centered on this question, “Do people worship God because they benefit from it - or because God Himself is worthy?” Here Job is asking, why serve God – or pray to God - if there’s no kickback?

Verse 16, “Indeed their prosperity is not in their hand (prosperity seems to be totally unrelated to righteousness); the counsel of the wicked is far from me.” Job can’t figure life



out. It's a perplexity. This is not how kindergarten theology works.

"How often is the lamp of the wicked put out? How often does their destruction come upon them, the sorrows God distributes in His anger? The answer is *not enough*. God doesn't punish the wicked as often or as severe as they deserve.

In the next few verses Job admits God does judge evil men, but there are some problems. Often the consequences fall on his kids after he's dead and gone...

"They are like straw before the wind, and like chaff that a storm carries away." "They say, 'God lays up one's iniquity for his children'; let Him recompense him, that he may know it. Let his eyes see his destruction, and let him drink of the wrath of the Almighty. For what does he care about his household after him, when the number of his months is cut in half? If he's dead what does he care about the sin he's committed. His kids are the one's who reap the consequences. It's unfair.

"Can anyone teach God knowledge, since He judges those on high?" The implication is that someone should. Job wants to teach God a lesson or two.

"One dies in his full strength, being wholly at ease and secure; his pails are full of milk, and the marrow of his bones is moist." He's limber, strong – full of vitality.

Verse 25 "Another man dies in the bitterness of his soul, never having eaten with pleasure. They lie down alike in the

dust, and worms cover them.” Why does one man live in ease – while another man dies in bitterness?

The answer isn't always tied to their morality or goodness.

"Look, I know your thoughts, and the schemes with which you would wrong me. For you say, 'Where is the house of the prince? And where is the tent, the dwelling place of the wicked?' Have you not asked those who travel the road? And do you not know their signs?" *Hey Job, the wicked live in tents. Princes live in palaces. Isn't that proof enough that the wicked are judged and the noble are blessed?*

Here's Job's answer, "For the wicked are reserved for the day of doom; they shall be brought out on the day of wrath." God sees to it that wicked people are judged, but not necessarily in this lifetime... Job contends, "the wicked are reserved for the day of doom" – "brought out on the day of wrath."

And the reserve is also true... *It does pay to be good and godly, but payday doesn't always come in this life.* Not all the scores get settled in this life.

Verse 31, "Who condemns his way to his face?" The wicked man dies and never has to face his crimes – he's never charged or confronted with his evil.

"And who repays him for what he has done?"

"Yet he shall be brought to the grave, and a vigil kept over the tomb." Here's an irony – he was guilty in life, but honored in death. "The clods of the valley shall be sweet to him; everyone shall follow him, as countless have gone before him."

Verse 34 is Job's conclusion, "How then can you comfort me with empty words, since falsehood remains in your answers?" Their kindergarten theology does not account for life's incongruities. Life isn't always as straightforward as we'd like...

I use to love to listen to Paul Harvey. He'd spin a tale, then just before the commercial he'd say, "Stay tuned. We'll be back for the rest of the story." When Paul returned he'd finish the story with a happy ending that made perfect sense.

Today we live before the commercial. Every story begun on earth has a happy ending in eternity, *but we have to stay tuned*. Heaven tells the rest of the story.

In the meantime we may have to put up with some perplexity, and some ambiguity, and some not-knowing. In short, we need to have faith.

The kindergarten theology of Job's three friends caused him a lot of grief.

It's dangerous to judge without being privy to all the information. We end up guilty of a "prima facie judgment" - "*prima facie*" is a Latin phrase that means "*at first sight*." Our interpretation of circumstances is often dangerously superficial.

We need "**the rest of story**" before we're in a position to offer advice. Always remember Deuteronomy 29:29, "**The secret things belong to the LORD our God...**"

As one man put it, “Life is painted on too large a canvas.” We lack the vantage point to see all the brush strokes. Our role is to simply love and trust the painter.

Chapter 22 “Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said: “Can a man be profitable to God, though he who is wise may be profitable to himself?” Job has been more concerned with his own reputation than with the glory of God.

“Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that you are righteous? Or is it gain to Him that you make your ways blameless?”

“Is it because of your fear of Him that He reproves you, and enters into judgment with you?” Eliphaz is being sarcastic... God blesses folks who fear the Lord – He doesn’t punish them. Reverence is rewarded, not judged.

In reality though, Job’s calamity was the result of his fear of God.

“Is not your wickedness great, and your iniquity without end?” What a bold, but baseless accusation. Eliphaz says Job is a serial sinner. His evil is endless. They can’t pin a specific sin on Job so Eliphaz throws the kitchen sink at him.

What follows is a tirade of false accusation. Here’s a summary...

He’s called in his loans prematurely... deprived the poor of clothes and food... mistreated widows and orphans. Verse 10 says Job is flooded with darkness.

In verse 12 “Is not God in the height of heaven? And see the highest stars, how lofty they are! And you say, ‘What does

God know?” Eliphaz accuses Job of questioning God’s wisdom. He can’t see through the clouds. “He walks above the circle of heaven.” He’s too aloof and removed to know what’s happening on earth.

Verse 15 “Will you keep to the old way which wicked men have trod, who were cut down before their time, whose foundations were swept away by a flood?” He’s accusing Job of following the example of wicked men. “They said to God, 'Depart from us! What can the Almighty do to them?' They defied God’s power to judge.

Again in verse 18 Eliphaz reasserts that God blesses the righteous and judges the wicked. He tells Job in verse 21, “Now acquaint yourself with Him, and be at peace; thereby good will come to you.” If Job will get to know God – he’ll be at peace. The implication is that he doesn’t know God and needs to repent.

In the next few verses, Eliphaz insists Job’s repentance should include giving up his gold. If he wants to be right with God he needs to repent of greediness

Verse 25 “Yes, the Almighty will be your gold and your precious silver; for then you will have your delight in the Almighty, and lift up your face to God.” Eliphaz is alluding that Job has been worshipping *gold* instead of *God*. Money is his idol.

The rest of chapter 22 encourages Job to repent. Eliphaz spoken three times over 4 chapters, but it was the same message – Job needs to get right with God

In chapter 23-24 Job responds to Eliphaz. “Then Job answered and said: Even today my complaint is bitter; my hand is listless because of my groaning.” Job’s hand is quivering – it’s limp and feeble. His strength is almost depleted.

Notice too, by his own admission, he’s become “bitter.” Job is going to step out of line, and make some awful statements. “In asking *why* Job loses his way.”

“Oh, that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come to His seat!

I would present my case before Him, and fill my mouth with arguments. I would know the words which He would answer me, and understand what He would say to me.” Job is saying if he can plead his case in God’s court – he can issue God a subpoena, and pin God down – Job can force God to answer to his questions.

In October, 2007 Nebraska State Senator, Ernie Chambers, filed a lawsuit against God. He accused God of making continuing terroristic threats against mankind and causing “fearsome floods, egregious earthquakes, horrendous hurricanes, terrifying tornadoes, pestilential plagues, ferocious famines, devastating droughts, genocidal wars, birth defects and the like...”

To keep the suit from being tossed out of court for failure to notify the accused, Chambers mentioned he’d tried several times to contact God, and serve notice. The Senator said - and I quote, “come out, come out wherever you are...” but

God has not replied. *Hey, Ernie Chambers better hope God doesn't reply.*

Chambers admits God is omniscient so he assumes God knows about the lawsuit. He's requested that the judge hear the case as soon as possible.

And this was Job. He too wanted to sue God. He had a beef that he wanted to take to court. Job wanted to know why God had allowed such horrible calamity to take place in his life. Job expects God to answer his questions and tell him why!

**“Would He contend with me in His great power? No! But He would take note of me.”** Job is saying God would have to face his questions... **“There the upright could reason with Him, and I would be delivered forever from my Judge.”**

If Job can just get his case on God's docket he knows he'd be vindicated.

Verse 8 **“Look, I go forward, but He is not there, and backward, but I cannot perceive Him; when He works on the left hand, I cannot behold Him; when He turns to the right hand, I cannot see Him.”** Job's arrogance sounds like Senator Chambers, **“come out, come out, wherever you are...”**

**“But He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold.”** Job is so moody. At times he comes perilously close to blasphemy - but at other times he has these outbursts of faith. And here's an explosion...

Job senses that his ordeal is some sort of test. He doesn't have all the details. But he realizes a truth, **“The stress in my life is often a test of my faith.”**



The book of Job teaches many lessons, but one of the most vital is that our reactions on earth matter! In a mysterious way, unknown to us, God's reputation may be hanging on the way you handle a hassle or a hardship. God's honor in heaven may be riding on your reaction to the twists and turns life throws at you.

To me, the message of Job is the most practical in the Bible. It ups the ante on everything that happens. Nothing is trivial. Every angelic eye in heaven may be watching you in your current crisis to see if you *fold* - or stay *faithful*. **It's a test.**

And Job senses that when God is done - after He's turned up the heat - and skimmed off the impurities - and repeated the process - over a lifetime... Job will come out as pure as gold. His character will be refined. If you're also in a trial tonight remember... **"When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold."**

In verse 11 Job continues, **"My foot has held fast to His steps; I have kept His way and not turned aside. I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food."**

Job maintains his innocence and reveals his love for God's Word.

Understand the strong, tough faith of Job wasn't built on wonders and worship, and miracles and fellowship... but on an insatiable hunger for the Scriptures.

Job loved a Bible study more than a trip to Outback Steakhouse.

"But He is unique, and who can make Him change? And whatever His soul desires, that He does. For He performs what is appointed for me, and many such things are with Him." God is changeless. He does as He pleases.

"Therefore I am terrified at His presence; when I consider this, I am afraid of Him." It's a bit unnerving to realize our lives are at God's disposal to do with any way He desires. We warm up to the idea only when we realize His love for us.

In verses 16-17 Job admits he's in a dark place. He's weak and terrified by God. Perhaps you're in a dark place in your life. *You're also wondering why.*

It reminds me of Gardner Taylor. He was preaching in Louisiana during the Depression. In the middle of the sermon the building lost its one light bulb. The church was pitched black. The young pastor started to stumble and stammer.

Suddenly, one of the deacons shouted, "Preach on, preacher! We can still see Jesus in the dark!" This was the lesson God taught Job, and He's teaching us.

Chapter 24, "Since times are not hidden from the Almighty, why do those who know Him see not His days?" Job wonders why people who know God still have questions about Him. I know Kathy Adams. We celebrated our 28<sup>th</sup> anniversary yesterday, but do I know all there is to know about her? No, I'm still learning.

Job is also learning, and he's perplexed by God's delay in judging the wicked.

“Some remove landmarks; they seize flocks violently and feed on them; they drive away the donkey of the fatherless; they take the widow's ox as a pledge. They push the needy off the road; all the poor of the land are forced to hide.

Indeed, like wild donkeys in the desert, they go out to their work, seeking diligently for food. The wilderness yields food for them and for their children.”

The wicked mistreat the needy and the poor, yet their families eat well.

Verses 6-11 sing the same refrain. People do wickedly, yet for the moment, God's judgment doesn't come. Verse 12 “The dying groan in the city, and the souls of the wounded cry out; yet God does not charge them with wrong.”

Verse 13 introduces those who rebel against the light... the murderer in verse 14 - the adulterer in verse 15 - the thief in verse 16... they all should be cursed.

Verse 19 “As drought and heat consume the snow waters, so should the grave those who have sinned.” In a just world, verse 20 depicts the end of an evil man, “The worm should feed sweetly on him; he should be remembered no more...”

To his disappointment, Job sees little difference between the plight of the wicked and the righteous. He says in verse 22, “No man is sure of life...”

Verse 24, everyone is “exalted for a little while, then they are gone.”

And in verse 25 Job challenges his counselors to deny his observations, "Now if it is not so, who will prove me a liar, and make my speech worth nothing?"

The inconsistencies in life are real. God is good, but life ain't always fair...