

# WOMEN IN THE WORD OF

## FELLOWSHIP BIBLE CHURCH

“Job: A 12-Week Study” by Eric Ortlund

Week Four, Part 2: Round One of the Debate

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All Scripture quotations are ESV unless noted otherwise

### Chapter 9

Job feels that he is clean before God, yet he is still struggling with what is happening to him. This leads into his subject for the remainder of this chapter: how a mere man can bring a dispute before Almighty God.

<sup>3</sup> If one wished to contend with him,  
one could not answer him once in a thousand times.

<sup>4</sup> He is wise in heart and mighty in strength  
—who has hardened himself against him, and succeeded?”

Here Job begins to expound on a theme that will continue for the next several chapters: that he would like somehow to plead his case in court and be vindicated.

He will not be swayed by the comforters’ argument that he must repent of some grave sin. Despite his grief and despair, he will not give up.

He declares the power and majesty of God in the next several verses:

<sup>5</sup> he who removes mountains, and they know it not,  
when he overturns them in his anger,

<sup>6</sup> who shakes the earth out of its place,  
and its pillars tremble;

<sup>7</sup> who commands the sun, and it does not rise;  
who seals up the stars;

<sup>8</sup> who alone stretched out the heavens  
and trampled the waves of the sea;

<sup>9</sup> who made the Bear and Orion,  
the Pleiades and the chambers of the south;

<sup>10</sup> who does great things beyond searching out,  
and marvelous things beyond number. "

God is so far beyond man, imperceptible (v. 11), and He can do as He pleases without being questioned (v.12).

<sup>14</sup>" How then can I answer Him,

And choose my words before Him?

<sup>15</sup> For though I were right, I could not answer;

I would have to implore the mercy of my Judge.

<sup>16</sup> If I called and He answered me,

I could not believe that He was listening to my voice." (NASB)

For the next several verses, Job again describes the misery of his current situation. God is so powerful and overwhelming that Job wouldn't be able to speak without condemning himself. Job says things about God here that shock and disturb us.

<sup>22</sup>" It is all one; therefore I say,

'He destroys both the blameless and the wicked.'

<sup>23</sup> When disaster brings sudden death,

he mocks at the calamity of the innocent.

<sup>24</sup> The earth is given into the hand of the wicked;

he covers the faces of its judges—

if it is not he, who then is it?"

Job has allowed his perception of God to be twisted because of his current circumstances. Job may not curse God outright, but he has crossed a line out of faith and into sin.

Job mentions that he has even tried to forget his misery and be cheerful, but that effort was useless. What grieves him the most is that he has lost God's favor and he can't understand why:

<sup>28</sup>" I become afraid of all my suffering,

for I know you will not hold me innocent.

<sup>29</sup> I shall be condemned;

why then do I labor in vain?"

He even goes so far as to say that he might try to cleanse himself, but God would plunge him back into filth.

Beginning in verse 32, Job brings up the idea of a mediator, and we have a foreshadowing of the gospel message:

<sup>32</sup> "For he is not a man, as I am, that I might answer him,  
that we should come to trial together.

<sup>33</sup> There is no<sup>Ⓜ</sup> arbiter between us,  
who might lay his hand on us both.

<sup>34</sup> Let him take his rod away from me,  
and let not dread of him terrify me.

<sup>35</sup> Then I would speak without fear of him,  
for I am not so in myself."

So God is beginning to reveal small glimpses of His plan from before the foundation of the world. But even as he speaks, Job himself has no real understanding of that message.

Our arbiter will serve as mediator because He is both God and man. He does not vindicate us before the Father because of our righteousness.

## Chapter 10

Job begins by declaring that, in his deep pain and frustration, he will continue to vent.

In verses 18 and 19 he repeats his desire to have died at birth, and in verses 20-21, he asks God to leave him alone and let him have some cheer before he dies.

In verses 4-6, Job adds a new slant to his questioning of what God is doing:

<sup>4</sup> "Have you eyes of flesh?

Do you see as man sees?

<sup>5</sup> Are your days as the days of man,  
or your years as a man's years,

<sup>6</sup> that you seek out my iniquity  
and search for my sin,

<sup>7</sup> although you know that I am not guilty,  
and there is none to deliver out of your hand?"

Here Job is wondering why God seems to be using methods that a person would use because of limitations people have in trying to determine someone's wrongdoing.

But God is not limited as a person is, and Job is perplexed at what God seems to be doing. Surely the omniscient God already knows he is not guilty.

In verses 8-13, Job appeals to God in a tender and moving description of how He has created him:

<sup>8</sup> "Your hands fashioned and made me,  
and now you have destroyed me altogether.  
<sup>9</sup> Remember that you have made me like clay;  
and will you return me to the dust?  
<sup>10</sup> Did you not pour me out like milk  
and curdle me like cheese?  
<sup>11</sup> You clothed me with skin and flesh,  
and knit me together with bones and sinews.  
<sup>12</sup> You have granted me life and steadfast love,  
and your care has preserved my spirit.  
<sup>13</sup> Yet these things you hid in your heart;  
I know that this was your purpose."

He laments that he is so deeply disgraced that he cannot lift his head.

Job finishes his lament with another description of Sheol.

## Chapter 11

In this chapter we finally hear from Zophar, the third of the three comforters. His words add little to what has already been said to Job by the other two. He reasons from his own convictions, and his speech is short and to the point.

**11** Then Zophar the Naamathite answered and said:

<sup>2</sup> "Should a multitude of words go unanswered,  
and a man full of talk be judged right?  
<sup>3</sup> Should your babble silence men,  
and when you mock, shall no one shame you?  
<sup>4</sup> For you say, 'My doctrine is pure,  
and I am clean in God's<sup>(a)</sup> eyes.'  
<sup>5</sup> But oh, that God would speak  
and open his lips to you,  
<sup>6</sup> and that he would tell you the secrets of wisdom!  
For he is manifold in understanding.<sup>(b)</sup>  
Know then that God exacts of you less than your guilt deserves."

Zophar calls Job long-winded, a babbler and a scoffer who should be rebuked. He hopes God Himself will talk to Job, which is interesting since that is what Job has said he wants.

Incredibly, Zophar even goes so far as to say that Job actually deserves worse consequences than what he is already suffering.

Zophar is just as bad a “counselor” as Eliphaz and Bildad.

In verse 12, Zophar goes from rebuking to insulting:

<sup>12</sup> “An idiot will become intelligent  
When a wild donkey is born a human.” (NASB)

It seems to be stated indirectly, but Zophar is calling Job stupid, emphasizing that by saying that he (Job) will become wise as soon as wild donkeys start giving birth to people.

Zophar concludes his speech in a similar manner to the other two friends, telling Job that the solution to his problem is reaching out to God in repentance.

Then Job will regain the blessings of steadfastness, freedom from fear, the return of light in his life where there is now darkness, trust, hope, and security.

Zophar’s speech ends with a final word of warning:

<sup>20</sup> “But the eyes of the wicked will fail;  
all way of escape will be lost to them,  
and their hope is to breathe their last.”

## Chapter 12

Job’s sarcasm is immediately evident in his response to Zophar:

**12** Then Job answered and said:

<sup>2</sup> “No doubt you are the people,  
and wisdom will die with you.  
<sup>3</sup> But I have understanding as well as you;  
I am not inferior to you.  
Who does not know such things as these?”

Thus Job asserts his ability to think things through with a mind every bit as capable as theirs.

He then laments that he, who was once looked up to and respected for his righteousness before God, is now a joke.

The mood changes starting in verse 7, as Job speaks of God as the exalted creator of all:

- <sup>7</sup> "But ask the beasts, and they will teach you;  
the birds of the heavens, and they will tell you;  
<sup>8</sup> or the bushes of the earth, and they will teach you;<sup>[b]</sup>  
and the fish of the sea will declare to you.  
<sup>9</sup> Who among all these does not know  
that the hand of the LORD has done this?  
<sup>10</sup> In his hand is the life of every living thing  
and the breath of all mankind.  
<sup>11</sup> Does not the ear test words  
as the palate tastes food?"

Job seems to imply that God teaches all who are willing to learn from His creation, and Job has as much wisdom as any of his comforters has.

Job affirms God's absolute sovereignty over all things:

- When He tears down, it can't be rebuilt (v. 13).
- He completely controls the waters, whether there is drought or flood (v. 15).
- He is the authority over both the deceived and deceiver (v. 16).
- He gives and takes away authority and power as He sees fit, whether it concerns counselors, judges, kings, priests, elders, nobles, chiefs (vv. 17-21, 24) or even entire nations (v. 23).

The theme of darkness and light comes up again here in verses 22 and 24-5:

- <sup>22</sup> "He uncovers the deeps out of darkness  
and brings deep darkness to light. "
- <sup>24</sup> " He takes away understanding from the chiefs of the people of the earth  
and makes them wander in a trackless waste.  
<sup>25</sup> They grope in the dark without light,  
and he makes them stagger like a drunken man."

## Chapter 13

Job will not settle for accepting his friends' advice, but insists again, in verse 3, on his desire to present his case directly to God.

Verses 4-12 are a scathing condemnation of their treatment of him. They have not really listened to him, and they have represented God falsely.

- <sup>4</sup> As for you, you whitewash with lies;  
worthless physicians are you all.
- <sup>5</sup> Oh that you would keep silent,  
and it would be your wisdom!
- <sup>6</sup> Hear now my argument  
and listen to the pleadings of my lips.
- <sup>7</sup> Will you speak falsely for God  
and speak deceitfully for him?
- <sup>8</sup> Will you show partiality toward him?  
Will you plead the case for God?
- <sup>9</sup> Will it be well with you when he searches you out?  
Or can you deceive him, as one deceives a man?
- <sup>10</sup> He will surely rebuke you  
if in secret you show partiality.
- <sup>11</sup> Will not his majesty terrify you,  
and the dread of him fall upon you?
- <sup>12</sup> Your maxims are proverbs of ashes;  
your defenses are defenses of clay.

Job states his determination to argue before God despite the risk with a vivid word picture in verse 14.

Then, the next several verses reveal Job's continued trust in God, despite his trial:

- <sup>15</sup> "Though he slay me, I will hope in him;<sup>a</sup>  
yet I will argue my ways to his face.
- <sup>16</sup> This will be my salvation,  
that the godless shall not come before him.
- <sup>17</sup> Keep listening to my words,  
and let my declaration be in your ears.
- <sup>18</sup> Behold, I have prepared my case;  
I know that I shall be in the right.
- <sup>19</sup> Who is there who will contend with me?  
For then I would be silent and die. "

Beginning in verse 20, Job directs his words to God again, making several requests. He asks God to end his suffering and his terrifying fear (v.21), he desires communication with God (v.22), he wants God to reveal any sin that would have caused God to be treating him badly (v.23), and he wants to know why God has hidden Himself and considers Job his enemy (v.24).

For a brief moment, Job has emerged from the depths of his sorrow and cynicism that we saw in Chapters 9 and 10.

Job quickly returns to making various accusations against God again, including that God could be holding against him the sins he committed when he was young. These conflicting thoughts and emotions are not unusual. Many great men of God, including the prophet Jeremiah, had similar experiences.

## **Chapter 14**

Job slips back into his depression, pondering the brevity of life, sorrows that it brings, and finality of death.

In verses 7-12, Job contrasts a person's life with a tree, which might have a chance to revive from its roots even though it appears dead.

In verse 13, Job contemplates another possibility: that God might hide him in Sheol until his anger passes, then bring him back and he can renew his fellowship with Him again. In verses 14-17, he seems to envision hope that he might experience renewed relationship with God after all.

However, Job returns to his mourning in the final verses of the chapter.

John Hartley does an excellent job summarizing the central message of the first cycle of speeches:

“Job’s words reveal the sense of futility that haunts him. But they also portray the steel nerve deep inside him that will neither let him succumb to his illness nor seek any easy solution that will relieve his pain by compromising his integrity. His struggling faith now and then compels him to make remarkable assertions of faith in God. These assertions lead Job to persevere on the path of seeking God while he holds on to his integrity.”

### **Closing thoughts – glimmers of hope**

Have you experienced moments of renewed hope or messages of comfort from the Lord in the midst of great suffering?

Next week, Week Five: Round Two of the Debate, pp. 35-42 in study book  
Job Chapters 15-21