



JOB: WISDOM THROUGH SUFFERING

Daily Devotions by Julie Haddon, 2020.

Introduction

In times like these, during a world pandemic, with people suffering wherever you look around the world, we begin to ask many questions....

Where is God?

Why does he allow this?

How can God be fair when everything seems so unfair?

Is God really good?

The Bible is always relevant for us, and the book of Job was written with these questions in mind. May your study of this book of God's Word help you to grow in your knowledge of our great God!

I would particularly like to acknowledge Christopher Ash and the ten years he spent dedicated to producing his wonderful commentary, which has highly influenced the content of these studies.

The Structure and Literary style of the book

The book of Job focuses on the person of Job. We do not know when it was written, but many theologians agree that it was most likely to have happened during the time of the patriarchs (possibly just after the time of Abraham). As we read his story we are able to observe the troubled life of this great man: his struggle to understand what was happening to him and the development and growth in his understanding of God. As we are taken on Job's journey of suffering, the narrator gives us, the readers, a privileged position to hear the conversations that God has with his heavenly council as well as the dialogue and interactions Job has with various friends and finally with God himself. The narrator also uses a variety of literary styles to enable us to understand what he wants to teach us. The book is composed of an introduction (1-2), a large section of dialogue between Job and his three friends (3-31), a section where previous arguments are summarised in preparation for the arrival of God (32-37), the words of God himself, and how Job responds to these (38-42:6) and a final conclusion (42:7-17).

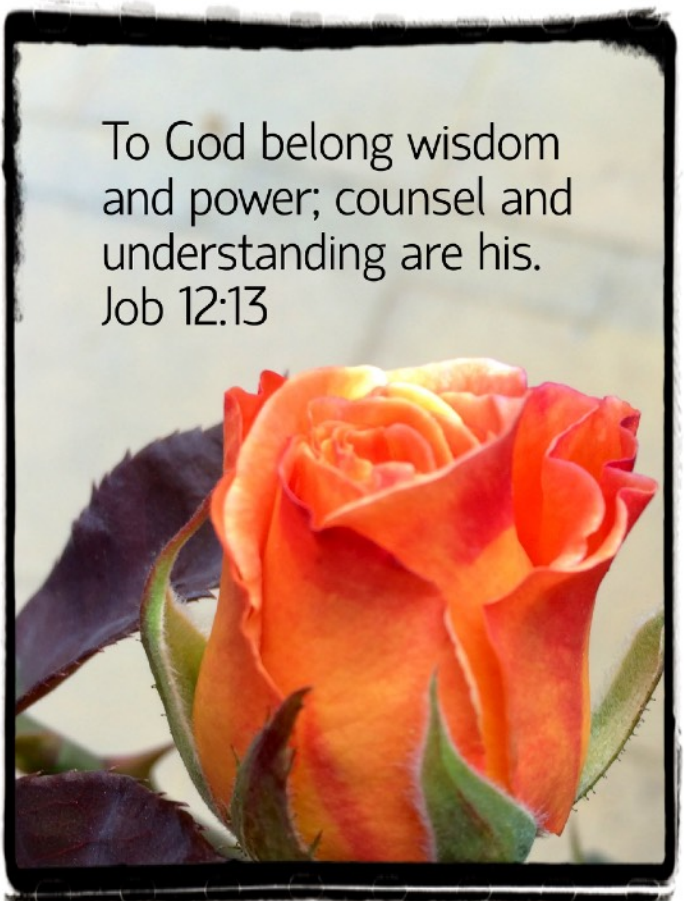
The book begins and ends in prose, along with the introductions to each person who speaks, but the bulk of the book is poetry. From chapters 3 to 41, the story is presented to us poetically. This is hard for us to perceive in our English translations, as it doesn't seem that different to us as we read. It is very difficult for translators to capture the beauty, style and word plays captured in the original, so while it may not seem particularly poetic to us, it is very important, that we remember that we are reading poetry.

The importance of poetry

Why does the narrator choose to use poetry instead of simply telling the story in prose? I believe that one of God's purposes for Job is to expose what is deep in his heart and it is poetry that best captures and expresses the deepest and most heartfelt emotions.

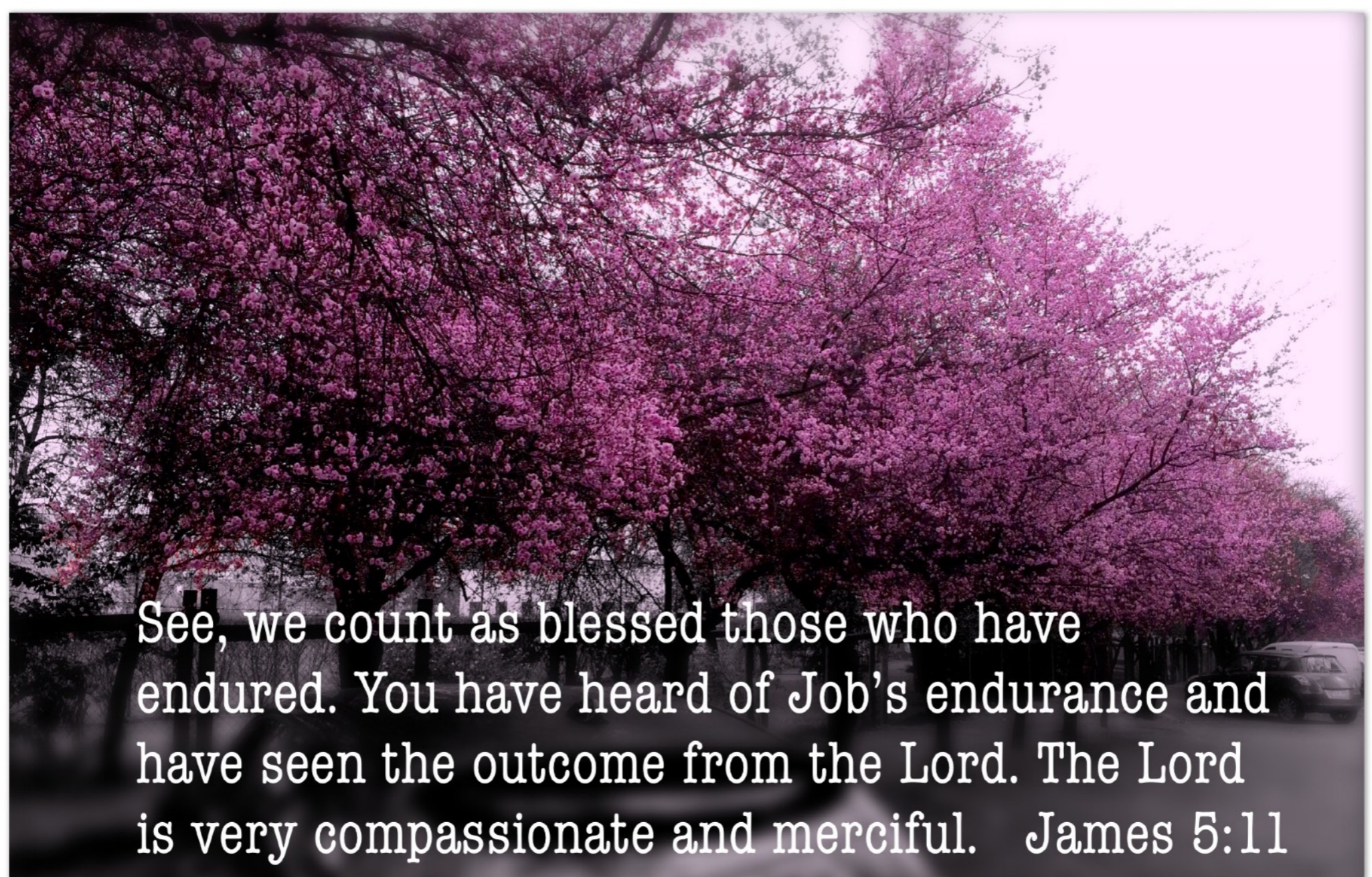
We do not read poetry in the same way that we read other literary styles, and the way we understand poetry is also different. Poetry not only expresses what is deep within the soul, it also speaks to our hearts.

In the Bible, especially in the Old Testament, when an author wants to highlight something, they will often will use poetry to make their point. So as we are reading the Bible and we find poetry or songs, it indicates something important, something the author wants us to remember and to repeat. Often, poetry was put to music to be sung to make memorisation even easier. The poetry in the book of Job should alert us to the fact that this book has important things to teach us, things that we should learn and remember, and things that should reach our hearts and touch the depths of our being.



To God belong wisdom
and power; counsel and
understanding are his.
Job 12:13

INTRODUCTION



James 1:2-5 & 5:7-11

We are living in extraordinary times. All across the globe people are finding themselves isolated in their homes. We can see all around us people who are suffering, with loss of work, loss of health, pain, and even death. Every one of us, at this time in history, is suffering the consequences of this global pandemic in some way or another. Understandably, we are asking “Why?” and “Where’s God in all of this?”

The Bible shows us that God is not indifferent to our suffering, and one of the books of the Bible that shows this, is the letter of James. This letter was written to those who were suffering, to encourage them to live in the light of that suffering. At the beginning of the letter, James assures his readers that the “trials” they are facing produce something positive: patience and perseverance, and these in turn lead to maturity, and to the completion of the work of God in their lives..

According to the Bible, God has a glorious purpose for his children, and in the journey towards our final destination, suffering is a key component in our development. This is difficult for us to grasp, especially when we find ourselves in times of crisis. That is why James encourages his readers to be patient, and he assures them that the moment will finally arrive when there will be no more suffering, when Jesus returns!

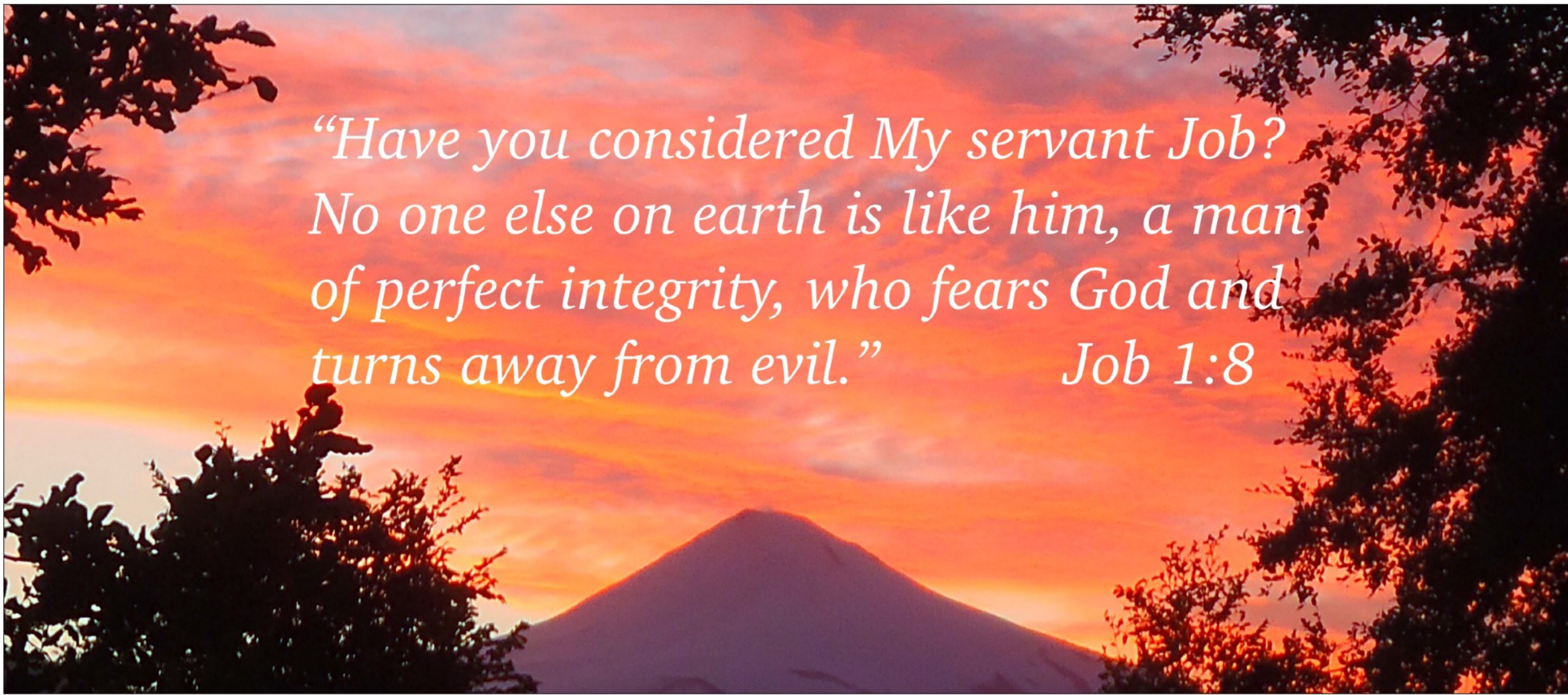
James reminds his readers in 5:10 of the suffering that the Old Testament prophets had endured and of their patience and perseverance, and in 5:11 he highlights the perseverance of Job. James wants his readers to see Job’s life as an example. Job was a man who suffered greatly, and his suffering was included in the Old Testament for our instruction.

James knows that as we face suffering we need wisdom (1:5), so it’s interesting to note that the book of Job is included in what we call the “wisdom literature” of the Old Testament. If we take the time to study these books, we can grow in wisdom, so I would like to invite you, to explore the book of Job over the next few weeks, and reflect on what it teaches us about God, suffering and the questions that arise in the darkest moments of our lives.

To think about: What is your reaction as you read in James 1:2 that we should consider it a great joy to face different trials? What difference does Jesus make in your experience of suffering? When you are faced with difficult circumstances or hard times, where do you look for wisdom to help you cope?

Prayer: As you read and reflect on James 1:5, ask God to give you wisdom when things are difficult, and ask for His help to understand what He wants to teach you from His Word.

JOB'S CHARACTER



*“Have you considered My servant Job?
No one else on earth is like him, a man
of perfect integrity, who fears God and
turns away from evil.” Job 1:8*

An upright man

Job 1 & 2

The book of Job, begins with a description of who Job is. We learn a number of important things from the very first verse of the book: Job is a *blameless* and *upright* man, who *fears God* and *shuns evil*. This is crucial for us to remember as we read the rest of the book. It is so important, that the exact same words are repeated three times within the first two chapters, and two of these repetitions are spoken by God Himself (1:1, 1:8 & 2:3).

Job is a man who is blameless, this doesn't mean that he is sinless, rather it indicates that he is a man who lives with integrity and authenticity. He consistently honours God with his actions and turns away from evil. Some theologians suggest that this also means that he has a continual attitude of repentance. God calls Job his *servant*. This is quite astounding because as far as we can understand from the text, Job doesn't live in the promised land, and is not part of God's people Israel. We don't know how, but Job has come to know God, and has learned enough to serve Him which he wholeheartedly puts into practice. The other thing we learn, is that God has been paying close attention to him, and wants the Heavenly Court to particularly notice him.

We, the readers, are privileged as we read the beginning of the book, because the narrator gives us information that is not given to any of the other characters in the book. We are told what is going on in the heavenly realm, unbeknownst to Job. There is a place where heavenly beings present themselves before the Lord, and one of

those who presents themselves before God is "the accuser" or "the Satan". God brings to his particular attention his servant Job. Job's faithful and upright life has not gone unnoticed! The accuser has indeed "considered" Job, but as is his custom, he twists Job's motives, saying that Job really only serves God because God has blessed him.

Then something dreadful occurs, the accuser asks for permission to test Job, which God grants, (within the boundaries that He sets). Everything that follows from that moment, is happening because God has seen Job's blameless and upright life and his faith. This is very important, and we must remember this as we read on. In God's eyes, Job is upright, and what God wants to do, is to highlight his faith so that it shines to an audience that goes way beyond Job's family or even the inhabitants of Uz. God wants to showcase Job's faith to a celestial audience for His own glory. To do this he must expose what is deep in Job's heart, and he does this through great suffering.

To think about: From what the accuser says in 1:9-11 & 2:4-5, what can we understand about what he thinks of suffering? What does God allow the accuser to do and what limits does he establish? What does this teach us about God's sovereignty?

Prayer: Ask for God to help you to worship Him in difficult times, and praise his sovereignty.

JOB'S RESPONSE

“Should we accept only good from God and not adversity?”
Throughout all this Job did not sin in what he said.
Job 2:10

Job 1 & 2 (again!)

Job is a great man, he is very rich, he has a large family and he is recognised and respected in his city and in all the land (1:3). The first chapter gives us the impression that Job has the perfect life, which is why it is such a contrast at the end of the second chapter where we see that he has absolutely nothing. The man who had everything, is reduced to sitting on an ash heap (where the town's rubbish was burned) scraping himself with a piece of broken pottery.

One day, within a few minutes, he receives the news that he has lost absolutely everything, including every single one of his children (1:13-19). What does Job do when this news hits him? (1:20) Firstly, he performs the appropriate cultural rites of mourning, by tearing his robe and shaving his head, and then immediately he is on his knees before God in worship. He has lost everything, and yet he magnifies God's name (1:21-22).

This is not enough for the accuser though, he's convinced that Job will curse God eventually, and again, he asks for permission, this time to attack Job himself (2:4-5). So not only does he afflict Job's body with a skin disease that affects him from the top of his head to the soles of his feet, he also tries to work through Job's wife to tempt him. We see this when she encourages Job to "curse God and die" (2:9).

Before we think the worst of her, we should be compassionate enough to see that she too is suffering greatly, she too has lost everything. (It is quite possible that she thinks that the only way for their suffering to end is to die). Job reminds her that to speak in such a way is to speak

as one who is foolish, and we see for the first time the theme of wisdom in the midst of suffering. Job knows that it is a foolish thing to curse God, and in spite of his suffering he does not do this. In the end, Job does not do what the accuser wants (2:10), he passed the test! So why are there 40 more chapters in the book of Job?

Part of God's purpose for Job is that he will wrestle with his suffering and reconsider his understanding of who God is and how he rules his world. Suffering doesn't just go away as quickly as it comes. All those who have suffered in any way will know that suffering cannot be dealt with lightly, pain and grief can't be treated with a band aid, it requires time. So the book of Job, doesn't just go from chapter two to chapter forty two, rather we are given, in God's grace and kindness, a long book so that suffering and the questions that it brings with it can be dealt with with the weight and depth that they deserve.

Job's story is extreme. The richest man in the land, the greatest man in the east, undeservedly becomes the most wretched. Job's story is a shadow of the story of the Lord Jesus. As we read through the book of Job we can see that Job's life points to Christ.

To think about: What can we learn from Job's reaction to his suffering? What would you say to Job's wife? After reading Job 1-2, read Philippians 2:5-11 and reflect on what our Saviour went through for our sake.

Prayer: Give thanks to God for his Son. Pray for those who you know are suffering, that they may know the true comfort that only Christ can give.

JOB'S COMFORTERS

“Now when Job’s three friends — Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite — heard about all this adversity that had happened to him, each of them came from his home. They met together to go and sympathize with him and comfort him.”

Job 2:11

The comforters: Eliphaz, Bildad & Zophar

Job 2:11-13

Job, this great man, in the end, finds himself sitting on a rubbish heap in the ashes (2:8). We don't know how long he sat there alone in his suffering, lamenting in grief and pain.

Such a great man cannot go through such extreme circumstances without people finding out what has happened, and in 2:11 the narrator tells us that three of Job's friends meet together and decide to go to visit Job to "sympathise with him and to comfort him". It is unclear how long it took for them to arrive, but it is apparent that it was a long way, so their journey probably lasted a few weeks or even months.

Who are these consoling friends Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar? The truth is, we do not know that much about them except the town's they came from, but we can probably assume that they are also prominent figures who are rich and well known. We are told that Eliphaz is from Teman, a place in Edom renown for its wisdom, which can lead us to conclude that these men were also considered to be wise.

The difference in Job is so great that they don't even recognise him when they first see him (2:12). As they arrive, they realise that Job's suffering and pain is so great that they are bereft of words. Considering that the aim of their journey was to sympathise with and comfort Job, it is quite surprising that when they see him, they are so overcome that they behave as though he has died already. They sit with him for seven days without saying a word (2:13).

The Bible makes no comment on their counselling technique, and it is certainly true that often the best thing we can do when we want to console someone is to sit with them in silence.

However seven days is a long time to go without saying a single word. Usually it is helpful to say something, at some stage, but these three friends say nothing.

To think about: How do you feel when you are called upon to comfort someone who is suffering? Are there any ways you can prepare yourself to comfort others? A challenge: find what the Bible says about what it means to be a good friend and how to comfort others in their suffering (Hint: 2 Cor 1:3-7, Rom 12:15..... How many more can you find?)

Prayer: Ask God to help and prepare you to be a good comforter.

The theology of the friends (and of Job)

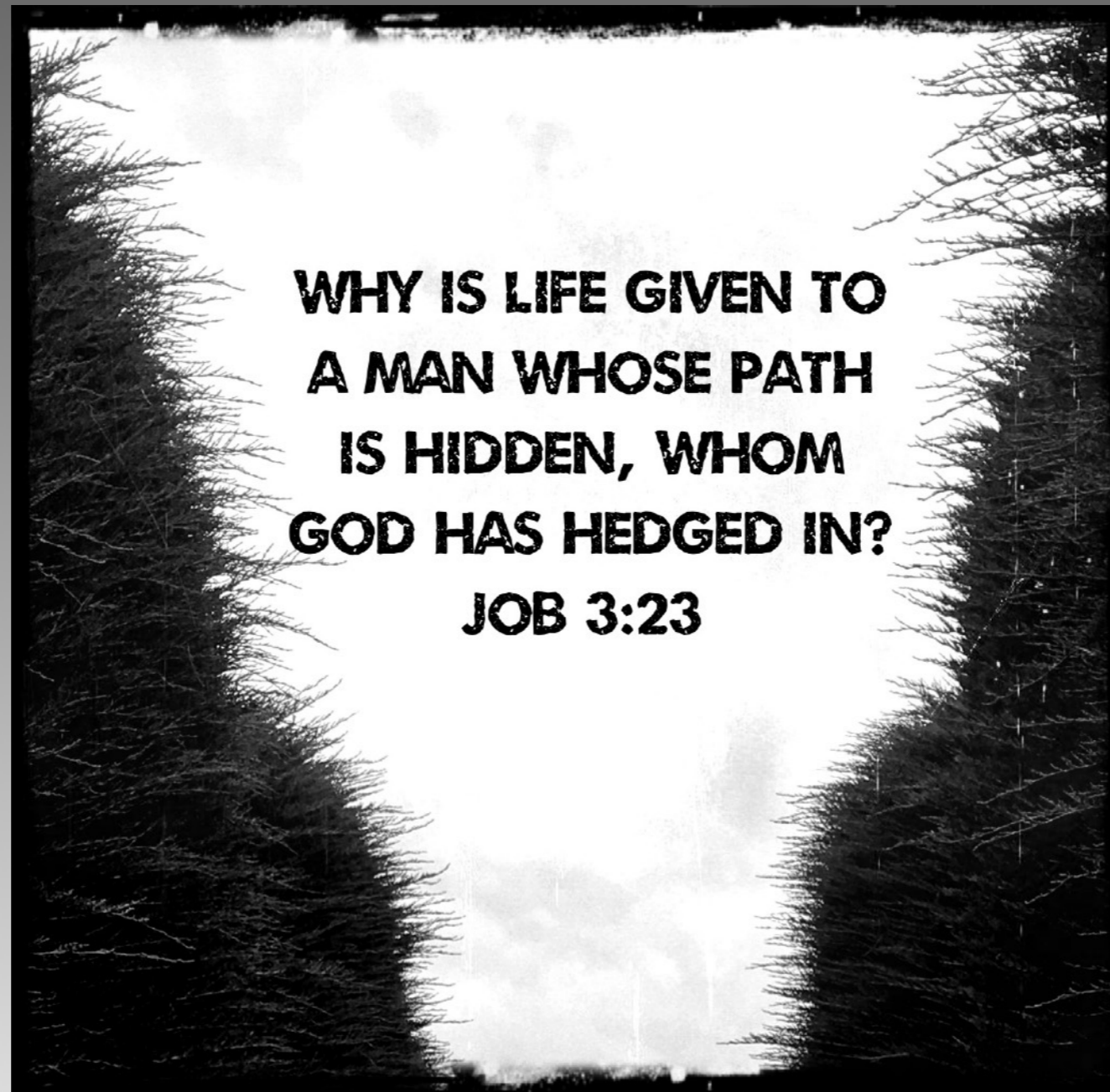
It is important before we continue, to understand the beliefs or the theology of the three friends. [Christopher Ash](#), Christian minister and author summarises it this way:

- 1) God is absolutely in control
 - 2) God is absolutely just and fair
 - 3) *Therefore* he always punishes wickedness and blesses righteousness - always
 - 4) *Therefore*, if I suffer, I *must* have sinned and am being punished justly for my sin
- The three friends believe this unreservedly, Job, however finds himself questioning these beliefs.

(Spoiler alert: these three "comforters" do not offer Job any comfort, now or in the following chapters.)

STUDY 5

JOB'S DARKNESS



Intense agony

Job 3

Have you ever felt so overwhelmed with pain or despair that you have felt there was no way out? That darkness surrounds you? That you are completely alone it feels as though God has turned his back on you? That is exactly what Job expresses here in this chapter. Job is a real believer, and yet he goes through a period of profound despair and darkness.

After being alone on the rubbish heap for an unknown amount of time, and seven days in the presence of his silent friends, Job finally cries out in pain and loneliness. As [Christopher Ash](#) says, we hear out loud Job's internal experience of the declaration in 2:13 that "his suffering was very intense", or "his pain was very great". This is the darkest chapter of the book and in this powerful and moving chapter Job bears his heart and soul. The narrator, using poetry, enables us to understand the darkness, frustration, misery, loneliness and despair that Job feels.

The poem begins with a curse (3:1-10), but Job can't really curse the day of his birth (it is over and gone) but we understand that his words are an expression that he feels so wretched that he questions his own existence. Job feels a darkness so deep that he wishes that his own conception and birth (symbols of light, life and hope) had been wiped out. In this moment, Job himself has no light or hope so he expresses that by wishing away anything that symbolises these things. In his expression of anguish he asks the question "why"? Why even exist if life only consists of suffering? (v 20-24)

It is evident that Job longs for the place of the dead. He wants to die, to escape his suffering, because it appears as though death would bring peace (v 13-19). Job, however, cannot find

peace or rest, and he understands that without God, he will never have perfect rest or peace, not in death nor in his miserable life (v25-26).

His expression of abandonment is profound, for as well as the physical and emotional pain he is experiencing, Job is also feeling real spiritual agony. God, who had always blessed and protected him, with whom he had a relationship, now feels distant and silent. Job knows nothing of the conversation that we the readers witnessed in the heavenly realm, he doesn't know that God has not abandoned him, so he feels that God is far away and he doesn't understand, so he naturally asks the question "why?"

We find much of the same type of language that Job uses in this chapter in some of the Psalms, especially Psalms 88 and 22. Jesus himself cites Psalm 22, in his moment of agony and abandonment on the cross (Matt 27:46). Again, we can see that the suffering of Job points us to the greater suffering of Jesus, who, although he was innocent not only felt (as Job did), that God had abandoned him, but God actually did turn his back on him, pouring on him the fullness of his wrath. What Job feels is only a shadow of what Jesus felt in the garden of Gethsemane and on the cross.

To think about: What things stand out for you as you read Job 3? Can you find anything that might give us hope in this chapter? What can we learn about Christians who might be suffering with depression or hopelessness?

Prayer: Ask that God might give you light and hope in the darkness and that he might give you compassion for those who suffer.

JOB'S FRIENDS

Consider: who has perished when
he was innocent? Where have the
honest been destroyed? Job 4:7

How many different meanings can you make just by
changing which word you emphasise?

Job 4 & 5

How do you feel when you bear your soul to someone and you realise that they haven't really been paying attention to what you were saying? Have you ever had someone "preach" at you different truths from the Bible and instead of that bringing you encouragement, it has only made you feel worse?

Job's friends are shocked and horrified by the outpouring of Job's words in chapter 3. When they finally speak after their prolonged silence (2:13), it is as if they only want to say what they think without taking into account what Job has really been saying. They have standard answers to the problems of life and their aim is to deliver these to Job immediately. They see the world and God from a certain point of view and from their comfortable position (one of not suffering), they want to remind Job what he should believe. Which is, in fact, what Job has previously taught others (4:3-4). It seems that Job's friends don't understand (nor do they seem to want to understand), what is really going on in Job's life, where due to what he sees as unfair pain and suffering, Job is beginning to question his own beliefs.

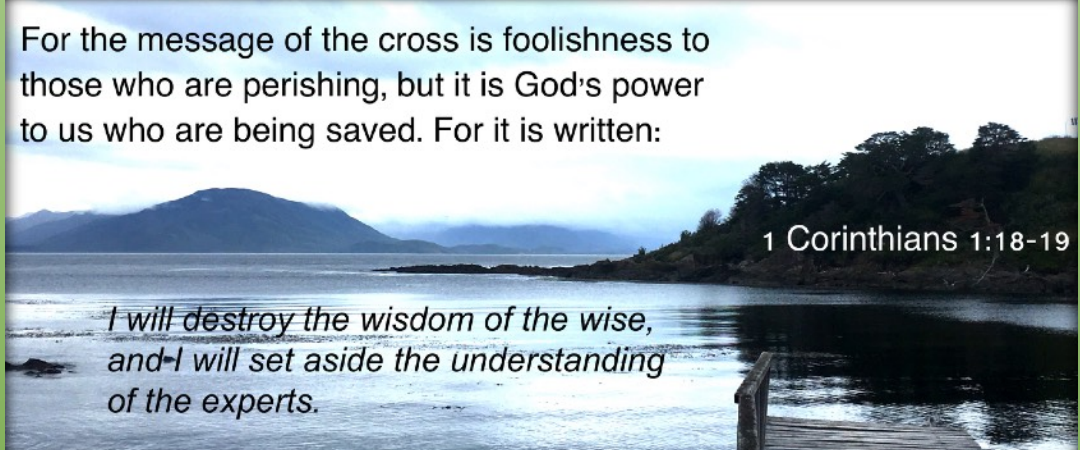
Eliphaz's speech in chapter 4, begins a long series of speeches where each of the friends speak in turn and Job replies. At this point, it is worth getting ahead of ourselves and going to the last chapter, where we hear what God declares about the things these three friends have to say. In chapter 42:7 God says to Eliphaz: *"I am angry with you and your two friends, for you have not spoken the truth about Me, as My servant Job has."* We need to be aware of God's assessment of what the three friends say as we read the book, their words have been included for our instruction, but we need to handle them carefully, because as God himself indicates, their words are not always right or well applied.

Much of what they say, we do hear echoed in the Bible, and many times we will agree with them, even the Apostle Paul uses the words of Eliphaz in 1 Corinthians, but here, in Job's extraordinary circumstances, they are wrong or misapplied.

At first glance, Eliphaz's words seem respectful and sincere, but as we think about it a little more, we can detect an accusatory tone in his words. Job has expressed that he doesn't understand why all this has happened to him (3:20, 23), but Eliphaz, in all his wisdom does know! His words if not direct, certainly imply that Job is not

blameless and upright after all... he must have some hidden sin in his life (4:8-11, 18-21), he is not wise (5:1-3) and he is crafty (5:12-14). When Eliphaz describes the discipline or correction of the Lord in 5:17 and the results that this should bring (5:18-26), we can imagine that Job might feel as though he is being mocked, because Eliphaz describes what Job once enjoyed but has now lost. We are able to discern that Eliphaz actually believes that Job is wicked, which is the opposite of what God has said in 1:8 and 2:3!

Eliphaz, along with his friends, has no place in his understanding for innocent suffering, but (as per [Christopher Ash](#)) the Bible teaches us that it is precisely the suffering of an innocent man who puts an end to sin and all its effects, which includes suffering. Paul uses the words of Eliphaz (4:12-13) correctly in 1 Corinthians 1:19, when he describes how God overturns the wisdom of the world with the message of the cross.



For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but it is God's power to us who are being saved. For it is written:

1 Corinthians 1:18-19

*I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
and I will set aside the understanding
of the experts.*

To think about: List all the things that Eliphaz says with which we would agree. Are there times when the things he says are true? Why are they not true in Job's situation? Think about times when you have been in the position of bringing comfort to someone, how do you use the words of the Bible? Read and think about 1 Corinthians 1:18-31, and give thanks to God for His wisdom and for the hope of the gospel.

Prayer: Ask God to help you to listen well when people confide in you, and ask Him for wisdom to properly apply His Word.

JOB'S COMPLAINT

Therefore I will not restrain my mouth. I
will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I
will complain in the bitterness of my soul.
Job 7:11

Job 6 & 7

In this passage, Job first addresses his friends briefly and then he speaks directly to God. In 6:1-3, Job continues to express the weight of his suffering, the anguish is almost too much for him to bear. He feels as though God is shooting poisonous arrows at him and his friends, these "comforters" just don't understand. This leads him to express his frustration with their counsel (6:5-7, 14-27).

What Eliphaz says does not satisfy Job, his words are bland like food without salt (6:6-7). He had great hopes that his friend's comfort would be like a refreshing stream, but in the end, his words of consolation are like an stream that has dried up, leaving him still desperate for something that will satisfy (6:15-20). Job is looking for someone who will actually sympathise with him and would be willing to listen to him, he would be willing to hear what such a person might say (6:24), but his friends just condemn him (6:26), and from what we read in 6:28, they don't even look at him when they speak to him!

In verses 6:11-13, Job reveals his greatest fear: he feels so weak that he is afraid he may not be able to carry on without abandoning his fear of the Lord. This is why he asks that God would crush him (6:9). He feels as though his strength is failing, and he wants to die without having "denied the words of the Holy One" (6:8-10), and he can't even count on his friends to give him the strength to keep going. So he does the only thing he can, he takes his cry directly to God.

Only God will listen carefully and understand his pain and anguish. Job wishes he were dead (7:15), but at the same time, he recognises how short and fragile life is (7:6-10). He really feels that he cannot keep living with so much pain (7:3,5), he is unable to find real peace or rest (7:4,13-14) and his life no longer make any sense or has any meaning (7:16).

In spite of all this, Job still surrenders himself to God's will and doesn't accuse Him of doing wrong. He doesn't understand why these things have happened to him, but he is unaware of anything that he may have done that would merit such a great punishment as this. He has also been diligent to fulfil the necessary sacrifices (1:5), so he cannot understand why his sins have not been forgiven (7:21). This is why he wants to protest and defend himself (7:11). He wants to go into the heavenly courtroom and present his argument before God. He doesn't want to say that he is sinless, but he does want to know what he has done that makes him deserving of the enormous tragedy that has befallen him.

Again, we can see that the book of Job points to Jesus; an innocent man who goes before a tribunal, but in Jesus' case, he does not complain. Unlike Job, Jesus does not try to defend his innocence (Is 53:7, Matt 27:12, Mark 15:3-5, Luke 23:9-10). And again, unlike Job, who asked in vain to be crushed by God, Jesus was crushed for our sin (Is 53:3-5), he bore the full wrath of God for our sake, all of the poisonous arrows of God were directed at Him. This means that Jesus is able to sympathise with those who suffer in a way no one else can (Heb 2:6-9, 17-18; 4:15).

To think about: Why is Job so disappointed in his friends? The book of Job shows us a language of lament, how does this help us? From this side of the cross, what type of consolation and comfort can we offer that Job's friends didn't have to offer?

Prayer: Ask that the Lord would give you real compassion for those who are suffering and that you might have an opportunity to point them to Jesus.

JOB'S PROBLEM

A scenic landscape featuring a clear blue sky with a few wispy clouds. In the foreground, there are some dry, brownish trees and bushes. In the background, there are rugged, brown mountains. The overall scene is bright and clear.

If only there were
someone to mediate
between us, someone to
bring us together

Job 9:33

Job 8-10

The second of Job's friends begins to speak and his "comfort" for Job is to declare outright what Eliphaz has inferred. Bildad says Job's words are like a blast of wind (8:2), and it is apparent, that just like Eliphaz, Bildad doesn't try to understand what Job is going through and he really does not sympathise with him at all.

He begins with a horrible accusation: Job's children must have been terrible sinners and their fate, a sudden and unexpected death, is a just punishment (8:4). It must be so, because God is just (8:3), and that's it, end of argument. He urges Job to return to the Lord before it's too late (8:5). This is obviously because he assumes that everything that has happened to Job is due to some sin in his life which he must now confess. According to Bildad, the wicked are punished and those who repent are blessed (8:8-22). However, we know that God himself has declared Job to be blameless and upright, and we also know that Job was very diligent and thorough in the offering of sacrifices on behalf of his children (1:5), so Bildad's words are just not appropriate in Job's case.

What is going on in Job's life doesn't fit within the framework understood by his friends. In fact Job himself doesn't know what to believe, because he sees some truth in what Bildad says (9:2), but he does know that what Bildad has said doesn't fit his situation. We, the readers know, that God agrees with Job, what has happened to Job is without cause (2:3). Job is not suffering because of his sin, rather it is because his faithfulness and faith have been identified. God knows that in the end, Job's perseverance in his suffering, will glorify Him ([Christopher Ash](#)).

Job understands that God is sovereign, and he had always believed God to be just, but what is happening to him doesn't seem to make sense. Job continues to insist on his innocence (9:22, 10:7) but he concludes that it seems as though being innocent or guilty are all the same in God's eyes (9:23), and so he begins to question the justice of God, because everything that is happening to him seems to be unjust and unfair.

Job's whole life has been turned upside down, his world is in chaos, and his language in chapters 9 - 10 reflects this. His

whole world has come unstuck and he finds it difficult to reconcile God's sovereignty with his justice. In 9:5-10, creation, instead of being stable and full of light (as seen in Genesis 2) is now full of darkness and is being shaken. God, whom he had always believed to be good seems to have become invisible and vindictive (9:11-24 y 10:3-17). In spite of this, Job persists with his desire to bring his complaint before the Lord (10:1-2), because somehow he knows that only God can give him the answers and the peace that he needs and he desperately seeks His mercy (9:15).

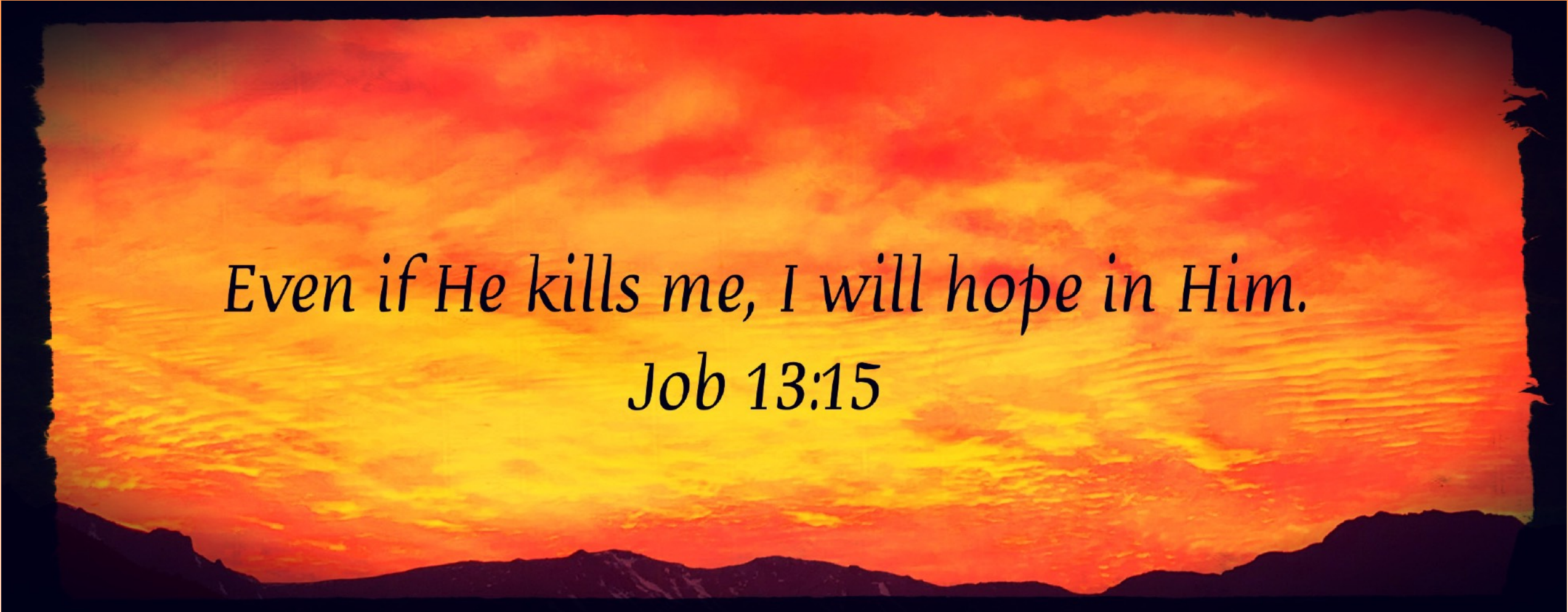
As we read Job's speech we are able to see that what most disturbs and upsets Job is the loss of his relationship with God. The deepest desire of his heart is to be in God's presence (9:2), but he cannot find peace with the Almighty (9:16, 10:2). He recognises that even though he is blameless and upright, he is unable to be holy enough to be able to come before God (9:30-31). He comes to the conclusion that what he needs is a mediator (9:33), someone who could remove the "rod" or punishment from him (9:34), but who could do such a thing? There doesn't appear to be anyone who could accomplish such a feat, so he continues on with his nightmare and his lament, wishing again that he had never been born (10:18-22).

From where we stand, we can see that Job is correct, there is no sacrifice of bulls or sheep that can completely forgive sin, and no man can be an intermediary with God. The role of mediator can only be fulfilled by someone who is perfect, someone who is God, and at the same time is man. The solution to Job's problem is found in Hebrews 9:11-15, 1 Timothy 2:5-6, and 1 John 2:1. The Lord Jesus is our perfect mediator!

To think about: Many people, just like Job, have a hard time seeing God's justice in this life, what would you say to them? What evidence from the Bible can you find to support your answer? What promises in the Bible encourage you when you feel as though what is happening (to you or others) is unfair?

Prayer: Ask God to encourage you with his promises when you are going through difficult times. Give thanks for our perfect Mediator!

JOB'S DESIRE



Even if He kills me, I will hope in Him.
Job 13:15

What the friends believe

Job 11 - 13:19

Job's three friends have come to comfort him, but their theology and their belief system is unable to comprehend Job's situation. As [Christopher Ash](#) explains, they have no understanding of the spiritual view that we, the readers, were given in the first two chapters. Their world is a world of cause and effect and they have no other explanation for Job's suffering other than as a consequence of his sin. The just and all powerful God who they claim to know, brings direct consequences which are immediate and proportional, therefore, because Job is suffering greatly his sin must also be very great.

Now, in 11:6 Zophar says that Job's punishment is actually less than he deserves! As we have seen, the only hope the friends are able to give Job is that he recognises and repents of his sin, only then will all be well (5:8, 18-26; 8:5, 21-22; 11:13-19). When Job persists in declaring his innocence, the friends just get angry and they reprimand him. Zophar accuses Job of speaking without understanding (11:1-3), of knowing nothing about God (11:4-11) and of being foolish (11:12). The friends can not understand how Job cannot see how his own actions must have been the cause of his suffering. They arrogantly presume to understand perfectly the mysteries of God and try to explain them with their simplistic answers. But what they say does not address Job's situation.

The lies of the friends

Job is well acquainted with their belief system (12:2-4, 13:1-2), but now his experience is causing him to doubt the truth of the beliefs his friends hold, and which he himself once held. There is no explanation in this "system" for those who do the wrong thing but seem to get away with it (12:6), nor for the suffering of someone who is innocent (like himself). In fact, the system

cruelly makes sure anyone who is suffering is frowned upon by those who are living comfortably, after all they brought the misery upon themselves (12:5). The friends world is well ordered, but Job's world is falling apart. Job's friends arrogantly presume to understand the justice of God but Job challenges them. In 12:13-25, Job describes the way God carries out justice, this is challenging and uncomfortable.

Job is struggling to reconcile the character of God who he knows to be just with what he sees in the world. What he does realise is that his friends are not speaking the truth. He recognises that their faith is superficial and their answers are useless, so he goes on to warn them that God will punish them if they continue speaking in this way (13:4-13), and instead of looking to them, he seeks God directly (13:3, 15).

What Job wants

As we see in 13:3, Job continues to seek a way to speak directly with God. He persists in wanting to take his complaint straight to the heavenly council before God Himself in spite of the fact that this is dangerous. According to the way Job describes the judgement of God in chapter 12, it is clear that he understands that sinful humans cannot enter into the presence of God, and yet he still wants to do this, in spite of the consequences because there is nowhere else to put his hope (13:13-19).

To think about: Job's friends believe that he is suffering the consequences of his sin, do we sometimes think the same? How does the gospel challenge us when we think this way?

Prayer: Ask the Lord to help you submit to him in all circumstances.

JOB'S HOPE

When a person dies, will he come back to life? If so, I would wait all the days of my struggle until my relief comes. You would call, and I would answer you. You would long for the work of your hands.

Job 14:14-15



Job doesn't know how to escape from God's wrath

Job 13:20-14:22

After speaking to his friends, Job turns and speaks directly to God. Yet again, we can see the deepest desire of his heart is the restoration of his relationship with God (13:20-22). His words here remind us of what happened in the garden of Eden (Gen 3:8-10), when the man and woman disobeyed, and God called out to them, he looked for them but they were afraid and hid from him. Here, Job is saying that he has no reason to hide from God, but it seems as though God doesn't want to look for him. What he really hopes, is that God would call him, and unlike Adam and Eve, Job would answer. But it seems to Job as though it is God who is hiding (13:24), and Job doesn't understand why. He feels as though God is making him suffer for sins which should have been forgiven already (13:26-27).

In these chapters, Job contemplates just how fragile life is and the mortality of humanity as a consequence of sin (13:28-14:6). What chance does man have, this "rotten" thing (13:28), of coming before the Holy and Pure God (14:4)? Just as had God had spelled out in the garden of Eden, the consequence of sin is death, which comes inexorably for everyone. The hope for renovation that Job has been able to observe in the life of plants (14:7-9), doesn't seem to extend to people (14:10-12). But for a brief moment, Job yearns for something impossible.... if only there was something beyond this life... ***If someone dies, will they live again?*** If that were possible... if there were some way to hide from God's wrath.... Job could have relief. God would look for him and he would be able to respond! (14:13-15). The damage caused by the fall, could be reverted and it would be possible to have his relationship with God restored. This is the only solution that Job can come up with that would possibly restore his

relationship with God. It is a feeble hope, an impossible dream, so Job returns to his despair. Death is inevitable, and without a resurrection there is no hope. God's wrath destroys hope just as erosion destroys the mountains and water wears away stones (14:18-22).

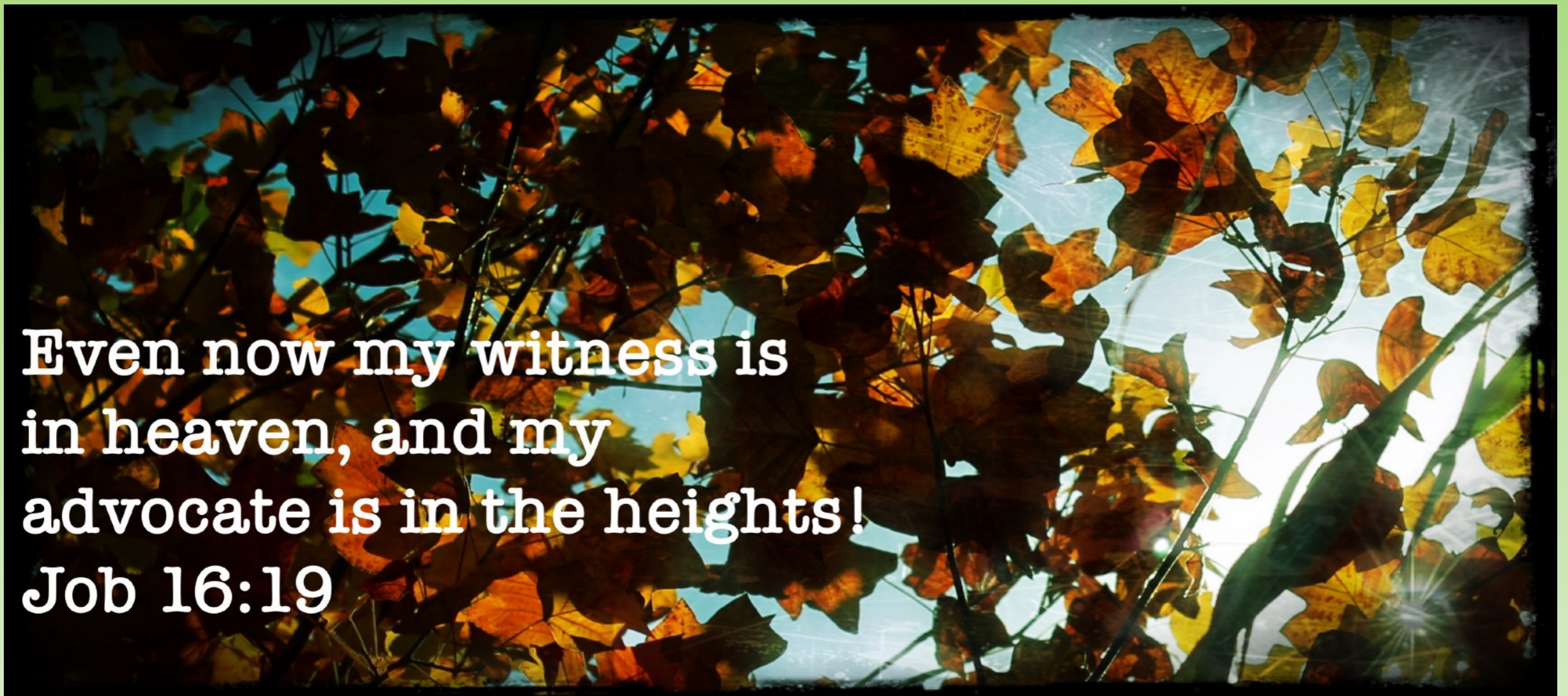
Job's feeble hope of a resurrection has become our firm hope. From the time of Job until today, God has been continually unveiling his redemptive plan. This plan, that will reverse the effects of the fall and restore the creation to a perfect relationship with Himself, finds its fulfilment in Jesus. The Lord Jesus, by suffering the full effects of the wrath of God, hides us from it. God called Jesus back from the dead and demonstrated that there is something beyond death. Eternal life is waiting for all who put their trust in Christ, and unlike Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, when God calls, they will reply to him with shouts of joy!

Job's experience of feeling abandoned by God and feeling that he was experiencing His wrath, paints a vivid picture for us, so that we can understand in a very small way, what Jesus suffered when he was abandoned by the Father on the cross and experienced the fullness of His wrath.

To think about: Read 1 Peter 1:3-9 and reflect on how our understanding of the resurrection of Jesus brings us sure hope. Knowing this, how does this bring you encouragement when times are tough?

Prayer: Give thanks to God for his redemptive plan, and the sure hope we have in our Saviour Jesus Christ.

JOB'S ADVOCATE



Job 15-16

Bildad's speech in chapter 15 begins the second cycle of speeches between the friends and Job. Bildad now makes it clear that however much Job declares himself to be innocent, he cannot believe this. As we have seen, there is no place in his theology for circumstances like Job's. This leads him to conclude that Job cannot be wise, and his words are empty, more than that, they undermine the common understanding about God (15:1-4). Even though we know otherwise, Bildad cannot concede that Job could be right, and says that his own words condemn him (15:5-6). This scene reminds us of Another, when he was before the high priests and teachers of the law. They were unable to find any evidence of his guilt, and so condemned him by his own words (Matt 26:59-66).

Eliphaz questions Job's wisdom, because what Job is saying goes against what has been passed down from generation to generation (15:7-19). This collective wisdom says that the evidence for innocence is demonstrated in this life, so therefore if you are suffering, it is the just punishment you deserve for your evil ways.

In his description of the suffering that is dealt to evil doers (15:20-34), Eliphaz uses images that come from Job's own life, and he even uses words that Job has used to describe his own misery. What Eliphaz is really saying is *"Job, you are experiencing all of this, so you must be guilty and everything that has come to you is what you deserve"*. Eliphaz's world view is clear, there is no such thing as innocent suffering, he also has no room for grace, which means that he is really unable to offer Job any real consolation (15:11). No wonder Job calls his friends "miserable comforters" (16:1-2)! Job is looking for compassion and sympathy. He says, if things were around the other way, he would offer *them* consolation, but all they are doing is increasing his suffering (16:3-5).

What follows in 16:6-16 is a further description of Job's suffering (following on from chapter 14), Job shares his

wretchedness as he describes how it feels to have God's wrath directed straight at him. It is a horrendous description of a relentless attack. Even so, Job continues claiming his innocence (16: 17).

By asking in 16:18 that his blood not be covered by the earth and cry out for him, Job is remembering the blood of Able crying out to God from the earth (Gen 4:10) and the promise of God to Noah (Gen 9:5-6) that he would require life for any blood that is shed. Job knows that God has promised to act when there is injustice, so he pleads that God himself would be his witness and would defend him (16:19-21). What had been a tiny spark of hope for a mediator in 9:33-34, Job starts to cling to. If God is attacking him, then surely it is God who must defend him (17:3).

In spite of all his circumstances, Job wants to put his trust in God. Even though his body is wasting away (17:1), his confidence is growing (17:9). In spite of the fact that it looks as though God is punishing him, Job is confident that God himself will stand up for him and defend him, even if it doesn't happen in this life.

Again, we cannot look at Job's situation without going to Jesus for the answer. Jesus is the only one who was truly innocent and who suffered the full wrath of God. It is His innocent blood that cries out to God in a better way than the blood of Able (Heb 12:24), it is His blood that cries out to God on our behalf (Rom 5:8-9).

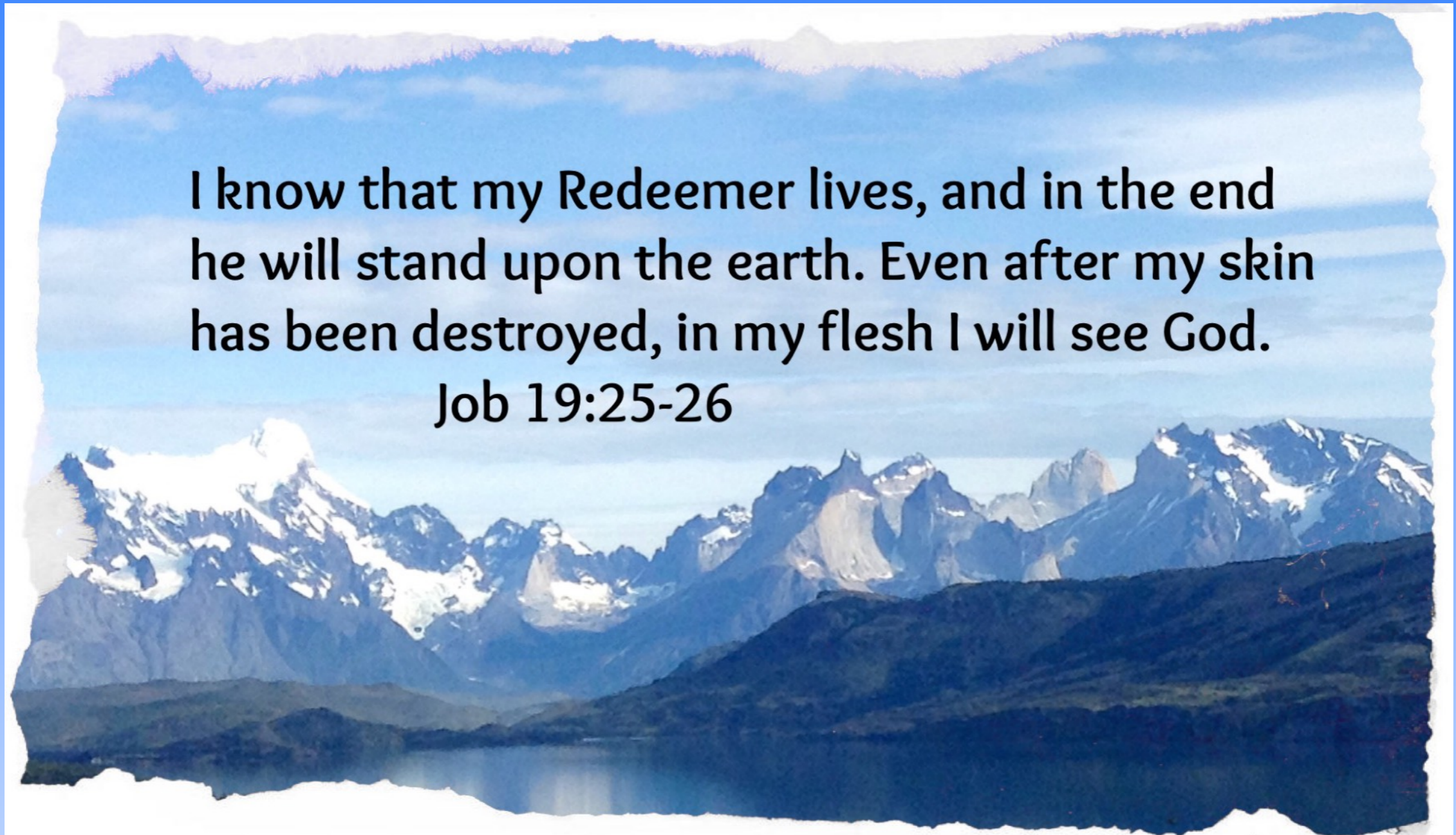
To think about: How do Job's words better help you to understand Christ's suffering? One of Job's desires was to offer real comfort to those who suffer, how are we, this side of the cross, able to do this? (Hint: 2 Cor 4:16-18)

Prayer: Give thanks to God for his great mercy to us in Christ, and for His blood that justifies us.

JOB'S REDEEMER

I know that my Redeemer lives, and in the end
he will stand upon the earth. Even after my skin
has been destroyed, in my flesh I will see God.

Job 19:25-26



Who is for and who's against Job?

Job 18-19

As we read the words of Bildad in chapter 18, we could ask ourselves the questions, is this guy really Job's friend? Does he really want to comfort him? Is this "friend" for or against Job? It is evident that there really isn't very much consolation for Job in Bildad's words. Along with his friend Eliphaz, he cannot believe that Job is really innocent. This idea is completely foreign to him, in fact in verse 3, he asks Job if he thinks that God would change the order of the whole universe (as he sees it) just for him. The way Bildad sees things is as follows: God has created an order and this is it: good people are blessed, wicked people are punished, no exceptions! This is why from verse 5 he continues with a sermon about the fate of the wicked, where he describes in horrifyingly detail what hell is like. It is a place of absolute darkness (18:5-6), a place of inevitable punishment (18:7-10), a place of unending terror (18:11-14), a place of eternal fire (18:15-16), and a place and a place of total separation from God and all of his blessings (18:17-21). (As per [Christopher Ash](#))

In Job's own words, which we have just read in previous chapters, we can see that he himself has described his own experience of these very things. It's clear that what Bildad is inferring, is that because Job is experiencing this, Job must therefore be wicked, and seeing as he refuses to confess his sin, there is no way out. Now the Bible does make it clear in other places that this is the destiny of all who oppose God and do not turn to Him. The problem is that Bildad is speaking to someone who *does* know and love God. God himself has called Job his servant (1:8, 2:3). While Bildad's words may well describe the fate of the wicked, they are certainly not suitable for Job's situation, which is why they cannot bring him comfort or relief.

Job responds in chapter 19 to this "comfort" with words full of agony and pain. What Bildad is saying fills his soul with torment and crushes him (19:2). Job agrees that God really is treating him as an enemy (19:11) and to top it all off, his friends are just as bad (19:3,22). Job's words echo what Bildad has said in chapter 18, Job does feel in the dark and trapped by God (19:8,12), he feels the fire and wrath of God (19:11) as well as complete alienation not only from God but from everyone (19:13-20). Before, Job had felt God's favour but now he just feels as though God is against him.

Job says that the hand of God has struck him (19:21). He knows that God is sovereign and all powerful, so he supposes that it is God who is striking him. What he doesn't know, is that it is the accuser who wanted God to raise his hand against Job and strike him (1:11 y 2:5). God, however does not do this, rather, he gives Job into the hands of the accuser (1:12 y 2:6). It is the hand of the Enemy, not God, who is attacking Job, but only within the parameters that God has set. We know that God is not against him, but Job doesn't know this, nor do his friends.


Job, is sure that what he is saying is right and that his friends are wrong, so he wishes he could make a permanent record of his words (19:23-24). He knows he will not find help from his friends so again he looks to his only hope. He knows that a sovereign and perfect God cannot allow injustice, so in spite of his circumstances, and the feeling that God is against him, hope springs again inside him. The small glimmer from 9:33-34 which became to a faint hope in 14:14-15 and 16:19-21, has become much more certain, and he makes the most extraordinary statement: ***I know that my redeemer lives!*** (19:25) Job has come to a point where he has become convinced that God himself is his redeemer. This yet again reveals that the deepest desire of his heart is to be in the presence of the God he loves (19:27). In spite of what Bildad has said, Job doesn't fear death because he is sure that he will see the Lord face to face, and that there is the hope of a resurrection (19:26).

At the end of chapter 19 Job gives a warning to his friends; if they continue to "pursue" him (19:28), if they don't seek, along with Job, the answers that only God can give about innocent suffering (instead of relying on their own wisdom), they will be in danger of being judged themselves by the just Judge (19:29).

To think about: Why is it significant that God himself is the Redeemer? How does it help you to know that God is for you even in difficult circumstances? (Read Romans 8:31-39)

Prayer: Give thanks to God for his redemptive acts throughout the Bible, and for our great Redeemer Jesus Christ.

JOB'S ARGUMENT

A photograph of a sunset over a body of water. The sun is a bright, glowing orb on the right side, partially obscured by the dark silhouette of a tree. The sky is a gradient of orange and yellow, and the water below is dark and calm. The entire image is framed with a rough, black, hand-drawn border.

**Can anyone teach
God knowledge,
since He judges
the exalted ones?
Job 21:22**

Job 20-21

Now Zophar takes his turn to speak, he is so upset with Job that he doesn't speak again. He is indignant about the warning Job gives him and his friends (19:28-29), and instead of trying to see things from Job's point of view, he continues depending on his own own wisdom to answer and rebuke him (20:2-3). It shouldn't surprise us then, to see that he gives another horrific picture of the destiny of the wicked. Again, we can understand that when he speaks of the wicked, he is actually talking about Job.

Zophar reaffirms what has already been said, that the wicked will be judged, that they will perish, and anything they may possibly gain in this life will be taken away (20:4-11). While evil may appear sweet to their taste, and they seem to acquire riches and possessions, these will become like poison that destroys and neither they nor their children will enjoy them (20:12-22). In the end, they will be crushed by the inevitable wrath of God as in the flood (20:23-29). The image that Zophar describes offers no hope of forgiveness or of grace. For him, the consequences of evil are immediate and there is no doubt that those who experience calamity are evil. Zophar, assumes that Job is guilty, but we know otherwise, his words are just not applicable to Job.

This time, when Job responds, instead of quickly addressing and dismissing the friends and then directing himself to God, Job engages with his friends to refute their arguments. He asks them to show him at least the courtesy of listening to him briefly before they go back to mocking him (21:1-4), and goes on to express his dismay at their lack of compassion for him, for the undeserved suffering he is experiencing should shock and surprise them (21:5-6).

Up until now, Job has been unable to convince his friends of his innocence, so now he tries to argue from a different perspective. Job proposes to open their eyes to the real world around them (not just the world they want to see), and show them that what they are saying is not correct. His argument is this: if their way of understanding the world is so right, what about the wicked? Don't evil people who openly reject God (21:14-15) seem to prosper and even thrive in the world? They even enjoy the riches they have gained dishonestly right up until their death where it seems as though they rest in peace, without any consequences even for their children (21:7-21,27-33).


Here, Job observes that the rich and poor, along with those who are evil and those who are righteous all end up in the same place... the grave (21:22-26). Job tries to show his friends that the world is much broader than they are able to see, and not everything is as it should be; innocent people suffer and the wicked prosper. However his friends are unmoved, so he concludes that what his friends are saying is "futile" or "meaningless", they make no sense, and what's more, they are failing to bring him any comfort (21:34).

To think about: If we read and understand correctly Romans 1:18, how do you feel realising that all of us deserve the fate of the wicked described in chapters 18 and 20? Now read Colossians 2:13-14. How does our understanding change when we know that Christ, even though he didn't deserve it, suffered that fate in our place?

Prayer: Give thanks to God for the grace and forgiveness that we have in Christ, and ask Him to help you share this good news with those who's still have not yet heard it.

STUDY 14

JOB'S IMPORTANCE



Does it delight the Almighty if you are righteous?
Does He profit if you perfect your behaviour? Job 22:3

Job 22

Chapter 22 begins the third and final round of speeches between Job and his friends. As we have seen up till now, the friends have not really listened to Job, nor have they tried to understand his situation. They are determined to rely on their own wisdom and to judge Job, all the while insisting that Job is wrong.

Eliphaz continues along the same line of argument as he has before, although this time he blatantly accuses Job of "abundant" wickedness and "endless" sin (v.5) and falsely accuses him of a host of evil deeds (v.6-9). Unlike Zophar, Eliphaz does at least offer Job a solution... he ought to repent and make peace with God (v.21). His words in verses 22-30 would probably be of great consolation to someone who recognises they are far from God and needs to repent and seek God's forgiveness, but as we are aware, this is not the case with Job. It just doesn't make sense for a blameless and upright man to admit to made up sins, much less admit to false accusations. Eliphaz's words are accusatory and his comfort is false and shows no grace. Eliphaz doesn't understand (nor does he try to understand) what Job is going through in feeling so far away from God and to suffer in this way. The only interpretation he can manage is the same as before, Job is a sinner who must repent.

What we have seen and heard from Job up till now has actually shown us that the deepest desire of Job's heart is to be in a right relationship with God, so it is clear that God already is his greatest treasure. This means that any kind of repentance on his part wouldn't restore this to Job (v23-25).

We should note at this point, that Eliphaz (along with his friends) is beginning to sound a lot like the accuser. Right at the beginning (1:9-10, 2:4-5), the accuser said that Job only serves the Lord for the blessings he gains from Him, and what Eliphaz is saying is that all Job needs to do to get back all he has lost is just make peace with God (22:21). It would seem that prosperity as an indicator of God's justice is what matters to the friends, and it is apparent that they think that the favour or the wrath of God depends on their own actions.

We can also see that Eliphaz plays on the doubts that Job has previously expressed about the justice of God. Eliphaz reasons that if Job even doubts God's justice this just shows that he himself must

be unjust (22:13-16). It is true that as Job has suffered, he has doubted God's justice and he has been questioning the way God carries this out in the world, but at the same time, his confidence in God has also been growing (13:15, 14:14, 16:19-20, 19:25).

Another thing we can notice through what Eliphaz says, is that he believes that what is happening to Job doesn't really affect God (22:2-3). According to Eliphaz, in the big picture, Job's predicament is insignificant and God is indifferent to his situation. But as [Christopher Ash](#) says, this is not so! The fact that an innocent man is suffering and continues to trust in God is of the utmost importance. The faith and the suffering of his servant is highly significant and has the ultimate purpose of bringing glory to God! Job himself recognises that what he is going through *is* significant, and he wavers between not wanting the personal attention of God because of the suffering it has brought him (3:23, 7:17-20) and wanting to see Him face to face to argue his case (9:32-35, 13:3,22, 19:27).

Job's suffering, and his perseverance in his faith in spite of his circumstances, ultimately brings glory to God. This points us to the true Suffering Servant (Isaiah 53:10-12), who, in spite of his undeserved suffering, persevered till the end when he was vindicated, not only bringing Glory to God, but also Salvation to his people. This helps us to see that our own suffering and our perseverance also matter to God, they do have meaning and purpose (1Peter 2:21-23). In spite of what Eliphaz says, God is not indifferent to Job's suffering, nor is he indifferent to ours. We may feel like Job: that God is far away and we are left in the dark, but he promises that he is always with us, and will never leave us.

To think about: Even though God is angry with Eliphaz in 42:7-8 because he doesn't speak the truth about God, nevertheless his words in 22:27-30 are prophetic. Read 42:7-9 How are his words fulfilled in the life of Job? How can we see these very words fulfilled in Christ? (See John 17:9-11 & Hebrews 7:23-27) What would you say to someone who feels far from God in times of difficulty or suffering?

Prayer: Ask that God would grant you faith, hope and perseverance when times are tough and that you may be able to keep your eyes fixed on Jesus, who intercedes for you.

JOB'S REFINEMENT

Yet He knows the way
I have taken; when He
has tested me, I will
emerge as pure gold.
Job 23:10



Job longs for his vindication and for God's justice

Job 23-24

After the vehement attack from Eliphaz, Job responds in chapters 23 & 24, by, as [Christopher Ash](#) puts it: pouring out his heart's desire, giving voice to his heart's confidence, and expressing his heart's fears.

In the midst of his suffering and groaning (23:2), what Job wants most, is to meet with God (23:3-6), so he searches and searches but he can't find Him (23:8-9). The words "if only" (v.3) indicate a great longing, Job longs to see God and be vindicated by Him. He doesn't understand why God seems to be hiding from him, but he trusts that God *does* see him and that what is happening to him does matter to God (23:10). Job declares that his conscience is clear, and far from setting his heart on gold and following in the paths of the wicked as Eliphaz has inferred (22:15, 23-24), Job states that he has always treasured God's word (23:12) and has followed His paths (23:11-12). He is sure that even through God's testing, he will "emerge as pure gold". Just as God is like gold to Job (22:25), Job will be like gold to God (23:10)!

In 22:13-17 Job, in spite of his confidence in the Lord, also expresses his terror at a possible encounter with God, because he knows that it is no light matter to enter the presence of the Almighty. He recognises God's sovereignty (23:13-14), so even though his heart is faint at the thought of meeting him (23:15-16), he still wants to go and say what he has to say (23:17).

In the following chapter Job takes a look at the world, and his first question is essentially: why does God do nothing when the world is so unjust (24:1,12)? To make his point, he describes all the injustice he has seen, firstly in the way

innocent people suffer at the hands of the wicked (24:2-12), and then how the wicked continue to prosper unchecked (24:13-17).

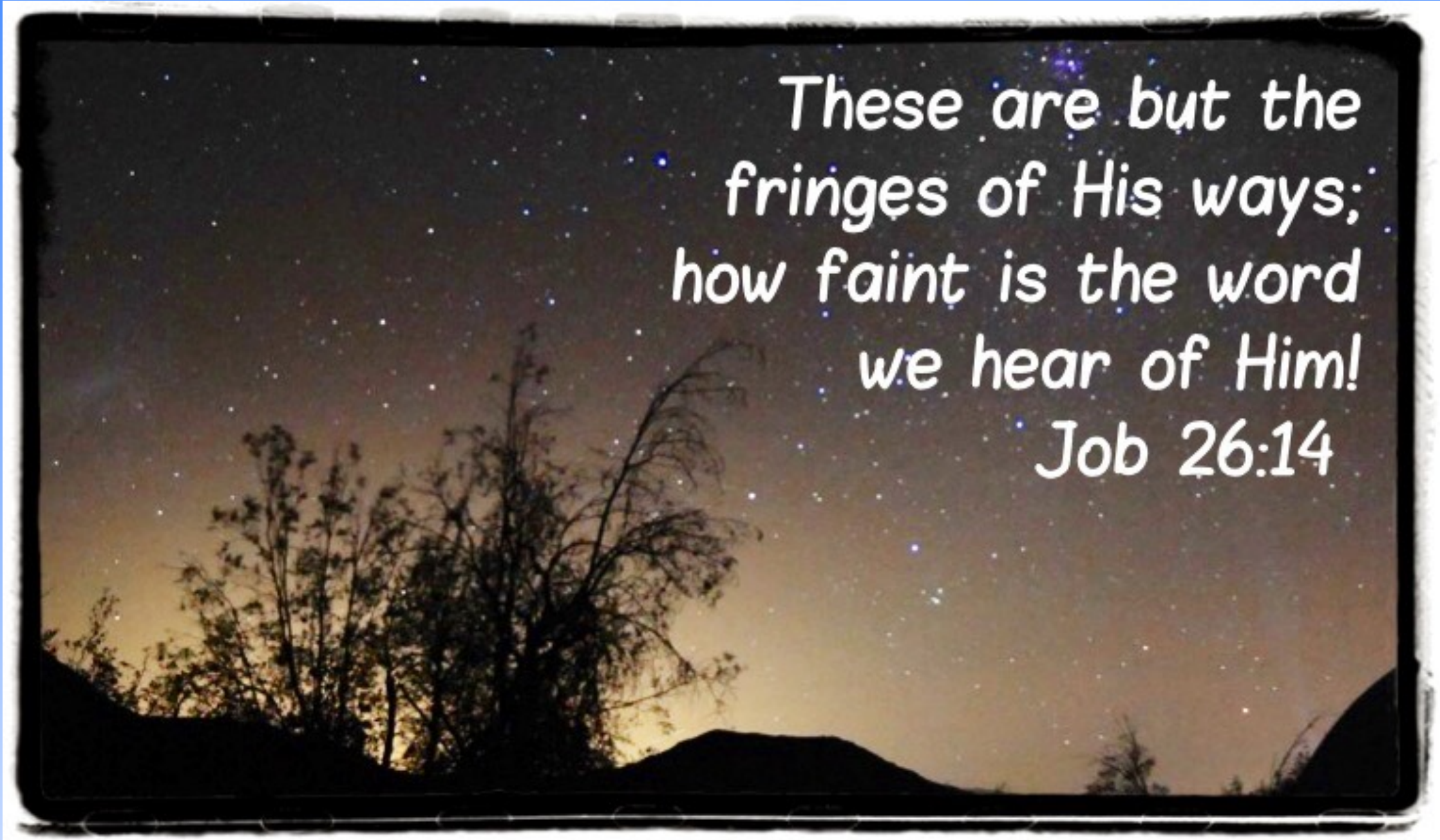
It is a description of a fallen world, a world where God's purposes seem to be thwarted... but not completely! In 24:18-24 he shows his confidence that although the wicked may prosper for a time, they cannot escape the judgement of God and he agrees with his friends that the wicked will indeed be destroyed (24:25).

Job longs for the establishment of God's perfect justice, to see both the destruction of the wicked and the vindication of the innocent. Again, as [Christopher Ash](#) says, this is what Jesus prays for as he teaches his disciples the Lord's Prayer in Matt 6:10, he asks that "*Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*" In this world, we do see injustice, but that doesn't mean that God is unjust. He has promised to establish his perfect justice in his perfect timing. Like Job and Jesus, we should also long for the perfect fulfilment of God's will.

To think about: Read 1 Peter 1:6-7 How have you seen God's refining in your life? How does knowing that this process is at work help you to face suffering? How can you be an agent of God's justice in the world?

Prayer: Lord, we pray that Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven, and we long for the day when you come to establish your perfect justice forever. Amen.

JOB'S COSMOLOGY



These are but the
fringes of His ways;
how faint is the word
we hear of Him!
Job 26:14

Job 25-26

With Bildad's final speech, we come to the conclusion of the arguments of the three friends, and we can see that everyone is losing their patience. Job's friends have had enough of him, and he in turn has had enough of them and their "comfort". The comforters speak less and less each time because they have nothing else to say. The last words of Bildad are only 5 verses long. Previously Bildad had asked Job if he thought that God would change the order of the whole universe just for him (18:4). Bildad's understanding is that God has fixed the order of the universe and Job cannot change it, so in these final words he summarises the way he sees things. This is the order of the universe according to Bildad: God is sovereign (25:2-3), God is holy (25:4-5); men are impure, small and finite, like tiny worms (25:6), life is finite, and that is it. It seems as though Bildad, like his friends, doesn't have an understanding of any kind of life beyond the present world. It is their understanding that it is only in this world where the blessing or the punishment of God is seen.

The main point of his argument can be found in the question he asks in verse 4 "How can a person be justified before God?" This question has been asked four times already (4:17, 9:2, 14:4, 15:14-16), and according to the friends the answer is "he can't". But Job longs to meet with the Lord, so he realises he needs a mediator (9:33-34), and the only way forward would be that God himself advocates for him (13:15-16, 16:19). The friends are indignant about Job's audacity to even think that he could enter into God's presence, especially since they think he is the worst of sinners, suffering justly under God's wrath. They find the idea that Job might actually be innocent and that God would listen to him (23:4-6) absurd and arrogant. That is all Bildad has to say, and this is the end of the friends' arguments.

Job responds in chapter 26, firstly with sarcastic words about Bildad's wisdom (26:1-4). Job believes that it is the friends who are arrogant, thinking that they can speak for God, and the truth is, their words are not truly wise. [Christopher Ash](#) notes that words of true wisdom come from our Saviour God, and they not only instruct, but should also offer help and salvation to those who suffer. The friends have offered Job none of these things.

Then, in the following verses Job endeavours to demonstrate from the depths to the heights, that God's sovereignty is so much more

than what they can even imagine (26:5-14). According to this poem, God's sovereignty encompasses way more than what his friends can see or experience... God is sovereign over death and the place of the dead (26:5-6). God is sovereign over all created things and over the order of creation. Surprisingly, Job also says that God can shake, change and overturn his creation according to his will (26:7-13). Somehow Job grasps that for evil to be destroyed, the order of things needs to be overturned (26:12-13). When he speaks here of Rahab and of the serpent, he is referring to the forces of evil. It reminds us of the snake in the garden of Eden in Genesis 3 and of the dragon in Revelation 12. [The other name it is called is Leviathan (Job 3:8 & 41:1; Isaiah 27:1), a mythological beast of chaos which also represents the forces of evil and all that opposes God.]

Job understands that there is a mystery here. The wisdom of God is deeper than anything that had been revealed up to that point. Anything that they know or understand of God's power or his sovereignty or his saving works are just a shadow, only the fringes of all there is to know about God (26:14). In spite of his suffering and his doubts, Job demonstrates a superior understanding of God. But it is not until we get to the New Testament that the saving works of God are fully revealed. As [Christopher Ash](#) says, it is in the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ where we see God overturning the whole order of creation. The words of Job must point us to Christ, who gave up his heavenly rule and became man (the glorious Creator becomes a creature... a worm even!). They point us to the cross, where an innocent man suffered the wrath of God in such a way that the sky goes dark and the earth shakes. They point to the resurrection, where life triumphs over death. They also point us towards that final day when the whole of creation will be overturned and God's perfect judgement will arrive for all.

To think about: Reflect on how the gospel overturns the whole of the cosmic order. Write your own words of praise to our great and Sovereign God.

Prayer: Read Ephesians 3:14-21 and ask that God would help you to grasp the measure of His love and be filled to overflowing with all His fullness.

STUDY 17

JOB'S WISDOM



The fear of the Lord is this: wisdom. And to turn from evil is understanding.
Job 28:28

Job 27-28

Over time, we have seen how the speeches of the friends have become more and more accusatory, and as we have progressed through the book, the attitude of the friends seems more and more like that of the accuser in chapters 1 & 2. We can note, then, that the “comforters” have become “accusers”. Job feels the weight of their accusations and this leads him to declared solemnly and emphatically before God (27:2), that he is innocent of wrongdoing (27:3-6). When Job speaks of his enemies in (27:7), he is saying that his friends have become his enemies, because as Christopher Ash observes, they are opposing an innocent man in the same way that the wicked oppose the innocent. So it’s not surprising that he goes on to issue them a warning, as he has done previously (13:4-13, 19:28-29), about the dangerous position they are putting themselves in before God. By continuing to oppose and accuse him, an innocent man, they are behaving the same way that the wicked behave, so therefore they are in danger of suffering themselves, the fate of the wicked that they have so aptly described previously (27:8-23). Along with this warning, Job also wants to teach them about something they have demonstrated that they lack, true wisdom (27:11).

The search for wisdom

Job goes on in chapter 28, to challenge his friend’s arrogance as he explores the mystery of true wisdom. This chapter forms an interlude where everyone, even Job himself, is invited to lift their eyes from Job’s problems and the arguments they have been bogged down with. Job’s words here also speak of his own experience looking for the answers to the question “why?” and even his search for God himself in the midst of his suffering (23:3).

In verses 1-11, Job shows that the most precious and valuable things in this world are usually incredibly difficult to find and need to be searched for with much perseverance and ingenuity, but the cost of the search is worthwhile as the treasure is found. Then in verses 12-22, Job declares that wisdom is the most valuable of all the treasures of the world, and yet it is even more difficult to find. The search for wisdom is certainly worthwhile, but although it may be searched for from the deepest depths to the highest heights, it

is impossible to find (28:14,21-22). Finally Job comes to the conclusion that to find wisdom, humans need to look to God, because He is the only source of true wisdom (28:23-28).

We are not told where to find wisdom, rather we are directed to the One who knows (v.27). This magnificent poem ends with a declaration from God in v.28 (which is written in prose to differentiate it from Job’s words); *“The fear of the Lord is this: wisdom. And to turn from evil is understanding.”* This reminds us of God’s words in chapters 1 & 2 describing Job himself (a man who fears God and turns away from evil)!

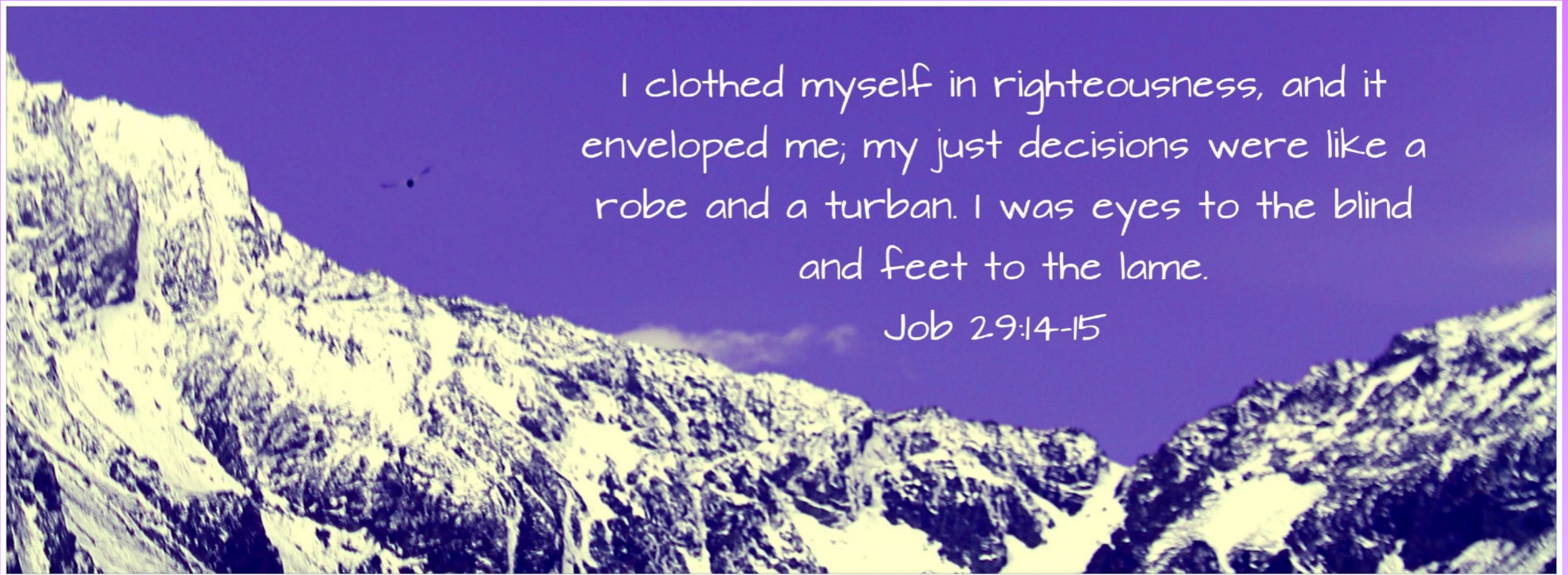
I believe that while Job is teaching his friends in this chapter, he is also speaking to himself. The chapter provides a moment for everyone to stop and reflect. The friends, who had thought themselves so wise should be rebuked and instead of relying on their own wisdom, look to God. Job, in the midst of his suffering and in his intense longing for God to answer his questions, needs to direct his own gaze to what is most important: the answers or God himself? (which anticipates the end of the book) Finally, this interlude points the readers or hearers of the book to what is most important, and be reminded that the answers to the problem of suffering (or any other thing for that matter) cannot be found outside of God himself.

Job’s description of the search for a precious and incomparable treasure, reminds us of the parables Jesus taught about the kingdom of God in Matt 13:44-46. Often, what looks foolish or incomprehensible in the eyes of this world, is wise in God’s eyes. The apostle Paul says in 1 Cor 1:27-31 that Christ is our wisdom. He suffered a senseless death on the cross, which in the eyes of the world looked weak and pointless, but for those who trust in Him, he becomes their true treasure: incomparable and unbelievably precious.

To think about: How does true wisdom help us in suffering?

Prayer: We pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, would give us a spirit of wisdom and revelation to grow in our knowledge of Him. (Eph 1:17)

JOB'S FINAL APPEAL



I clothed myself in righteousness, and it enveloped me; my just decisions were like a robe and a turban. I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame.

Job 29:14-15

Job 29-31

In chapters 29 to 31, we read the final words of Job. It is important we remember that nothing has changed in his circumstances, in fact, he believes he is very close to death. Although he declared in chapter 28 that wisdom is only found in God, he has also stated that he cannot find God (23:8-9). God has not responded to him, and he continues to feel that he is being treated unjustly. So Job is not only looking for answers, but he is demanding them. His last speech is divided into three parts, looking back on what has been, lamenting his present suffering and his final defence of his integrity.

Job's deepest longing

Once more, the words of Job in chapter 29 reveal his deepest desire. Again, with the words "if only..." Job expresses his longing for things be the way they were before, but it's not his possessions and riches that he seeks, rather he longs for the relationship he had with God. He wants to return to how it was when God was with him, and when he enjoyed God's friendship (29:4), when the light of God's face shone over his life and God looked after him (29:2-5). He also longs for the way he was able to bless others as God's servant, a man known for his wisdom, integrity and justice (29:11-17). His deep longing, is that his friendship with God would be fully restored. It is interesting to note that the way he describes himself in verses 12-15 is similar to what Jesus says when he refers to himself (in Luke 4:18 & Matt 11:4-6) as the fulfilment of who the prophet Isaiah describes as the Servant or Messiah (Is. 35:3-6 & 61). Jesus claims that he is the One who fulfils these words, and they describe a life of faithfulness, wisdom, righteousness and justice. We can understand from the nature of his friendship with God, and the way he lived his life, that it points to the way Jesus would live perfectly.

Job's lament over his suffering

Job's hope for the restoration of former things is quickly subdued as he considers his current miserable situation, which he describes in chapter 30. His world has been turned completely upside down. Instead of being treated the way he had been formerly (when he was respected and people were anxious to hear what he had to say), he is now despised even by the most contemptuous people in society (30:1-9). Instead of peace he is overwhelmed by terror, affliction and calamity, instead of light he

surrounded by darkness, instead of rejoicing there is only sorrow (30:10-31). The worst thing of all, is that when he appeals to God, he does not answer (30:20). The only thing that awaits him is death (30:23). These two chapters help us to understand in a very personal way, the immense changes in his life that were described so briefly in the first two chapters of the book. We can see that, just as his life before his suffering points to Jesus, so too does his life of suffering. All that he suffers in feeling abandoned by God, points to the much greater agony and abandonment that Jesus would suffer on the cross. Again his words remind us of Psalm 22.

Job defends his integrity

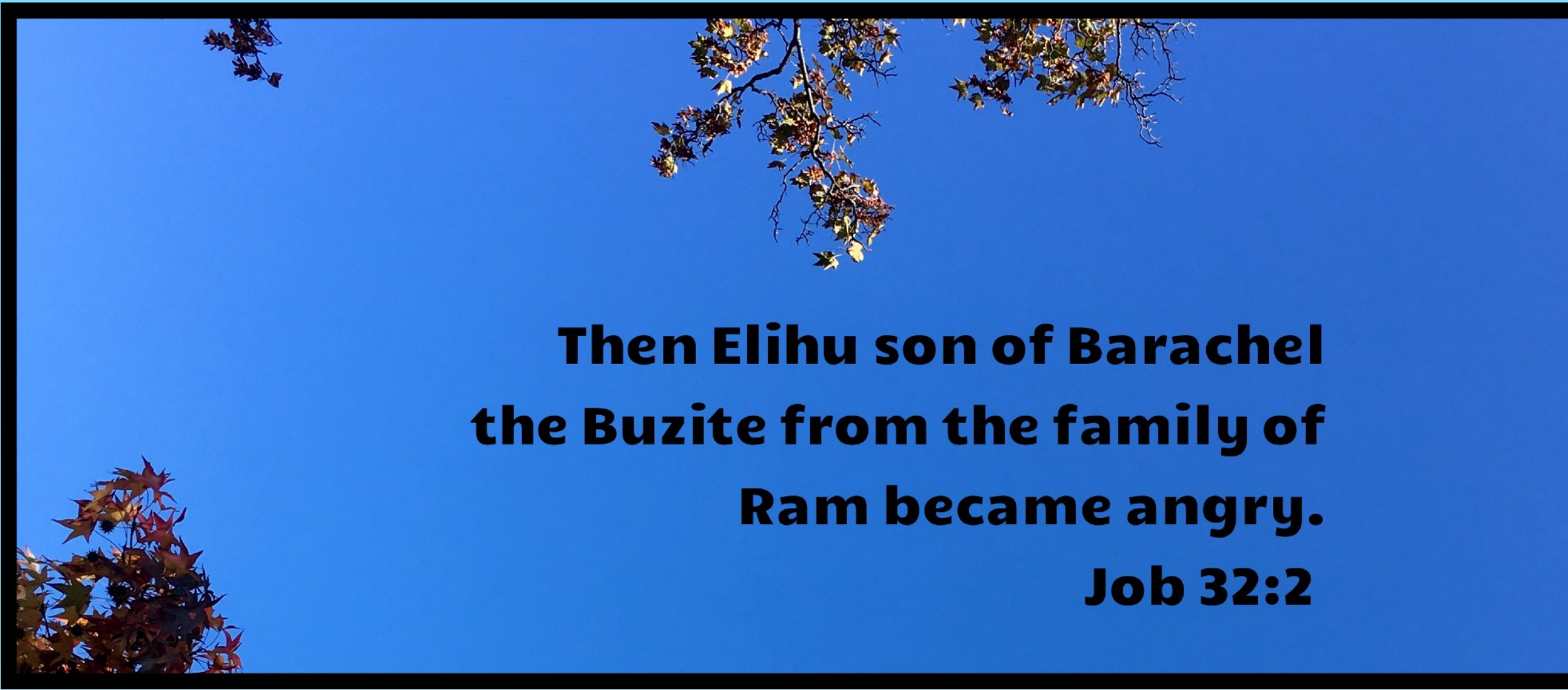
Unlike Jesus who suffered without trying to defend himself (Is 53:7, Matt 27:12, Mark 15:3-5, Luke 23:9-10), we can see that Job is indignant about what he sees as unfair treatment and he wants to challenge God. In chapter 31, Job defends himself before God as though he were in a courtroom. By doing this, however, we need to note that Job is questioning not only God's justice but his whole character. In his defence, Job uses the strong and binding language, that was used in ancient covenants. Each of his declarations comes with a curse or punishment that Job calls down upon himself if it were found that he is guilty. In doing so, he solemnly declares that he is innocent of all the charges his friends have accused him of (and a few more, such as adultery and idolatry, just for good measure!). He finishes by stating that his conscience is clear, and defies God to find something in his life that deserves the punishment that he is presently suffering (31:4-6, 35).

To think about: What do Job's desires and longings reveal about his heart? Can you identify your own desires and longings? What do these reveal about your own heart? How does Job's life point to Christ? What doubts could we be feeling about Job after hearing everything he has expressed up until this point in the book?

Prayer: "God, examine me and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any bad thing in me. Lead me on the road to everlasting life." Psalm 139:23-24

STUDY 19

JOB'S SILENCE



**Then Elihu son of Barachel
the Buzite from the family of
Ram became angry.
Job 32:2**

Job 33:1-5

Job, upon finishing defending himself, is silent and waits in hope for answers. His friends are also silent, now refusing to say any more to him because they believe he sees himself as “righteous in his own eyes.” 32:1. In this moment of silence and waiting, a young man appears, bursting with the need to contribute to the conversation. His speeches (in the following 6 chapters) are uninterrupted, so we can understand that what he has to say must be significant. As Elihu is introduced at the beginning of chapter 32, there are some important things we can learn about this new character.

The first thing we learn, is that he has a genealogy. He is the only character in the book of Job who has one, and it is repeated twice (32:2 & 6). Genealogies in the Bible tend to serve a specific purpose, usually they identify those who belong to the people of God (or a specific groups within God’s people). By giving Elihu a genealogy, I believe the narrator wants to identify him as someone belonging to the people of God, therefore the readers or listeners should be alerted to the fact that they must pay careful attention to what he is saying. There are a couple of possible ways we can trace his family line: firstly, as he is called a Buzite, he could be linked with Buz, a nephew of Abraham (Gen. 22:20-23); or secondly, he could be linked with the family of Ram (Ruth 4:18-22, 1 Chr 2:9-15, Matt 1:2-6). In any case, whichever way we may want to trace his genealogy, the idea is, that he is somehow connected with the people of God and therefore has an essential contribution to the argument.

We can also note that he has been listening to the whole argument without having said anything up until this point because of his age (v.4, 6). This tells us that he is someone who is respectful and courteous, in keeping with the traditions of the his culture. We will also see that he has been paying very careful attention to all that has been said. It is only now, after everyone

has said their piece, and there is a pause, that he begins to speak.

It is also evident as we read on, that his message is urgent. He feels the need to speak and cannot contain himself any more! He has an important word to speak and it is imperative that he proclaim it (v.18-20).

The other important thing that this introductory text highlights, is that he is very angry! What he has been hearing has made him angry. Within four verses (v.2-5), we are told he is angry four times. Christopher Ash suggests that he not just a grumpy guy, rather, he is expressing anger in the way that Moses (Ex. 32:19) or Jesus (Matt 21:12-13, Mark 11:15-17, Luke 19:45-46, John 2:13-17) do. That is, he is expressing the righteous anger of God, he is full of zeal for the honour and glory of the Lord. He is angry with Job because “he had justified himself rather than God.” (v.2) and he is angry with the friends because they condemned Job but had “failed to refute him” (v.3 y 5). Christopher Ash goes on to suggest that Elihu comes with the prophetic voice of God. This is apparent when we see that his main goal in the following speeches is to rebuke and admonish Job for his defiance towards God and to prepare his heart for the imminent arrival of God.

To think about: What is the role of the prophets in the Old Testament? How does the role of prophecy change in the New Testament? How do we understand prophecy now in the light of Christ? What temptations can suffering bring us?

Prayer: Pray that God might use His Word to search your innermost being in such a way that it might reveal to you the thoughts and intentions of your heart and convict you of anything that hinders you from trusting Him.

JOB'S SILENCE

**For God speaks time and
again, but a person may
not notice it.
Job 33:14**



Job 33:6-33:33

Elihu, this young man full of zeal for the glory of the Lord, now begins to speak. He has listened to the arguments of the older men (32:4, 11-12) and he respectfully suggests that their wisdom (and here he is speaking to Job's friends whose wisdom comes from tradition and their experience of the world) has not dealt adequately with Job's situation (32:13-16). Elihu declares that there is another source of wisdom, that which comes from the "breath" of the Almighty, and speaks to the spirit of man (32:8). In this way, Elihu is declaring that it is now time to listen to what God has to say, and that this word from God will come through him. In fact, Elihu feels compelled to speak God's word because the Spirit itself is driving him (32:17-22).

After this introduction, Elihu speaks directly to Job, imploring him to listen (33:1-2), he offers Job a few reasons as to why he should trust him: he is sincere (33:3), he is compassionate (33:6-7) and because he speaks with the spirit of God (33:4-5). In contrast to Job's friends, Elihu is not interested in the reason for Job's suffering, nor does he accuse him of made up sins, what Elihu is interested in, is what Job has said in his presence, and about his attitude during his suffering.

In 32:2 he accused Job of "justifying himself rather than God", and now he proceeds to summarise some of the things he has heard Job say as a basis for his argument (33:8-13). It is clear that Elihu has been paying careful attention to the previous speeches. He notes that Job has declared his innocence (33:9), which we have seen repeatedly (9:21; 10:7; 13:18-19; 16:17; 23:4-6; 27:5-6; 31:5-6, 35-37), and that he accuses God of treating him like an enemy (33:10-11), which we have also seen (13:24, 27; 16:9-14; 19:6-12; 30:21). He identifies that by saying these things, Job is inferring that God is unfair and unjust, which makes Elihu angry. Saying that God is unjust is a serious accusation, and Elihu rebukes Job, and tells him he is wrong in saying this, because God is greater than man (33:12). This will be an important theme in his speeches, but he first wants to

focus on something else Job has said (33:13) that God does not speak to him (9:16; 19:7; 30:20). The answer that Elihu gives him is this: God does speak! Many times and in different ways, but people may not notice (33:14).

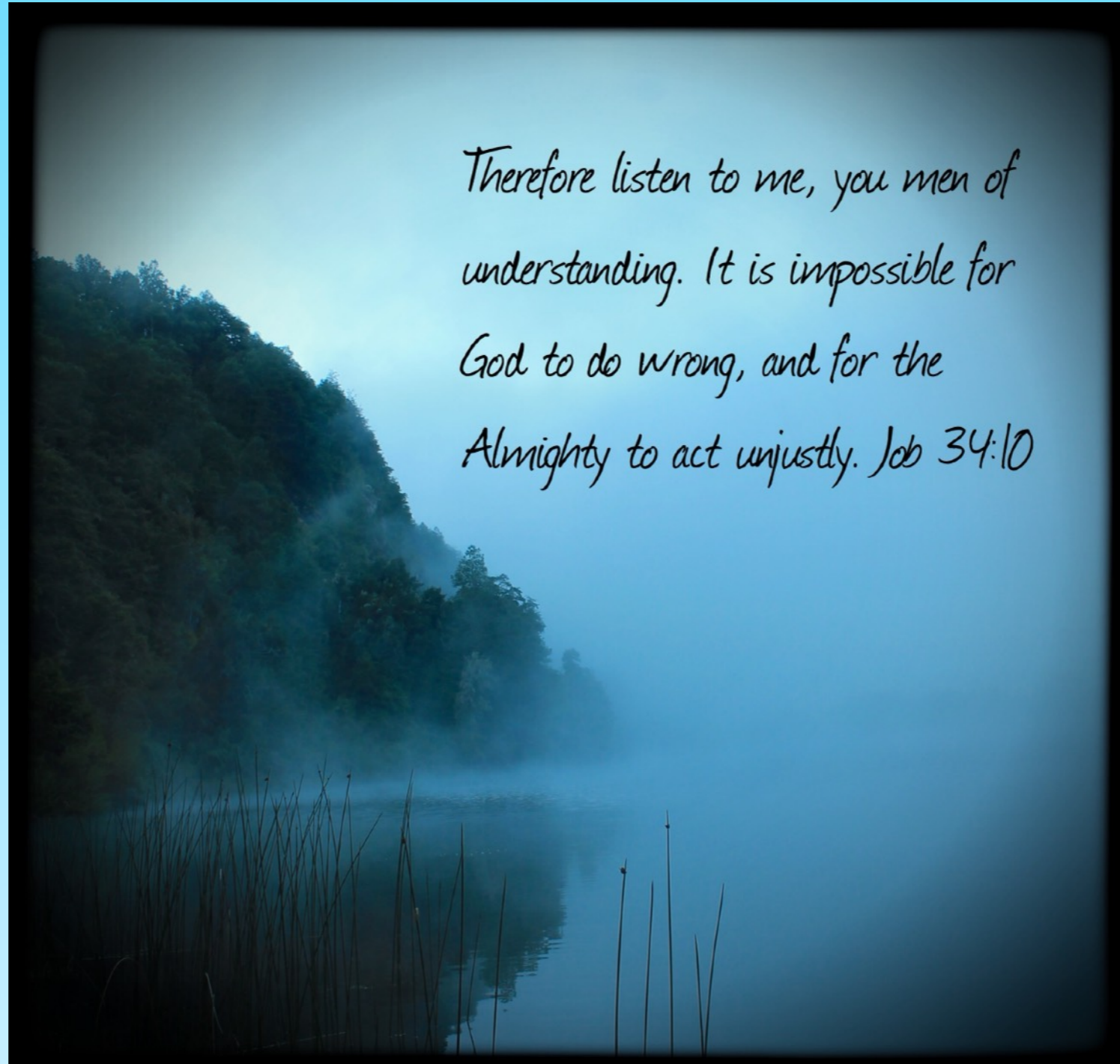
Elihu goes on to show two ways that God speaks: in dreams through the conscience (33:15-18), and in suffering (33:19-22). Elihu explains that God speaks with the purpose of salvation, he wants to prevent people from sinning, and spare them from the Pit (33:17-18, 29-30). We have seen that Job has declared that his conscience is clear, but Elihu wants to help Job to see God's activity in his suffering. He challenges Job to see if God really has been silent in this time, and he suggests that his suffering is not necessarily punishment. As he speaks to Job, he draws attention to some things that we have noticed that Job has been learning in the midst of his suffering (33:23-28). God may not have given him the answers he is looking for about why he is suffering, but he reminds Job of things he has been clinging to during his suffering: the need for a mediator, and for someone to intercede for people before God.

After his speech, Elihu gives Job an opportunity to respond (33:5, 31-33), but Job doesn't answer as he did after the speeches of his friends, this shows us that Job is listening and thinking about this new perspective that Elihu is offering.

To think about: Read Hebrews 1:1-2 and John 1:14-18 How does God speak this side of the cross? How has God brought words of salvation to your life?

Prayer: Give thanks to God for bringing us salvation through his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and ask that he may give you opportunities to bring this news of salvation to others.

JOB'S SILENCE



Therefore listen to me, you men of understanding. It is impossible for God to do wrong, and for the Almighty to act unjustly. Job 34:10

Job 34

In this, his second speech, Elihu focuses on the central theme of God's justice. Initially, he addresses all those present (34:2-15) and then he speaks directly to Job (34:16-37). His hope is that this argument will be pleasing to their "palate" (12:10), and that his words would be more appetising to Job than what his friends have offered (6:5-7). He asks that they all would have discernment (34:4) and then he addresses Job's accusation that God is unjust (34:5-9). Unlike Job's friends, who falsely accuse Job, Elihu only repeats the words that he has heard Job say in his presence.

In chapter 15:16 Eliphaz falsely accused Job of "drinking injustice like water", but now Elihu says Job "drinks derision like water" (34:7), he is indicating that by implying that God is unjust, Job is mocking God in the same way that those who oppose God do (34:8-9). What Elihu is saying in these verses is that Job is speaking like one who keeps company with evil men, (he is not saying that Job himself is an evil man), this is a warning for Job, very similar to the warnings Job himself gave his wife in 2:10 and his friends in 19:29 and 27:11-12. Elihu's warning for Job is that should he continue in this way, God will treat him as one who opposes him.

Elihu then directs his hearers attention to God's great power: there is no higher authority in all the universe (34:13), He is the Creator, and he could cause every living thing to perish (34:14-15), how then, could he not rule with perfect justice?

When Elihu speaks to Job in 16-37, the essence of his argument is this: how can you dare to question God's justice, simply because you haven't received the answers to your questions? By questioning God's justice, Job is questioning his nature (34:17). Elihu says that God is the Almighty and he is perfectly just in all that he does. He can not be influenced by

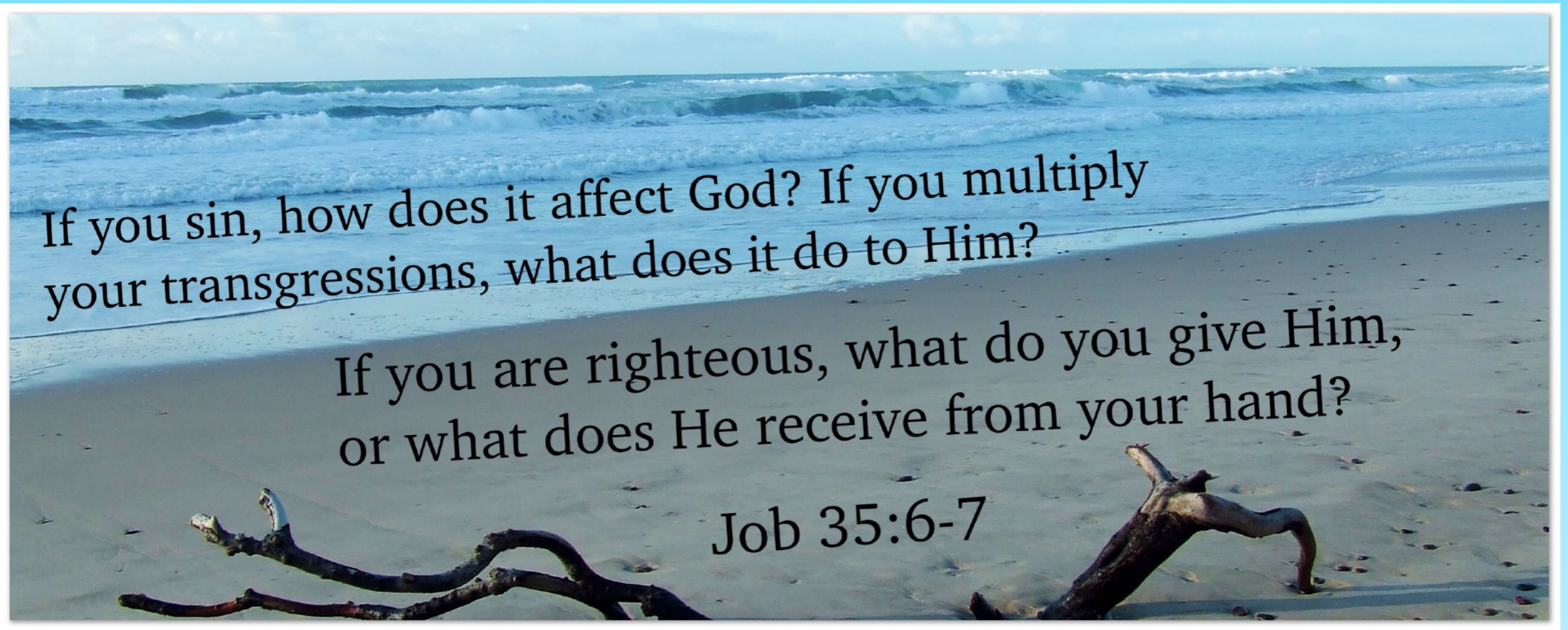
the rich and powerful of this world, that is to say, he can't be bribed (34:18-20); he judges impartially (34:19), and with perfect knowledge, nothing that people do is hidden from his sight (34:21-25); he judges openly (34:26-28) and his judgement is certain, even if it not immediate (34:29-30). This confirms what Job has said previously (24:18-24), but it seems as though the continual suffering he has been going through has made him doubt these truths in some way. It is important to note that what Elihu is doing, is reminding him of these truths so that he will keep trusting God instead of doubting. He also rebukes Job and calls him to repent for the things he has said about God in those moments of doubt and due to his lack of understanding, otherwise he risks being judged by God himself (34:31-37).

We can see that the way Elihu deals with Job is different from the way his friends did, and even though what he says might be hard to for Job to hear, Elihu is highlighting and repeating the truths that Job professes to already know, and he is careful to rebuke him in a way that will lead him to to repentance. So unlike the friends, who only offered rebuke, Elihu also offers hope and comfort to Job.

To think about: What truths about God do you need to remember in difficult times? Are there things you have said in the midst of suffering or difficulty that you need to repent of?

Prayer: Give thanks to God for his great mercy and grace. Ask that you may find comfort during tough times and that through His word and wise counsellors, you may be reminded of His faithfulness to his promises and the certainty of those still to be fulfilled.

JOB'S NEED TO REPENT



If you sin, how does it affect God? If you multiply your transgressions, what does it do to Him?

If you are righteous, what do you give Him, or what does He receive from your hand?

Job 35:6-7

Job 35

In this next speech, Elihu addresses something very important, the idea that people believe that they are owed something by God. He challenges Job to look at God's justice in his own life. He has accused Job of having said *"there is nothing to be gained from trying to please God"* (34:9), reminding Job of his words in 9:22 *"It is all the same... 'He destroys both the blameless and the wicked'"*. He also reminds Job that he has been continually insistent on his innocence, thus inferring that he, God's servant, deserves something better from God. This contradicts his words from chapter 2:10 *"Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?"*

At the very beginning, we saw that Job didn't serve God for whatever he might gain, rather, he served Him because he is Sovereign and worthy of worship. It seems as though his prolonged and severe suffering has caused Job to waver in his acceptance of trouble from God. It is true, that suffering wears us out, and the longer we have to endure suffering, the harder it is to keep trusting in the goodness and justice of God. As Job has been focusing on himself and his own situation, he has started doubting the understanding of the good, faithful and just God that he had always had. Instead of opening his mouth and proclaiming *"The Lord gives and the Lord takes away; may the name of the Lord be praised"* as he did in the beginning (1:21), he is starting to say things he shouldn't about God... *"Job speaks without knowledge; his words lack insight"* (34:35, 35:16, 38:2 and 42:3).

Our journey through the book of Job has shown us the roller coaster of Job's struggles, sometimes he magnificently shows the sovereignty and justice of God (9:4-10; 12:13,22-23; 23:22; 24:23-24; 26:6-14; 27:11; 28:1-28; 31:2,4), and other times he questions and doubts (9:22; 12:16-20; 19:6; 21:5-7,23-26; 24:1; 27:2; 30:26; 31:4,6). Now in verses 4-8 Elihu challenges him, explaining that God is not influenced by people's works. He is not saying that what happens to people doesn't matter to God (as Eliphaz suggested in 22:3), or that what they do doesn't require a response from him; rather, Elihu is saying that God is superior and transcendent, so what people do cannot affect the essence of his character. All the sin in the world cannot change

God's holiness, he is still good no matter what people do (34:6). On the other hand, God doesn't need the good deeds of people, nor is he indebted to anyone for the good things they might have done (34:7).

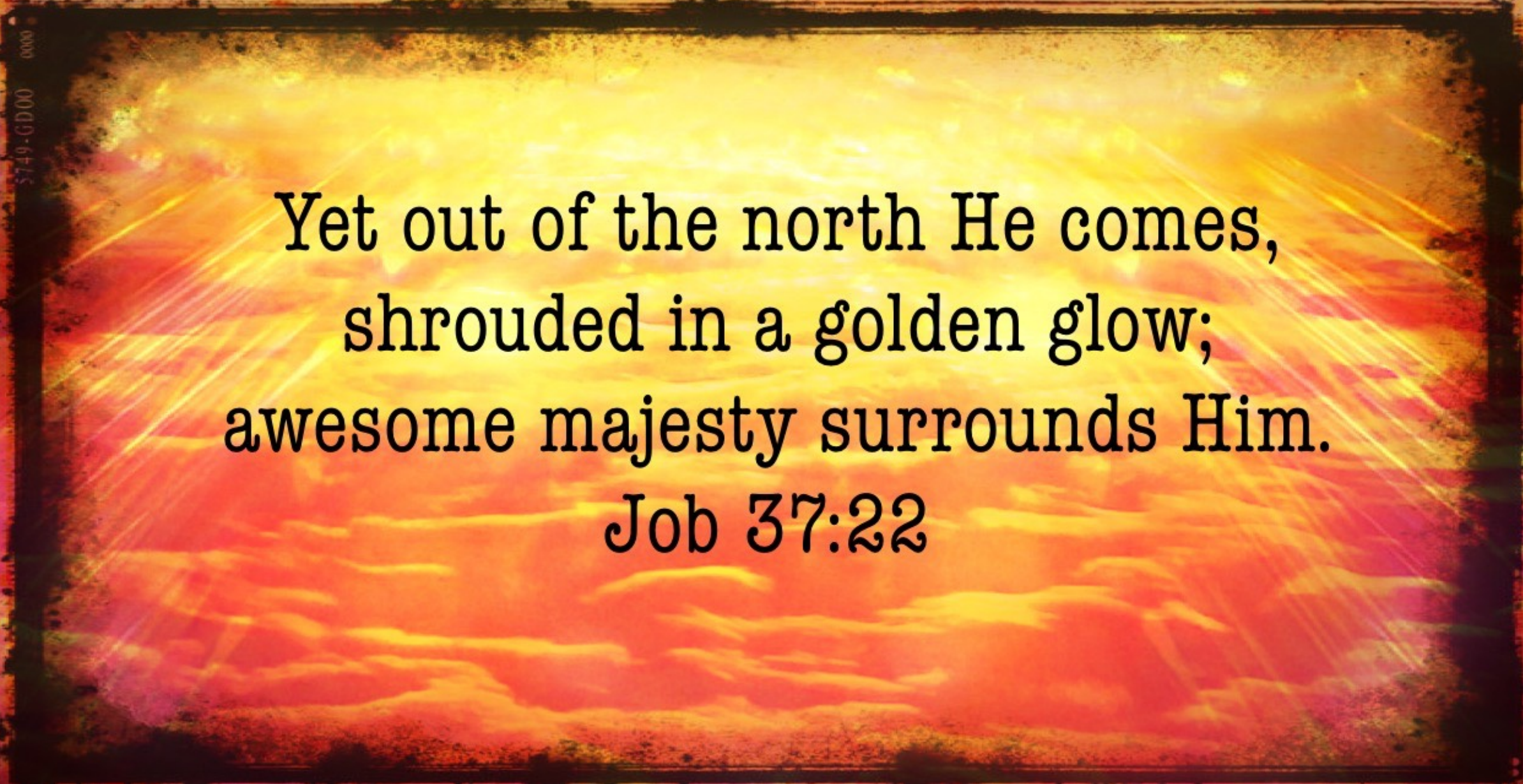
The second part of Elihu's speech (34:9-16) is a bit harder to understand and is quite severe. [Christopher Ash](#) explains it this way: Elihu identifies a difference between those who just cry out and lament because of their suffering and those who cry out in faith to God. He is asking Job what kind of cries he is making. We have seen that through much of his suffering, the deepest longing of Job's heart has been for the Lord, and for a restored relationship with Him, so he has cried out to him in faith; but Elihu is urging Job to think about how he is crying out, because some of his words, words requiring an immediate response from God and getting upset and angry when he can't perceive a response from God, sound a lot like the cry of someone without faith. Elihu suggests that such a cry would be *"lacking insight and knowledge"*(35:16).

In spite of these strong and difficult words, what Elihu is trying to do, is to help Job hold fast to his faith in God, even though his suffering continues to be difficult and prolonged. He is warning Job of the need to take care in moments of doubt, in case he starts to believe the lies of those who do not trust in God. In the end, Elihu's purpose is to urge Job to continue strong in the faith he had at the beginning, to trust and worship God for who he is, and not for what he could gain or for what he thinks God might owe him.

To think about: Read Psalm 73 and compare the experience and reaction of the psalmist with that of Job. The turning point for the psalmist is in v.17, how do we enter into the "sanctuary" of God? (Hint: see Heb 4:14-16) How can you help others to fix their eyes on Christ in the midst of suffering or difficult circumstances?

Prayer: Give thanks to God that we can confidently draw near to the throne of grace through the blood of Christ, and that we will always find grace and help there when we most need it. (Heb 4:16)

JOB, LOOK UP!



Yet out of the north He comes,
shrouded in a golden glow;
awesome majesty surrounds Him.

Job 37:22

Job 36-37

Elihu, in his last speech boldly attributes justice, glory and honour to the Lord. He declares that his words come from God (which is what the words “from afar” indicate in 36:3), so therefore from his perspective, Elihu is speaking with the authority of God (36:2-4), which is why he can say “For my arguments are without flaw; one who has perfect knowledge is with you.” (36:4), because he is indicating this perfect knowledge comes from God (not himself). His goal in this speech is to help his hearers, and specifically Job, to see the greatness and glory of God. Four times he uses the word “behold” to get his attention and declares that God is mighty (36:5), God is exalted in his power (36:22), God is beyond understanding (36:26), and finally he describes the power and glory of God as displayed in lightning (36:30).

As we have seen in his previous speech, Elihu has said that God isn't influenced by people (35:5-8), but he now says that although God is superior to humans, he is not indifferent to them. Elihu reminds Job that everything people do is important to God and that he does pay close attention to them (36:5). His eyes are on the afflicted and the righteous (36:6-8) and he cares for them. He also punishes the wicked (36:6) and corrects the arrogant (36:8-9). Sometimes affliction comes, and God uses it to reveal the heart and open the ears of people to correction from Him and call them to repentance (36:8-10). Elihu also affirms that there is reward for those who are obedient and punishment for those who disobey (36:11-12), but affliction or suffering is not necessarily a punishment but rather a something that God uses to refine and determine the inclination of the heart.

Verses 13 to 21 are meant to be both words of warning as well as words of encouragement for Job. Elihu reminds him that God speaks and brings comfort in the midst of trouble (36:15) and that God calls people to save them from the “jaws of distress” (36:16), so Job should not have a heart full of resentment or anger like the wicked (36:13-14). He should keep from judging others (36:17) and from longing that God would judge them (36:20) lest he himself should be judged (36:17).

Job should also be careful of the lure of riches, because they are unable to sustain him or give him strength (36:18-19), and he should be very careful that he is not tempted to think that to turn to evil would be preferable to suffering (36:21).

After these words of warning to Job, Elihu proceeds to lift his eyes to see what is most important, to magnify and exalt the Lord. He reminds Job that he must submit to the teaching of God, (even if it is through suffering) and that it is God who should be magnified (not himself), 36:22-25.

Elihu goes on to describe the great power of God (36:26-37:24) using the same example that Job used in 28:25-26, the weather; something that people have no control over but which God controls perfectly. From the formation of the clouds and the mist (36:27-29), to the storms and the lightning (36:29-33), God is sovereign over the cycle of precipitation. God's voice is like the thunder and his works are beyond the understanding of people, whose hearts tremble at his Majesty (37:1-5). He speaks and snow, or torrential rains fall, displaying his mighty power (37:6-7). God controls and directs the all the weather, using it to bless or punish according to his will (37:8-18). If Job can see all this, and understands just how much greater God's knowledge and wisdom are compared to human understanding, how can he dare to challenge him? (37:14-20) Elihu's words can be summarised in this way: Job, be wise! Recognise who God is and be prepared to have the right attitude before him because he is coming! (37:21-24)

Elihu's goal in speaking with Job, has been to prepare him for the arrival of the Almighty. He has challenged Job's wavering heart and warned him of the danger of a defiant attitude. He has also reminded him of important truths and lifted his eyes to see the glory and power of the Living God. Job has remained silent as Elihu has spoken, he has not interrupted nor has he disagreed with him, so we can understand that he is pondering the challenges Elihu has brought before him.

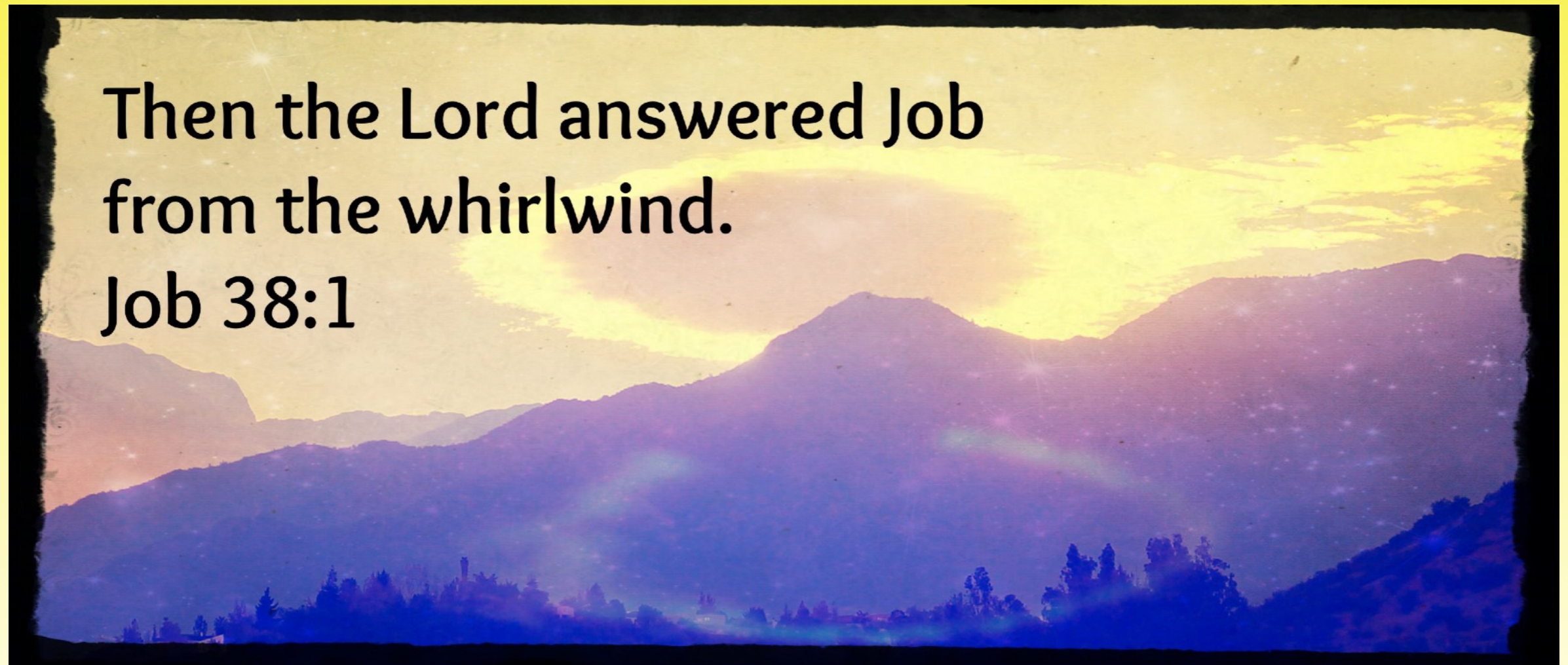
To think about: Read 2 Tim 3:12-17 How do you respond when you are challenged by the Word of God? When would it be necessary to bring a challenging word of God to someone?

Prayer: Ask that God would give you an open heart that is willing to listen to challenging words from Him when necessary.

GOD RESPONSE

Then the Lord answered Job
from the whirlwind.

Job 38:1



Job 38-40:5

Finally the moment that Job has been waiting and longing for arrives, God himself appears! God had not abandoned him, he is faithful to his servant, but he arrives when and how He chooses (not when and how Job demands). God appears amidst the interminable suffering of Job, and speaks to him from a whirlwind. This is not a peaceful moment! Job's world has been turned upside down and God comes to him in the middle of the chaos. Job has spoken of the fury, strength and chaos of the whirlwind earlier as he has spoken about the judgement of God. He has said that the whirlwind of God has battered him (9:17), he has asked why the whirlwind does not carry away the wicked (21:18) and he has declared that it is the whirlwind of God's judgement that will finally carry away the wicked (27:20-21). Elihu has also stated that it is God's sovereignty over the whirlwind that is one of the things that displays His mighty power (37:9). So it is not surprising that God chooses to speak from a whirlwind, what is surprising, is that instead of coming in fury and judgement, God comes with wisdom in the whirlwind.

When God speaks, his first words are the same as those of Elihu in 34:35 and 35:16 *"Who is this who obscures My counsel with ignorant words?"* (38:2). God is challenging Job about his words, words spoken during his time of suffering. We have seen that Job has said many things that have reflected his faith in God, but he has also said things where he has not only expressed doubt but also defiance. By challenging God, and thinking he can question the way God runs the world (19:7; 24:1;30:26), Job has spoken without wisdom and without faith in the Sovereign God. Elihu had started to open Job's eyes to the majesty and sovereignty of God (37:15-20) by asking him a series of questions, and now God himself continues with more questions for Job.

We can see a pattern and a purpose in these questions: starting with questions about the earth and the sea (38:4-21), followed by questions about the heavens (38:22-38) and

then questions about the wild animals of the earth and sky (38:39-39:30), God is reminding Job about his creative work (Gen 1) and his sustaining work of upholding the universe. God relentlessly asks question after question, instead of just stating these things about himself. The questions not only help Job to recognise that he has absolutely no idea what is required to rule over creation, but, as [Christopher Ash](#) explains, they also require Job to think more profoundly about the full extent of God's sovereignty.

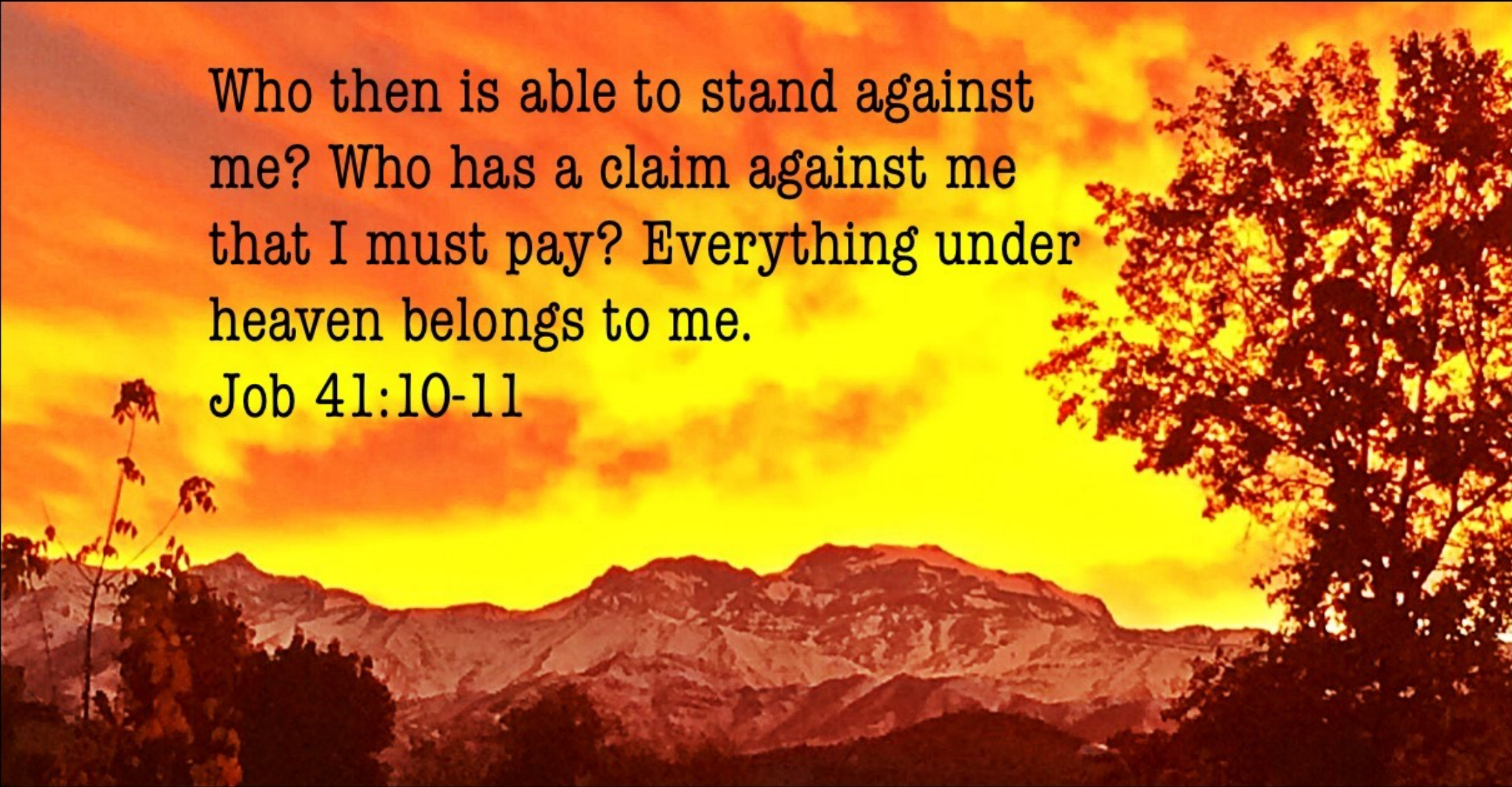
In the poetry of these words, we can see a series of contrasts: light and dark, good and bad, chaos and order, visible and invisible, wild and tame, wise and foolish, predator and prey and life and death. Nothing in creation, says God, is out of his sight or beyond his control. God specifically wants Job to think about the all of the things he has seen in the world including his own suffering, and recognise that everything, from the earth's foundations to the distant galaxies, including even the smallest details, is under His personal oversight and care.

What is Job's response to this first speech from God? *"I am so insignificant. How can I answer You? I place my hand over my mouth. I have spoken once, and I will not reply; twice, but now I can add nothing"* (40:4-5). In spite of all that he had previously thought he would say if he could enter God's presence (10:1-4; 13:13,18,22; 23:4; 31:37), now that God is here, he is speechless. He recognises his insignificance before God and keeps listening to what God has to say and stays attentive to what God will show him.

To think about: Reflect on God's amazing sovereignty and the way we are able to see this in his creation and in his management of the world. What passages of the Bible help remind you of the glorious greatness of God?

Prayer: Ask that God would be glorified in his world and in your life.

GOD'S RESPONSE



Who then is able to stand against
me? Who has a claim against me
that I must pay? Everything under
heaven belongs to me.

Job 41:10-11

Job 40:6-42:6

God has not finished with Job yet, he continues to speak from the whirlwind, and uses the same words he used as he began to speak in 38:3, *"Get ready to answer Me like a man; When I question you, you will answer."* (40:7) and this time he brings a more serious accusation before Job. He has already said that Job *"obscures His counsel"* (38:2), meaning that Job has not spoken correctly of God's sovereign and wise government of his creation, and now he says *"Would you really challenge My justice? Would you declare Me guilty to justify yourself?"* (40:8). This is what Elihu had said and what had made him so angry (32:2), so now God confronts him in a very surprising way. God challenges Job to take His place to execute judgement over the world (40:9-14), and to just give him a small test, to show that he can manage, God will give him a couple of his creatures to control, the Behemoth (40:15-24) and the Leviathan (41:1-34).

These are not just some other wild animals to add to the list of animals to tame (it it were possible) along with the wild ox (39:9-12). In the ancient world, there were two beasts that evoked terror and were symbols of great power and evil: the Behemoth (symbolic of the power and strength of death, possibly based upon the hippopotamus) and the Leviathan (symbolic of chaos and evil, possibly based on the crocodile). In handing these two particular beasts to Job to tame, God is giving Job all the forces of evil to see if he can get them under control.

The point God is making here, is that there is no one other than He, who is capable of bringing judgement on the world, because only He can contain and control all the forces of evil and of death. It is obvious to Job (as it is to us), that there is no one capable of doing what God is asking of him. These powers are greater than those of humans, so it would be impossible for Job to defeat and subdue them. God, however declares his own superiority, and demonstrates that he has actually already got these forces under his control. It is clear, that the task that is impossible for Job is something God himself has already done. He has Behemoth captured (40:24), and he has Leviathan on a leash and enslaved (41:1-4). The main point is clear in 41:10-11, if Job fears the Behemoth and the Leviathan, how much more should he fear God who has control over everything in creation, including the forces of evil.

We have witnessed how God clearly had control over the accuser in the first two chapters of the book, who was unable to do anything to Job without permission from God (1:12, 2:6), and he does not put a toe outside the boundaries set for him. So now, in the final chapters of the book, along with Job, we are given a picture, painted for us in poetic language of the great power of God over all the forces of evil.

When Job understands this, and realises that nothing can stop God from accomplishing his purposes nor his just government of his creation, he is filled with awe (42:2). Job knew before about God's sovereignty, but now he has a much deeper understanding of what this means, especially when applied to his own life. Job also recognises that he has done what both Elihu and God had accused him of (34:35, 35:16, 38:2), and he confesses that *"Surely I spoke about things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know"* (42:3), he recognises that he has not spoken correctly about the judgement and sovereignty of God. In verses 42:4-5, Job echoes Gods words from 38:3 and 40:7 and he focuses on what God has said and on what he has learned; things that before he had only "heard" about, he now has "seen", that is to say, he now knows the Lord in a way that he never had before, and this causes him to repent (42:6).

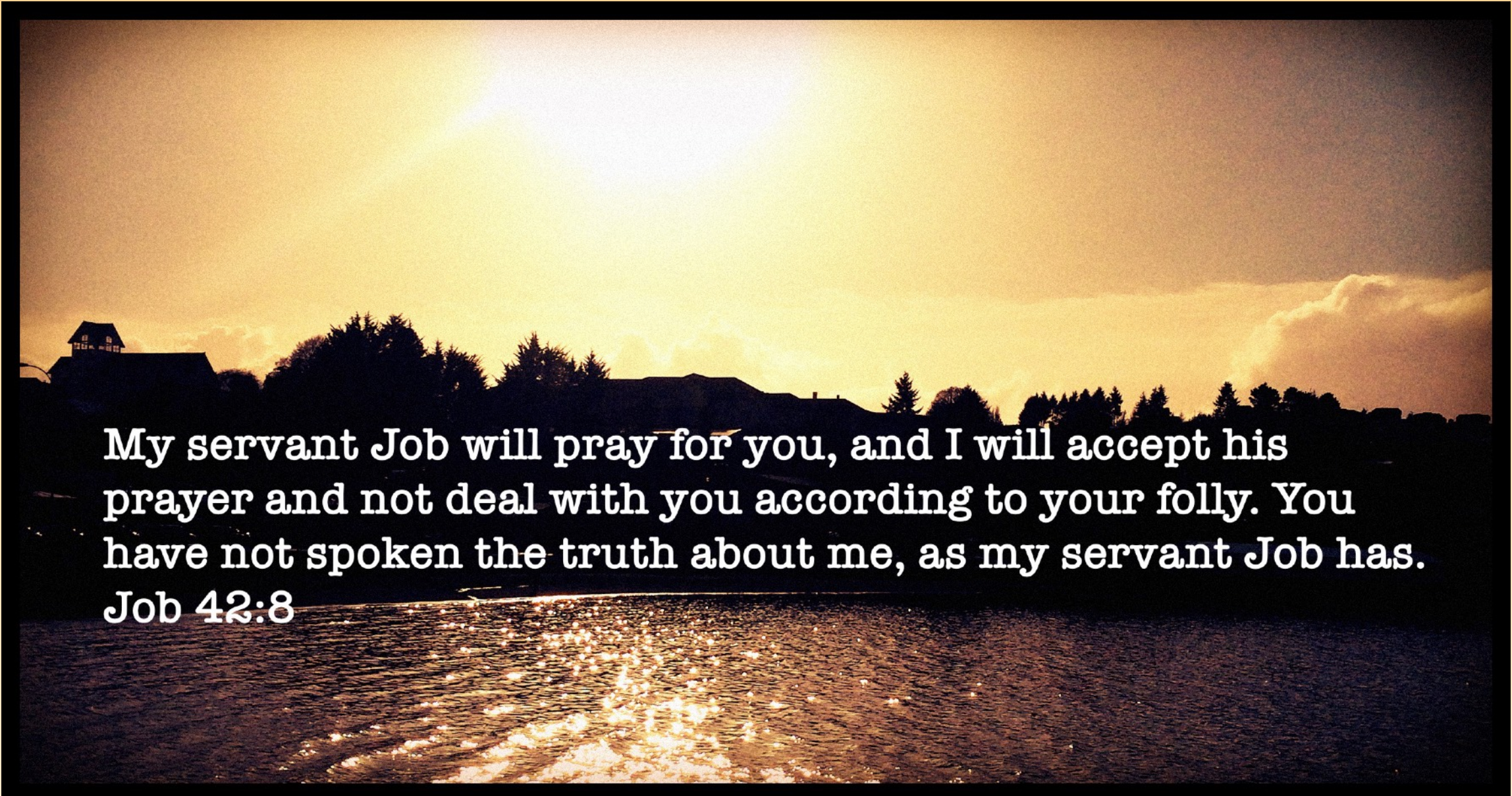
God has not given Job the answers he was looking for, but Job has seen him in a way that is clearer than ever, and without asking for any more answers, he trusts in God's sovereignty, even though his circumstances still have not changed..

God has never been subject to the forces of evil, but we as humans are, because of sin. It isn't until we get to the New Testament that we can begin to understand what it cost Him to win the battle over evil and death on our behalf. It is only through the redemptive suffering of his perfect Son on the cross, that we can be free from Leviathan and his mate Behemoth.

To think about: Read Col 2:13-15 and Rev 19:11-16 and reflect on the glorious victory won by Christ, and on everything that makes him worthy to rule and to judge.

Prayer: Acknowledge and submit yourself to the glorious sovereignty of God.

JOB'S VINDICATION

A photograph of a sunset over a body of water. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright orange and yellow glow in the sky. The water in the foreground is dark, with the sun's reflection shimmering on its surface. In the background, there are silhouettes of trees and a house with a chimney.

**My servant Job will pray for you, and I will accept his prayer and not deal with you according to your folly. You have not spoken the truth about me, as my servant Job has.
Job 42:8**

A mediator instead of an accuser

Job 42:7-16

Christopher Ash says that “the most deeply compassionate and merciful thing God can do is to humble us and bring us low so that we bow before him and lean on him and trust him.”

This is what God has been doing in the life of Job, through his suffering and in the midst of the whirlwind. God has considered his servant and has tested his heart, and this has led Job to a greater understanding and dependence on God than he has ever had before. In all of this, Job, in spite of his doubts and questions never did what the accuser wanted, he never curses God. It is true that he spoke of things he didn't understand, but the deepest desire of his heart was to always look to God. In the end, when God speaks and reveals his sovereignty, his glory, his power and his wisdom, Job does what every creature must do before their Creator, he kneels, repents, worships and trusts, in spite of the fact that nothing in his situation has changed. The most important thing, his relationship with God, has been restored and Job is content with this. God, in his mercy and grace, calls Job his servant and declares job to have spoken rightly about Him (42:7 y 8).

Unfortunately, God cannot say the same for the three “comforters”. These men had trusted in their own wisdom, and instead of offering Job words of hope, relief and help, they falsely accuse him. They did not heed Job's warnings, believing they knew God better than him and thinking they were in the right, but now they are facing Gods anger. Speaking directly to Eliphaz God says: “*I am angry with you and your two friends, for you have not spoken the truth about Me, as My servant Job has*” (42:7). What they need at this point is a mediator.

The way God, in his mercy decides that his anger can be assuaged is through them offering a sacrifice and asking that an upright man, whom God has declared to be right would intercede for them, God's servant Job. God accepts the prayer of his servant Job on behalf of his friends, and does not treat them as they deserve (42:8). Job, who had longed for a mediator (9:33, 16:19, 19:25), becomes a mediator himself,

interceding for his friends, foreshadowing the One who would intercede for his people before God, the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Tim 2:5, Heb 7:25). Jesus' saving work on the cross means that the accuser no longer has the right to accuse before God, because there is now a perfect mediator (Rev 12:9-11).

It is only at the very *end*, in the last six verses of this long book that God restores Job. The blessing that God pours out on Job is not a reward for enduring his suffering or for his worship of God, or for not cursing Him, it is just the unmerited mercy and grace that God shows to those who are in a right relationship with him. Job knows that true wisdom is to trust in the Lord completely in all circumstances, acknowledging that He is sovereign in both the good and the bad times.

Our lives in this fallen world are a mixture of blessings and difficulties (including suffering), but the book of Job reveals to us, and reassures us, that God is always sovereign and just. Being a follower of Jesus does not make us exempt from suffering, rather it is a call for us to share with Him in his suffering, but life with Him comes with the promise that the One who suffered will be with us in our times of difficulty and will lead us to the *end* (Heb 2:14-18, 2 Cor 1:5, 1 Peter 4:13, Rom 8:18). The promise for all who follow Christ is for a glorious *ending*, which is really a glorious beginning, eternity joined in perfect relationship with our perfect, just, wise and sovereign God.

To think about: How does the book of Job give us hope? What have you learned about God, wisdom and suffering as you have studied this book? Read Luke 22:31-32, what do these verses tell us about our Intercessor and about times of trial for Christians?

Prayer: Give thanks to God for our redeemer and mediator Jesus. Ask that he would be with you during tough times and that he might give you compassion and grace as you comfort others who may be suffering.

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