

Will It Be Well With You?

January 22 — Job 12:1-14:22

Day 22 — 343 Days to Go

Today In Your Reading...

Job responded to his accusers, who were supposed to be his friends. They turned out to be more irritating than comforting. Do you have any friends like that?

In the process of responding, Job made some strong remarks about the finality of death. "How frail is humanity! How short is life, and how full of trouble! Like a flower, we blossom for a moment and then wither. Like the shadow of a passing cloud, we quickly disappear... When people die, they lose all strength. They breathe their last and, then, where are they? As water evaporates from a lake and as a river disappears in drought, people lie down and do not rise again. Until the heavens are no more, they will not wake up nor be aroused from their sleep" (14:1, 2, 10-12).

Job was not aware, at this point, that Christ would come, nor that He would die and be resurrected, to deliver man from death; but Job does accurately describe the death of one who does not know Christ. "If a man dies, will he live again?"

What we do on this earth, in the time that we are given, is so important. **Oftentimes, we think that we have many years left to do those things that we need to do, while now is the time to do what we want to do.** But life is short and it is full of trouble, and we don't know what it has in store for us. We would be better off to take care of what we know is right to do and worry about our desires another day. **Life is about Christ** — getting to know Him, becoming more like Him, glorifying Him through our words and deeds, and telling others about Him. What can possibly be more important?

When death does come, and it will, we need to have things in order, and I don't mean earthly

things, but spiritual things. Job asked, "Will it be well with you when God examines you? Or can you deceive Him as you deceive a man?"

Daily Reflection

Death is inevitable. Are you prepared for it? Will it be well with you when it comes? If you died today, do you know for sure that you would spend eternity in heaven? How do you know? What will you say when you approach the gates of heaven and God asks, "Why should I let you into My heaven?"

What other spiritual matters do you need to resolve before death? Do you have any regrets, any unresolved conflict, anything to make right?

"It is appointed for a man to die once, and after this comes judgment" (*Hebrews 9:27*).

Making Sense of Suffering

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January 23 — Job 15:1-18:21

Day 23 — 342 Days to Go

Today In Your Reading...

Two of Job's friends insulted him with their words, for both perceived Job to be suffering because of sin that he had committed. Eliphaz said, "If you will listen, I will answer you from my own experience. Wicked people are in pain throughout their lives. They conceive trouble and evil, and their hearts give birth only to deceit" (15:17, 20, 35).

Bildad echoed Eliphaz with these thoughts, "The truth remains, that the light of the wicked will be snuffed out... The light in their tent will grow dark. It will be said that this was the home of a wicked person, the place of one who rejected God" (18:5, 6, 21).

Job responded to both, "I have heard all this before. What miserable comforters you are! How long will you torture me! How long will you try to break me with your words?" (16:2; 19:2).

It is a common misconception that suffering happens because of sin, but it is clearly evident from the story of Job that **those who love God are not exempt from trouble**. We, too, experience hardship in our lives, and that hardship may be caused by various reasons, such as the fallen world in which we live, consequences of our sinful deeds, testing from God to refine our faith, or, as in Job's case, flagrant attack from our spiritual enemy.

Knowing which one of these is the source of our troubles is difficult. Sometimes, **suffering simply does not make sense**. However, although we may not be able to understand the pain that we experience, it can lead us to rediscover God.

Daily Reflection

Where do your thoughts run to when you are suffering? Do you fill your mind with your own wisdom or the truths of God's Word?

More often than not **we spend too much time trying to figure out why we're suffering rather than trying to learn what it is that the suffering is supposed to teach us**. We would do better to stop trusting in our own wisdom and relying on our own strength.

Paul wrote, "...To keep me from exalting myself, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me. Concerning this, I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me; and He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness...'" (2 Corinthians 12:7-9).

The Lord never said that His followers would enjoy a life of comfort and convenience. He never promised that suffering would not come our way. What He does promise is that He will never leave us or forsake us, even in the midst of trials or trouble, that He loves us and is conforming us to the image of His beloved Son, and that His grace is sufficient for us.

God does not ask us to make sense of our suffering but rather He calls us to *trust Him in the midst of our suffering*, for His grace is enough.

Our Redeemer Lives

January 24 — *Job 19:1-21:34*

Day 24 — 341 Days to Go

Today In Your Reading...

Job and his friend Zophar discussed the fate of the wicked. Zophar commented that “the triumph of the wicked has been short-lived and the joy of the godless is only temporary” (20:5). However, Job responded with a good observation, which is that Zophar’s comment is not true for every wicked person. He said, “The truth is that the wicked live to a good old age. They grow old and wealthy. They live to see their children grow to maturity, and they enjoy their grandchildren. Their homes are safe from every fear, and God does not punish them” (21:7-9).

While I think Zophar’s statement about the ungodly is true, I also think Job has a point. There are those around us who seem to mock God and yet they still enjoy the success of the world. However, we know the truth that, although the ungodly seem to avoid God’s judgment on earth, they will be judged in time; for we know that “God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows that shall he also reap” (*Galatians 6:7*). Remember that “it is appointed unto man to die once and after this comes judgment” (*Hebrews 9:27*).

Despite all the talk about the fate of the wicked and Job’s state of affairs, he declared that he did have one hope. “As for me,” he said, “I know that my Redeemer lives and that He will stand on the earth at last” (19:25). Again, the writer of *Hebrews* comforts us with these words, “Jesus will come again... and He will bring salvation to those who are eagerly waiting for Him” (9:28).

Oh that we could all be faithful and patient, knowing and believing that Christ is alive, that He is molding us into His image, allowing circumstances in our lives for His good purposes, that He has redeemed us with His love, and that one day He will return to gather us to Himself. Those thoughts should be the hope of our hearts and the joy and pleasure we have on this earth.

Daily Reflection

What is your perspective of wrongdoers? Have you ever found yourself envious of them? Or have you ever doubted God’s Word because of their success?

Why is it not a good idea to compare your circumstances to those around you?

The Lord has each person on a different path, yet **all must give an account to Him someday**. In due time, all men small and great will answer to the Supreme Judge for their actions. Remain faithful to Him, in the meantime, and do not doubt His love for you. “Though he slay me, nevertheless I will hope in Him” (*Job 13:15*).

Coming Forth as Gold

January 25 — Job 22:1-25:6

Day 25 — 340 Days to Go

Today In Your Reading...

One of Job's friends, Eliphaz, summarized why he and the others believed that Job was suffering. "Is it because of your reverence for Him that He accuses and judges you? Not at all! Is it because of your wickedness! Your guilt has no limit. Stop quarreling with God! If you agree with Him, you will have peace at last and things will go well for you. If you return to the Almighty and clean up your life, you will be restored" (22:4, 5, 21, 23).

Job's friends thought like many people today, that suffering is always a result of sin. While suffering may be the result of sin, it is not always the case, as we see with Job. He was upright, a man of integrity, and yet God still allowed him to suffer. "He knows where I am going," Job said, "and when He has tested me like gold in a fire, He will pronounce me innocent. For I have stayed in God's paths; I have followed His ways and not turned my heart" (23:10-12).

Scripture is replete with the fact that sin has its consequences; but while many of our problems today may be a result of personal wrongdoing and self-centered decisions, we must make room for the fact that, in His plan for our lives, **God does test us at times.**

We just finished the story of Joseph. He was a good man to whom many bad things happened. But Joseph's perspective was the right perspective — **God allows us to endure trials for our good and His glory.** Job confirmed this truth, when he said, "When He has tested me like gold in a fire, He will pronounce me innocent" (23:10b).

God is not interested in our convenience or ease. He desires that we grow in faith and Christ-like character, and that can only be achieved through various trials and tribulations.

Daily Reflection

How do you typically react to suffering? Do you get angry with God, feel yourself wanting to abandon Him, or seek to learn from it?

What did Job mean when he said that he was like gold being tested in fire? How is gold improved by flames? Relate this truth to yourself.

Do you trust God enough to remain faithful to Him in the midst of your suffering? God can only do good, and, thus, all that happens in your life, though viewed as "bad," He will work for good.

"Consider it all joy, my brothers, when you encounter various trials and tribulations, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance" (James 1:2, 3).

The Beginning of Wisdom

Today In Your Reading...

Job rebuked his friend Bildad for not providing comfort when he needed it most. Then, he went on to reaffirm his own conscience, that it was clear and right before God. Job continually had to defend against his friends' accusations, as they tried to peg his suffering to some personal unconfessed sin.

Despite Bildad's inability to console Job, he did raise a question that I think deserves repeating, "How can a mere mortal stand before God and claim to be righteous? Who in all the earth is pure?" (25:4). In several places in this book, eternal questions like this one are raised and find, of course, their answers only in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. He is the answer to all eternal questions. **He alone makes men righteous; He alone makes men pure.** "For God made Him, who knew no sin, to become sin for us, so that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21).

However, I wish not to focus on Bildad's question but on one of Job's. The question he raised was this, "Do people know where to find wisdom? Where can they find understanding? No one knows where to find it, for it is not found among the living" (28:12, 13, 20).

This is a great question to consider, and I believe Job answered it for us. "God surely knows where wisdom can be found. This is what He says to all humanity: 'The fear of the Lord is true wisdom; to forsake evil is real understanding'" (28:23, 28).

Here, I believe Job to be on target, and the Scriptures echo as much later in *Proverbs*, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge..., and the fear of the Lord is to hate evil; pride, arrogance, the evil way, and the perverted mouth, I hate" (1:7a; 8:13).

Part of fearing the Lord is to hate what God hates and to love what God loves. If we would just live our lives by that motto, then we would definitely be in pursuit of wisdom; but *this world most often embraces what God hates and despises what God loves.* Unfortunately, God's people get caught up in the world's thinking and repeat the same foolish mistakes.

Daily Reflection

None of us wants to be a fool, but sadly we often choose to follow the foolish thinking of our ungodly, fallen world. Many of us have Christian, regenerate hearts but pagan, degenerate minds. What are you doing to pursue true godly wisdom and to avoid falling prey to the secular mindset around you?

Do you love what God loves and hate what God hates? What in your life is godly? What in your life is worldly? What needs to change?

Without Wax

January 27 — Job 30:1-31:40

Day 27 — 338 Days to Go

Today In Your Reading...

Job continued to defend his integrity against the claims of his misguided friends, who believed that his suffering was a consequence of some unconfessed sin in his life. "Does God not see everything I do?" Job asked. "He knows every step I take. Let God judge me on the scales of justice, for He knows my integrity" (31:1, 4-6).

Though Job understood that all people are born into sin and that no one is perfect, except for God, he also lived, as Paul stated, "with a clear conscience before God and men" (Acts 24:16). So then, taking Job's lead, let's talk about integrity. What is it?

Integrity comes from the word "integer," meaning "whole." Thus, integrity has to do with wholeness or purity. A biblical phrase for integrity is to be **"above reproach."** A reproach is something shameful that could be revealed about you. Thus, to be above reproach means that nothing shameful could be brought against you, to defame your name or reputation.

Eric Liddell, the celebrated Scottish athlete and Olympic competitor, described living above reproach as being **"without wax."** Ancient potters sometimes made the mistake of overheating their clay pots, causing them to dry out too quickly and develop cracks. To cover up their mistakes, they would apply wax over the cracks and sell their pots at full price. However, when the pots were used, the truth was soon revealed; the wax fell off and uncovered the cracks. Thus, it was known that the potter who sold pots like that was deceitful and lacked integrity.

All of us make mistakes, but oftentimes we cover them up with lies or masks. It is best if we live our lives without wax, in humility, sincerity, and genuine integrity.

Daily Reflection

Are you living your life without wax, above reproach? Or are there things about you that, if uncovered, would shame your name and reputation, or worse, shame the name of Christ?

Is having integrity the same as being sinless or perfect? Explain.

What are some steps you can take to develop integrity in your life?

Here's a sobering thought. What if you were to die today and tomorrow your loved ones had to dig through all of your belongings, your journals, photos, music, videos, files, phone, books, etc. Would they find anything that would shame their memories of you? Or would they find a life of integrity? **Live without wax.**

"He who walks in integrity walks securely, but he who perverts his ways will be found out" (Proverbs 10:9).

The Wisest of Men

Today In Your Reading...

A young man named Elihu gave Job a piece of his mind. When he saw that Job's three older, and, supposedly, wiser friends had found no answer for Job's suffering, Elihu decided it was time to speak. "His anger burned against Job's three friends...; Elihu waited to speak to Job because they were years older than he" (32:3, 4).

Although Elihu's approach was straightforward and refreshing, his words were not very helpful. However, Elihu did share some important characteristics of God. For example, He described God's holiness, when he said, "Everyone knows that God doesn't sin. The Almighty can do no wrong. There is no truer statement than this" (34:10, 12).

Elihu described the necessity of God's existence, when he said, "If God were to take back His spirit and withdraw His breath, all life would cease and humanity would turn again to dust" (34:14, 15). Next, he described God's omniscience and sovereignty, "God carefully watches the way people live; He sees everything they do. No darkness is thick enough to hide the wicked from His eyes" (34:21, 22).

Perhaps the most interesting thing Elihu said today was that "sometimes the elderly are not wise, and sometimes the aged do not understand justice" (32:9). It is true that neither wisdom nor spiritual maturity comes with age. *Someone who is older may still do foolish things or think in foolish ways, while someone younger may have wisdom beyond their years.* The truth is that **wisdom is not a given because of time on earth, but rather it is a gift of God.**

Elihu said, "Surely it is God's Spirit within that makes men intelligent" (32:8). As Solomon discovered when he was young, that in his own strength he was weak, and in his own wisdom

he was foolish; but God granted Him wisdom through His Spirit. So it was with Daniel, to whom God gave knowledge and wisdom (*Daniel 1:17*). **It is God who makes men wise.**

Daily Reflection

In what areas of your life do need wisdom?

Where do most people look for wisdom today?

Why will these sources ultimately fail you?

"If any man lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach" (*James 1:5*).

"God gives wisdom to men. Out of His mouth (Word) come knowledge and understanding" (*Proverbs 2:6*).