

# Old Arguments, New Attitude

January 29 — Job 35:1-37:24

Day 29 — 336 Days to Go

## Today In Your Reading...

The young Elihu continued his ranting, talking longer than any of Job’s friends and reproving him with every word. “If men cry out and God does not answer,” he said, “it is because of their pride. It is wrong to say God doesn’t listen, to say the Almighty isn’t concerned. It is even more false to say that He doesn’t see what is going on. He will bring about justice if you will only wait” (35:11-14).

Elihu accused Job of pride, misguided motives, and impatience. In fact, Elihu condemned Job for the same reason the old men were condemning him — sin in his life. So then, after all the venting, Elihu’s arguments were the same.

You know, Elihu’s speech got me to thinking about the arguments that the world raises today, regarding why people suffer. It’s hard for our worldly-minded friends to understand why bad things happen to good people.

Many people will even say that the existence of suffering trumps the idea that there is a loving God; for how can there be a loving God with the existence of so much evil in our world? However, the concept of evil is not a good argument against the existence of God. In fact, **the existence of evil is a powerful argument for the existence of God.** How so?

For us to understand what is evil, we must first understand what is good. How can we know what is good without a standard for good? Without a standard for good, we would never know what is evil, right? So then, there must be a standard of good in the universe, and, of course, we know that standard of good is God.

Just as Elihu brought new attitude to the discussion with Job and his friends, he still raised the same old argument. Likewise, many of our

brightest minds today bring fresh zeal and passion to the same old arguments against God, the Bible, and Christianity; yet, all three prevail. Why? “There is nothing new under the sun,” Solomon wrote; and, nothing under the sun is able to expose a weakness in the very One who made the sun.

## Daily Reflection

Have you ever had doubts or struggles regarding God, Christianity, or the Bible? Explain.

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What does it prove that these three still prevail despite the age-old arguments against them?

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It is never wrong to doubt or question, but I would encourage you to find the answers you seek. *Dwelling on unanswered questions is harmful to your faith.* Take heart, **no question has ever debunked God, Christianity, or the Bible. Neither will yours.**

# In Light of Who God Is

## Today In Your Reading...

The ramblings of Elihu and Job's three friends came to an end, and the Lord spoke to Job out of a whirlwind.

After listening to all of them rant and rave, including Job, God decided to put them in their place. All He did was ask Job a series of questions, such as, "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? (38:4) Have you ever commanded the morning to appear or caused the dawn to rise in the east? (38:12) Have you explored the springs from which the seas come? (38:16) Of course, you know all this! For you were born before it was all created and you are so experienced! (38:21) Do you still want to argue with the Almighty? You are God's critic, but do you have the answers?" (40:2).

It didn't take long for Job to realize that, what-ever happened to him, **he had no right to complain to God**. In the midst of this questioning, Job quickly recognized how small he really was in the big scheme of things. In fact, his reply to the Lord was, "I am nothing. How could I ever find the answers? I will put my hand over my mouth in silence" (40:4).

What I believe is described here is the answer to human pride and the beginning of humility. A definition and means to humility would be **to view oneself in light of who God is**, because it won't take long, if one truly considers the greatness of God, to see himself as small in his own eyes.

*Pride is our worst enemy.* Self-glorification is the focus of all our activities; yet to curb that infectious sin, all we need to do is study and ponder the nature of God — His sovereignty, His creativity, His holiness, His grace and mercy, and His love. **For in light of who God is, we see more clearly who we are.**

## Daily Reflection

If you were honest with yourself, what is your perspective of yourself? Is it accurate compared to who God is?

Why is your pride a stumbling block? Why is it so dangerous or harmful? What does it do to you that is so troublesome?

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Everyone deals with pride. It is inherent in your sinful nature. Therefore, you must battle to weaken the influence of your pride and cultivate an attitude of humility. Besides studying the nature of God, what are some ways that you can weaken pride and cultivate humility in your life?

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"God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble. Therefore, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, so that He may exalt you at the proper time" (1 Peter 5:6 NASB).

# Retract and Repent

January 31 — Job 40:6-42:17

Day 31 — 334 Days to Go

## Today In Your Reading...

God continued His barrage of questions, describing His power and majesty. Job responded appropriately, as he said, "I know that You can do anything, and no one can stop You. I was talking about things that I did not understand, things too wonderful for me. I take back everything I said, and I sit in dust and ashes to show my repentance" (42:2, 3, 6). In the *New American Standard Bible*, Job says, "I retract and repent."

We see again the proper response to God's sovereignty and wisdom compared to our frailty and ignorance. Job humbled himself before the Lord when his three friends came to him in arrogance. As a result, the Lord accepted Job, while He judged his friends in their pride.

Continuing in the theme of humility, here is another way to weaken the effects of pride in our lives — **retract and repent**, as Job did. We must retract our arrogance, our supposed earthly wisdom and feeble efforts to make our own way, and we must repent of our attempts to assume God's throne and glory.

Both retraction and repentance are essential elements of salvation, for we must admit that we cannot save ourselves. Without retracting our pride and repenting of our sins, we put ourselves in God's place. What an offensive act, assuming for ourselves what is rightfully God's.

Why would we not practice retraction and repentance the rest of our lives? It is another step in cultivating humility before the Lord. Notice that God responded to Job's humility. "God restored the fortunes of Job and blessed the second half of his life more than the first." May we ever retract before the sovereignty and glory of God and repent of trying to assume that which was never ours. For as we humble ourselves, as did Job, God will in time exalt us.

## Daily Reflection

Summarize what it means to retract yourself. What would be the opposite thing to do?

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What exactly does it mean to repent? What all does that entail?

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When was the last time you retracted yourself and repented of your sins? These two elements should be a common practice in your spiritual growth.

Take time today to retract any prideful thoughts, prideful words, prideful actions, in which you have overstepped your bounds and tried to assume for yourself God's glory and position. Be ever vigilant not to allow anything in your life to bloat your ego or harden your heart.

**Retract and repent!**

# Chapters in a Book

## Today In Your Reading...

Moses described for you what happened that Israel became slaves in Egypt, how God providentially saved him from the Pharaoh as a baby and yet raised him up in Pharaoh's own household, how he killed a man and then fled into the desert, only to be invited to stay with Jethro and his daughters. Then, Moses described his encounter with God at the burning bush, and how the Lord called him to return and deliver His people out of bondage.

When I read the account of Moses' life, I found myself wanting to know more of the details, but Moses moved so quickly through his story. However, when I remembered that the Bible describes Moses as a humble man (*Numbers 12:3*), it became clear immediately, as he did not spend time talking about himself. He covered a lot of ground in just a few chapters.

Speaking of chapters, I want to focus attention on what I think is the most amazing aspect of the story — God's preparation of Moses for this great task. Even though Moses quickly flew through the account of his life, it is evident that **God ordained each event at the right time and in the right way**, in order to prepare Moses for this great call on his life.

Of course, God does that all of the time, for every individual, as the Author of a book builds His characters through the plot twists and experiences of their lives. The older I get, the more clearly I can see the chapters in my life, times in which God was preparing me for the tasks He had for me to accomplish.

Moses was the "man for the job," perfectly suited for the task. The Lord had arranged everything so that Moses might be ready for the greatest adventure of his life. **Just as He did for Moses, He is doing for you.**

## Daily Reflection

Take a few minutes to look back at your life and divide it into chapters, like a book.

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What did God teach you in each chapter? How did He prepare you then for who you are or what you do today? What task does God have you doing that He prepared you for years ago?

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Perhaps that great work has not happened yet. What else does He need to do in your life to make sure that you're ready? Are you patient enough to wait and are you obedient enough to do what is needed? Be sure of this — **God is working.**

"I am confident of this one thing, He who began a good work in you will perfect it..."  
(*Philippians 1:6*).

# Steps of Faith

February 2 — Exodus 4:18-7:13

Day 33 — 332 Days to Go

## Today In Your Reading...

Moses returned to Egypt, met his brother Aaron, got caught up on the last 40 years of their lives, and called a meeting with Pharaoh in order to beseech his generosity. The only problem was that Pharaoh didn't have any generosity to beseech. In fact, when he heard what Moses wanted to do with his favorite work force, he decided to double their hours with the same amount of breaks — none! That announcement must have been quite a blow to Moses and Aaron, but especially to the excited Israelites who were quite ready to leave their sorry day jobs.

Now this scenario raises a couple of interesting questions, such as why does God allow that sort of thing? You know, if God sent Moses to Egypt to free His people, then why did He allow Pharaoh to make their work even harder? I'm sure even Moses posed that question to God at least a dozen times.

God gave us the answer to why He allows things like that to happen, when He said, "Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh. When he feels My powerful hand upon him, he will let them go. I will crush Egypt with a series of disasters, after which I will lead the forces of Israel out with great acts of judgment. Then, **the Egyptians will realize that I am the Lord**" (6:1;7:3-5).

God said Himself that He allowed Egypt's success, in this case to oppress Israel, in order **to show Himself mighty and to make Himself known**. In essence, that's God's way of saying, "Hey, I know you don't understand it all, but relax! I've got it under control."

As finite and short-sighted human beings, we are allowed to question God, but sooner or later we must admit, that despite our misunderstanding, God knows what He's doing and all we can do is trust Him.

## Daily Reflection

Describe a time in your life when you followed what you believed to be the Lord's will or direction and, then, you were met with obstacles, difficulties, and disappointments.

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Why does the Lord do that to you, when you do what's right and everything goes wrong?

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As difficult as it is to follow sometimes, **the Lord's way is the right way**. However, God never promised that following Him would be easy. Your first step of faith must be followed by second, third, and fourth steps of faith.

Remember, **that which stretches you causes you to grow**. God is simply growing your faith by allowing you to be stretched. Rather than abandon God after the first step or two in His direction, commit to following Him no matter what comes your way. *His glory is your goal, not your ease.*

# A Heart of Stone

February 3 — Exodus 7:14-9:35

Day 34 — 331 Days to Go

## Today In Your Reading...

God unleashed His wonders on the land of Egypt, through plagues of bloody water, hordes of frogs, gnats and flies, a disease on the cattle, painful boils, and a nasty hailstorm. Tomorrow, we will complete the plagues, but we read enough today to get a glimpse of the awesome power of God.

In His display of power, He outlasted the Egyptian magicians, who were able to repeat the first few plagues but then were outmatched when Moses turned the dust to gnats. They even advised Pharaoh to beware, for “this is the finger of God!” God also demonstrated His great power when none of the plagues affected the land of Goshen, where the Israelites lived. There was a clear separation between Him and the gods of Egypt, and between His people and the Egyptians. **There is no one like our God!**

However, despite all of these things, Pharaoh did not budge, as God predicted. It seemed at times that Pharaoh would give in, but he always changed his mind and refused to let Israel go. In our passage today, it was mentioned at least nine times that Pharaoh hardened his heart. Now, I’ve met some pretty stubborn people, but this guy was immovable, to the point of the humiliation and destruction of his nation.

## Daily Reflection

Though it is easy to point your finger at Pharaoh and shake your head at his defiance, I would guess that there have been times in your life when you have been pretty hard-headed. Perhaps even now, God is trying to get your attention, trying to get you to listen, or trying to convince you to act or do something that you know He wants you to do; yet, in your selfish, sinful, stubborn way, you have refused to budge. I hope that you, unlike Pharaoh, will soften your heart of stone before He is moved to break it.

If you could see through your own self-deception, how hard is your heart towards God at this moment? Are you open to His calling, to His will, to His direction in your life, or are you, like Pharaoh, set in your ways?

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What does this type of stubbornness reveal about Pharaoh, about you? What causes your heart to harden, to turn into “stone”?

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Is there something in your life that you know God has been asking you to do and you simply have not budged? You are only asking for Him to break you, to humble you. Will He have to unleash “plagues”? Will He have to destroy your idols? Will He have to dismantle your kingdom?

**A heart of stone is simply an indication of a heart of pride.** Repent of your self-reliance, your self-confidence, your selfish arrogance, and soften your heart. Be willing to allow the Lord to accomplish a great work in your life.

# Your Personal Exodus

February 4 — *Exodus 10:1-12:51*

Day 35 — 330 Days to Go

## Today In Your Reading...

God administered the last three plagues on Pharaoh and Egypt — the dreaded locusts, the darkness that could be felt, and finally, the Destroyer or death angel, to eliminate every first-born child. That's quite a combination of punches; in fact, it resulted in a knock-out, as Pharaoh finally gave in and let God's people go.

Of course, the last plague included great symbolism related to the Christian life. For the Jews, it has been forever called "Passover" and the "Feast of Unleavened Bread." Like Israel, who, because of the blood of the lamb, was passed over by death, we, who are in Christ, will be passed over by death, that is spiritual death, because His blood covers our sin-stained souls.

In regards to sin, Israel was told to eat unleavened bread, because they were to be ready to leave at a moment's notice and did not have time for the bread to rise. Leaven, or yeast, in the New Testament, is a symbol of sin. Again, because of Christ, we are unleavened, since He, our Passover Lamb, was sacrificed on our behalf (*1 Corinthians 5:8*).

The Exodus account is an incredible story in and of itself, but what I love about it is that it is a great picture of salvation. We too were once in bondage; our slave master was the Devil, who fought as hard as he could to keep us in his control. Also, consider this: the moment when Israel left Egypt, every person was filled with the lamb he ate that night. How interesting it is that because the Lamb of God was consumed by our sins, that we were freed from bondage. Are we not transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light, just as the Israelites were transferred from Pharaoh's control to become God's treasured possession?

Those of us who know Christ as our Savior have experienced an exodus of sorts. We've left a life for which we should never pine or lament. We've left a place to which we should never want to return, and we've been freed from a task master for which we should forever be grateful. Thank God that **we too have been brought out of Egypt by the Lamb!**

## Daily Reflection

Take a minute to reflect on your personal exodus from sin to salvation. What highlights do you remember about that experience?

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I imagine those first few days were the most glorious days Israel had ever experienced. They had true joy in their salvation. What about you? Do you recall the excitement and joy you felt when you were set free? Are you still walking in that joy today? How would you describe it?

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