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Job 29 - 31



Job - Steve Gregg

In "Job 29-31," Steve Gregg explores Job's final speech in these chapters. Job reflects on the importance of fearing the Lord and realizing the terror of rebelling against God. He also speaks of his past blessings and the sorrow he currently faces. Gregg analyzes Eliphaz's response to Job and the rhetorical device of "if-then" statements used in the chapter. Gregg concludes that while Job may not be a perfect man, he is still an example of humility to learn from.

Transcript

Yesterday we came to the last round of speeches from Job himself. It's a very long section. It began with his answer to Bildad in chapter 26 and continued through chapter 27.

That seems to have been the last of his answers to his three friends, but then in chapter 28 we have a poem about wisdom, largely devoted to asking the question of where can wisdom be found. About half, almost half of the poem describes the fact that people have learned how to mine gold and silver and emeralds out of the ground and rubies, but they have not learned where wisdom is to be found. And yet wisdom is worth more than gold and silver and rubies.

And he concludes at the end of chapter 28 that the place that wisdom is to be found is in the fear of the Lord. That the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom. And to depart from evil is understanding.

Which means, of course, that no matter how much education a person has and how much knowledge a person has, whether it's secular or religious knowledge, if they do not fear the Lord, they may have facts and figures and information, but they really are not wise in their thinking and their philosophy and their choices and their dealings. So that the fear of the Lord is the core of everything. And what is the fear of the Lord? The fear of the Lord is a term that's used frequently in the Bible and not only in the Old Testament.

We might think of that as an Old Testament term and maybe see it as a contrast

between a New Testament idea of just loving God or trusting God. Fearing God seems like an unpleasant emotion. And many people just don't know how that's supposed to fit into the life of a believer.

Because it says in 1 John chapter 4 that perfect love casts out fear. It would seem that the fear of God would be inappropriate if we love God. But the fear of God in the Bible is not simply the sense of being afraid and living with a sense of dread and fear of, you know, the unknown or fear of danger or anything like that.

It's not a sense of insecurity about God knowing what you're doing. It's not a fear that he's going to lash out and attack you as soon as you step out of line, necessarily. Some people fear their parents this way and some fear their rulers this way.

But the fear of God is something really much more wholesome. It says in Psalm 19 that the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever. And the fear of the Lord simply means this, that you are indeed afraid of walking away from God, of displeasing God, of rebelling against God, because you are aware that God is great and God is powerful and God is deserving of all your obedience and your reverence.

And therefore, the concept of being on good terms with him is a fearful concept. But the Bible says that by the fear of the Lord, men depart from evil so that the fear of the Lord actually drives you into a positive relationship with God so that the fear is not your conscious emotion. With reference to God, we do all live with fear, even if we are not aware of it.

For example, we are not perhaps afraid of water, but we would be afraid to be shipwrecked out in the middle of the ocean where there is no land, because then we're in a relationship with water that's deadly to us. If the water is in a pond where we can swim or water in a glass that we can drink, water is not a frightening thing. But when we're overwhelmed with water and we are not in the relationship with water that is safe for us, then, of course, we're terrified of it.

And for that reason, we don't go out and take those kinds of risks of being we don't try to swim across the ocean, for example. We know better than that. We're wiser than that.

Why? Because we fear what we know would be the consequence. Now, we don't walk around all the time afraid of water, but the concept of doing something very stupid to put us in a lethal relationship with water would be something that we would fear if we thought we really had to do that. If we contemplated that, fear would prevent us from going any further in that direction.

I'm not afraid of trains, but I would be afraid to be on the railroad tracks on my car driving toward a train that's coming at full speed, because that would put me in the wrong relationship with the train. That would scare me. But because that does scare me,

I won't do it.

In other words, I have a healthy fear of that which is not necessary. It is not necessary to be in a bad relationship with God. That is that is something that I have a choice about.

And therefore, since I have a choice, I'm not living in fear. But if the choice would suggest itself to me to do something rebellious against God, then the fear of God makes me think more sensibly than that. The fear of God, in other words, is a fear of being in the wrong relationship with him.

The illustration I use most often is with traffic. We're not afraid of freeway traffic. Probably if you've been driving a car for many years, you get on the freeway, you merge right on.

You're talking with your friends in the car. You don't think much about the other traffic. It's not a big deal.

Traffic is not a fearful thing. But if you suddenly realize that you had gotten on the wrong ramp and you're going against the traffic, you'd be filled. You'd be gripped with fear because you know that the traffic can do you a lot of harm if you're in the wrong relationship with it.

If you're moving with the traffic. If you're going the same direction as the traffic, you don't feel any fear, but you have that fear of being in the wrong relationship with traffic all the time. You're just not aware of it because it's not necessary until you actually are in a wrong relationship or contemplating being in a wrong relationship with traffic.

Then you don't even you're not even aware that you're afraid of that. It's not on your mind. And the fear of God is like that when you're on good terms with God.

The fact that you fear God, it's not on your mind because it's not your it's not a dominant emotion. But when you contemplate rebellion, when you contemplate sinning, when you contemplate being at odds with God in a wrong relationship with God, that should be terrifying if it is not a person is not wise. A person is not afraid to be on bad terms with God is fool is a fool.

That's why the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. And so this is the conclusion of the matter. Where do you find wisdom? You find wisdom in reverence for God, fear for God, a healthy respect for the harm that comes to a man when he is not aligned with his creator as he ought to be.

And so the poem, many commentators feel that the poem in Chapter 28 is a standalone poem. It does not really summarize the previous material or introduce the following material. It just seems to be the kind of poem that you might find in Proverbs.

In fact, you do find a poem somewhat like it in Proverbs chapter eight. And it may serve simply to break up the book because we have moved from a section of the book that's dominated by this conversation between Jesus and these three men. And apparently that part is over and we're moving into another section.

There's going to be some other speakers now. Job is going to speak still for three more chapters, but then Elihu is going to speak for six chapters and God for four chapters. So that we'll find that different conversation partners are here.

Actually, Job is not going to converse with these people or even with God. Job gives his final words in chapters 29 through 31. And at the end of 31, it says the words of Job are ended.

And that's pretty much the case. We don't find any more speeches from Job. He says a few short things, a few words of repentance and humility at the end of the book, but he is not going to give any more lectures.

And so he winds that up here and it's not really an answer to his friends so much as it's just a summary of his trials and of his problems and of the grief he's suffering. Then we have Elihu speaking and then we have the Lord speaking. And Job does not answer either of them, except at the end of the Lord's speeches, Job does repent.

But of what? What has he done wrong? That's, of course, what the issue has been all along. And we will perhaps get a hint of that, maybe even in Elihu's speeches, although his speeches are not that much more enlightening than the other men's. He does seem to progress a little further in his understanding and discuss it a somewhat higher plane spiritually than the others.

We'll not be there quite yet, though. Right now we're looking at Chapter 29 where we have three more chapters of Job speaking and each chapter has its own characteristics. Chapter 29 is simply a reminiscence about the good old days before these trials came on Job.

He really had it made. He was really living it up and not in a sinful sense. It's just that he was a blessed man.

He had a blessed life, a charmed existence, an enviable life. And his life has turned so sour that he can't help but look back on those things with some bitterness. That is not bitterness of anger, but just bitterness of grief, thinking of the things that he has lost.

And that's what Chapter 29 is about. Then Chapter 30 is simply a recitation of the griefs that have come upon him again. And so he talks again about his sufferings and how different he is now from when he was doing so well.

And so we have this contrast in Chapters 29 through 30. And then Chapter 31 is entirely

his, again, insistence that he is an innocent man. So these really are the... This is kind of just a summary of his whole life as it's been presented to us in the book.

He was a wealthy man. He came into great trials. He protested that he was innocent.

That's what these three chapters do. So in Chapter 28, excuse me, 29, Job further continued his discourse and said, Oh, that I were as in months past, as in the days when God watched over me, when his lamp shone in my head and when by his light I walked through darkness. Just as I was in days of my prime when the friendly counsel of God was over my tent.

When the Almighty was yet with me, when my children were around me, when my steps were bathed with cream and the rock poured out rivers of oil for me. Now, this reference to his steps bathed with cream is not is not literal. Of course, people do take milk baths, but I don't think they did back in those days.

I think that's more of a modern fad. But but the his his steps bathed with cream is simply like saying a place is flowing with milk and honey. A man would wash his feet coming in from the outdoors and the water in which he washed his feet would be the dirtiest water, of course, because it was it washed the dirtiest stuff off the dirtiest part of the body.

But he says in those days he was so rich he could wash his feet as it were in cream, which is obviously expensive, even more expensive than milk. He didn't have to use water. He could treat cream like it was water, like he had money to burn.

And the rocks poured out oil for him, not literally oil came from olive trees. But he said that I had so much oil and which, by the way, was another commodity of value. And it was like the rocks poured it out for me.

It's like I could just go in and strike the rocks and oil would come out for me. Now, these are hyperbole, of course, but he's simply talking about how how much wealth and how much luxury had been part of his life before, back when his children were with him, back when God's favor was upon him, when God's friendly counsel seemed to be upon his tent. When I went out to the gate of by the city now here we see perhaps for the first time that Job was a judge that has been hinted at in some of the earlier speeches.

But it is clear here he went to the gate of the city, which is where the judges sit. And throughout his speeches, especially in Chapter 31, he's going to talk about how he had judged on behalf of the oppressed and how he had taken care of the poor and the widows and so forth. But he says, in those days, I went out to the gate of the city where I took my seat in the open square.

The young men saw me and hid and the age of the rose and stood. Now, this is not because they were afraid of him, but because they respected him. The young men didn't know quite how to behave before him because he was so dignified, so they'd rather just

kind of they were uncomfortable in his presence.

They're afraid they'd maybe misstep or say something that wasn't quite sufficiently respectful. The older men who knew how to act in a dignified way, they'd stand in honor of his arrival until he sat down. Sort of like people doing a courthouse today when the judge comes in, all rise in deference to the judge until he sits.

The princes refrained from talking and put their hand on their mouth. That is, they were all having their conversations before I arrived. When I arrived, they all said, OK, time to be quiet.

Job's here. Not because, again, they were afraid he'd be angry, but because of the reverence they had. For his wisdom and so forth, they just they realized it's time for us to stop talking and listen to this man.

When the ear heard, then it blessed me. And when the eye saw, it approved me because I delivered the poor who cried out and the fatherless and he who had no helper. That's what judges did.

They delivered the poor in their grievances, in their court complaints against their oppressors, their rich oppressors in most cases. He said, the blessing of a perishing man came upon me and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness and it clothed me.

My justice was like a robe and a turban. I was eyes to the blind. I was feet to the lame.

I was a father to the poor. And I searched out the case that I did not know. He didn't judge just off the top of his head.

If he didn't know enough evidence to judge the case, he would do research. He'd want to make sure that he had all the facts before he made a hasty decision. I broke the fangs of the wicked and plucked the victim from his teeth.

Now, when you think of fangs, you might think of a snake's fangs. But probably here he's thinking of like the the fangs of a tiger or a lion more like and saving a helpless animal from the mouth of a predator is what he's talking about. Figuratively, he's not talking about real animals.

He's saying that many of the cases that came before him were helpless, poor people who were being oppressed and abused by rich, privileged people. And he would deliver them from the hand of these from the fangs of these wicked oppressors. Then I said, I shall die in my nest and multiply my days as the sand.

My root is spread out to the waters and the dew lies all night on my branch. My glory is fresh within me and my bow is renewed in my hand. And I felt quite secure.

I felt like I lived forever. I thought my days would be like the sands of the seashore that is infinitely numerous. I thought I would die in comfort.

Because I had my strength, I had my bow in my hand, so to speak, his bow would just simply refer to his power. It's talking about a bow and arrow, but, you know, he was armed not so much with a real bow, but with status and power and wisdom and influence. I mean, he had he had power and authority in society, and he figured that would always be.

Now, it might seem like in verse 18, 19, he's saying, you know, I was kind of arrogant or self-confident, but that's not implied here. He's just saying I had reason to believe these things would continue. I was behaving in a just manner.

Why shouldn't people always respect me? I was going to continue to act respectable. Why wouldn't God continue to bless me? That's what I rather assumed would be the case. Men listened to me and waited and kept silence for my counsel.

After my words, they did not speak again and my speech settled on them like the dew. Now, when he says after I spoke, they didn't speak again. It's like whenever there's a debate, Job would wait till the last to speak.

And once he spoke, everyone knew that he said the right thing. There's nothing more to say, no more arguments to make. They waited for me as the rain and they opened their mouth wide as for the spring rain.

If I mocked at them, they did not believe it. And the light of my countenance, they did not cast down. I chose the way for them and sat as chief.

So I dwelt as a king in the army. As one who comforts mourners. He's not saying that he was the chief of his tribe or the king, although he could even have been.

But that's not necessary to take from verse twenty five. He's basically I was like a chief. I was like a king.

I was honored in that way. This is before that was then. This is now chapter 30.

But now they mock at me. Men younger than I, whose fathers I disdain to put with the dogs of my flock. In other words, the people who mock me now are from the lowest, coarsest families, the sons of men that I wouldn't trust with the lowest duties in my household.

And he describes these men who he wouldn't trust with his flock. He says, indeed, what profit is the strength of their hands to me? Why would I hire them? They have nothing to offer me that I would even hire them to take care of my dogs. Their vigor is perished.

They are gaunt from want and famine, fleeing late to the wilderness, desolate and waste,

who plucked mallow by the bushes and broom tree roots for their food. They were driven out from among men. They shouted at them as at a thief.

They had to live in the clefts of the valleys, in caves of the earth and the rocks among the bushes they'd braid, which is a sound like a donkey makes under the nettles they nestled and were sons of fools. Yes, sons of vile men. And they were scourged from the land.

Now, these men that he describes in verses two through eight are really the fathers of the younger men who mocked him now. And the fathers are usually more honorable than their sons. That is, in society, it was assumed no son was more honorable than his father, fathered by virtue of age, even just commanded more honor in Middle Eastern society.

And yet even these fathers were such scoundrels that they've been driven from society for their evil deeds. They had to live in the caves like a bunch of bandits. They had to, you know, they had to forage for their food in the wild.

These are the kinds of men whose children now mock me, men I would have never trusted with any responsibilities in my household, men who have no status at all in society, men who've been driven out for their violence. And yet now their sons are mocking me. And now I am their taunt song.

Yes, I am their byword. They abhor me. They keep far from me.

They do not hesitate to spit in my face because he has loosed my bowstring and afflicted me as God has loosed the bowstring. When you take the string off of a bow, obviously you can't shoot any arrows with it. It's disarmed.

You disarm the bow by taking off the string. Now, he said earlier when people were second, it's because my bow was in my hand, but God has now disarmed my bow and no one's afraid of me. Now, of course, he never was walking around with a real bow and arrow.

That's not literally what he's talking about. He's saying that, again, his status, his stature in society, his wisdom, the respect everyone had for him, that made everybody treat him well, made everybody really afraid to be on his wrong side. But now his bowstring has been removed by God.

He's lost all status. He's lost all respect. And now anyone can spit in his face and mock him.

They have cast off restraint before me. Verse 12, at my right hand, the rabble arises. They push away my feet.

They rise against me, their ways of destruction. They break up my path. They promote my calamity.

They have no helper. They come as a broad, as broad breakers under the ruinous storm. They roll along.

Terrors are turned upon me. They pursue my honor as the wind and my prosperity has passed like a cloud. And now my soul is poured out because of my flight.

The days of affliction take hold of me. My bones are pierced in me at night and my gnawing pains like no rest. By great force, my garment is disfigured.

It binds me about the collar of my coat. He has cast me into the mire and I have become like dust and ashes. Now, I have to say that.

It's difficult to know what verse 18 means, my great force, my garment is disfigured. It binds me as the color of my coat, actually in the Hebrew, that's very obscure also. Some think he's talking about having night visitations of the word great force.

Some would translate that word as paws or claws or hands, as if someone's got their hands around his throat choking him. One commentator thought that was referring to some kind of terrible dreams he has where he feels like someone's got their hands on his throat, choking him like a tight collar. Of his clothing, it's hard to really make it out.

I cry out to you, he says to God in verse 20, but you do not answer me. I stand up and you regard me, but you have become cruel to me. It's not like you ignore me.

You do regard me, but, you know, it almost be better for me if you didn't regard me because you pay attention to me only to be cruel to me. Be better if you didn't notice me at all. With the strength of your hand, you oppose me.

You lift me up to the wind and cause me to ride on it. Which might sound like fun, or it might sound like a good thing, but it means you blow me away. You really, I just blow away like a piece of trash in the wind and just ride, you know, on the breezes as if I'm weightless and worthless and of no consequence.

You spoil my success, for I know that you will bring me to death and to the house appointed for all the living. Which is the death, the house of death, surely he would not stretch out his hand against a heap of ruins if they cry out when he destroys it. That is, why would God worry even to why God didn't pay attention to someone who is so worthless and helpless as Job is now, why does God seem to persecute him? Have I not wept for him who was in trouble? Has not my soul grieved for the poor? But when I looked for good, evil came to me and when I waited for light, then came darkness.

And this is these verses, two verses are very much like the way Eliphaz opened his first

speech. Job, you were helpful to people, but now it's come upon you and you're grieved. He kind of agrees with that.

I did help the poor in the past, but now I'm the one who's being grieved. My heart is in turmoil and cannot rest. Days of affliction confront me.

I go about mourning, but not in the sun. I stand up in the congregation and cry out for help. I'm a brother of jackals and a companion of ostriches.

My skin grows black and falls from me. My bones burn with fever. My harp is turned into mourning and my flute into the voice of those who weep.

That is, we used to hear music rejoicing, dancing music in my tent, the harp and the flute. Instead, those have been replaced by mourning and weeping. When he says I'm the brother of jackals and a companion of ostriches, probably what he means is he's been driven from town.

He's out in the has to kind of sleep out under the stars out where the wild animals are. He's kind of become like one of them. Now, in Chapter 31, he finishes his speech by going into a long.

Protestation that he is an innocent and good man, which is, of course, true. It doesn't sound very humble for him to say it, but it's kind of hard not to say these things when someone is telling lies about you and and when it would appear just from your circumstances, everyone is concluding you're not a good man. There comes a time when you stand in court and say, I plead not guilty when everyone is thinking that you are guilty.

Well, if you're not guilty, you should say so. And that's what he does. Now, most of this chapter is in the form of if I have done such and such.

Then may such and such happen to me. It's a very typical rhetorical device in biblical literature. And essentially, when he says, if I have done so and so, the so and so, he says, if I have done that, it's something he's saying I have not.

If I had, then I should suffer the thing, the consequences that I name here for that act. If I've done that, then this should happen to me. However, what is the very rhetorical device means I haven't done that.

So this shouldn't happen to me. It's a little bit like when Paul said, if I have done anything worthy of death, then I then I do not object to dying. Then I should die.

But they said, but since I'm all these things they've accused me of, I've done none of them. Therefore, no one can deliver me to their hands. I appeal to Caesar.

So, I mean, when Paul said, if I have. If I'm an offender or have done anything worthy of

death, I don't object to dying. He's basically saying, OK, if I've done capital crimes, kill me.

It should happen. But he's, of course, saying that isn't the case. I haven't.

And therefore, I shouldn't be put to death here. And so, Job, beginning at around verse five of chapter thirty one, he begins speaking this way, which goes through essentially the whole chapter. The opening verses, though, he just states plainly, I have made a covenant with my eyes.

Why then should I look upon a young woman for what is the allotment of God from above and the inheritance of the Almighty from on high? Is it not destruction for the wicked and disaster for the workers of iniquity? Does he not see my ways and count all my steps? Now, as far as I know, none of his counselors, despite accusing him of great wickedness, none of them have accused him of moral indecency. They haven't indecency. They haven't accused him of adultery.

He does bring up adultery here as, you know, if I have slept with my neighbor's wife, then let that happen to me. But we don't know that anyone has accused him of that, though maybe they were suspicious of it. So he makes it very clear.

I actually have made a covenant with my eyes. I will not even look upon a young woman. Now, that's an interesting thing, because this is prior to the law of Moses is very early.

And yet he had this ethic. He was a married man. He had only one wife.

He was not a polygamist. And he considered that it would be wrong for him to consider other women than his wife. He considered to be wrong for him to consider a maid.

Now, a maid is by definition not a married woman. So in a land where concubines and polygamy was not considered wrong. What's wrong with a man considering a maid? He could he could take her as a wife if he wanted to.

But he even knew that that was wrong, even in that day, he knew that that's not. Something God approves of the fact that other men, Abraham and Jacob and David and Solomon and so forth, had many wives, and so did many of the kings of Israel and Judah. Although the Bible never brings that up against them, it certainly is a strong indication in Scripture that that's not what God really wants people to do.

And Job, who didn't even have the law, knew intuitively that, you know, as a married man, he shouldn't be considering other women. He's he's he's monogamous, not just monogamous in his practice, but monogamous in his mind. He is not going to even allow his eyes to to contemplate and look at other women than his wife.

He considers that to be a wicked thing to do. Now, some people think that when Jesus

taught in the Sermon on the Mount, he made the law more severe than the Old Testament does, because he said, you've heard if you commit murder, you'll be subject to the judgment. But I say, if you're even angry at your brother, God, because you're subject to the judgment, he said, if you commit adultery, you know, that's you know, that's not that's not right.

You shall not commit adultery, as you've heard that. But I say, if you look at a woman to lust after you commit adultery with her in your heart, and lots of people say, wow, Jesus made the Old Testament harder. The Old Testament just said you don't have to commit adultery.

Jesus said you have to not look at a woman with lust. Well, Jesus didn't originate that. That ethic that Jesus is presenting is found in the oldest book of the Bible.

And Job said that he made a practice of not looking at young women. He means lustfully, of course. Nothing wrong with looking at a person, but he's talking about looking at them in a way that was inappropriate.

And he had made a practice, he made a covenant with his eyes, a covenant is a firm agreement that you keep for life. And he basically said to his eyes, OK, this is my covenant with you, you're not going to look at women other than my wife. Now, he says in verse five, if I have walked with falsehood or if my foot has hastened to deceit, let me be weighed in a just balance that God may know my integrity.

If my steps, if my step has turned from the way or my heart walked after my eyes, or if any spot adheres to my hands, then let me sow and another eat. As let me plant crops and someone else harvest them because they're taken from me. Yes, let my harvest be rooted out.

If my heart has been enticed by a woman or if I have lurked at my neighbor's door, in other words, I have schemed to have an adulterous relationship with my neighbor's wife. Then let my wife grind for another and let others bow over her. Now, it sounds like he's saying, you know, if I have sex with my neighbor's wife, then let someone else come and have sex with my wife.

You might think, well, that's not a very nice thing to wish on your wife, but he's not wishing it on his wife, he's wishing it on himself. He's assuming that if his wife had an affair, it would be agreeable to her. He's not talking about her being raped by the neighbor, but being seduced.

He's saying that he'd be the victim in that case, not his wife. And he says, if I have victimized my neighbor by sleeping with his wife, then let my neighbor victimize me that way. But someone victimized me by sleeping with my wife, which would be a punishment to Job.

It's not seen as something that's done against his wife's wishes or something. For that would be wickedness. Yes, it would be iniquity worthy of judgment.

For that would be a fire that consumes to destruction and would root out all my increase. Now, when he says in verse 11, if I had done that, well, that would be wickedness. You say I've done wickedness and you say that I'm suffering because of my weakness.

Well, that's not really what I have. I have not done wickedness. But if I had slept with my neighbor, that would be wickedness.

That would deserve what I'm going through right now. But that's not the case. If I have despised the cause of my manservant or my maidservant when they complained against me, what then shall I do if God rises up? When he punishes, how shall I answer him? Did he who made me in the womb make them or did he did not he who made me in the womb make them? Did not the same one fashion us in the womb? Now, this is an interesting prescience of really a more enlightened age about human rights, because he's talking about his slaves.

As a slave owner, he could do whatever he wants to his slaves. A man doesn't answer to his slaves, but he said, if my slaves came to me with a complaint against me, did I ever just ignore them? Did I send them away? Did I despise their cause? No, he listened to them. He said, why shouldn't I? The same God made me and made them.

You see, he saw himself, although he was a slave owner previously and his slaves were chattel, he still saw them as human beings made by God just like him. That was a position that human beings didn't take in society for centuries after Job's time. Every society has recognized slavery as a legitimate institution until modern times.

Even Job recognized it as a as a legitimate institution. He had servants, but he saw his servants as humans. And most times slaves were not treated like humans.

They're just treated like property. He says, hey, the same God who made me made them. The same God who brought me from my womb, from my mother's womb, made them too.

We're kind of equal in God's sight. That's a pretty enlightened view for a very ancient man living in an age where slavery has never even been questioned. It's legitimacy.

Usually when people have social power or economic power over others, they exploit it as much as they can. But he was a man who had that kind of power, but didn't exploit it, didn't even seem interested in doing so. He didn't think that'd be right.

If I have kept the poor from their desire or caused the eyes of the widow to fail or eaten my morsel by myself so that the fatherless may not eat of it. But from my youth, I reared him as a father and from my mother's womb, I guided the widow. If I have seen anyone

perish for lack of clothing or any poor man without covering.

If his heart has not blessed me and if he is not warmed with the fleece of my sheep, if I have raised my hand against the fatherless, when I saw I had help in the gate, then let my arm fall from my shoulder and my arm be torn from its socket for destruction from God is a terror to me. And because of his magnificence, I could not endure. So he's saying if I use my position as a judge in an unjust way.

Taking bribes from the rich so that I ruled against the poor on behalf of the rich or whatever, then my arm should be torn off. You know, that's kind of a typical imprecation to wish upon oneself in that society. The psalmist in one of the songs is it Psalm 137 or 139? I get those two mixed up.

I think 137. The psalmist says, if I should forget Jerusalem, then may my right eye wither. Or how do you say that? There's there's a number of these kinds of statements.

Let me see what it says here. It is Psalm 137. Where is it there? Verse six, if I do not remember you earlier, still verse four through six.

How long how should we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land? If I forget you, Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her skill. If I do not remember you, let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth. If I do not exalt Jerusalem above my chief joy.

See, this is typical wishing an imprecation on oneself. If I don't do my duty, then may these horrible things happen. May my right hand lose its skill.

May it wither up. May my tongue cleave to my mouth so I can't speak anymore. In this case, may my arms be ripped off their sock out of their sockets.

These are strong ways of saying I clearly am not guilty of these things, because if I was, I wouldn't wish such results on myself in this manner. So this is a rhetorical way of protesting one's innocence. Verse 24, if I've made gold my hope or said to find gold, you are my confidence.

If I have rejoiced because my wealth was great and because my hand had gained much. If I have observed the sun when it shines or the moon moving in brightness, this probably means observing them and honoring them as gods, because almost all ancient peoples, except for godly people, did worship the sun and the moon as if they were deities. And he has no doubt got that particular thing in mind.

In fact, it would appear in Deuteronomy, Chapter four. There's similar language for God's warning Israel not to do just that. Verse 19, he's talking to Israel about when they come into the promised land and settle in there, he says, take heed that you don't lift your eyes to heaven.

And when you see the sun, the moon and the stars and all the hosts of heaven feel driven to worship them and serve them. OK, he says, don't you watch out for that temptation that you look up and you feel driven to worship the sun and the moon and the stars. Apparently, that was an ancient urge that people, pagan religions, felt they all made the sun one of their gods and the moon one of their gods.

And so Job said, if I've done that, if I've observed the sun when it shines or the moon moving its brightness so that my heart has been secretly enticed, meaning enticed to worship them and my mouth has kissed my hand. No one knows what that means, except that it seems to be some kind of a ritual, a pagan ritual in worshiping the sun and the moon, kissing one's own hand. This also would be an iniquity worthy of judgment.

So again, he's saying, I haven't done anything worthy of judgment. If I'd done this, it certainly would be I would deserve what I'm getting if I'd done these things. I would have denied God who is above.

If I have rejoiced at the destruction of him who hated me or lifted myself up when evil found him. Indeed, I have allowed my mouth. I have not allowed my mouth to sin by asking for a curse on his soul.

If the men of my tent have not said, who is there that has not been satisfied with his meat? But no sojourner had to lodge in the street, for I've opened my doors to the traveler, if I have covered my transgression as Adam, by hiding my iniquity in my bosom because I feared the great multitude and dreaded the contempt of family so that I kept silence and did not go out of the door. Oh, that I had one to hear me. Here is my mark.

Oh, that the almighty would answer me that my prosecutor had written a book. Now, some of these things, he said, I hope it's self-explanatory talking about, he said, if I have rejoiced at the destruction of my enemies, I haven't when my enemies succumb to hardship, that didn't make me rejoice. In fact, I never went so far as to curse them when they were doing well.

I never wished them evil. And when evil came upon them, it never caused me to rejoice. He said, my servants in my tent have actually said things like who hasn't been benefited by Job's food.

What stranger has never been taken into his house traveling through his hospitable? He said, those are the things that really characterized him, not the sins that some of his some of his counselors had accused him of. And he said, as he's coming to a close here, he says in verse thirty five, oh, that I had one to hear me. Oh, that the almighty would answer me that my prosecutor had written a book.

Surely I would carry it on my shoulder and bind it on me like a crown. I would declare to him the number of my steps like a prince. I would approach him.

In other words, I wish God would just write a book of everything I've done. My accusers here think that it would be filled with accusations against me, but actually God wouldn't find any accusations against me. I behaved well, I would actually take that book and I'd wear it like a badge.

I'd show everybody this book. I'm not hiding anything. I don't have anything to hide.

If my land cries out against me and its furrows weep together, if I have eaten its fruit without money or caused its owners to lose their lives, then let this grow instead of wheat and weeds instead of barley. So, again, his final words there, it says the words of Job are ended. His final words are, again, wishing an imprecation, a curse on himself if he has done any of those things that should bring a curse on a man.

But all of this is said in this way in order to simply say, I haven't. I haven't done those things. Therefore, there's no reason that these curses should be upon me.

So that's really the end of his speeches all together in the whole book. And then we come to the very lengthy speeches of Elihu. Now, Elihu is sort of a mystery man.

First of all, he appears seemingly out of nowhere. His friends came and their arrival was announced in chapter two. They made an appointment.

They came to see him. They sat and listened to him as he poured out his grief. Then they answered him.

They talked with him. And all the while, one could get the impression of this conversation between Job and his three friends was just a private matter among the four of them. But we now find that Elihu has been there listening all along and he's got his own assessment to make of it.

And if he has been there, perhaps many others have been there, too. And Job was a famous man in the area. And no doubt, many people were curious about his circumstances.

There might have been many people who just came to watch and see what was going to happen to him when his three friends, notable philosophers, came to visit him. I'm sure that everybody had been asking the question, why is this happening to Job? Oh, these guys will know. And probably something of a crowd had been drawn to listen to this dialogue because there were other people besides these who were interested in knowing the answer.

Job's situation was an enigma. And they thought, well, this would be really interesting. And it was.

It would have been very interesting to show up for that. I don't know about you. Not

everyone finds the same things interesting I do.

But my favorite kind of movies are courtroom dramas. I just love courtroom dramas. I like to hear two sides argue their case.

And in movies, they're both usually pretty good. And I'd love to sit in courtrooms. In fact, I once thought I wanted to be a lawyer just because I thought it'd be fun to spend so much time in a courtroom and even have a chance to give arguments once in a while.

But I don't think that would be a good calling for me. But the thing is, I can see how there'd be an appeal to the general man and the common man when they see, oh, here come these philosophers. We're going to hear some some explanation.

We're going to get some evidence come out. That's going to be interesting. So I would assume that Elihu was not the only person who had arrived.

He's just the only one who speaks up afterwards. And he speaks up either because he knows more or because he just thinks he does. And that's really the hard thing to ascertain.

Does he really know any more than the other guys? Does he really bring any advance in knowledge to the situation? Or does he just flatter himself that he knows more than they do? He ends up rebuking Job's friends and Job. He's kind of like a mediator, at least sees himself in that role. He sees himself as one who's Job's advocate before God.

But he also ends up mostly criticizing Job, but not as severely as the other guys do. He's a young man and therefore he's held his peace until the older men have spoken. That would be the custom.

Yet many people feel that Elihu does not exhibit true humility. I mean, when he says things like, you know, he who is perfect in knowledge is with you. It sounds like he's talking about himself and it doesn't sound like a very humble thing for a man to say.

After all, what he is saying is these otherwise older men, Job and his three friends, have not shown themselves wise. And now Elihu is going to come and teach them knowledge. He's going to teach him a few things.

It doesn't sound like a humble approach. On the other hand, he does at least give at least formal, humble statements at the beginning of the speech. And it's really hard to know what to think of him.

One of the questions on your self-study was, you know, did Elihu seem like a humble man or an arrogant man? And I got a variety of answers. Some people thought he sounded arrogant. Some thought he sounded humble.

And that's really how the commentators are, too. They have differences of opinion about

him. He's kind of a mystery.

Some think he is actually the voice of God, not the voice of God, like the one that came out of the whirlwind, but more like a prophet of God. Someone who came with God's answer to Job. But if so, then why did God have to speak out of the whirlwind after Elihu was done? It would seem like God showed up because no one had yet really said to Job what needed to be said.

And God, none less than God himself, could say it. Elihu does feel that he's got his insights from God, though I don't know if he's claiming the same kinds of inspiration that a prophet would claim. He doesn't say, thus saith the Lord, necessarily, like a prophet would.

He, I'm just going to take Elihu at face value without any assumptions about who he is. He's a young man in the crowd. He's listened to them.

He's very dissatisfied that there's been a lot of talking by these older men and nothing has been resolved. Job hasn't moved his counselors one inch from their original position. They haven't moved Job one inch from his.

All this talk has ended up fruitless. And he's had his own opinions formulating in his mind. And he feels there's some things that they haven't said and some of the things they've said they've said unkindly.

He feels that Job is probably a righteous man, but that Job has come off a little too proud, a little too self-righteous, maybe. There's a sense in which Elihu, his speeches don't really settle anything. But there are a few things that Elihu's speeches differ from the others in, it seems to me.

One is that he's certainly more courteous than the others. He has at times words of rebuke to offer to Job, but he is not accusatory like his friends, like Job's friends were. He is not quite as humble as you'd expect a young man to be rebuking older men.

But he does recognize he's a younger man and he does treat Job with more deference and respect in his rebuking him or his correcting him than the older men did. The ones who are, as they said, older than Job's father. Another thing about Elihu is that he introduces one aspect that the others have not.

And that is that suffering isn't always a punishment, but many times it's a chastisement. Now, chastisement, we might think of a chastisement as a spanking, in which case we think of it as a punishment. But chastisement really simply means training of a child.

Training of a child does include what we customarily think of as chastisement, when a child does the wrong thing, he has to be disciplined. But the training of a child doesn't involve only dealing with the child when they've done wrong, but also bringing the child

up through the stages that they have to go through. When you send a child to school and the child doesn't like it, he finds trouble, finds difficulty learning his ABCs.

He's not happy in that role, but he's not there because he did something wrong. He's there because it's time for him to make the next step of his maturing. And the parents know it.

They put him into a place where he'll be trained. And training is difficult, but it's good for him. And we'll find and it's not as if Elihu is just immensely more enlightened than the other men, or at least if he is, it's not obvious that he is because he makes some of the same mistakes the other counselors make.

But he doesn't ever say that Job is suffering because of sins that he committed before these things came upon him. See, all the other counselors are saying, Job, these things came upon you because you were a wicked man. Elihu does not say that at any time.

He does say that Job may need to be corrected. But the suggestion that Elihu makes is that it's not that sufferings came upon Job because he sinned, but perhaps Job has sinned because the sufferings have come upon him. That is, Job's response to the sufferings have not been as exemplary as could be wished.

We do find Elihu indicated that Job is guilty of something and needs to repent, but he doesn't make it as clear as the other counselors do that he thinks that this something that Job did was a long time ago and it brought these sufferings on him. But rather, he says that Job is not responding very well to the hand of God that has come heavily upon him now. So that Elihu is a little more enlightened than the others.

He's willing to take Job's word for it that Job had not done something to deserve his sufferings. But since those sufferings have come, Job has not been quite as humble, quite as submissive to the trials as he might have been. This is not to say that Job did worse than any of us would.

In fact, his early responses were amazing. But he was a man, his strength is not the strength of stone. You know, he got worn down and he did begin to complain.

He did begin to suggest God's not doing the right thing and stuff. It would have been better for him just to keep quiet as he had. It would have been better for him to just say, you know, I don't understand what God's doing, but hey, I'm not going to say he's doing the wrong thing.

Better, yes. Perfect, in fact. And he's not a perfect man.

No one is. And so that's one thing really fantastic about the book of Job is that although it makes Job out to be an exceptionally righteous character, it doesn't make him so perfect that he makes no mistakes and doesn't need to repent. He has to repent at the end of

the book.

He's a multidimensional character like all the real people in the world are. He's not a fictional character who's just, you know, you know, he's just totally good. And I mean, he certainly is made out to be totally good at the beginning, but that is in order to tell us that the things that came on him came upon him in spite of the fact that he was good, not because he had done something evil.

But we do see that not everything he said, even though we probably side with him in his disputes with his friends because they're making false accusations, he's responding in anger to them. And we say, well, you know, you winced a little bit of some of the things he says because the spirit he says them in. But at the same time, you say, well, you know, he is the one who's right in this situation.

They're the ones who are wrong. He's just trying to, you know, set the record straight. But it's one thing to set the record straight.

It's another thing to lose your temper, to become indignant because you're being accused, to become prideful or to allow the pride that's in every man to rise up as anger because of someone's false accusations. And as I said earlier, every man, apparently even Job has some trial, which he's likely to succumb to in the sense that he would possibly not do the right thing when he loses property, loses his family, even loses his health. Those aren't the trials that will make him angry.

He can accept that from God. But when people come and start maligning him when he spent his whole life making sure he's kept his nose clean, making sure he's done the right thing and people come and represent his whole life as if it's been the opposite, that gets to his pride. And I don't think Job was an exceptionally proud man.

I don't think he was prouder than the average man. I think that any man would feel indignant if they had been totally faithful to their wife and someone said that they've been cheating on their wife or they've been totally honest in business. And someone said that they'd been pilfering.

Embezzling, you know, men rise up and women, too, no doubt when they're falsely accused. And that was Job's problem. Perhaps that is even part of the lesson of the book is that there are deeper trials, not just not just temptations that afflict us in our lusts and our comforts and our outward circumstances.

But we have something in our own nature that needs to be chastened at times. And so Elihu, he seems to view Job's trials not as punishment for something Job's done, but as a part of God's training, part of God's chastising, part of God's bringing Job further along and bringing some spiritual benefit to him, which is no doubt true. Although the first two chapters don't tell us that that's the reason.

But it certainly is a reason for God to do these things. And it makes God out to be a good God in spite of the fact that Job is suffering things he wouldn't rather suffer. And this chastisement is coming on him, thinks Elihu, because because Job has not responded to his trials as well as he could have.

It'd be hard to sit in judgment of Job when you haven't been through such things. Job, you should handle this better. But even if even if no one else would handle him better than Job did, still, it's true.

He could have done better. Everyone could do better. And that would seem to be the point here, that you could have done better.

And God is using these circumstances to train you, to chastise you, to make you a better man. So that's what we'll find in Elihu's speeches. But we'll take a break now and come back and actually read those speeches.