

June 28: Job 10–12 and Acts 8: 1-25

Job continues speaking in his anguish. He cries of the bitterness in his soul. He boldly proclaims that he will ask God why he is being prosecuted and why it is good for God to oppress him. Job continues on with his pity party, expressing his desire to have never been born. He is struggling with this affliction, trying to make it make sense.

Zophar, another friend, speaks up and asks how long Job is going to speak foolishly. He asks if Job can fathom the depths of God or His limits. God is God and He can do what He wants to do. If He wants to throw someone in prison and lift someone else up, then that is His prerogative.

Job responds to Zophar's speech with hostility. He explains that he is not inferior to Zophar. Everyone knows what Zophar is talking about. Of course God can do what He wants to do. The life of everything is in His hand. Job goes on to explain that wisdom is found with the elderly and understanding comes with long life.

I do not enjoy getting older. The only thing I enjoy about getting older is that I can look back on my life and see where God's hand was in it. There have been times that it seemed like God was taking me down a path toward one thing. In one particular instance, the path I thought we were on took a vastly different route. As I look back on that tumultuous time, I thank God that He brought me where He did rather than sending me where I thought I wanted to go. It's a wonderful thing to look back on my life and see how all the detours brought me to where I am today. The challenge is to look for His hand in everything we are going through, in good times or in bad.

In Acts, Saul is now identified as the lead persecutor. He becomes feared within Judea and the believers scatter. The Word starts to spread. There was a man in Samaria named Simon that had done magic tricks for the Samaritans. Philip comes to Samaria and does even greater things than Simon. Simon wants to have the same power as Philip, so he goes and asks how much he needs to pay them to give him the Holy Spirit. Peter confronts Simon for his sin. Simon's sin was not that he wanted the Holy Spirit. Instead, the sinfulness was in his motive. He wanted the Holy Spirit to give himself clout. He was not interested in serving God. Instead, he wanted to use God for his own gain.

June 29: Job 13-15 and Acts 8: 26-40

Job is understandably upset. He again confirms that he knows just as much as his friends. They are all on equal footing when it comes to knowledge of God. He exclaims that it would be better for him if they would just "shut up and let that be" their wisdom. Job then confirms his trust in God. He states that even if God kills him, his hope remains in The LORD.

Job acknowledges that one day he will die. Our bodies are all on a finite timeline. We are short of days and full of trouble.

Eliphaz answers Job with more rebuke. He thinks that Job's rebuttal is all from an underlying sin. He accuses Job of arguing with useless talk. As far as Eliphaz is concerned, Job's words

have no purpose, he is merely speaking hot air. Eliphaz reminds Job of the wicked's plight. The wicked writhes in anguish all of their lives. Dreadful sounds fill their ears. Eliphaz goes so far as to ask how a human can be righteous and trustworthy since God doesn't even trust the angels. If that is the case, how can Job be any better than them?

In the New Testament reading, Philip receives a message from the LORD. He is to go south to the road that goes down to Gaza. He will meet an eunuch of Candace, the queen of Ethiopians. Philip does as he is instructed and approaches the eunuch's chariot. He hears the man reading Isaiah. Philip asks if he understands what he is reading. The eunuch responds that he cannot. Philip uses the Old Testament prophecy to prove Christ is the Messiah. The eunuch comes to belief and when he sees a body of water asks if there is anything that could prevent him from being baptized. The man is baptized, and Philip is whisked away. The Ethiopian eunuch thinks nothing of it and goes on his way rejoicing.

June 30: Job 16-18 Acts 9:1-22

Job responds to Eliphaz's accusations. Job's assessment is that it is easy for them to cast judgment on him. They are not suffering like he is, so they can give lip service to the problem without it affecting them. Job claims that if they were in his position and he was in theirs, he would have compassion on them. There is a definite lack of compassion from Job's friends. I am curious how it would be if the shoe was on the other foot. The fact is that we do not know how we will respond in certain situations until we find ourselves in one of those situations. Job is getting tired from all of this. Grief has made his eyes tired.

Bildad responds with more rebuke. He wants Job to stop talking. Both parties would have been better off if they had just kept their mouths shut. Now it is a race to see who will be proven right and who will be proven wrong in their assessment. Job doesn't know why he is suffering. His friends don't understand why he is suffering. However, they think they do, so they make the situation even worse by their accusations.

In the New Testament reading, Saul is on his way to Damascus. He is still breathing murderous threats against the Christians. He got approval to go into the homes in Damascus and pull people out. In those days, believers were meeting in homes to worship The LORD. On his way, he sees a blinding light and The LORD confronts him. He tells Saul to go to Damascus and wait.

Meanwhile, The LORD tells Ananias to go find Saul and baptize him. Ananias protests, but God explains that He is going to use Saul to take the message of Jesus to the Jews, Gentiles, and beyond. This man that killed many believers will become an asset to furthering the kingdom. Ananias is obedient and baptizes Saul. When that happened, scales fell from Saul's eyes and he could see again.

July 1: Job 19-20 and Acts 9:23-43

Job responds to Bildad. His anger is increasing from all of the "friendly" advice he has even receiving. Job says that "If you really want to appear superior to me and would use my disgrace

as evidence against me, then understand that it is God who has wronged me and caught me in His net.” This in response to Bildad’s claim that Job had sinned and was therefore caught in God’s trap. Job reminds his friends that there are plenty of wicked people out there that are thriving in the secular realm. Just as Job witnessed sinful and unrepentant people succeed from a worldly standpoint, we see the same things today. There are plenty of people living the opulent lifestyle while living in sinfulness. However, that is only going to last so long. We all have one final destination in our present state, the grave. The righteous might suffer for a little while here, but it is better to have a little suffering with eternal bliss than have easy times on earth and an eternity of despair.

Zophar responds, telling Job that he has to answer Job’s response because it has upset him. That is clearly not the best place to respond from. When we feel the need to respond immediately, it is less of a response and more of a reaction. Zophar speaks about the plight of the wicked. Their joy is brief. They spend their lives chasing down things with temporal value. Their appetite is never satisfied. They are always seeking more. When they get more, then even more is required. We can’t know true satisfaction until we know Christ. Until we know Him, we seek the pleasures of the flesh. The sins of the flesh will not fulfill.

In the New Testament reading, Saul had been preaching and teaching in Damascus. He developed quite a name for himself to the point that everyone was mad at him and wanted to kill him. It got so bad that they even posted guards at the gates to prevent Saul from leaving. Knowing this, the brothers lowered him through a window in a basket. Saul heads to Jerusalem. Unfortunately, the believers there do not trust him because of what he had done to them before he was converted. Barnabas, the son of encouragement, goes to them and speaks on Saul’s behalf. They allow Saul in, and he begins preaching and teaching there. Saul has come a long way.

July 2: Job 21-22 and Acts 10:1-23

Job responds to Zophar. He tells him to pay close attention. When Job is finished speaking, then Zophar can continue to insult him and mock him. I think this is the crux of the entire situation here. The friends think they are helping. Meanwhile, they are just beating Job down. Job is trying to explain where he is coming from, but they do not want to hear anything from his perspective. They want to maintain the idea that they have it all figured out. One thing that we should all be able to admit is that we don’t have it all figured out. When we approach a person that is suffering, we can’t assume we know everything about the situation. These friends are not listening to Job. God gave us two ears and one mouth for a reason!

When Job finishes, it is Eliphaz’s turn to brow beat Job some more. We can read the mockery in there. “Does God correct you and take you to court because of your piety?” The answer, of course, is no. When we do what God has commanded us to do, He will not punish us for it. Eliphaz is still digging in his heels, trying to get Job to admit whatever sin he committed to bring him to such a state. He then tells Job that he needs to get right with God so that Job can be a blessing to other people again. Can you imagine being in destitution and then have one of your friends tell you that it’s your fault and now others are suffering because of your sin?! While all

of these accusations seem crazy when we read it here, the fact is that there are people that will do the same thing as Job's friends.

In the New Testament reading, a centurion named Cornelius is a good and upright man. He does what is right for the LORD. He has belief in Yahweh, but has not gone through the full conversion process. Cornelius receives a vision. His prayers and acts of charity have gone up to the LORD as an offering. He is directed to send folks to retrieve Peter. Cornelius is obedient.

Meanwhile, Peter receives a vision from The LORD. It is time for Peter to stop looking at other nations as less than the Israelites. Whatever God has made clean cannot be called unclean. Jesus has made a way for every person, Jewish or not, to be reconciled with the Father.

July 3: Job 23-25 and Acts 10: 24-48

Job boldly states what he would do if he was to receive an audience with The LORD. He says he would plead his case before Him. Job knows that God will pay attention to him because he is an upright man. He speaks of how God knows his every step even though he does not see all of the work that The LORD is doing to the east, west, north, and south.

Still, though, he has questions. He does not understand why the wicked have such an easy time. There are people that are taking advantage of the poor, the widow, the orphan. Those folks living in their opulent lifestyles are not using their wealth the help out those in need. Instead, they are taking from those that have nothing to add to their coffers. Yet, these wicked people continue to walk about the earth unscathed.

Bildad comes in with a reminder that everyone born is born in sin. No one is pure. Bildad is trying to remind Job that even though he is upright, he is still not perfect.

In the New Testament reading, Peter goes to Cornelius. Meanwhile, Cornelius gathers his family to hear what Peter has to say. After Cornelius explains what God told him to do, Peter understands that God does not play favorites. His plan was not just to save the Israelites and other Jews from their sin and despair, His plan is to save ALL peoples. God did not just send Christ for one people group, He sent Him for all people groups.

Peter begins teaching them about Jesus. He explains Christ's resurrection and the fact that He ate and drank with the disciples after the return from the grave. All of the prophets testify to Christ and His great work on the cross. At this, the people come to belief. They receive the Holy Spirit and begin speaking in other languages, declaring the goodness of God. At that, Peter asks how anyone could deny them being baptized. They were clearly believers.

Notice that it is not the baptism that makes them believers. We are not converted by a rote ritual. Baptism is important, it is an outward demonstration to show the world what we believe. However, baptism does not bring life. It is God Almighty that restores us. It's the relationship, not the ritual, that is most important.

July 4: Job 26-28 and Acts 11

Bildad has said nothing helpful, so Job responds with sarcasm. He jokes that Bildad has helped so much in his opening words. However, Job quickly goes in to describing the order and logic of God in His creation. He speaks about the mysteries of how God put it all together. The waters are wrapped in the clouds, but the clouds do not burst under their weight. He hung the earth in nothing. Of course, from our perspective, we know the physics and science to understand why the earth rotates the way it does and the gravity that holds it in place. We understand the science of the water cycle. God is the One that made gravity and the water cycle.

In verse 12-3 of chapter 26, Job makes reference to Rahab. The reference to God destroying Rahab and the fleeing serpent was to counter an ancient belief that gods conquered chaos at the beginning of the world.

Job changes his rhetoric to show that the wicked and unjust will not be satisfied. They will spend their lives trying to build themselves up. One day it will all disappear, though. They go to bed with piles of silver and other treasure, but when they wake up to death, it is all gone. As believers, we can invest in the eternal things. There are three things on earth that are eternal, your soul, my soul, and the Word of God.

In the New Testament reading, Peter returns to Jerusalem. He is questioned by people that were adamant new believers had to be circumcised to become followers of Christ. The debate of circumcision goes on for a while in the history of the early church. It was unclear whether people had to become fully Jewish to become a Christian. Peter outlines the vision he received to the men questioning why he baptized them. After the explanation, the men remained silent for a while. Then rather than come up with a defense as to why Peter is wrong, they give praise. It clicks with them. They too see that God had made a way for all people to come to Him. Rather than become jealous that it's not just salvation for the Israelites, they rejoice that it is not just salvation for the Israelites.

We also see how the church responds to the needs of people suffering through a famine. Notice that no one asks them for help. They see the need and they do what they can to meet it. As Christians, we are called to love the unloved, heal the hurt, and help the helpless. That list is not all inclusive, but it's a good start.

July 5: Job 29-30 and Acts 12

Job begins to give his last claim to innocence. He longs for the days gone by where he was respected by everyone in the town. In those days, the business of the cities were conducted at the gates. When Job would come up to the gates, the young men withdrew because of his importance. The older men even stood to their feet when he entered. Job enjoyed a place of prominence before all of this calamity hit.

Even though he was a man of fame and renown, Job now finds that he is mocked by the dirges of society. It's not just the rich officials and other folks that scorn him. The poor folks also mock him and taunt him. The mallow Job references is also known as saltwort. It came from an edible plant that was used for feeding the poor. To put an even finer point on the destitution his

mockers live in, he also explains that they use the broom tree for food. In those days, the broom tree was generally used to make charcoal, not food. Despite their poverty, these folks now look upon Job and they sing songs to mock him.

How would we respond if we were ever put in a position like that? What would happen if we found ourselves in a spot like Job is in now? As believers, just like the rest of the world, we have our ups and downs in life. When the low points hit, what do we do? Do we continue to praise God and walk through the storm with Him?

In the Acts reading, we see that persecution is once again upon the church. James, the son of Zebedee is killed. When Herod sees that this pleased the people, he has Peter arrested with the intent to execute him. However, Peter has friends that pray for his release. An angel of the Lord comes and helps him in the middle of the night. Peter runs to where his friends are at. The woman answering the gate is so thrilled to hear Peter's voice that she fails to open the gate. Instead, she runs to tell the good news to the others. They tell her she is crazy.

Herod meets an interesting fate. He delivered a public address on an appointed day in royal robes while seated on the throne. The people screamed that they were not hearing the voice of a mere man. Instead, they were hearing the voice of a god. The LORD struck Herod down for his hubris. We are not certain of what exact physical ailment killed Herod. Some contend that it was appendicitis. Others hold that he was poisoned. Some believe that he died from intestinal blockage. Either way, with Herod out of the picture, spreading the message will be easier now.

July 6: Job 31-32 and Acts 13:1-23

Job concludes his defense by stating that he has not looked at a young woman. He has not fallen into the sins of the flesh, not has he even thought about it. If he had been seduced by a neighbor's wife, then his wife could have been taken by another. It would be a disgrace! In those days, even within the pagan cultures, adultery was deemed immoral and in many of the pagan cities it carried the death sentence. Job states that he has not even rejoiced when his enemies were in distress. He really paints the picture that he is upright and honest by stating that he does not even have any impure thoughts.

Elihu, the son Barachel the Buzite responds. Elihu is not happy with Job or Job's friends. He has kept his mouth shut until now. However, after seeing that Job is righteous Elihu becomes angry with him. He is also angry because Job's friends have been unable to refute any of Job's claims of innocence, yet they still condemned the man. Essentially, Elihu has had enough with both parties and decides to enter the debate. He has kept silent until now because he is significantly younger than Job and the other friends. Generally the older folks were considered to have the wisdom. Elihu finds that this is not the case with these men.

In the New Testament reading, we read about the teachers and prophets in Antioch. There was Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, Manean, and Saul. They spent their days ministering and fasting. Saul and Barnabas are set apart for special work. They will take God's message to Cyprus! Are we obedient when God gives us an assignment?

Barnabas and Saul first go to Salamis. They begin proclaiming God's message in the synagogues. When they were done there, they came across a sorcerer accompanying the proconsul, Sergius Paulus. Paulus was an intelligent man and listened to what Barnabas and Saul had to say. The sorcerer tried to steer the proconsul away from the faith. Saul/Paul is filled with the Holy Spirit and rebukes the sorcerer for trying to steer the proconsul away from Christ. Paul says that the man is the son of the devil, full of deceit and all fraud. Paul pronounces judgment on the sorcerer. The sorcerer is blinded by a mist. The proconsul sees all of this and comes to believe in Jesus.