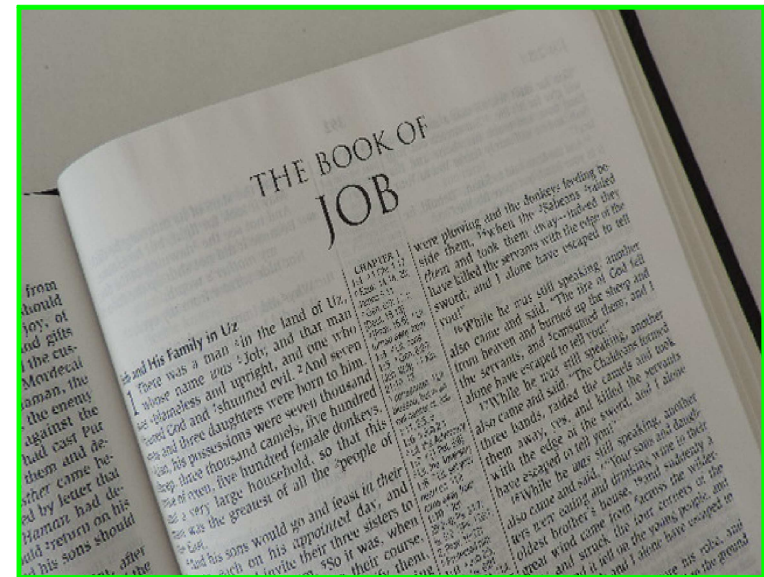


PILGRIM BIBLE NOTES

God's holy Word simply explained and applied



March 2018

Bible readings from Job chapters 14 to 42

The LORD restored Job's losses when he prayed for his friends

The three friends had to humble themselves and go to Job, presumably to apologise to him and to ask for his forgiveness: *And the Lord restored Job's losses when he prayed for his friends, giving him twice as much as he had before* (10). The Lord Jesus said, 'Pray for those who spitefully use you' (Matthew 5:44). Is there someone who has hurt you? Pray for them! Do not harbour resentment or bitterness, for that will rob your life of blessing. It makes it far easier for us to have a forgiving spirit when we pray for those who have wronged us. Has someone sinned against you? Are you praying for them, that they will see the error of their ways, that they will repent and seek your forgiveness and be reconciled to you?

The Lord not only restored Job's losses, but also his health. His brothers, sisters and friends who had forsaken him visited him. They ate with him and comforted him and each brought him a piece of silver and a gold ring (11; cp. 19:13–14). God gave his servant another ten children, seven sons and three daughters. The daughters were outstanding in their beauty and their names are given here (13–15).

Roy Zuck writes, 'Job and his consolers came to see that God, to be God, must be totally free. If God is predictable or is responsible to man, he ceases to be God. We too, in an attitude of calm trust, must allow God the freedom to be himself.' (EVERYMAN'S BIBLE COMMENTARY ON JOB, page 191). *Now the LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning* (12). **We may not be vindicated here on earth like Job, but our trials are not for ever. (Romans 8:18).**

*We expect a bright tomorrow,
All will be well.
Faith can sing, through days of sorrow,
All, all is well:
On our Father's love relying,
Jesus every need supplying,
Or in living or in dying,
All must be well.*

(Mary Peters)

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I know that you can do everything

Job was overwhelmed by the revelation of God's infinite power and he answered God, saying, *'I know that you can do everything, and that no purpose of yours can be withheld from you'* (2). God is absolutely sovereign and his purposes cannot be thwarted. Job remembered the words of God to him:

- *'You asked, "Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?"'* (3; cp. 38:2). Job confessed that he had been out of his depth in trying to understand the ways of God.
- *'You said, "I will question you, and you shall answer me"'* (4; cp. 38:3; 40:7).

He saw that he had sinned in the way he had reasoned about God and had been presumptuous to imagine that he could argue his case before God. He had such an experience of God that he was overcome by a sense of his own worthlessness. He said, *'Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes'* (6). **When a man experiences God in his life, there is true repentance and humility.**

The Lord then had something to say to Eliphaz and the other two friends. Job had challenged them with the question, *'Will it be well when he searches you out?'* (13:9) and the answer given here is 'No.' — God was angry with them because they had not represented him correctly. They had uttered many wonderful truths about God but they had insisted that Job must have been guilty of some great sin to be suffering such calamity in his life. The Lord ordered them to make a burnt offering of seven bulls and seven rams and told them to go to his *'servant Job'* who would pray for them (7–8).

The three friends had spoken much about Job's sin and his need to admit it and to repent to obtain God's forgiveness. They now had to do the repenting in order to receive forgiveness from God and from their friend whom they had wronged. **The Lord vindicated his 'servant' and he will surely vindicate us. Let us always look to him and trust in him when we are wronged.**

If a man dies, shall he live again?

Intense, unexplained suffering brought a mood of deep despair upon Job. He expressed sentiments about the brevity and futility of life (1–2). He could not understand why God had fixed his eyes on such a defenceless creature as himself (3). His case was hopeless because no one is able to bring a clean thing out of the unclean (4). God has determined how long a man shall live and Job longed for some respite from his gaze (5–6).

Job turned from the futility of life to the certainty of death (7–17). He contrasts man with a tree which may be cut down and yet sprouts again and flourishes. Man, however, dies and does not rise. He is like water that evaporates from the sea or a river that has dried up — *'So man lies down and does not rise'* (7–12). Such thoughts destroy hope (19) and God sends man away at death. He is cut off from his family in all their joys and sorrows (20–21). Job asked a most important question, *'If a man dies, shall he live again?'* (14). He was later to give a wonderful answer to this question (19:25–27).

The child of God is not kept from suffering, but he has great hope in it. The apostle Paul wrote, *'For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us'* (Romans 8:18). Suffering will give way to glory when Christ returns. The glory which shall be revealed in us is beyond anything that we can possibly imagine! Suffering is but for a time, but glory is for ever!

Someone once remarked that 'death is the greatest fact of life.' Many feel that it is morbid to think or talk about death which is a great enemy (1 Corinthians 15:26) but it is foolish not to be realistic and to be unprepared to die. There is conscious life for everyone after death — either in the presence of God, or shut out of heaven and in torment (cp. Luke 16:19–28; Philippians 1:21–23). There is eternal life for all who repent of their sin and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. **Do you believe in the Lord Jesus? Have you trusted in him?**

Are the consolations of God too small for you?

This chapter begins the second round of speeches in which Job's friends become even more acrimonious in their tirade against him. Eliphaz said that no wise man would speak as Job with words that were as useless and as unprofitable as the wind (1–3). He turned on Job accusing him of casting off fear and of restraining prayer before God. His sin was causing him to speak irreverently against God and his own mouth condemned him (4–5).

Eliphaz continued to assail Job – ‘Who do you think you are? Do you think that you were the first to be born? Are you more ancient than the hills and the only one to have wisdom? Are you the only one to have access to the counsel of God? What do you know that we do not know? We have age and experience on our side’ (7–10). This was not true. Job had not made any such claims, though he had asserted that he was not inferior to them (12:3; 13:2). Eliphaz told Job that he had allowed his emotion to take over his reasoning, hence he had turned against God (12–13). He had ignored the uncleanness of man who gulps down iniquity as a thirsty man drinks water (14–16). Eliphaz was very wrong in his view of Job.

He also asked, ‘*Are the consolations of God too small for you, and the word spoken gently with you?*’ (11). The Word of God does bring great comfort to the child of God but Eliphaz and his companions used truth as a battering ram to bring Job down. They had not brought comfort from the Word of God nor had they been gentle in their speech. It is true, however, that we sometimes complain as if the consolations of God were very small. God has given us exceedingly great and precious promises (2 Peter 1:4). We need to encourage ourselves in these promises. **If we undervalue the consolations of God, we will lose our Christian joy, neglect prayer, and be unable to cope with trial.** ‘*Are the consolations of God too small for you?*’

He is king over all the children of pride

The whole of this chapter speaks of Leviathan, an awesome sea-monster which is now extinct. No amount of human effort could slay or capture this creature (1–10, 26) which could hardly be a crocodile or a whale as some suggest. When this creature raised himself out of the water, he struck fear into the ‘*mighty*’, the most brave of humans (25). Leviathan is also described as ‘*a serpent*’ and ‘*the reptile*’ (Hebrew = ‘*dragon*’ as in the AV) *that is in the sea* (Isaiah 27:1; Psalm 104:25–26).

Leviathan is a type of Satan. ‘*He beholds every high thing; he is king over all the children of pride*’ (34). These words are not a description of an animal but they are true of Satan. The devil is described as a serpent and as a dragon (Revelation 12:9–10; 20:1–3). Satan is very powerful and no man is able to overcome him in his own strength. He had brought Job very low but he is not able to stand against God who is sovereign over all his creation and will surely punish him (10–11). The Lord Jesus came into the world to *destroy the works of the devil* (1 John 3:8). He *disarmed principalities and powers* through his death on the cross (Colossians 2:15).

Job's suffering was coming to an end and God's power over Leviathan was not only an encouraging message for Job, but a warning to the evil one who hated him so much. Suffering Job persevered and he saw the purpose of the Lord who is very compassionate and merciful (James 5:11). **Satan may proudly strut about, he may roar at us, seek to intimidate us and to destroy us, but we have a sovereign Protector. Hallelujah!**

*A Sovereign Protector I have,
Unseen, yet for ever at hand,
Unchangeably faithful to save,
Almighty to rule and command.
He smiles and my comforts abound;
His grace as the dew shall descend
And walls of salvation surround
The soul he delights to defend.*

(Augustus M. Toplady)

Behold, I am vile

The Lord had reminded Job of his awesome power and majesty and now challenged him, ‘*Shall the one who contends with the Almighty correct him? He who rebukes God, let him answer it*’ (2). Job had now lost his determination to argue his case with God (cp. 23:3–7; 31:35–37) and he is reduced to silence after saying, ‘*Behold, I am vile*’ (3–5; meaning here, ‘unworthy’ or ‘insignificant’).

God again told Job, ‘*Now prepare yourself like a man*’ to answer his questions (7; cp. 38:3). Would Job condemn God in order to justify himself? If he had an arm (strength) like God he could then ‘play God’ and clothe himself with majesty and splendour. He could then in his wrath bring down those who are proud and punish the wicked (8–13). If Job were equal to God he could save himself by his own strength (14).

The Lord further showed Job his own insignificance by directing him to the largest of his creatures – the behemoth (15–24) and Leviathan (chapter 41). Some commentators believe that the behemoth refers to the elephant, hippopotamus or the rhinoceros but all this is speculation. His exact identity is not known. The behemoth moved his tail like a cedar (17) but the elephant, hippo and rhino all have a very small tail. Behemoth was probably one of the great plant-eating dinosaurs (the brontosaurus). God made this huge animal just as he made Job and it ranked first among God’s creatures because of its massive size and strength (15,19). Yes, Job was very insignificant!

We do not esteem God as we ought! When we see more of the greatness and majesty of our Creator, we will see just how insignificant we are. We will then be filled with wonder that God should love us, and we will accept his wise and holy will in our lives.

Great God! How infinite art thou!

What worthless dust are we!

Let the whole race of creatures bow

And pay their praise to thee!

(Isaac Watts)

Let him not trust in futile things

It is almost impossible to reason with people like Job’s comforters. Eliphaz was convinced that only the wicked suffered illness, loss and tragedy. No argument, however well presented, would move him from his opinion. Job must therefore be guilty of some hidden wickedness to have been visited by loss, multiple bereavement and illness; he was a hypocrite to pretend otherwise. He had pointed out that the wicked often prosper in this life and live in apparent security (12:6) but Eliphaz would have none of this. He had observed the very opposite and the wisdom of past ages taught that the wicked will have nothing but trouble (17–35).

- Job had said, ‘*The earth is given into the hand of the wicked*’ (9:24). Eliphaz insists that it is given to the wise: ‘*To whom alone the land*’ (‘earth’) *was given*’ (18–19).
- Job was suffering such intense pain, that he longed for death (3:11, 20–26): ‘*The wicked man writhes with pain all his days*’ (20).
- In prosperity the destroyer comes upon the wicked (21) and this very thing had happened to Job (1:13–19).
- Darkness and terror are the portion of the wicked. Job had spoken of the terrors of God being arrayed against him (6:4) and of going to the land of darkness (10:21–22).

Many of the friends’ words were true, but not when applied to Job. Eliphaz rightly observed how the wicked man stubbornly defies God, holding out against him like a soldier with a strong shield (25–26). His apparent prosperity will not continue for ever: ‘*Let him not trust in futile things, deceiving himself*’ (31). This comment was not true of Job, however.

It is futile to trust in material things which cannot give lasting satisfaction or give any hope or security in the day of calamity. **Are you trusting in the Lord or are you relying on the empty things of this world?** To be obsessed with the things of the world rather than seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness is bound to lead to much sorrow (Matthew 6:33; 1 Timothy 6:6–10).

I would strengthen you with my mouth

The three friends had failed Job in his time of need. They had told him that his words were *'like a strong wind'* (8:2; 15:2) but all that they had given him were *'words of wind;'* they were *'miserable comforters'* (2–3). Had they suffered like him, Job would have treated them in a different manner: *'But I would strengthen you with my mouth, and the comfort of my lips would relieve your grief'* (4–5). Are you ready to encourage your fellow-Christian who is passing through a valley of trial or discouragement? A kind, sympathetic word can do much to lift up the heart of a struggling child of God.

Job continued to vividly describe his suffering. He complained of God, *'He has worn me out.'* His shrivelled, lean body testified to his desperate condition. He felt that God was against him (7–8), tearing him in anger and snarling at him like a savage beast, glaring at him (*'my adversary sharpens his gaze on me'* – 9). His friends had turned against him, opening their mouths in derision at him (*'they gape at me with their mouth'* – 10). He wrongly perceived that God was using him for target practice, piercing him, wounding him and having no pity on him (12–14). He mourned in sackcloth, laid his head in the dust and wept. Why had he been reduced to such a pathetic condition when he had not practised violence, nor was he guilty of hypocrisy (*'my prayer is pure'*; 15–17)?

Misunderstood by friends and scorned, Job tearfully looked for a heavenly witness to plead on his behalf with God. His few remaining years would soon expire and he would die, going *'the way of no return'* (19–22). When we die, we all *'go the way of no return'*, believer and unbeliever alike. This should challenge us to obey and to please God!

The embattled, afflicted and perplexed Christian may feel like Job in his suffering. **We should never forget, however, that God is for us, however others may treat us (Romans 8:31), and that the Lord Jesus appears in the presence of God for us, praying for us (Hebrews 7:25; 9:24).**

Because God deprived her of wisdom

The Lord had shown Job his great power over the inanimate universe and He now shows how he is the sovereign Sustainer over the animal kingdom. He continued to pile on the questions:

- *'Can you'* provide food for the lion? (39–40).
- *'Who provides food for the raven?'* (41; cp. Luke 12:24).
- *'Who'* gives the wild donkey its freedom? (39:5–8).
- *'Can you'* tame the wild ox? (9–12). This huge beast had disappeared from Palestine by the New Testament era and is now extinct. It would have been a wonderful animal to harness and put to work, but it could not be tamed.

God also pointed Job to the ostrich, the horse (particularly the horse used in war), the hawk and the eagle (13–30). The ostrich appears to be a stupid bird. *'God deprived her of wisdom and did not endow her with understanding'* (17). She has wings that she cannot use, she is careless with her eggs, and yet she can outrun a horse and its rider (13–18). God's intentional creation of such a strange bird, inferior to some animals in wisdom but greater than others in speed, illustrates his sovereign ways. He works as he pleases and there is nothing that we can do about it: *But our God is in heaven; he does whatever he pleases* (Psalm 115:3).

Derek Thomas writes, 'God made the world according to a perfect blueprint. And despite the coming of sin, and its consequences for the world, God continues to rule over the entire world — animate and inanimate. There is not a single part of the entire universe where God's rule does not extend. And he governs it wisely. Things may appear to be out of control at times, but they are not. He sets limits beyond which sin, and the kingdom of evil, cannot transgress' (THE STORM BREAKS – Job simply explained page 294).

God is absolutely sovereign in our lives and over suffering. The most important thing in life is not that all our questions are answered, but that we are right with God!

Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind

Job and his friends had reasoned and disagreed but now the silence of heaven is broken. Job had said, *‘I desire to reason with God’* and had prayed, *‘Let me speak, then you respond to me’* (13:3,22), and *‘Oh, that the Almighty would answer me’* (31:35). Here we read, *Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind* (1). Notice that *the LORD answered Job* but he did not answer his specific questions. It is not for us to pry into the secret things of God even though we may find ourselves beset by perplexing questions (cp. Deuteronomy 29:29).

There had been too many *‘words without knowledge’* (2) and God challenges Job, *‘Now prepare yourself like a man’* (3; Hebrew = ‘gird up your loins’ – in other words, ‘be prepared for combat’). Job had wanted to argue his case before God that he had been treated unfairly. He wanted answers but the Lord challenges him, *‘I will question you, and you shall answer me’* (3). Instead of answering Job’s questions, God asked him one question after another in which he pointed to the marvels of the inanimate world (4–38) and of the animal kingdom (38:39 to 39:30). Look at some of these questions (there are many more in chapters 39 to 41):–

- *‘Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?’* (4).
- *‘Have you commanded the morning?’* (12).
- *‘Have you entered the springs of the sea?’* (16).
- *‘Have you comprehended the breadth of the earth?’* (18).
- *‘Can you’* guide the great galaxies? (31–33).
- *‘Can you’* control the weather? (34–38).

When we meet with God, we see the questions that trouble us in a different light. We are overawed at the greatness and the majesty of the Almighty. We are painfully aware of our own weakness and ignorance. **We realise that God knows what he is doing with us, and though we cannot trace his ways, we will trust him!**

Yet the righteous will hold to his way

Job was broken in spirit and in his despair he stated that his days were finished and that the grave was ready to receive him (1,11). His friends did not understand him because God had hidden from their heart the reason for his trial (2,4). He was not suffering because of some great sin in his life as they had alleged. He called upon God to lay down a pledge for him, to be his guarantor (3; striking hands was a method of confirming an agreement or business deal (cp. Proverbs 6:1). Though his comforters mocked him and he suffered insults, he was confident that the upright would stand up for him (1,8). Job felt that death was not far away (5–16) but there is a verse in this chapter which expresses great hope: *‘Yet the righteous will hold to his way, and he who has clean hands will be stronger and stronger’* (9).

The believer may pass through periods of severe trial when his faith is sorely assailed, but he will never lose his salvation. Theologians call this great truth ‘the perseverance of the saints.’ We can be confident that God will complete the good work that he has begun in us (Philippians 1:6). We have eternal life through the Lord Jesus Christ and we cannot be lost (John 3:16; 10:27–28). God has chosen us to and he will never lose us! Everyone whom he has predestined to salvation in eternity past, all who are called and justified, will be glorified (Romans 8:30). The Lord is able to keep us from stumbling and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy (Jude 24). Let us encourage ourselves in the Lord and rejoice in him — *‘The righteous will hold to his way.’*

*They may in the storms of temptation be tossed,
Their sorrows may swell as the sea,
But none of the ransomed shall ever be lost,
The righteous shall hold on his way.*

*Surrounded with sorrows, temptation and cares,
This truth with delight we survey,
And sing, as we pass through this valley of tears,
The righteous shall hold on his way.* (Henry Fowler)

The place of him who does not know God

Bildad's first and second speeches begin with the question, 'How long?' (2; cp. 8:2). The meaning of the Hebrew in verse 2 is, 'How long will you hunt (literally, 'set snares') for words?' He was very impatient with Job, accusing him of hunting for arguments, however far-fetched, to defend himself. He was angry that he refused to accept their arguments, treating them as if they were beasts (3; cp. 12:7–9). Job had complained that an angry God was tearing him but in reality he was tearing himself in anger (4a; cp. 16:9). He had spoken of a rock being moved from its place (14:18) and Bildad used the same terminology to ask whether he thought that God would alter the course of nature to vindicate him (4b).

Bildad offered no words of comfort for Job. He preaches a sermon at him on the downfall and fate of the wicked (5–18). His light will go out in his tent, so how could Job assert that 'the tents of robbers prosper' (5–6; cp. 12:6). Job had uttered these words in response to Bildad's earlier statement that 'the dwelling-place of the wicked will come to nothing' – 8:22). The wicked man is surrounded by hidden traps and snares which are ready to seize him (8–10). Terror and destruction are his portion and he will be taken from the shelter of his tent to be paraded before death, 'the king of terrors' (11–14). Bildad was heartless in making allusions to Job's festering skin (13) and to the loss of his children (19; cp. 8:4).

Bildad was very wrong in suggesting Job must be suffering as a wicked man and in his insistence that the prosperity of the wicked is short-lived in this life. His words when taken to describe the ultimate fate of the wicked person are very true, however.: 'The place of him who does not know God' (21) is very frightening for he is without hope unless he turns from his sin and calls upon the Lord to save him. **Do you know God? Is your heart right with God?**

Stand still and consider the wondrous works of God

Elihu now reminds us of the unsearchable greatness of our eternal God: 'Behold, God is great, and we do not know him' (26). He goes on to describe five aspects of God's work in nature which demonstrate his awesome power:

- In the formation of the rain drops (27–28).
- In the thunder and lightning (36:29 to 37:5). God's voice is often likened to thunder in Scripture. — 'God thunders marvellously with his voice; he does great things which we cannot comprehend' (5).
- In sending the snow (6).
- In forming the ice (9–10).
- In the clouds which are under his control (11–12).

Elihu concluded his speech by calling on Job to 'stand still and consider the wondrous works of God' (14). He asked some questions to make Job recognise his smallness in the sight of God. — He who balances the clouds in nature also balances the clouds of suffering and affliction in our lives (16). We must recognise that 'with God is awesome majesty' (22) and that his ways are beyond our understanding. **If God's wondrous works in nature should lead us to worship and to adore him, how much more his great work to save us from our sins.** He so loved sinners like you and me, that he gave his holy, sinless Son to die in our place, to be punished for our sins. Let us consider the wondrous works of God and worship him!

*How wondrous are the works of God,
Displayed through all the world abroad!
Immensely great, immensely small!
Yet one strange work exceeds them all.*

*Almighty God sighed human breath!
The Lord of life experienced death!
How it was done we can't discuss,
But this we know, 'twas done for us.*

(Joseph Hart)

Behold, God is exalted by his power; who teaches like him?

Elihu had earlier said that he was full of words (32:18). He had not yet finished and he asked Job to bear with him because he still had words to speak on God's behalf (2). In his final speech, he continued to speak of God's sovereignty and justice. He had no problem of low self-esteem, claiming to be complete ('perfect') in his knowledge which he would bring from afar (3–4).

He used the word, 'Behold' four times in this chapter to begin a statement about the greatness of God (5,22,26,30). God's greatness is seen in his knowledge (5; cp. 37:16). Though he is mighty, he despises no one. He will judge the wicked and give justice to the oppressed (5–6). He is always watching over the righteous and he honours them like kings (7). Elihu differed from the three friends by showing that God does not always send suffering as a punishment for sin. When the righteous suffer, God uses it to make them ponder on their work and their sins, to instruct them, and to bring them to repentance (8–10). If the afflicted obey God and turn from their sin, they will have a bright future, but if they refuse to listen to God, they will perish (11–12).

The hypocrite will come to a shameful end because he stores up wrath against God and refuses to cry to him for help in his suffering (13–14). Elihu did utter some sublime words about the character of God but he was again hard and unjust in some of his statements to Job (17–21). Job had lost all his riches; he could hardly be tempted to depend on them as Elihu suggested (19).

There is a wonderful truth and encouragement for the afflicted in verses 15 and 16. Those who seek God in their affliction will be brought out of their dire distress. These words became a reality to Job (42:12–17). 'Behold, God is exalted by his power; who teaches like him?' (22). Let us never accuse the Lord of being wrong in his dealings with us, but be willing to learn from him in affliction. Let us 'remember to magnify his work' (24).

I know that my Redeemer lives

Roy Zuck writes, 'This chapter is a skyscraper among the forty-two chapters of Job that form the beautiful skyline of this poetic masterpiece. After decrying hostility from his accusers (1–6), from God (7–12), and from his relatives and friends (13–22), the suffering saint rose from the depths of his broken spirit to the heights of renewed confidence in his God (23–29)' – EVERYMAN'S BIBLE COMMENTARY pages 84–85, published by Moody Press.

Job's friends had tormented him and wronged him (2–3) and in his despair, he felt also that God had wronged him and was against him (6–12, 21b). His close friends, his relatives and even his wife had shunned him (13–20) and he appealed to the three friends to have pity on him (21). **Let us learn to recognise the often silent cries of those who sorrow or suffer.** We need to be like the Lord Jesus Christ, who is gracious and full of compassion (cp. Matthew 9:36; Luke 4:18).

Though he was in terrible despair, Job here uttered one of the greatest affirmations of faith to be found in Scripture: 'I know that my Redeemer lives ... that in my flesh I shall see God' (25–26). **Job was confident that even if he died, he would one day be raised to see his living Redeemer.** The two disciples on the Emmaus road were very downcast because they thought that their Redeemer was dead (Luke 24:17–21). When they discovered that he was alive, they were filled with great joy and excitement (Luke 24:32–33). We serve a risen Redeemer! Be glad and rejoice!

*I know that my Redeemer lives, —
What joy this blest assurance gives!
He lives, he lives, who once was dead,
And reigns, my everlasting Head.*

*He lives to silence all my fears,
To wipe away my fallen tears,
To soothe and calm my troubled heart,
All needed blessings to impart.*

(Samuel Medley)

The portion from God for a wicked man

Zophar's second and final speech was an angry outburst against Job's warning of *'the sword'* and he felt insulted (1–3; cp. 19:29). He said, *'I hear censure that insults me'* (3; English Standard Version). He felt compelled to speak from his *'understanding'*. He had nothing to say about Job's great affirmation of faith in his living Redeemer (19:25–26).

Zophar was convinced that God swiftly punishes the wicked and that is why calamity came upon Job so swiftly. He reminded his suffering friend that *'the triumphing of the wicked is short'* (1–5). He asserted that the wicked are soon punished by God and that their wealth is taken from them. He was implying that Job must have lost his children, his wealth and his health because he too was wicked (20–28).

Zophar spoke of the poison of the cobra and the tongue of the viper (14,16) but his own words to Job were more venomous than any snake-bite. He claimed to have understanding (3) but he failed to recognise that some sufferers are saints. The prosperity and ease of the wicked and the suffering of the godly have created problems for many of God's people (cp. Psalm 73). We must always remember that we are not spared suffering when we follow Christ but should expect it to come our way (Romans 8:18; Philippians 1:29; 2 Timothy 3:12).

If Zophar had been describing the ultimate destiny and *'the portion from God for a wicked man'* (29), he would have been quite correct. It is to lack quietness in the heart, it is to know terror and wrath (20,25,29). We must be sure that we are right with God! Job's reply will show Zophar that wickedness is more than hypocrisy, arrogant pride, oppression and violence (5–6,19). It is rooted in our attitude to God. If we refuse to seek God for mercy and forgiveness, we will die in our sins and be separated from God for ever (Matthew 25:41,46). ***The portion from God for a wicked man is indeed terrible!***

But no one says, 'Where is God my Maker?'

Elihu implied that Job had claimed to be more righteous than God (2) but this was not true. He then went on to deal with Job's complaint that there is no more profit in leading a righteous life than following in the paths of sin (3; cp. 34:9). He began by again reminding Job of the greatness of God (4–5; cp. 33:12). Our sin accomplishes nothing against him nor should we expect any reward for being righteous. — *'If you sin, what do you accomplish against him?... If you are righteous, what do you give him?'* (6–7). Eliphaz had earlier used a similar argument (22:2–4). Elihu was wrong to suggest that God's greatness makes him too remote to be concerned about human sin and righteousness (4–8). God is not indifferent to our behaviour which does have an effect upon other people but (8).

Derek Thomas writes, 'The question Job asks deserves a better answer than the one given by Elihu. Christians in pain do sometimes cry out, "What is the point of leading a righteous life?"... Contrary to what Elihu appears to be saying, being good — obeying God's commandments — pleases God immensely and, no matter what benefits we may or may not receive in this life, we are called upon to please him through thick and thin' (THE STORM BREAKS, pages 271–272)

Elihu observed that many who suffer oppression cry out for help and relief, *'But no one says, "Where is God my Maker?"'* (10). If he was getting at Job in this statement, he was being most unjust and was far wide of the mark. Job had worshipped God when sudden tragedy struck him and was yearning to find God in his trouble (1:20–21; 23:3). **God is awesome in his might and majesty but this truth should never cause us to lack sensitivity and compassion towards sinful, frail sufferers.** Elihu fell short in this respect and he accused Job of speaking empty words against God (14–16). This was not true! Job was crying out from a broken heart and a perplexed mind; he was hardly uttering empty words.

Surely God will never do wickedly

In his second speech, Elihu continued by again addressing the three friends (1–15) though his words were also meant for Job (see his references to ‘wise men’ and to ‘men of understanding’ in verses 2 and 10). He then addresses Job (‘you’ in verses 16 to 37 is singular in the Hebrew). He answers Job’s complaint that God has wronged an innocent man (5). His manner is now harsh and like the three friends, he also made false assumptions about Job (eg. 7–9). He accuses Job of saying that there is no profit to be gained from friendship with God (9; cp. 35:3). Job had not said this.

Elihu reminds us that God is absolutely just and sovereign in all his ways. He said, ‘*Surely God will never do wickedly, nor will the Almighty pervert justice*’ (12; cp. Genesis 18:25; Revelation 15:3). We must never *condemn him who is most just* (17). God is sovereign over all the earth and he sustains all creation (13–15). If it is not fitting to say to a king, ‘*You are worthless,*’ how dare we accuse God of injustice? He is impartial in his dealings with rich and poor alike (18–20). God sees us all and he knows us all. He does not need to investigate us in judgment (before a court). He sees the deeds of the wicked and will punish them (21–30). Elihu saw Job’s constant quest for vindication as an implication that God was doing wrong: ‘*His answers are like those of wicked men! For he adds rebellion to his sin ... and multiplies his words against God*’ (31–33).

Job’s complaint that he had done nothing to deserve his suffering is one that is still heard today. Most of us have said at some time, or thought to ourselves, ‘What have I done to deserve this?’ **Life often appears to be unfair but it is not meaningless. We are not the helpless victims of fate. God is very wise, very gracious and very good. He has kind purposes for all who belong to him.** To remember these truths will equip us to face the trials and perplexities that befall us. *The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us* (Romans 8:18).

They say to God, ‘Depart from us’

Zophar and the other two friends were fixed in their belief that God punishes the wicked here and now and that their prosperity is short-lived. Job emphatically denied this (7–16) and he asked his friends to give him some consolation and to bear with him by listening to what he had to say (1–3). Job painted a different picture of the wicked to Zophar:

- They live to a ripe old age and increase in power and enjoy the blessing of children and grand-children(7–8; cp. 20:5–8).
- They are being punished by God now, but this is not always the case (9; cp 20:23,28).
- They live safely in their homes and increase in wealth (9–10). Zophar may have been casting aspersions on Job when he said that the wicked will suddenly lose all their wealth (20:21,23,28).
- Their children are happy and not impoverished (11–12; cp. 20:10).
- There is happiness for them and their descendants (8; cp. 20:26).
- Death is no respecter of persons. Those who are good die as well as those who are evil; it says nothing about their standing before God (21–26).
- They are given an honourable funeral (32–33; cp. 20:7–9).

Job was not like the wicked who *say to God, ‘Depart from us for we do not desire the knowledge of your ways’* (14). He did not despise God like the wicked, saying, ‘*Who is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit do we have if we pray to him?*’ (15). Job insisted that *the counsel of the wicked* was far from him (16). but his friend’s words were empty and false and unable to bring comfort because they had no bearing on his suffering (34).

Throughout the ages, believers have been perplexed by God’s dealings with them (cp. Genesis 42:36; 2 Corinthians 4:8). **Christian, if you are passing through some perplexing trial, be assured that the Lord will bring you through because nothing whatever can separate you from his love (Romans 8:35–39).**

Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that you are righteous?

Job had been protesting his innocence and Eliphaz began his third speech by asking whether God gains anything from a man being righteous: *‘Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that you are righteous?’* (2–3). God is concerned that we be righteous! He had commended Job for this very thing (1:8; 2:3).

Eliphaz moves from implying that Job must be guilty of some hidden sin (eg. 4:6–7) to affirming that Job was suffering not because he feared God but because of his own wickedness (4–5). He then went on to accuse Job of being very callous, alleging that he had taken the outer garment of those who owed him money (this was a pledge of payment which had to be returned to man before nightfall so that he would be protected from the cold – Deuteronomy 24:10–13). He had been heartless to the needy, to widows and to orphans (7, 9). Job emphatically denied these accusations (6–11; cp. 31:16–22).

According to Eliphaz, Job had displayed an insolent attitude to the Almighty, questioning his omniscience by asking, *‘What does God know?’* (12–13). This was untrue! Job had questioned God’s dealings with him, but he had never questioned the knowledge of God. Eliphaz accused Job of saying that God cannot see, but this was also untrue (14; cp. 7:17–20). He also said that Job was like the wicked of Noah’s day who were swept away by the flood (15–16). He then twisted Job’s own words to accuse him of calling on God to depart from him (17–18; cp. 21:14). Fire had devoured Job’s sheep. Was Eliphaz hinting that Job was a wicked adversary and that he was being punished by God? (19–20; cp. 1:16).

The three friends completely misjudged Job and treated him like an enemy of God. They had no evidence whatever for their accusations against him. **Let us be very sure that we know all the facts before we pass judgment on others. This will help spare us from hurting them with ill-considered words.**

God is greater than man

Elihu now addressed Job asking him to listen to everything that he said, assuring him that he was sincere (1–3). He was very certain of himself and considered himself to be Job’s spokesman before God. He was his equal (for both had *been formed out of clay*) and he would not terrify him nor put pressure upon him (4–7).

He reminded Job of things that he had heard him say – of his claim to innocence (8–9), that God had treated him unjustly (10–11) and had not given him any reason for the trials that he was suffering (13). In this, his first speech, Elihu first dealt with the latter point. He was quite blunt with Job telling him that he was wrong in his complaint, *‘for God is greater than man’* (12). — *‘Why do you contend against him saying, “He will answer none of man’s words”’?* (13; English Standard Version).

Elihu pointed out that God may communicate with us *‘in one way, or in another, yet man does not perceive it’* (14). He may speak through dreams to turn man from his sin and pride (15–18). God also speaks through sickness and pain and may use a messenger (an angel, *‘one among a thousand’*, indicating that God has thousands of angels) to instruct him in his sickness. Such ministry is designed to bring both physical and spiritual restoration (19–28). God works all these things to keep a man from death and to give him *the light of life* (a godly, contented life, 29–30). Elihu did at least give Job hope and he again pleaded with Job to listen to him because he desired to justify him and to teach him wisdom (31–33).

If we remember in times of trial or suffering that ‘God is greater than man’ it will help us accept his wise and holy will, though we do not understand the reason for his particular dealings with us. God may use such times to speak to us, turning us to his holy Word. We do not have to rely on dreams or on angels in order to hear God’s voice. We have the Bible (2 Peter 1:19–21). Let us listen to what he has to say to us!

Great men are not always wise

We are now introduced to Elihu who responded to Job in a series of four speeches (chapters 32–33; 34, 35 and 36–37). He had been a silent listener throughout the dialogue between Job and his three friends and had not previously spoken because he was much younger than the friends and he respected their age (6). They had been no help to Job however, and now they had nothing more to say to him (1). Elihu had been patient, but he was rather full of himself (he uses the word, ‘I’ nineteen times and the words, ‘me’, ‘my’, and ‘mine’ thirteen times in this chapter. Elihu was bursting to speak (18–20) because he was angry (the expression ‘his wrath was aroused’ is found four times in verses 2 to 5). He was angry with Job *because he justified himself rather than God* (2). He was also angry with the three friends because they had found no satisfactory answer to Job’s questions (3, 10–12).

Elihu had a different approach to the three friends. They had sought to answer the question, ‘Why is Job suffering?’ and had failed. Elihu was a little nearer to the mark in his approach which was ‘What was God saying to Job in his suffering?’ Had Elihu known of Satan’s challenge to God he would have seen that the important question was, ‘What was God saying to Satan and the angels through Job’s suffering?’ The Lord’s answer was seen in Job’s experience; a man should worship and obey God not because of what he could obtain from him (eg. prosperity, health, happiness), but because he loved him and stood in awe of his greatness and majesty. A man could refuse to curse God though overtaken by tragedy, loss and physical suffering.

Elihu addressed the three friends in this chapter (called ‘men’ rather than ‘friends’ in verses 1 and 5). He rightly observed, “*Great (or aged) men are not always wise*” (9). Many respected intellectuals are often lacking in wisdom, having an arrogant attitude that rejects God and his Word. We have already been reminded that true wisdom is to fear the Lord and to depart from evil (28:28). **You may not be wise in the eyes of the world, but if you seek to glorify him and live by his Word, you will know God’s comfort in severe trials.**

Now acquaint yourself with him, and be at peace

Eliphaz was sure that Job was not right with God and that he needed to be reconciled to his Maker. He made a passionate appeal to Job to return to the Almighty and urged him, ‘*Now acquaint yourself with him, and be at peace*’ (21–23). This is precisely what Job longed for, so the admonition of Eliphaz was of no use to him! Albert Barnes writes, ‘There are few passages in the Bible of more exquisite beauty than this, and nothing could be sounder advice, on the supposition that Job was, as he supposed, a stranger to God’ (COMMENTARY ON JOB).

If the words of Eliphaz are applied to sinners generally, they are full of spiritual truth. To be acquainted with God is to know him in a personal way. How can we know him? We must receive his Word into our hearts, returning to the Lord and forsaking sin (22–23). What are the blessings that come from knowing God?

- We have his peace in our lives (21; cp. Philippians 4:7).
- We have a new set of values and find that God is more precious than any human treasure (24–25).
- We know what it is to enjoy God (26).
- We know that God hears our prayers (27).
- We know success and God’s direction in our lives (28).
- We will have faith in adversity and will triumph (29).
- We will be used to deliver sinners from their plight (30).

It is a wonderful privilege to know God! Do you know him in a personal way? If you do not know the Lord, ‘now acquaint yourself with him, and be at peace.’ How is this done? – You come humbly to God in prayer and ask him to have mercy on you. You trust in the Lord Jesus Christ to save you from your sins, promising that with his help, you will seek to please him. An evidence of true repentance is that you will turn away from sinful practices.

*I have treasured the words of his mouth more than
my necessary food*

Job had been urged to acquaint himself with God and to forsake his sin (22:21–23) but he had two problems with this advice: He was unable to find God anywhere (3–4,8–9) and he could hardly repent of sin for which he was not guilty (11–12). He was in great anguish of soul because of his unexplained suffering (2) and he was desperate to find God. He would then present his case before him and would use one argument after another in his defence (3–4). God would pay attention to his complaint and he would be delivered for ever from injustice at the hand of his Judge (5–7).

God is always present with us and there are times when God seems to be far away. Job had searched everywhere for God but without success (8–9). He felt that God was avoiding him because he knew his ways and that he was innocent. When he did appear in court, no dross would be found in his life; he would shine like gold (10). Verse 10 is generally taken to teach that God uses trials to refine us and to remove the sinful dross from our lives (cp. 1 Peter 1:6–7). Though this is true, Job was not reasoning like that here. He could not see any purpose in his suffering. Eliphaz had wrongly contended that Job must be following the way of the wicked (22:15). Job had not turned aside from God's way nor departed from his commandments (11). The advice to receive divine instruction (22:22) was hardly relevant to him. He affirmed, '*I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my necessary food*' (12). Do you treasure and obey the Word of God?

Job stated that God is unique, absolutely sovereign and would perform all that he had decreed for him (13–14). This troubled and terrified him. How would he be able to stand before such a God to defend himself (15–16)? Satan will assail our faith when we are in perplexing circumstances. He will tempt us to question the goodness of God. Never listen to his lying whispers! **When God seems to be hidden from you, remember that he sees you and hears you! He is very wise, very good and very gracious! He will bring you through!**

Surely I would carry it on my shoulder

Job continued to insist that he had not been tainted by gross sin:

- He recognised that God had made his servants as well as himself and he had treated them with dignity (13–15; cp. Ephesians 6:9). We must never have a proud or superior attitude towards other people.
- He had not been guilty of a lack of compassion or injustice as Eliphaz had implied (16–22; cp. 22:6–9). If we love God, we show practical love and compassion to those in need (1 John 3:17).
- He had been rich but he had never trusted in his riches (24–25). Scripture warns us that *the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows* (1 Timothy 6:10).
- He had never worshipped the sun, moon or idols (26–27).
- He had never rejoiced at the downfall of his enemies (29–30).
- He had always given hospitality to travellers (31–32).
- He had not covered his sins like Adam (33–34; the Hebrew word translated 'Adam' can be also translated 'man' — He had not covered his sins as other men do).
- He had not misused his land (38–40). He had rested it every seventh year (cp. Exodus 23:10–11) and had not caused it to cry out for vengeance as in the case of Cain's murder of Abel (Genesis 4:10–12; Numbers 35:33–34).

Job was convinced that he was blameless (the Lord had also testified to the same, 1:8; 2:3) and he longed for the Almighty to answer him. If God, his '*Prosecutor*' or ('Accuser') had written a book, there would be no evidence in it to condemn him — '*Surely I would carry it (the book) on my shoulder*' (35–36). He would not be ashamed of its contents! **Would you have the same confidence that you are blameless as Job had?** Our deeds are recorded in God's books and these books will be opened on the day of judgment (Revelation 20:11–12). **How do you stand before God?**

I have made a covenant with my eyes

Job could not understand why he was suffering and he again protested his innocence. What had he done to deserve such suffering when he had been so careful to keep himself from sinning? His friends have been insisting that he must be guilty of leading a sinful life. In this chapter we find that Job responds by naming a range of sins and emphatically denies that he is guilty of any of them. He is so sure of his innocence, that he calls a curse down upon himself if he is truly guilty. Notice the number of times he said, ‘*If*’ and ‘*let*’ — ‘If I have sinned by doing ... then let ... happen to me.’

Job insists that he has not been guilty of having any secret sexual desires, of being dishonest or of committing adultery (1–12). He said, ‘*I have made a covenant with my eyes; why then should I look upon a young woman?*’ (1). A covenant is a solemn agreement. He would never use his eyes as an instrument of lust. Female beauty and male manliness are gifts to be gratefully received from God, but Satan often uses these gifts as instruments of temptation to sin. There is a very narrow line between admiration and sinful desire. The Lord Jesus warns us that to look at a woman and to lust after her is an act of adultery within the heart (Matthew 5:27–28). The apostle Peter writes of wicked men who have ‘*eyes full of adultery*’ (2 Peter 2:14).

There is a solemn warning here for all of us! Adultery is a wicked deed which God will severely punish (3,9–12). We cannot hide our actions or our thoughts from God (4; cp. Psalm 139:1–6). We must control our eyes! This means that we must keep them from watching anything that is unwholesome on television or video; it means shunning all forms of pornography, whether in magazines or on computer screens (some of the most vile pornography is now accessible through the internet). **We must not allow our heart to walk after our eyes (7).** Many a Christian has fallen into grievous sin because he did not discipline his eyes. Have you made a covenant with your eyes that you will keep them from lust?

Yet his eyes are on their ways

Job has expressed his concern at the apparent indifference of God to his suffering (chapter 23). He now reflects on the injustice in the world around him. He asks why those who know God do not see days of judgment on the wicked (1) — ‘*Why are not times of judgment kept by the Almighty, and why do those who know him never see his days?*’ (English Standard Version). He mentioned three sins:

- Removing landmarks (2). These were boundary stones which marked property limits. Some wicked people removed these in order to steal their neighbour’s land and to extend their own fields (cp. Deuteronomy 27:17).
- Theft of another’s flocks (2).
- Oppression of widows, orphans and other needy people (3–4).

Job describes the plight of the needy seeking food like wild donkeys and having little protection against the cold and rain (5–8). Ruthless people snatched fatherless babies from their mothers and caused them to go without necessary clothing. The poor toiled in the fields, and at the oilpresses and winepresses of the wicked but were themselves dying of hunger and thirst. God seemed to be indifferent to their plight, not punishing the wicked (9–12) who rebel against light and seem to get away with murder, adultery and robbery (13–17).

The answer to the problem of God’s seeming indifference to human wickedness and suffering is dealt with in the closing verses in this chapter. The wicked may appear to be enjoying blessing, but in reality, their land is cursed. They will be carried into the grave, disappearing like melting snow (18–19). They will be felled like a tree and God will drag them away to judgment (21–22). It may seem that God is giving them security, ‘*yet his eyes are on their ways*’ (23). God does see the wicked and though they are exalted for a while, they will be brought low (24). Job closes by challenging his friends to prove him wrong (25). **When you are puzzled by the unfathomable ways of God, remember that he is the righteous Judge who always acts wisely and justly (Genesis 18:25; Romans 3:5–6).**

Man, who is a worm

It appears that the friends had run out of arguments and Bildad made no response to what Job had just said. This is his last speech and it is very short (Zophar did not speak a third time). Bildad sought to bring Job to his knees by reminding him of the awesome might, sovereignty and majesty of God: *‘Dominion and fear belong to him’* (2). He repeated the question Job had asked earlier, *‘How then can a man be righteous before God?’* (4; cp. 9:2). If the moon and the stars spread over vast distances are insignificant in the sight of God, *‘How much less man, who is a maggot, and a son of man who is a worm?’* (5–6).

Bildad wanted to impress on Job that he was worthless and though all that he said was true, he had no words of hope or comfort for him. Matthew Henry comments, ‘Everything that is true and good is not suitable and seasonable. To one that was humbled, and broken, and grieved in spirit, as Job was, he ought to have preached the grace and mercy of God, rather than his greatness and majesty, to have laid before him the consolations, rather than terrors, of the Almighty.’

We may be as weak and helpless as worms before God, but he does not treat us as worms! The Lord is awesome in his majesty, but he is mindful of us (Psalm 8:1–4). God sent his own beloved Son into the world to save sinners and the Lord Jesus in his humiliation and suffering said, *‘I am a worm and no man’* (Psalm 22:6). He willingly gave his life so that we could be brought into God’s family. What amazing grace! **When Christians pray, we come before the Lord, not as worms, but as his beloved and precious children!**

*And will this sovereign King
Of glory condescend?
And will he write his name
My Father and my Friend?
I love his name, I love his word,
Join all my powers to praise the Lord.*

(Isaac Watts)

Days of affliction

Job continues to contrast his present misery with the golden times of the past. — *‘But now’* (1,9,16). He describes the *‘days of affliction’* (16,27) that have taken hold of him with misery coming from every direction. Misery came from without. — He had enjoyed the respect of the most respectable but he now suffers the contempt of the most contemptible (1–15; cp. 29:8–11,21–25). He is now scorned by those who were the lowest of the low, by younger men whose fathers were not worthy to be put with the dogs of his flock; he is disdained by those who scavenge for food in waste places, eating roots, the outcasts of society (1–8). This rabble now taunts and torments him (9–15).

Misery also came from within. His soul was poured out because of the burning, nagging pains of his disease (16–18). Misery also came from above, for God had cast him into the mire and seemed to be indifferent to his cries for help. God appeared to be cruel towards him, tossing him to the wind (19–23). Though Job had helped the needy, in his own hour of need there was no one to help him (24–31). He again speaks of his physical suffering and of his joy turning to grief. His groans were like the howling of a jackal or the noise of an ostrich. His harp and his flute (instruments for joyful music) were now used to accompany the dirges of those who weep (28–31).

When we suffer *‘days of affliction’* or know loneliness in suffering, we may feel that God is far away and unconcerned, we may feel very low, but let us not measure everything by our feelings. The Lord Jesus went about doing good, but he was killed and crucified (Acts 10:38–40). If you are being ill-treated without a cause by those to whom you have been kind, remember that he knows how you feel and he will be with you and strengthen you. **God was for Job, though it did not seem like that at the time, and he brought him out of the mire and the ashes. Satan never has the last word!**

Oh, that I were as in months past

In this chapter, Job reflects on former days when things were much better for him (notice the repetition of the word ‘when’). He said, ‘*Oh, that I were as in months past, as in the days when God watched over me*’ (2). He remembered the blessing of the Lord on his life when God preserved, guided and befriended him. God was with him, his children were around him and he was prosperous (2b–6).

Job had been a judge (elders would administer justice and transact business at the gate of the city, 7). He had been respected by young, old and the nobility alike (8–11) because he had righteously judged and was ever ready to help the poor and disadvantaged when they were oppressed. He had severely punished the wicked person and rescued his victims (12–17). He had given counsel and comfort (21–24). He was as a chief and a king in the city of Uz in the way he counselled and directed men (25). Job’s life had been an example of what James calls ‘*pure and undefiled religion*’ (James 1:27). He had been looking forward to a long life and a comfortable death (18–20), ‘*but now*’ (30:1) all this was gone.

When times are difficult and when we pass through dark valley experiences, we are prone to think about better times in the past. If you belong to the Lord, you must always remember that he is with you and that trials do not last for ever! (cp. Romans 8:18). **We can look through our tears to the Lord and know that he has for us a bright tomorrow!**

You may be looking at the past for a different reason, however. — If you are backslidden in heart, you are no longer enjoying God’s blessing. You have lost your fellowship with the Lord Jesus and there is now an aching void in your heart. You can know better times again if you will repent of your backsliding and call upon the Lord to forgive you. He will then restore to you the joy of your salvation and you will once more know his smile and blessing upon you.

These are the mere edges of his ways

Job’s longest speech is recorded in chapters 26 to 31. He began by replying to Bildad (‘*you*’ in verses 2 to 4 is singular) in this chapter and then goes on to address all three friends (‘*you*’ in 27:5 is plural). If Job was without power why hadn’t Bildad done anything to help him? If Job had no wisdom why hadn’t Bildad counselled him and given him sound advice (2–3)? ‘*To whom ... ?*’ (4) may be read as ‘*From whom ... ?*’ – i.e. ‘From whom did you get such ideas? Are not these your own worthless notions?’

One Bible commentator heads this chapter, ‘Job rivals Bildad in magnifying the greatness of God.’ (A.B. Davidson, quoted in THE NEW BIBLE COMMENTARY, 1958 edition). Bildad had emphasised God’s power and majesty but Job responded by reminding him of God’s grandeur. The Lord, our great Creator, is supreme over the depths beneath – over ‘*sheol*,’ the place of the departed (5–6). He is sovereign over the heights above – over outer space, the earth, the clouds, the moon, the waters, the mountains (the pillars of heaven), the sea and the heavens (7–13).

Job points out that man is so remote from God that he hears only a small whisper of him despite the wonder and glory of his creation (Psalm 19:1–6). — ‘*Indeed, these are the mere edges of his ways, and how small a whisper we hear of him! But the thunder of his power who can understand?*’ (14). Even if the Lord spoke from the thunder of his power, man would still fail to comprehend his mighty power and fathom his inscrutable ways. The Christian is privileged to be able to appreciate the glory of God displayed in creation and to hear his voice through his precious Word.

Bildad thought that he knew all about God, but he had foolishly limited God in his thinking. **When we ponder the greatness of God and realise that these are only the edges of his ways, we will reverently worship him.**

Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised (Psalm 48:1)

Will he delight himself in the Almighty?

Job continued his discourse by insisting on his innocence with a strong oath, ‘*As God lives, who has taken away my justice ...*’ (1–2). He had complained that God was punishing him without reason (eg 7:20; 10:2–3; 13:24; 16:12–13, etc.) but he could appeal to no higher authority than God. He affirmed that he would not speak wickedness nor utter deceit (3–4). He would never admit that his friends were right but would hold on to his integrity as long as he lived, so that he would have no cause to reproach himself (5–6). He expressed a desire that his enemies suffer the fate of the wicked and the hypocrite who have no hope (7–8).

Job would tell his friends about the power of God but this would only remind them of what they already knew. Why had they behaved in such a vain manner (to accuse him of sin; 11–12)? God is against the wicked person who will have a terrible portion just as Zophar had said (13; cp. 20:29). He will ultimately lose his children and his wealth (14–22) and men will clap their hands at him and hiss at him (a sign of indignation and derision; 23; cp. Numbers 24:10). The friends had wrongly assumed that because Job had suffered similar losses, he too must be wicked, but this was not so. He had felt that he had little hope and that God was not hearing him (8–9), but he knew that one day all would be well (eg. 13:24; 19:10, 25–27).

The hypocrite may appear to be religious, but he has no hope when God takes away his life, nor will God hear him when trouble comes (8–9). Job asked, ‘*Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call on God?*’ (10). What does it mean to delight ourselves in God? It is to enjoy fellowship with him in prayer, it is to worship and to praise him; it is to listen for his voice as we read his holy Word; it is to desire always to please him because we love him; it is to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness (Matthew 6:33). **Do you delight yourself in God?**

But where can wisdom be found?

Man goes to extraordinary lengths to search for treasure. He mines the depths of the earth to find gold, silver, copper and precious stones. His quest takes him to places never seen by the sharp-eyed falcon nor by the proud lion (1–11). Job has already asked some very important questions: ‘*What is man?*’ (7:17); ‘*How can a man be righteous before God?*’ (9:2); ‘*If a man dies, shall he live again?*’ (14:14). There is another in this chapter: ‘*But where can wisdom be found?*’ (12). What is wisdom? Chambers Dictionary describes it as ‘spiritual perception.’ THE PREACHERS HOMILETIC COMMENTARY observes that it ‘prepares us for correct, satisfying, and ever increasing knowledge of God and of his ways and works; it purifies the heart, sanctifies the will, and enlightens the understanding.’

The answer Job’s question, ‘*But where can wisdom be found?*’ cannot be found in the depths of the earth, nor in the land of the living, nor in destruction and death (13, 22); it is not found within the depths of the sea, and it cannot be purchased with the treasures mined from the earth (14–19). ‘*From where then does wisdom come?*’ (20)? – The only One who can answer this question is God! – *God understands its way, and he knows its place* (23). Wisdom can only be found in God and in his beloved Son *in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge* (Colossians 2:3).

God tells us how we can find the priceless treasure of wisdom. — *The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding* (28; cp. Proverbs 8:13; 9:10). To fear God means to have a sense of awe, reverence and humility before him; it is to depart from evil (Proverbs 8:13). The ways of wisdom *are the ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace* (Proverbs 3:17). — *But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy* (James 3:17). **Does this wisdom show in your life? Do you want this precious wisdom? You can have it if you will call upon the Lord Jesus to save you, trusting in him, and turning from your sin!**