

October 27, 2020  
Sunday Morning Service  
Series: Job  
Community Baptist Church  
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Greer, SC 29650  
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## REMAINING CONFIDENT IN A CHAOTIC WORLD Job 22:1-24:25

It is in an understatement to say that Job's world was falling apart. I am quite sure I would have fared far worse than Job in a similar trial. As if it wasn't bad enough to lose everything that Satan considered to be important (which truly was important, especially in a temporal sense), Job was also agitated daily by so-called friends who felt it was their God-ordained duty to convince Job that he was a sinner and was getting what he deserved from God.

Chapters twenty-two through twenty-four contain the third and final speech from Counselor Eliphaz and Job's response. Chapter twenty-two recorded another, and very pointed, attempt by Eliphaz to show Job just how awful and wicked he really was. Job really did not respond to Eliphaz until chapter twenty-four.

Chapter twenty-three is a wonderfully encouraging outpouring of Job's heart in which he gives to us eternal principles of how to respond to desperate circumstances. The very doctrinal and edifying speech is bookended on one side by Eliphaz's rebuttal that God always punishes sinners, explaining why Job was being punished; and on the other bookend is Job's reply in chapter twenty-four that there is plenty of evidence in the world that God doesn't always punish sinners in this life. In between those two extremes is the wonderful truth that God has a plan and is working out that plan to make His servant more righteous. Therefore, we need to learn how to trust God's promises to sustain us in the midst of the fiery furnace.

## Living in the World of Sin (22:1-30; 24:1-25).

Eliphaz would have been among the first to admit that we all live in a world infected by sin. But he also accused Job of contributing to the problem (22:1-30). And so he asked, "Can a sinner be profitable to God?" (22:1-4).

*Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said: "Can a man be profitable to God? Surely he who is wise is profitable to himself. Is it any pleasure to the Almighty if you are in the right, or is it gain to him if you make your ways blameless?" (22:1-3).* As in past speeches from Eliphaz, these are rhetorical questions. The implication of the first question is that a wise man is profitable to himself, but it doesn't affect God one way or another. That was supposed to apply to Job. The counselor's bottom line was that God wasn't judging Job because he was wise and showing deep respect for God! *Is it for your fear of him that he reproves you and enters into judgment with you (22:4)?*

Eliphaz's questions were part of the overall accusation, "Job, you are a sinner!" (22:4-30). But just because an accuser said it with much zeal, doesn't mean it is true. Even saints can be misrepresented, which is a kind way of saying, "Lied about." That is what happened again here where Eliphaz made a bold assault against Job. This is his third and final attempt to make Job realize that he was not a righteous man but an evil sinner whom God was judging. *Is not your evil abundant? There is no end to your iniquities. For you have exacted pledges of your brothers for nothing and stripped the naked of their clothing. You have given no water to the weary to drink, and you have withheld bread from the hungry. The man with power possessed the land, and the favored man lived in it. You have sent widows away empty, and the arms of the fatherless were crushed. Therefore snares are all around you, and sudden terror overwhelms you, or darkness, so that you cannot see, and a flood of water covers you. Is not God high in the heavens? See the highest stars, how lofty they are! But you say, "What does God know? Can he judge through the deep darkness? Thick clouds veil him, so that he does not see, and he walks on the vault of heaven?" (22:5-14).*

How could these things be true of Job and God tell Satan that Job was righteous? Was Job really no different than sinners of the past? That was the case according to Eliphaz who argued, *Will you*

*keep to the old way that wicked men have trod? They were snatched away before their time; their foundation was washed away. They said to God, "Depart from us," and "What can the Almighty do to us?" Yet he filled their houses with good things – but the counsel of the wicked is far from me. The righteous see it and are glad; the innocent one mocks at them, saying, "Surely our adversaries are cut off, and what they left the fire has consumed" (22:15-20).*

This is an amazingly ignorant speech in that Eliphaz actually demanded that Job do what he was already doing. He told Job to *Agree with God, and be at peace; thereby good will come to you. Receive instruction from his mouth, and lay up his words in your heart. If you return to the Almighty you will be built up; if you remove injustice far from your tents, if you lay gold in the dust, and gold of Ophir among the stones of the torrent bed, then the Almighty will be your gold and your precious silver. For then you will delight yourself in the Almighty and lift up your face to God. You will make your prayer to him, and he will hear you, and you will pay your vows. You will decide on a matter, and it will be established for you, and light will shine on your ways. For when they are humbled you say, "It is because of pride"; but he saves the lowly. He delivers even the one who is not innocent, who will be delivered through the cleanness of your hands (22:21-30).*

Job was already doing that when God allowed Satan to strike him down. Eliphaz was preaching to the choir. It is good to challenge sinners who are at odds with God to humble themselves, agree with God against themselves, return to the Almighty, and delight themselves in Him. But that was the very essence of Job's life! Eliphaz had the wrong audience! We agree with his sermon that God rewards a person according to his or her way. Sometimes that reward or judgment is evident in life (as Eliphaz contends). Certainly, that reward or judgment will be given in eternity. But we finite and faltering humans cannot always discern what God is doing in life. That is why we must learn to rely on God's promises in the difficult days.

By the time we come to chapter twenty-four, we read Job's rebuttal of Eliphaz's last argument. Job wondered why God doesn't always punish sin in life (24:1-25). There are plenty of examples of the Almighty not punishing sin. And so Job wondered why it seems

like evil proliferates and the Almighty God doesn't do anything about it? *Why are not times of judgment kept by the Almighty, and why do those who know him never see his days (24:1)?*

There are so many examples even in our own culture of how the powerful abuse the weak, needy, innocent and powerless. Job pointed out that in his culture, sinners move landmarks that protect a person's possession (v.2). They steal flocks (rustlers) and treat them like they own them (v.2b). They drive away the very necessary beasts of burden (donkeys) (v.3a). They take the means for livelihood (v.3b). In Job's culture, oxen served the same purpose as tractors do in our culture. He also stated how sinners force the poor off the road (v.4).

As a result of sin, the poor suffer greatly. *Behold, like wild donkeys in the desert the poor go out to their toil, seeking game; the wasteland yields food for their children. They gather their fodder in the field, and they glean the vineyard of the wicked man. They lie all night naked, without clothing, and have no covering in the cold. They are wet with the rain of the mountains and cling to the rock for lack of shelter (24:5-8).* The powerful sinners force fathers to put their kids in slavery (v.9).

Yet it appears that God is not doing anything about it! Job argued, *Yet God charges no one with wrong (24:12b).* As a result, injustice becomes more blatant. Because sinners rebel against light (v.13) and are ignorant of the truth (v.13) . . . Murderers rise up and kill the poor and needy (v.14). Thieves oppress the needy (v.14b). Adulterers sin in secret (v.15). Sinners sin in the dark and hide in the daylight (v.16).

They call light darkness, good evil, and right wrong. *For deep darkness is morning to all of them; for they are friends with the terrors of deep darkness (24:17).* God does warn us about people like this in our world. *Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter (Isaiah 5:20)!* This is what Jesus came to correct! He said, "I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness" (John 12:46). This is the work of the gospel, as Jesus demonstrated when He sent Paul: *"To open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins*

*and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me” (Acts 26:18).*

But most people do not accept the gospel. Most people are content to live in sin. And God doesn't always judge their sin in this life. This is our world. We know it too well. Instead of judging, God seems to bless the sinner. But even with God's common grace, the sinner is soon gone. For awhile they seem to prosper, but then God brings them down. *Yet God prolongs the life of the mighty by his power; they rise up when they despair of life. He gives them security, and they are supported, and his eyes are upon their ways. They are exalted a little while, and then are gone; they are brought low and gathered up like all others; they are cut off like the heads of grain (24:22-24).*

It does appear that God prospers the sinner but then reality sets in and the sinner is judged. But that is not Job! And so he answered his accusers, *If it is not so, who will prove me a liar and show that there is nothing in what I say (24:25)?* But Job's counselors tried to prove that he was like one of these sinful people! We know the end of the story. We know that in reality Job was far more righteous than were the people who accused him of unrepentant sin. Where is your hope in times when people do not understand you, when they misrepresent you or lie about you? Where is your confidence when it really does look like God is making a mistake, or, at best, you cannot quite figure out what God is doing in your life right now?

### **Confidence Despite the World of Sin (23:1-17).**

In spite of all his agony and the false accusation of friends, Job was confident that God would pay attention to him (23:1-7). That is, if he could find God. It doesn't take much to imagine that Job's physical/emotional/spiritual agony was ceaseless. We don't have to imagine because Job told us. *Then Job answered and said: “Today also my complaint is bitter; my hand is heavy on account of my groaning (23:1-2).* The word, *today* means “even now.” We are not sure how many days the agony and the debating lasted. But at that moment he was complaining.

Job's complaint might have been what he spoke to God in that the word also describes prayer. In fact, it appears in Job's response

after the accusation of Eliphaz, he ignored his counselors and simply unburdened his heart. He revealed how heavy the trial was on him. The physical/emotional/spiritual suffering was so overwhelming that Job had to control himself with a heavy hand.

Greater than his physical suffering (and it was astonishingly agonizing) was Job's spiritual/emotional suffering because he could not communicate with God. *Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat (v.3)!* In a comparatively small way, this is how we feel when we try to pray and it seems like God is not listening, or even cares, or is not even present.

That possibility doesn't matter to someone who has no relationship with God. But when we love God and know that He loves us, broken communication is not only frustrating, it is painful. Job pictures God being approachable by him a human. This is in keeping with the ancient understanding of God residing in His temple above the earthly heavens, above the upper waters in a sphere above the doom that covered the earth. That is also the picture that Eliphaz drew in his description in 22:12-14. If somehow Job could penetrate that sphere and walk into God's temple.

Why was Job so determined to gain an audience with God? Job knew that if he could somehow gain an audience with God, God would listen and acquit him. Wouldn't it be great to have that kind of confidence? Christians do (or should). Job had utmost confidence that God would receive Him. He would be free to lay out his arguments to the Judge. *I would lay my case before him and fill my mouth with arguments (23:4).* Having laid down his argument, Job was sure he would fully understand and accept God's response. *I would know what he would answer me and understand what he would say to me (23:5).* He also had full confidence that God would be kind and compassionate in His response. *Would he contend with me in the greatness of his power? No; he would pay attention to me (23:6).* Ultimately, Job knew that God acquits the upright. *There an upright man could argue with him, and I would be acquitted forever by my judge (23:7).*

This is the confidence of the child of God. We know that God in heaven is accessible through prayer. We know that we can come into His presence and lay out our burdens, our cares, our questions, our arguments. We know that however God answers, whatever God

decides will be right and perfect. We know that God will not respond censoriously, but will show us immeasurable, undeserved compassion. We know, most of all, that God who has made us righteous, giving us the righteousness of God the Son, will acquit us of every offense for eternity.

So why do we doubt? Why do we have fears and misgivings? Why do the everyday problems of life cause us to worry and fret? Why do we crash when the bitter complaints (and often repeated problems) throw us into groaning? Especially why do we complain like Job when we realize that God knows what He is doing to us (23:8-12)?

Part of the problem is the fact that sometimes I do not see God. *Behold, I go forward, but he is not there, and backward, but I do not perceive him (23:8)*. Again Job pictured the ancient understanding of God in heaven, and yet there was a sense of His omnipresence. How odd that Job could not find the same God that David could not escape! David sang, *“Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?” (Psalm 139:7)*.

But there are times in the midst of testing when we long for a God “with skin” to sit beside us and talk to us. Knowing that we will have those days, God gave us promises. Like, *Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5)*. Or the promise God gave to His people through Isaiah, *“Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand” (Isaiah 41:10)*. And again, *But now thus says the LORD, he who created you . . . “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the LORD your God . . .” (Isaiah 43:1-3)*.

I agree with Job that even though I do not see God, I know He is working. Job knew God was *on the left hand when he is working, I do not behold him; he turns to the right hand, but I do not see him (23:9)*. It was obvious to everyone that Job’s disaster was God-sent. He works like the work of the Holy Spirit, which is like wind rustling

the leaves of the trees. We are confident that God is present and working. But God is not a human like us – and that is a good thing.

So where do we find comfort when humans fail? How are we encouraged to keep on when our friends have bad advice or don’t understand? I trust God’s Word, which is something Job also did even though Job had no Bible. Nevertheless, the saint exercised absolute trust. *But he knows the way that I take; when he has tried me, I shall come out as gold (23:10)*. What a statement of incredible faith. I must always remember and rest in the reality that God knows my path better than I do. I must rest in the assurance that God will try me. In fact, if I do not experience testing periodically in my life, it is an indication that I am not God’s child.

And most of all, God is putting me to the test in order to refine me, purify me, make me like Himself in character. Again God spoke to His people through His messenger Isaiah, *“Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tried you in the furnace of affliction. For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another” (Isaiah 48:10-11)*.

If we really trust God’s promises to do His work for our good and His glory, how do we respond? Like Job we respond with full obedience. Why shouldn’t we obey if we know that God already knows the way that we take. More than that, God leads in paths of righteousness for His glory. Therefore it is for us to respond like Job did, *My foot has held fast to his steps; I have kept his way and have not turned aside (23:11)*. How? What did Job know about God’s Word? Did he mean what we would mean when he said, *I have not departed from the commandment of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my portion of food (23:12)*? That sounds more like the response of the psalmist who had God’s law: *Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD! Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart, who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways (Psalm 119:1-3)*!

Obedience is not just a good feeling; feeling like I’m doing pretty well. Obedience to God is obedience to the statues, precepts, commands of His Word. God’s Word makes our path straight even in times of trials and testing. So the psalmist declared, *With my whole*

*heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments (Psalm 119:10)!*

That kind of wholehearted commitment to God's way reveals the confidence that God will complete His work in me (23:13-17). He must because God is unchangeable. *But he is unchangeable, and who can turn him back? What he desires, that he does (23:13)*. God must complete His work in me because God is immutable. Who can turn Him, change Him? God will finish the job because He is omnipotent He does what He desires.

And what God desires is a change in me. That is what happens as God completes what He has begun. *For he will complete what he appoints for me, and many such things are in his mind (23:14)*. This is such an amazing conclusion in the midst of agony, suffering, doubts and fears. This hope sustains the suffering saint. *And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:6)*. But, sometimes God's process toward completion is frightening. In fact, just honest thoughts about God can be terrifying. So I agree with Job when he said about God, *Therefore I am terrified at his presence; when I consider, I am in dread of him (23:15)*.

When we truly understand who and what God is, this is the only proper response. Think of the Apostle Paul's conclusion: *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. Therefore, knowing the fear [terror, KJV] of the Lord, we persuade others (2 Corinthians 5:10-11a)*. In light of giving an account at the judgment seat of the eternal Judge probably justifies the interpretation "terror." We don't like to feel that way. It is humbling to realize that we cannot control God, tell God what to do, or require God to respond to our failures and sins in a kind way.

Truth about God humbles us. That is what Job meant when he said, *God has made my heart faint; the Almighty has terrified me (23:16)*. Nevertheless I will trust Him. Job might have been terrified by thoughts of God, yet he concluded, *I am not silenced because of the darkness, nor because thick darkness covers my face (23:17)*.

Yes, we, the people of God, will find ourselves in the darkness of trials. In those times, we know well that God sends the trials. Sometimes the depth, extent, or supposed consequences of the trial

terrify us. But, unlike Job, we are confident that we can enter God's presence, talk to Him, present our arguments to Him. And we know that God will listen and God will respond in kindness because we are His children. It is the Holy Spirit's ministry to help us know and apply the promises of God's Word to our circumstances. He is indeed the Comforter like Jesus.