

“Though He Slay Me, Yet Will I Hope in Him”

Texts: Job 4:1-14:22; Matthew 27:45-50

There is a reason why we use the phrase “Job’s Counselors” when we speak of people whose well-intended words only add insult to injury. Having spent a week in mourning with their friend Job, and having heard his lament in which he curses the day of his birth, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar now seek to “comfort” their heartbroken friend. But they will utterly fail, as their misguided words only bring pain to Job. As they attempt to show Job the error of his ways, they instead provoke a defiant outburst of protest, the subject of this sermon.

We now turn to an extended dialogue/debate which runs from Job 4-14. In the first of three cycles of speeches we will hear from each of Job’s friends as well as from Job himself. Context is critical. In the prologue (chapters 1-2), we met Job, learned of his great piety as well as the critical fact that underlies what follows. Job’s trial by ordeal has come about because God directed Satan’s attention to Job, a man who was blameless and upright, who feared God and shunned evil. When Satan posed the idea that Job’s piety is self-serving, and that if all of the good things God had given him were taken away, Job will no longer worship God, but curse him, Job’s ordeal began in earnest. But when Job’s possessions are gone and when his children are killed, Job does not curse God. Instead, he praises God. Satan tries again. Only this time Satan wants to attack Job’s health. Take away Job’s health—Satan reasons—and Job will curse God to his face. Now afflicted with a horrible skin disease, still Job does not curse God. Job is an outcast, covered with sores, a miserable wretch, sitting on the town dunghill. He has lost everything. And all the people who saw him surely were thinking, “what sin did Job commit which brought down God’s wrath upon him?”

Having heard of the disaster that had befallen their friend, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar set out from their homes to comfort their friend. Between the time Job lost everything and the time his three friends arrive, Job’s emotional state deteriorated greatly. He has reached the point where he curses the day of his own birth. In the lament of Job 3, Job repeatedly asks the question “why did all of these horrible things come to pass?” Yet, the trigger which sets Job off is the arrival of his three friends, who, out of their deep respect for Job, sat silently with him throughout a week of mourning. Knowing that his friends must be thinking that he must have committed some secret sin which brought about God’s judgment, Job knows that he has done nothing wrong. This is why Job’s inner turmoil is so great and the story so compelling.

As we turn to the dialogue which follows, we need to be aware that Job’s suffering is viewed from two completely different perspectives. From the fact of his suffering, Job’s friends all infer that Job has committed some great sin. In this, they are completely orthodox in their theology. They know that God is holy and must punish sin. In their minds, Job’s ordeal is evidence that Job is being punished. The conclusion is obvious. Job has sinned. But from Job’s perspective the issue is completely different. Since Job is innocent—despite the opinion of his friends—the fact that he is suffering calls into question God’s justice. How can God be just if he’s punishing the innocent?¹ This dilemma explains why Job is not focused on the loss of his possessions and family, nearly as much as he is focused upon the loss of his

¹ Andersen, *Job*, p. 112.

relationship with God. How can God treat Job like an enemy when Job has done nothing wrong?

Job's lament (Job 3) ends the silence of the period of mourning and provokes the three cycles of speeches from his three friends, to which Job responds. The three opening speeches (cycle one) are the longest and most carefully reasoned. The second cycle of speeches in Job 15-21 are somewhat shorter, while the third cycle of speeches in Job 22-26 are the shortest and most intense. As the debates and speeches become more heated, the four men seem to run out of steam.² The dialogue begins with Job's three friends offering him pastoral advice, but the speeches quickly take on the air of a courtroom drama, as though Job were on trial and his friends take on the role of a council of elders who pass judgment on Job. Job refuses to agree with their verdict.³ Yet his friends will not budge from their view that God is holy and must punish all sin. Therefore, Job's plight is indicative that he has sinned.

In cycle one—round one—we have the speech from Eliphaz the Temanite and Job's response.

Eliphaz is the oldest of Job's three friends and is given the opportunity to speak first in all three cycles of speeches. The presumption is that as the oldest, he is also the wisest. Initially, Eliphaz presents what appears to be the orthodox view of sin—righteous behavior brings forth blessing and sinful behavior brings curse. But Eliphaz also believes that there is a direct connection between the degree of someone's sin and the amount of suffering they must endure.⁴ This can be seen in Job 4:1-4, as the dialogue begins: *"Then Eliphaz the Temanite replied: 'If someone ventures a word with you, will you be impatient? But who can keep from speaking? Think how you have instructed many, how you have strengthened feeble hands. Your words have supported those who stumbled; you have strengthened faltering knees.'" Having heard Job's lament, Eliphaz cannot keep his opinion to himself. Beginning with a reference to Job's esteemed reputation, Eliphaz insinuates that Job does not practice the things he has taught others.*

Then, in verses 5-9, Eliphaz contends that Job's troubles are the result of some secret sin. *"But now trouble comes to you, and you are discouraged; it strikes you, and you are dismayed. Should not your piety be your confidence and your blameless ways your hope? Consider now: Who, being innocent, has ever perished? Where were the upright ever destroyed? As I have observed, those who plow evil and those who sow trouble reap it. At the breath of God they are destroyed; at the blast of his anger they perish."* From Eliphaz's perspective, there can only be one reason why Job is suffering. Suffering is the consequence of sin. Those who plow evil will reap the reward. The implication is inescapable. Job must have sown evil, or else he would not be suffering. But if anything, this shows us the folly of trying to understand the ways of God and the sufferings of others through the lens of our own limited observations of the world around us. Without knowledge of the decision of the heavenly court, Eliphaz will never understand Job's situation. Therefore Eliphaz's advice to Job is utterly self-centered.

Eliphaz even claims his observation is confirmed through a dream. In Job 4:12-15, we read of what one writer calls a very spooky atmosphere.⁵ *"A word was secretly brought to me, my ears caught a whisper*

² David Atkinson, *The Message of Job* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1991, p. 39.

³ Kline, "Job," p. 465.

⁴ Kline, "Job," p. 465.

⁵ Andersen, *Job*, p. 113.

of it. Amid disquieting dreams in the night, when deep sleep falls on men, fear and trembling seized me and made all my bones shake. A spirit glided past my face, and the hair on my body stood on end."

Eliphaz's experience tells him that sowing to evil brings calamity. Now he appeals to special revelation. From Eliphaz's distorted perspective, Job's lament called into question God's providence, when instead, Job ought to be looking at his own conduct for an explanation. But Job never questioned God's conduct. Rather, Job laments his own miserable condition, wishing he were dead. Two different things.

In Job 5:1, Eliphaz offers Job a solution to his problem. Job must repent of his sins. Says Eliphaz, "*Call if you will, but who will answer you?*" The implication is that Job's lament is not heard, because he has not repented. But Eliphaz is not done. "*To which of the holy ones will you turn?*" Since Job is in sin, he cannot count on the help of divine messengers. As the dialogue unfolds and Job begins to defend himself, ever so slowly Job begins to raise the idea of a mediator (or a go between), who will make peace with God on his behalf. Job never envisioned that God would take to himself a true human nature in the person of Jesus Christ, who is the only true mediator between God and man.⁶ But such a mediator is God's answer to the question of the suffering of the righteous and the anguish that we all feel in the midst of suffering. Jesus Christ, the only mediator, is not only truly God, but also the man of sorrows.

In Job 5:9-16, Eliphaz gives us an eloquent expression of God's providence. "*[God] performs wonders that cannot be fathomed, miracles that cannot be counted. He bestows rain on the earth; he sends water upon the countryside. The lowly he sets on high, and those who mourn are lifted to safety. He thwarts the plans of the crafty, so that their hands achieve no success. He catches the wise in their craftiness, and the schemes of the wily are swept away. Darkness comes upon them in the daytime; at noon they grope as in the night. He saves the needy from the sword in their mouth; he saves them from the clutches of the powerful. So the poor have hope, and injustice shuts its mouth.*" Eliphaz's faulty understanding of Job's situation and his condescending attitude make it difficult for Job to accept these wonderful words. In what follows Eliphaz leaves no purpose for suffering of the righteous, other than to see it as the just desserts of sowing to evil.⁷ Eliphaz echoes the unbiblical theology typical of many Pentecostal faith-healers. Do the right thing, say the right words, and everything will be fine! And if you are not healed, who is at fault? You are. You must have some unconfessed sin in your life. So must Job.

As Eliphaz concludes his soliloquy, he exhorts the suffering Job to repent and submit to God. Once chastened, God will restore him. Listen to the words of Eliphaz from Job 5:17-25, and put yourself in Job's place. How would these words sound to you in the midst of suffering? "*Blessed is the man whom God corrects; so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty. For he wounds, but he also binds up; he injures, but his hands also heal. From six calamities he will rescue you; in seven no harm will befall you. In famine he will ransom you from death, and in battle from the stroke of the sword. You will be protected from the lash of the tongue, and need not fear when destruction comes. You will laugh at destruction and famine, and need not fear the beasts of the earth. . . . You will know that your children will be many, and your descendants like the grass of the earth. You will come to the grave in full vigor, like sheaves gathered in season.*" Eliphaz concludes by saying to Job, "*We have examined this, and it is true. So hear it and apply it to yourself.*" In other words, take your lumps and God will restore you.

⁶ Andersen, *Job*, p. 117.

⁷ Kline, "Job," p. 465.

The problem is not so much with Eliphaz's theology, but his ineptness as a counselor.⁸ A sufferer does not need to be told to take his suffering like a man, any more than someone who has lost an unbelieving relative needs to hear a lecture on reprobation. "Pull yourself together" does not comfort someone in the midst of a trial, grief or despair. Such advice is actually cruel. While Eliphaz's logic is impeccable, he has limited God's purposes in suffering to the principle that everything you reap comes from what you have sown. But this is manifestly untrue of Job.⁹ Job has not sown evil. Job has already confessed that God can send both evil and good. Job knows that God can do whatever he wishes. Job may very well agree with Eliphaz's speech and its focus on God's power and justice. The problem is that this is not the issue. Given Eliphaz's limited perspective and his Pentecostal claim to divine revelation ("God told me this was true") he misses the mark widely. Eliphaz's words reflect an astounding self-righteousness.

Since the situation Eliphaz describes does not apply to Job, the last thing Job needs from Eliphaz is a lecture to the effect that if Job would only do what Eliphaz tells him to do and repent of his sin, everything will be OK. The reader already knows what Eliphaz does not and what Job is starting to grasp. Job's tragic state is not the result of divine judgment for past sin. God may indeed have a purpose for Job's ordeal—a purpose which completely transcends Eliphaz's preconceived notions about what God can or cannot do. No trite speech about sowing and reaping can comfort Job after what he's endured. Job is still be groping for an answer, but he knows Eliphaz does not have one!¹⁰

Job cannot take anymore. And so in 6:1-7:2, he responds to his friend. Eliphaz's words do not bring Job comfort. Instead, they bring forth an emotional outburst and protest from Job against the insinuation that there is some hidden sin in his life which has caused God to punish him. Knowing he has done nothing wrong, Job's reaction is to cry out in terror because he feels like God has become his enemy. In Job 6:2-4 we hear haunting words from Job. *"If only my anguish could be weighed and all my misery be placed on the scales! It would surely outweigh the sand of the seas- no wonder my words have been impetuous. The arrows of the Almighty are in me, my spirit drinks in their poison; God's terrors are marshaled against me."* The Hebrew text speaks of the armaments of God in a battle array against him.¹¹ The thought of God bringing an army against Job brings terror to his heart.

In 6:14, Job speaks directly to his counselor. *"A despairing man should have the devotion of his friends, even though he forsakes the fear of the Almighty. But my brothers are as undependable as intermittent streams, as the streams that overflow when darkened by thawing ice and swollen with melting snow, but that cease to flow in the dry season, and in the heat vanish from their channels."* Job will not let this go—he will defend himself. As he points out in 6:25 and following, *"How painful are honest words! But what do your arguments prove? Do you mean to correct what I say, and treat the words of a despairing man as wind? You would even cast lots for the fatherless and barter away your friend. But now be so kind as to look at me. Would I lie to your face? Relent, do not be unjust; reconsider, for my integrity is at stake. Is there any wickedness on my lips? Can my mouth not discern malice?"* Job has done nothing wrong. He has not spoken evil, nor done evil. He now tells Eliphaz to

⁸ Andersen, *Job*, p. 123.

⁹ Atkinson, *The Message of Job*, p. 43.

¹⁰ See the helpful discussion in Andersen, *Job*, pp. 123-126.

¹¹ Andersen, *Job*, p. 128.

relent and back off. Job's integrity is at stake.

In Job 7, the sufferer speaks directly to the Almighty. His friends have no answer and do not understand his plight. Thus it is only natural for Job to look anew to his creator, friend and redeemer for an answer. Job cries out in verses 1 and following, *“Does not man have hard service on earth? Are not his days like those of a hired man? Like a slave longing for the evening shadows, or a hired man waiting eagerly for his wages, so I have been allotted months of futility, and nights of misery have been assigned to me. When I lie down I think, ‘How long before I get up?’ The night drags on, and I toss till dawn. My body is clothed with worms and scabs, my skin is broken and festering.”*

Knowing he has done nothing wrong, Job cries out for an answer. In Job 7:11 we read: *“Therefore I will not keep silent; I will speak out in the anguish of my spirit, I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.”* As Francis Andersen reminds us, “Job makes his way to God with prayers that are sobs. Narrow and inhuman is the religion that bans weeping from the vocabulary of prayer.”¹² And Job returns to this theme again in verses 19-23. *“Will you never look away from me, or let me alone even for an instant? If I have sinned, what have I done to you, O watcher of men? Why have you made me your target? Have I become a burden to you? Why do you not pardon my offenses and forgive my sins? For I will soon lie down in the dust; you will search for me, but I will be no more.”* Job wants to know “why?” He knows that there is no secret sin. Job wants to know what we already know—that there is a purpose behind all of this and Job's suffering does not have to do with some secret sin or a divine vendetta against him. Job knows he is a sinner. What troubles him is that it appears as though he has not been forgiven.¹³

This brings us to cycle one, round two, and the speech from Bildad and Job's response.

This brings us to cycle one, round two, and the speech from Bildad and Job's response. Bildad picks up where Eliphaz left off. Utterly insensitive to Job's lament and his defense against Eliphaz's accusation, Bildad doggedly returns to the theme of divine justice, even calling Job a windbag in Job 8:2:¹⁴ *“How long will you say such things? Your words are a blustering wind.”* For Bildad the issue is very straight-forward. There are two kinds of people—those who are blameless and those who are wicked. God reveals who is who through blessing or curse. And so in verses 3-7, Bildad makes his case, only instead of accusing Job of a secret sin, he accuses Job's children of sinning. *“Does God pervert justice? Does the Almighty pervert what is right? When your children sinned against him, he gave them over to the penalty of their sin. But if you will look to God and plead with the Almighty, if you are pure and upright, even now he will rouse himself on your behalf and restore you to your rightful place. Your beginnings will seem humble, so prosperous will your future be.”* These words must have cut Job to the quick, since he regularly made burnt offerings on behalf of his children. Bildad's words are not only cruel, they are dead wrong. Notice how his speech ends. Job's own illness has not yet proved fatal, so he still has time to repent and plead with God to spare his life.

Perhaps aware of the stinging nature of his words, Bildad offers a rather weak attempt in 8:20-22 to offer Job words of cheer, but these words bite as well. *“Surely God does not reject a blameless man or strengthen the hands of evildoers. He will yet fill your mouth with laughter and your lips with shouts of*

¹² Andersen, *Job*, p. 136.

¹³ Andersen, *Job*, p. 139.

¹⁴ Andersen, *Job*, p. 140.

joy. *Your enemies will be clothed in shame, and the tents of the wicked will be no more.*” The problem is that God does not reject the blameless, yet God has apparently rejected Job. Therefore, Job must not be blameless. Again, the implication is obvious. Job must repent of whatever sin he has committed!

Despite his lowly state, Job cannot let these heartless words go without a response. In chapter 9, Job addresses Bildad directly, while in chapter 10, Job pours out his heart before God. As the dialogue with his friends now takes on the shape of a courtroom drama, Job endorses his friend’s main theme—that God is just—before responding to the application of Bildad’s argument. For Job, even God seems like a prosecutor. Thus in 9:2, Job agrees with the essence of Bildad’s speech before lamenting the futility of trying to argue his case before God. *“Indeed, I know that this is true. But how can a mortal be righteous before God?”* There is no way for a sinful creature to win an argument with God. Job puts it this way beginning in 9:3: *“Though one wished to dispute with him, he could not answer him one time out of a thousand. His wisdom is profound, his power is vast. Who has resisted him and come out unscathed? He moves mountains without their knowing it and overturns them in his anger. He shakes the earth from its place and makes its pillars tremble. He speaks to the sun and it does not shine; he seals off the light of the stars. He alone stretches out the heavens and treads on the waves of the sea. He is the Maker of the Bear and Orion, the Pleiades and the constellations of the south. He performs wonders that cannot be fathomed, miracles that cannot be counted. When he passes me, I cannot see him; when he goes by, I cannot perceive him. If he snatches away, who can stop him? Who can say to him, ‘What are you doing?’”* Job knows that God does whatsoever pleases him. Job can do nothing to stay his hand.

Beginning in 9:25, Job describes his situation as a sign of God’s condemnation. *“My days are swifter than a runner; they fly away without a glimpse of joy. They skim past like boats of papyrus, like eagles swooping down on their prey. If I say, ‘I will forget my complaint, I will change my expression, and smile,’ I still dread all my sufferings, for I know you will not hold me innocent. Since I am already found guilty, why should I struggle in vain? Even if I washed myself with soap and my hands with washing soda, you would plunge me into a slime pit so that even my clothes would detest me. He is not a man like me that I might answer him, that we might confront each other in court. If only there were someone to arbitrate between us, to lay his hand upon us both, someone to remove God’s rod from me, so that his terror would frighten me no more. Then I would speak up without fear of him, but as it now stands with me, I cannot.”* Even if he does as Bildad suggests, and repents, Job knows that he cannot stop God’s will. What Job needs is a mediator, someone to arbitrate his case before the holy God. What Job needs is the intercession of Jesus Christ—something he already has but does not yet understand.

In Job 10:1-7, without breaking stride, Job turns from debate to prayer, demanding a hearing before the heavenly court. *“I loathe my very life; therefore I will give free rein to my complaint and speak out in the bitterness of my soul. I will say to God: Do not condemn me, but tell me what charges you have against me. Does it please you to oppress me, to spurn the work of your hands, while you smile on the schemes of the wicked? Do you have eyes of flesh? Do you see as a mortal sees? Are your days like those of a mortal or your years like those of a man, that you must search out my faults and probe after my sin—though you know that I am not guilty and that no one can rescue me from your hand?”* In verses 14-17, Job cries out, *“If I sinned, you would be watching me and would not let my offense go unpunished. If I am guilty—woe to me! Even if I am innocent, I cannot lift my head, for I am full of shame and drowned in my affliction. If I hold my head high, you stalk me like a lion and again display your awesome power against me. You bring new witnesses against me and increase your anger toward me; your forces come against me wave upon wave.”*

If God is indeed good and all powerful, then why have things turned out like they have? Job comes to the

essence of his ordeal in 10:18-22: “*Why then did you bring me out of the womb? I wish I had died before any eye saw me. If only I had never come into being, or had been carried straight from the womb to the grave! Are not my few days almost over? Turn away from me so I can have a moment's joy before I go to the place of no return, to the land of gloom and deep shadow, to the land of deepest night, of deep shadow and disorder, where even the light is like darkness.*” Even as Job hits the deepest depths of despair, still he cries out to God for deliverance.

This, then, brings us to cycle one—round three, the speech from Zophar the Naamathite and Job’s response to the most difficult words yet.

Job’s response to Eliphaz and Bildad was to protest their charges and proclaim his innocence. Zophar has been listening to all of this and now applies the principle of divine justice with a vengeance in verses 1-6 of Job 11. “*Then Zophar the Naamathite replied: ‘Are all these words to go unanswered? Is this talker to be vindicated? Will your idle talk reduce men to silence? Will no one rebuke you when you mock? You say to God, ‘My beliefs are flawless and I am pure in your sight.’ Oh, how I wish that God would speak, that he would open his lips against you and disclose to you the secrets of wisdom, for true wisdom has two sides. Know this: God has even forgotten some of your sin.’*” In Zophar’s estimation, Job refuses to see the obvious. Even if Job were granted what he requests—an open debate with God—God’s justice would consume him immediately.¹⁵ Job is an exaggerator and an impatient man. But Zophar has missed Job’s point and now mocks his friend. What Zophar cannot grasp is that Job is bewildered. His outbursts are not self-justification, but a heart-felt lament. But then Zophar’s theory of divine justice allows no room whatsoever for the sincere heartfelt lament of a sufferer like Job.¹⁶

Zophar’s logic now gives way to a series of self-righteous opinions. According to Zophar, all Job needs to do is to get his act together, repent of his sin, and then God will restore him. In verses 13-20 we read: “*Yet if you devote your heart to him and stretch out your hands to him, if you put away the sin that is in your hand and allow no evil to dwell in your tent, then you will lift up your face without shame; you will stand firm and without fear. You will surely forget your trouble, recalling it only as waters gone by. Life will be brighter than noonday, and darkness will become like morning. You will be secure, because there is hope; you will look about you and take your rest in safety. You will lie down, with no one to make you afraid, and many will court your favor. But the eyes of the wicked will fail, and escape will elude them; their hope will become a dying gasp.*”

Job’s friends have had their say. Job is suffering. Therefore Job must have sinned. His horrible plight is simply the fruit of divine justice. Yet, despite the self-righteous lectures, Job has not budged one bit. He will not confess sins he has not committed. He submits to the will and power of God, but Job cannot understand why God would put him through all of this, since he has done nothing wrong. He demands a trial—even though he knows God can bring an overwhelming case against him. And so in chapters 12-14, we find one of the longest speeches in the book as Job not only dismisses the arrogant criticism of his friends, but as he responds to Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, we begin to see a glimmer of hope and a longing for a mediator who will stand between himself and God so as to make peace.

In chapter 12:2-6, Job responds to his friends with scorn. “*Doubtless you are the people, and wisdom*

¹⁵ Kline, “Job,” p. 471.

¹⁶ Andersen, *Job*, p. 156

will die with you! But I have a mind as well as you; I am not inferior to you. Who does not know all these things? `I have become a laughingstock to my friends, though I called upon God and he answered- a mere laughingstock, though righteous and blameless! Men at ease have contempt for misfortune as the fate of those whose feet are slipping. The tents of marauders are undisturbed, and those who provoke God are secure- those who carry their god in their hands.” The theories of Job’s friends cannot explain the reality of his situation. They reduce God to someone they can control.

But from Job 12:13 ff, it is clear to Job that God cannot be managed. *“To God belong wisdom and power; counsel and understanding are his. What he tears down cannot be rebuilt; the man he imprisons cannot be released. If he holds back the waters, there is drought; if he lets them loose, they devastate the land. To him belong strength and victory; both deceived and deceiver are his. He leads counselors away stripped and makes fools of judges. He takes off the shackles put on by kings and ties a loincloth around their waist. He leads priests away stripped and overthrows men long established. He silences the lips of trusted advisers and takes away the discernment of elders.”* His friends do not understand.

Job is not finished. In Job 13:13-19 Job utters what amounts to a confession of faith, *“Keep silent and let me speak; then let come to me what may. Why do I put myself in jeopardy and take my life in my hands? Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him; I will surely defend my ways to his face. Indeed, this will turn out for my deliverance, for no godless man would dare come before him! Listen carefully to my words; let your ears take in what I say. Now that I have prepared my case, I know I will be vindicated. Can anyone bring charges against me? If so, I will be silent and die.”* The corner has been turned. Job wants to speak in his defense. He will plead his case no matter what will come as a result. He knows that even if YHWH strikes him dead, he will be vindicated in the end.

With these words, Job points us ahead to Jesus Christ, who prayed a similar prayer in Gethsemane: *“My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. . . . He fell with his face to the ground and prayed, `My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will. . . .The spirit is willing, but the body is weak. My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.”* Jesus knew that in dying, he too, would be vindicated. Jesus must drink the cup of wrath for salvation to come to God’s people. As the greater Job, Jesus is willing to be slain, knowing he would be vindicated in the end.

Having considered this great truth, Job returns to the theme of his sins. In 14:1, Job reminds us, *“man born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He springs up like a flower and withers away; like a fleeting shadow, he does not endure. Do you fix your eye on such a one? Will you bring him before you for judgment? Who can bring what is pure from the impure? No one!”* Clearly, Job is aware of human sin and that no man can do anything to save himself. He continues in verses 5-6: *“Man’s days are determined; you have decreed the number of his months and have set limits he cannot exceed. So look away from him and let him alone, till he has put in his time like a hired man.”*

But hope is beginning to arise in Job’s heart. As we read in verse 13, *“if only you would hide me in the grave and conceal me till your anger has passed! If only you would set me a time and then remember me! If a man dies, will he live again? All the days of my hard service I will wait for my renewal to come. You will call and I will answer you; you will long for the creature your hands have made. Surely then you will count my steps but not keep track of my sin. My offenses will be sealed up in a bag; you will cover over my sin.”*

Sadly, Job’s suffering once again erodes his hope. Again, he returns to a lament in verse 18: *“as a*

mountain erodes and crumbles and as a rock is moved from its place, as water wears away stones and torrents wash away the soil, so you destroy man's hope. You overpower him once for all, and he is gone; you change his countenance and send him away. If his sons are honored, he does not know it; if they are brought low, he does not see it. He feels but the pain of his own body and mourns only for himself.” The dialogue between Job and his friends has two more rounds to go, before Elihu speaks, and then Job gets his answer from God himself from the midst of a whirlwind. But the light is starting to dawn. Job now seeks a mediator. And he knows he will be vindicated. Thus even now, the suffering Job is pointing us to such a mediator and vindicator, Jesus Christ. The resolution to his troubles may yet be at hand! Amen.