

## Hope For The Hard Times Part 12

Tonight we finally bring our study of Bro. Job to an end. I want to point out a few thoughts from Job that I feel are meaningful and important for us. These are just a few things I think need to be emphasized as we conclude our study.

1. Here is a question asked twice in the book, once by Job and once by Bildad. Job asked, **“But how can a mortal be righteous before God?” Job 9:2** Bildad asked, **“How then can a man be righteous before God? How can one born of woman be pure?” Job 25:4.**

That is a good question. It is a question that in one sense all of the major religions of the world have been asking. How can we be made righteous and pure before a holy and righteous God? Works? Piety? Sacrifice? Denying yourself? Legalism? I still remember as a boy going to the T.L.Osborn museum and watching this film of a man in the Philippines whipping himself, his back bleeding, and then he was crucified, literally being nailed and strapped to a cross. Did that make him righteous before God? Did his suffering atone for all his past sins? No!

Few people use such extreme measures, but lots of people are trying to figure out how to be righteous before God. Some try eastern forms of meditation, trying to become one with the universe. But does that make you righteous? I don't think so, it just makes you feel better about your own unrighteousness. And it might calm your nerves and help your health.

How about just denying the problem or shifting the blame? It was your parents fault. Balance the guilt. Does that make you righteous before a holy God? No.

The Bible says **“there is no one righteous, not even one...All have turned away...there is no one who does good, not even one...” Romans 3:10,12.** That means there is no way that sinful flesh, mortal man, can be righteous before the only righteous God. At least not by our works and our efforts. We cannot save ourselves. Remember what God told Job? **“Do you have an arm like God's and can your voice thunder like his? Then adorn yourself with glory and splendor and clothe yourself in honor and majesty...Then I myself will admit to you that your own right hand can save you.” Job 40:9-14.**

We can't save ourselves. Our voice can't thunder like his and our own right hand cannot save us. Then what do we do? How can we be made righteous in order to stand before God?

Job asked the question in chapter 9:2 and he provides the answer in 9:15. **“Though I**

**were innocent, I could not answer him; I could only plead with my Judge for mercy.” Job 9:15.**

Job hit upon the solution, the answer. Mercy is the only way we can be made righteous. We must rely upon God’s mercy and grace in order to be saved and made righteous. How can we be made righteous before a righteous God? The New Testament says, **“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” 2 Cor. 5:21**

How can mortal man be made righteous? By repenting of our sins and placing our faith in the grace of God, relying completely upon his mercy. Jesus bore my sin, my guilt, my shame at Calvary. He took the penalty for my sin upon himself so that I could be declared the righteousness of God in Christ.

Job says, **“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...” Job 9:33-34.** There is, Job, there is. His name is Jesus and he has come to lay his hand upon us both, to bridge the gulf between us and God – that gulf created by our sin and rebellion. Jesus removed God’s rod of wrath from us by bearing that rod in his own flesh so that we might be forgiven and shown mercy. “Mercy Lord, thanks for your mercy Lord, I have been redeemed by your mercy.”

There is an arbitrator that lays his hand upon both of us and joins us together in peace. He has broken down the dividing wall, the barrier and has made us part of the family of God.

2. Look at God’s care in creating us. We are a work in progress. **“Your hands shaped me and made me...Remember that you molded me like clay. Did you not pour me out like milk and curdle me like cheese, clothe me with skin and flesh and knit me together with bones and sinews? You gave me life and showed me kindness, and in your providence watched over my spirit.” Job 10:8-12.**

God shaped us and molded us and he is still shaping us and molding us. If he is molding us like clay, it really helps to stay pliable in his hands. Are you still cooperating with the Holy Spirit and his transforming work in your life? There is still creating going on. He is still purifying and forming and shaping us so we can be all he intended us to be. Sometimes it doesn’t feel too good getting pulled on and reshaped and molded. But the finished product, the

extreme makeover, is worth it.

Job said God takes us like milk and makes cheese out of us. That means time, effort, pouring us from one container to the next, transforming us. Don't get angry or frustrated at the process that is going on. He is making cheese. Someone mentioned a book called "Age only matters if you are a cheese." He is working on us, so be patient with his process.

He clothed us with skin and knit us together. God created us with a purpose and plan in mind. Do you feel like you are committed to his plan and purpose?

He gave us life (breathed into us) showed us kindness (mercy, unmerited favor) and he watched over our spirit, preserving us (Jerusalem Bible translates: "watched each breath of mine with tender care"). He is watching over us to accomplish all he desires to do. Don't give up on God because he hasn't given up on you. He is still working on you.

3. Tests will come to every life. Job said, **"Man born of woman is of few days and full of trouble." Job 14:1.** There are all kinds of reasons for some of the trouble people encounter in life. The fact we live in a fallen world, sin, poverty, poor choices, Satan still attacks people like he did Job. But through all the troubles of life, make sure you remember the faithfulness of God. God is a good God. He is faithful and He will deliver you and even use the trials to refine and purify your heart so you will be of even greater usefulness in His kingdom. Job said, **"But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold." Job 23:10.**

Many are the afflictions of the righteous but the Lord delivers us out of them all. We are going to come forth as pure gold. 100%. I know sometimes you wonder, but we are going to make it. God is going to see us through.

Notice what the next verses say, **"My feet have closely followed his steps; I have kept to his way without turning aside. I have not departed from the commands of his lips. I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread." Job 23:11-12.** During the testing, don't waver, don't quit, don't stray from the path. Keep to his way and keep on honoring his word and obeying him. That leads to gold.

Too many people leave the path when trouble comes and then they are just angry at the outcome. It's because you stopped honoring God and obeying his word that the outcome is so poor. You gave up and left the pathway that would lead to victory and headed toward despair and defeat. No wonder that's what you found. Stay on God's path!

4. Here is a powerful image of the lost from Job. **“The groans of the dying rise from the city, and the souls of the wounded cry out for help.” Job 24:12** . How desperate are the needs of so many in this world. How they need the Lord. Look at this description of the wicked who reject the Lord.

V13-17 - Hiding because their deeds are evil, but hoping no one will see them.

v18-24 - Don't be deceived by the apparent success of the wicked. Their time is coming and their punishment will last for eternity. **“He may let them rest in a feeling of security, but his eyes are on their ways.” Job 24:23.** It helps to remember God knows what's going on. No one is getting by with anything and all accounts will be settled someday.

The groans and cries continue to rise up from the city and we must respond. We have to be part of the rescue team that goes into every person's world to share the gospel. That's why we are planting churches and doing outreach. It's about the perishing. It's about the mission!

5. Look at the awesome power of our God that Job describes. Let me read Job 26:6-13. Then he says, **“And these are but the outer fringe of his works...”** We haven't even begun to see the real fabric, the whole picture. Job says all of this grandeur and splendor is like a faint whisper. **“...how faint the whisper we hear of him! Who then can understand the thunder of his power?” Job 26:14.**

We are overwhelmed by just the fringe, by the whisper. Imagine what would happen if he really let loose and we were to encounter his thunder! There is no way we can begin to comprehend the awesome power of an awesome God.

Imagine heaven and then realize our wildest imagination is still just a faint whisper. It is just the outer fringe. Think about all the splendor of this earth and realize it is just a faint whisper. No wonder Paul said 'eye has not seen, ear has not heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man what the Lord has prepared for those who love him.' God has revealed it to us by His Spirit, but it is no doubt still just a faint whisper of what lies ahead. Wow!

6. Look at what Job 28 says about wisdom. **“Where then does wisdom come from? Where does understanding dwell?...God understands the way to it and he alone knows where it dwells, for he views the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens... The fear of the Lord – that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding.” Job 28: 20, 23-24, 28.**

There is so much knowledge and incredible, instant access to information in this world, but there is not much wisdom, is there? Wisdom means we know what to do with our knowledge. But where does wisdom come from? James talks about the wisdom that comes down from heaven versus the wisdom that is earthly or that is even from the devil and unspiritual. Where does real wisdom come from? Job says God alone knows where it dwells. God alone understands everything, he alone sees everything under the heavens. God alone understands all of the seasons of mankind and the seasons of the universe. There is so much we don't understand and cannot know, but we must rest in the Lord and trust in him.

There have been all kinds of scientific advances, but without wisdom, science can become a monster that we can no longer control. We must not become wise in our own eyes and reject the wisdom of God and his word. God alone knows where wisdom dwells. Fear God. Honor God and his ways. Shun evil because when you do, that leads to understanding. Refuse to walk in sin and disobedience to God. Fear God and shun evil and you will have success. Wisdom and understanding will keep you from trouble.

7. Here is an example of fearing God and shunning evil. Look at Job 31. **“I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl. For what is man's lot from God above, his heritage from the Almighty on high? Is it not ruin for the wicked, disaster for those who do wrong? Does he not see my ways and count my every step?” Job 31:1-4**

Your eyes are one of the gateways to your mind and your heart, your spirit. The wise person will make a covenant with their eyes to please God, to not look for sin, to not look upon a woman or a man to lust after them. It leads to ruin, disaster, destruction. We fear God and shun evil, realizing that God sees our ways and counts our every step. Notice that. He sees my ways and counts my every step. God knows. God sees. We aren't deceiving God. He knows the thoughts and motives and intent of our heart. Let's turn our heart towards God and do what is right. Let's covenant with him to live for him and please him.

8. Look at Job 32 with me. This is Elihu that speaks. **“I am young in years and you are old; that is why I was fearful, not daring to tell you what I know. I thought, ‘Age should speak; advanced years should teach wisdom.’ But it is the spirit in a man, the breath of the Almighty, that gives him understanding. It is not only the old who are wise, not only the aged who understand what is right.” Job 32:6-9.**

Don't let age – whether young or old – don't let your age keep you from obeying God and fulfilling God's purpose for your life. **Whether young or old, your age is not an excuse!** Let God use you and work through you, regardless of your age. God can and will use yielded vessels at any age. It is the spirit in a man, it is the anointing of the Holy Spirit at work, that is what gives him the words to speak – understanding and wisdom.

9. Remember what Job said in 42:3. **“Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know.” Job 42:3.** Sometimes it pays to keep your mouth shut. We don't have enough information to make a judgement about God and his decisions and his dealings with us. We don't know enough to be able to decide if God is being just or unjust. We aren't the judge. He is. We must be willing to trust him – to rest in his mercy and rely upon his grace.

And the truth is, it is not just about the things of God. Sometimes I'm guilty of speaking about a number of things that I don't really understand, things too wonderful for me to know. God help us to learn to be quiet and careful when we speak.

10. And finally remember this, **“I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted.” Job 42:1** God can do all things and none of his plans can ultimately be thwarted. Boy is that good news because most of us figure we can mess things up so badly and get ourselves tied up in such a mess that even God can't get all the knots out. But his ultimate purpose can and will be perfected.

God can do all things. So if he isn't doing what you expect, then ask, seek and knock, press on, trust, believe, but also realize that you might not have all the facts yet, you might not see all of the pieces yet, so you'll need to just trust and keep on trusting. God can do all things and no plan of his can be thwarted. It's going to be all right. Remember, **“The Lord blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the first.” Job 42:12** Wherever you are on the journey, keep on trusting the Lord. He is at work. His plans are good and they will be fulfilled. Trust Him!