

# TODAY IN THE WORD

SEPTEMBER 2004

There is hope.

Job 11:28

*JOB: THE WISDOM OF GOD'S PLANS*

# THE GREAT FALL

**G**rowing up in a pastor's home, I remember going to sleep at night to the sound of my parents talking in our living room with people whose lives had experienced the "great fall." One moment, their lives seemed fine; the next minute life's problems sent them down a roller coaster

of confusion and devastation. I didn't realize back then that every pastor faces similar situations in his congregation, that, in fact, trials and sufferings permeate our lives.

Years later, when following God's call to ministry I became a pastor like my father, I needed to integrate knowledge of Bible and theology

from the seminary with real-life situations and hard questions from my first congregation. Within months of landing in the pastorate, a young wife and mother came to see me. She told me that she no longer loved her husband. She didn't want to leave her children, but she was desperately unhappy.

I scrambled for something meaningful to say.

That was the beginning of my regular exposure as a pastor to the tyranny of trouble in people's lives. Like my father before me,

I spent hours of ministry with people who suffered loss, pain, and failure. I began to realize that all of life runs unsettlingly close to the ditch. Trouble is indiscriminate in its timing and its choice of targets. "Man is born to trouble as surely as sparks fly upward" (Job 5:7).

No one is exempt.

No arena of life is out of bounds.

Job's devastating life experience is help-

ful to our understanding of the wisdom of God's plan. Notice that only a brief part of his story deals with recounting his problems—and there were many of them. Instead, the bulk of the book deals with the advice of his friends, who try to answer that most difficult of life's questions: "Why?"

The advice of Job's closest friends only seems to compound his problem. It is God, in the end, who resolves the mental anguish by turning Job from the question of "Why?" to the question, "Who?"

The theme of the book of Job is God. WHO is God? And is He worthy of our unconditional, uncompromised allegiance? Does God have the right to exercise His sovereignty? These are the issues of the book.

What did Job know about God that gave him hope during trouble?

Job knew that God had the right to be sovereign. God permitted Job's life to turn upside down. "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised" (1:21). Job knew that God was sovereign in death. In the face of death, Job said, "Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him" (13:15). Job knew that God was sovereign in wisdom and in power. Near the end of his testing, Job teeters in his confusion and pain. God meets him and stabilizes his failing heart by reminding Job of His infinite, unchallenged wisdom and power. God asks, "Were you there when I created the heavens and earth?" (Job 38–41).

Affirming God's sovereignty in life, death, wisdom and power, Job says, "I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted" (42:2). That is how Job made it, by trusting God.

I love him for it—he is my hero.



Answer: Howell

## ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

### *Holiness*

“Suppose for a moment you were allowed to enter heaven without holiness,” the nineteenth-century evangelical leader J. C. Ryle once asked. “What would you do? What possible enjoyment would you feel there? To which of all the saints would you join yourself, and by whose side would you sit down? Their tastes are not your tastes, their character not your character.”

Heaven is marked by holiness, the primary attribute of the God who has His dwelling place there. The biblical concept of holiness is rooted in the notion of being set apart. Objects or people that were designated as holy in Scripture were set apart for God’s use. God, on the other hand, is holy because He is set apart from us.

When the Ten Commandments were given on Mount Sinai, the Lord appeared in a dense cloud. He commanded Moses to put a barrier around the mountain and warned him not to allow the Israelites to come up (Ex. 19:9, 24). These restrictions were a vivid reminder of His holiness. God is holy, set apart from every creature and all creation. He is unparalleled and majestic in His nature (Ex. 15:11). He cannot abide sin or injustice (Hab. 1:13).

### *Why Theology Matters*

*All holiness is derived from God. Only the work of Christ can bridge the chasm created by our sin (Eph. 5:27). Because of Christ’s death and resurrection, the barrier that once separated God’s people from His holy presence has been torn down. Unlike the Israelites of old, we do not need to keep God at arm’s length. Instead, we are to “draw near” to Him (Heb. 10:22).*

*For Further Reading*  
*To learn more about God’s holiness and its implications for our practice, read Holiness by J. C. Ryle (Evangelical Press).*



## Pastor Don Cole:



*“The real business  
of the preacher is  
to help people apply  
Scripture to life.”*

PASTOR DONALD COLE

## *A Man of Stories, A Man of the Word*

By Lisa Ann Cockrel

*as missionaries in Angola. The war-ravaged country continues to be near and dear to their hearts. Pastor Cole returns to encourage and exhort the local church for two weeks twice a year.*

*“People sometimes wonder why I focus on Angola. ‘Aren’t there poor people here?’ they say. But they have no sense of the magnitude of situation in Angola,” says Pastor Cole. “A 27-year war ended in 2002. In the church 85 percent of the women over 55 are widows. Destruction is normal for these people. If things are shot up, that’s normal. If a house has three walls, that’s normal.”*

*“On top of this, a whole generation has grown up illiterate. I was in a church that was packed with a couple hundred people and a speaker asked everyone under 25 to stand. It was almost everyone. Then he asked how many people had Bibles. Only six people raised their hands. The real need is not to sell more Bibles. It’s to teach people how to read.”*

*Pastor Cole’s passion is contagious. His son, Andrew, recently founded RISE International ([www.riseinternational.org](http://www.riseinternational.org)), a nonprofit organization whose main focus is the building of schools in rural areas of Angola. MBI has been privileged to assist Pastor Cole with his work in Angola by featuring programming about the nation and giving a portion of this year’s SHARE donations to RISE International.*



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## Job: The Wisdom of God's Plans

Job begins, "In the land of Uz, there lived a man whose name was Job." It ends with Job living happily ever after. It opens and closes like a fairy tale might, but it's actually a true story of real-world pain, mourning, doubt, and repentance.

The lessons taught in Job become particularly tough when we view the story from its heavenly beginning and we see God giving Satan permission to torment His faithful servant Job. Does God really verbally permit such torture? Does He plan our suffering? Why would He allow this to happen? Did Job deserve that pain? And do we even have the right to ask these questions?

We'll study these and many other questions about the wisdom and sovereignty of God, as we search through the mourning of Job and the advice of his friends. And we'll gain profound insight into our own attitudes toward God, trials, and faithfulness.

Join us this month in *Today in the Word* for a journey into the human heart and glimpse the holy, just, sovereign plans of our righteous and loving God.

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*Job . . . was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil.*

JOB 1:1



#### TODAY AT MOODY

Moody Graduate School continues to grow, providing advanced Christian education in a flexible format. Join us in prayer for its ministry to the students under the leadership of Vice President and Dean of MGS, Dr. Joseph Henriques.

#### Read: Job 1:1-5

#### TODAY IN THE WORD



The walk along the beach had been magical. The sky was a crisp blue, and the waves sparkled in the sunlight. Small children giggled as they splashed in gentle waves. Suddenly the mood was broken. As two young kids walked with their parents, they came across a dead gull that had been caught in a fishing net.

“How come this bird died?” asked one of the kids.

“Did he do something bad?” asked the other.

The presence of death and suffering in our world prompts these questions. Why do bad things happen for no apparent reason? Why do “good” people get cancer or some children die?

Our natural human tendency is to look for answers. We often think that if we know the reason, then we can accept the tragedy. But, as anyone who has suffered can attest, often there are no easy answers—at least humanly speaking.

The book of Job, our study this month, helps us to consider suffering from the divine perspective. Throughout Job’s long ordeal, he’s completely unaware that God is accomplishing His own divine purposes. It’s only at the end of his trial that Job begins to see God’s hand in it all. Even then, Job does not find explanations; rather, he sees God more clearly. Job is a powerful example that continues to instruct and encourage believers today.

We don’t know who wrote Job. Some have suggested that Job is a fictional character, but it’s likely that he was a real person who may have written part of this book himself. Others have suggested that Elihu, who appears later in this work, was the author.

The date and location of Job are also unknown. It’s clearly set in the time period of the Patriarchs, perhaps about the same time as Abraham, and it’s possible that it was written at that time. Although verse 1 says that Job lived in Uz, scholars are not certain of this city’s location. What we know for certain about the book of Job, however, is that it poignantly describes human suffering and offers tremendous wisdom to help us understand suffering and minister to those who suffer.

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY



We know Job is blameless and upright. He worships God and avoids evil.

He’s concerned for his children’s spiritual well-being (v. 5).

We often assume, maybe unconsciously, that suffering is the result of sin. But Job 1:1 makes it clear that what is about to happen to Job has nothing to do with sin. Although we can suffer because of our sin, this book addresses the question of innocent suffering. Be encouraged to know that while you may now be suffering, it is not necessarily a result of your sin.

*Read: Job 1:6–22*

TODAY IN THE WORD



It's hard to imagine what confronted Job in a single day! In our own time, this would be like losing our job, all our savings and investments, all our material assets, such as our house and car, and our children at once. Even Shakespeare couldn't have come up with a more wrenching tragedy.

Yesterday, we learned that Job was the greatest man among the peoples of the East (Job 1:3). Today's generation might suspect a very wealthy person of being greedy, but in the ancient world, richness was considered an indication of God's favor. In fact, this is how Satan understood Job's riches (v. 10). So Job's loss was great in part because his wealth was so vast. The most horrific part of his loss, of course, was the death of his children.

As we suggested yesterday, the book of Job offers much wisdom on suffering. Perhaps most importantly, Job teaches that a human perspective is necessarily limited. Far beyond human understanding is the mind of God. This higher perspective is introduced in Job by the appearance of the so-called divine council. In verse 6, we find the angels and Satan coming before the royal court of the sovereign Lord. Here we see the destructive nature of Satan, who is roaming the earth looking for victims. We also see his cynical understanding of faith; he

claims that people only believe in God for what they can get.

The most important thing to observe in this passage is that God, not Satan, is in full control. God brings Job to Satan's attention. God allows Satan to afflict Job. This is not a teetering balance between the forces of good and evil! This is the sovereign God before whom Satan must obtain permission to act. This is one of the key points of Job, and we will return to it again.

The other key point to notice is Job's response to his calamity. Far from Satan's callous prediction, Job doesn't turn from the Lord. Instead, Job worships the Lord (vv. 20–21). It's hard to imagine! In the face of unimaginable anguish, Job praises God.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Job's immediate response to his awful situation is to praise God. This suggests that Job already had a habit to praise God. Because he had learned to praise God in the good times, he was ready to praise Him in the bad times.

This is a lesson for every believer. What difficult situation are you facing? Have you already offered the "sacrifice of praise" (Heb. 13:15) in these trying circumstances? If you have trouble finding words of praise, make this text your own declaration of worship to God.

*A man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.*

LUKE 12:15



TODAY AT MOODY

As we continue to pray for Moody Graduate School, please mention its Administration staff: Randall Dattoli, Valencia Holloway, Ellen Nishimoto, Nathan Richey, and Karla Williams who work together with Dr. Henriques serving our students.

*The Lord  
gave and the  
Lord has  
taken away;  
may the  
name of  
the Lord  
be praised.*

JOB 1:21



#### TODAY AT MOODY

Edward Cannon, Executive Vice President, will appreciate your prayers for his work of overseeing the MBI Operations and, together with the MBI leadership and Trustees, charting the course of our ministries for the 21st century.

#### Read: Job 2:1–13

#### TODAY IN THE WORD



According to some, the world hangs in a precarious balance between forces of good and evil. One can only hope that things will turn out all right in the end. Given current events, this view is understandable. The problem is that this view is contrary to biblical reality, where there's no doubt that God's victory is certain because Satan is a defeated enemy.

The picture given in Job 1 and 2 is not a balanced scale that might tip either toward good or evil! Instead, Satan must receive permission to carry out his destructive plans. This point is crucial to a correct view of human suffering. God sets the boundaries . . . period.

These first two chapters of Job reveal a larger framework for understanding human suffering. Job only sees what's happening on earth, but the book of Job lets us see what's happening in heaven. Thus, the human experience of suffering is not the full story. Rather, God is actively accomplishing His own purposes even, or perhaps especially, when those who suffer are unaware of it.

Job 2 shows us more of Satan's cynical view of faith. Satan's motto would be, "When the going gets tough, the 'tough' desert God." It's impossible for him to understand how someone could remain faithful to God, even to the point of death (v. 4). (The expression "skin for skin" probably reflects Satan's view that Job's initial suffering

had not really touched his body.) But the sovereign Lord has confidence in Job's character and the example he will be to others who remain faithful despite horrific circumstances.

The affliction that befell Job was most likely a type of leprosy. Whatever it was, people would have avoided him for fear of catching his disease. This illness was more than Job's wife could handle. Although she is often judged harshly, it's possible that her anger was simply an expression of her deep frustration over recent events. In fact, anger at God is a very common response to suffering. Job's wife was unable to see beyond her human experience to glimpse a divine perspective on the suffering that had befallen her family. Job's rebuke was probably intended to redirect her to the Lord.

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY



It's easy to miss the impact of verse 13. Job's friends' silence could seem cold and heartless. After all, aren't friends supposed to speak words of comfort? Well, not always. Sometimes there really isn't anything that can be said. Sometimes the best thing we can do is to sit silently with those who suffer and allow ourselves to enter into their pain. Sometimes our silent presence is our best and most caring ministry.

Commentator David Atkinson writes, "Suffering presence is the powerful ministry of silent compassion."

*Read: Job 3:1–26*

#### TODAY IN THE WORD



In his book, *Epitome*, the Roman historian Cassius Dio recorded that one of Emperor

Hadrian's enemies uttered the following curse just before his execution by order of the emperor: "... As for Hadrian, this is my only prayer, that he may long for death but be unable to die."

With all that Job had experienced, he might have felt that he had somehow received this dreadful curse. At least he believed that if he'd never been born, he would be experiencing the peace that now eluded him (v. 13). (In verses 13 and 14, we find a vague reference to the afterlife, although Job's understanding of it is not precise.) It's important to note that although Job curses the day of his birth, he never curses God, as Satan predicted he would.

Job's speech makes it clear that he "tells it like it is." These may not be the words we'd expect of a believer, but they're an honest reflection of Job's heart. Instead of worrying about the right kind of prayer, Job pours out his heart before the Lord without caring if his words were pious or theologically correct! Like the psalmist who wrote today's key verse, the depth of Job's confidence before the Lord is found in his freedom to lay bare his wounded soul.

Today's passage also begins a series of speeches that alternate between Job and his three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad,

and Zophar. As we'll see, Job's speeches offer true wisdom about suffering, whereas his friends offer "conventional wisdom" that sounds good, but actually reflects some very faulty views of God.

Job asks some of the most haunting questions to confront humanity. As we continue through Job, we will hear echoes and variations of these questions. In the end, however, we'll not find definitive answers to these perplexing questions. It's possible that God allows us to experience deep despair because there's no other way we can learn certain lessons, experience His comfort, or witness to others. But we often have to admit that we can't fully understand what God is doing.

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY



As noted earlier, a common perception among Christians is that honest, deep despair somehow reflects a lack of faith. Sometimes we hear that if we were really trusting the Lord, then we'd always be joyful.

Job's speech, however, reflects no lack of faith. Instead, it shows that, in the depths of despair, the only place Job could freely express himself was before the Lord. We find this same honesty in many of the prophets. And our Lord Jesus Christ uttered a similar cry on the cross (Mark 15:33–34).

*My tears have been my food day and night, while men say to me all day long, "Where is your God?"*

PSALM 42:3



#### TODAY AT MOODY

Please join us as we mention in prayer the work of the Campus Post Office staff: Anthony Harper, Ronald Hunt, and Jenny Matthews. Our students and employees can always rely on their service!

*Those who  
plow evil and  
those who  
sow trouble  
reap it.*

JOB 4:8



#### TODAY AT MOODY

As we continue to pray for the Campus Post Office, please add these employees to your prayer list: Victor Perez, Samuel Ramos, and Timothy Wisner. Ask the Lord to bless their faithful work at Moody and their commitment to follow Him every day.

#### *Read: Job 4:1–21*

#### TODAY IN THE WORD



You've probably heard people say, "Well, they only got what they deserved!" or "What goes around, comes around!" Common sense suggests that there's a cause and effect relationship between people's actions and the events that occur in their life. To some extent this is true—after all, we read in Galatians 6:7, "A man reaps what he sows." The problem is that this principle cannot be applied blindly to every person or to every situation.

This is exactly what's wrong with the approach of the first of Job's friends, Eliphaz. For him, it's clear why Job suffered: Job must have sinned. In the ancient world, most people believed that suffering was due to sin, in the same way that material abundance confirmed that a person was good. So Job's affliction would have been seen as God's judgment. This way of thinking is sometimes called "retribution theology."

Eliphaz's words show why the first two chapters of Job stressed his righteous character and his blameless conduct. As we noted, this prologue showed that Job's suffering was not the result of sin. Moreover, as readers, we have been allowed to "overhear" the heavenly council, so we know that there are divine purposes at work, although Job and his friends have not been given the same insight.

Throughout the book, each of the friends' speeches is

followed by a reply from Job. This juxtaposition contrasts conventional versus true wisdom. Each of the three friends will present common, but wrong, views on suffering. Job, on the other hand, will reveal a deeper view of God and the mysteries of suffering. Job is not always right, but he is real and offers many helpful insights.

Eliphaz is the first to speak, probably indicating that he was the oldest. In addition to assuming that Job's suffering is the result of sin (vv. 7, 8), Eliphaz also rebukes Job for not heeding his own words (vv. 3–6). He suggests that Job is arrogantly resisting God's chastisement. If fault can be found even in angels (v. 18), then how can Job claim that his suffering is not due to sin? (v. 17).

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY



The story of the man born blind in John 9 makes it clear that many illnesses are not the result of sin (see especially John 9:1–5). This account reveals that suffering can bring glory to God.

This truth should make us hesitant to assume too easily that a person's predicament is related to personal sin. Scripture clearly teaches that there are consequences for sin, but the opposite—that "consequences" are because of sin—is not true. When we understand that, we can avoid Eliphaz's well-intentioned, but cruel, approach.

*Read: Job 6:1–13; 7:11–21*

#### TODAY IN THE WORD



Medical experts warn that repressed anger can cause headaches, nausea, or other health problems.

Perhaps because of this, there are many who encourage people to stop bottling up their anger and to let it all out. The problem with this approach, however, is that anger can be very destructive—both to the angry person and to those around. So what are we to do with our anger, especially as Christians? Job can help us out here.

Job begins his second speech by explaining why he has cried out so bitterly. When the full extent of his suffering is understood, it's no wonder he has spoken rashly (6:3). He has moved from silence (Job 2), to lament (Job 3), to anger. Part of Job's anger is no doubt in response to Eliphaz's presumptuous accusations (see Job 6:14–30). But more importantly, Job's anger reflects his pain at being misunderstood and his deep confusion as to what is happening to him. Whereas he had once enjoyed God's favor and fellowship, it now seems that God's arrows and terrors are aimed at him (6:4). Under the crushing weight of his anguish, Job once again pleads that God might take his life.

The key to understanding Job's outburst is found in Job 6:10. Despite all that has happened and all that Job has said, he knows that he has not denied the Lord. There are several

instructive observations to be made from this.

First, Job communicates his anger to God. He does not turn from God or deny Him. He doesn't take out his frustrations on others. Instead, he prays that the very One whose arrows are directed at him would graciously show him mercy.

Second, Job admits that he is angry with God. He does not understand what God is doing, and he's not afraid to let God know it. He doesn't pretend or try to cover his emotions.

Finally, Job realizes that he can't bottle up his frustration and fear (7:11). Here we find very honest, almost accusatory, words. But, and this is essential, these words reflect Job's heart; even in his anger, Job continues to talk to God.

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY



As we've noted, many Christians think that anger isn't an acceptable emotion. But honest anger directed to God is better than denial. Many prophets expressed honest anger with God. So we need to realize that pretending we aren't angry isn't acceptable. Instead, we need to learn how to express all our emotions to God. If we are ministering to one who is angry, perhaps the best thing we can do is to lead that person into the presence of the Lord where honest anger can be freely expressed.

*How long,  
O Lord, must  
I call for help,  
but you do not  
listen? Why  
do you tolerate  
wrong?*

HABAKKUK 1:2–3



#### TODAY AT MOODY

As Provost at Moody, Dr. Charles Dyer leads the development of Moody education for Undergraduate and Graduate Schools. Would you pray for God's lasting strength and guidance in Dr. Dyer's challenging schedule and everyday responsibilities?

# Question Answer

**Q** *My name is Caleb, and I am 13. In a science course, we concluded that the Bible is free from error. But I was asked to find out why Matthew 27:5 says that Judas hanged himself, but Acts 1:18 says his insides spilled out. Is one of these passages incorrect?*

**A** There is no real conflict between the two passages. Matthew and Luke (who wrote Acts) record different aspects of the same event. Matthew focuses on Judas's dealings with the chief priests and elders to make the point that the purchase of potter's field was a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies by Zechariah and Jeremiah.

Luke records the end of the affair, when the rope broke and the traitor's rotting body fell to the ground and burst. Luke does not say how many days elapsed between his suicide by hanging and his fall to the ground.

**Q** *(On my latest visit in Angola, this question and variations of it were posed by several Christian women.) One day, during our nation's 27-year war, my husband and I fled from attacking troops in different directions. We did not see each other for twenty years. I thought he was dead. But recently he turned up at our village with another "wife" and seven children. He says I am his wife and he wants me back. I want him back, too! The problem is that he wants me and*

*his second wife. That would create a polygamous household.*

*I have three questions. First, who is his true wife: the woman who bore seven children for him, or I the original bride? Second, what should I do, take him in or tell him to leave? Third, if I take him back, what about the other woman's seven children?*

**A** Your predicament is serious, and you ask serious questions. I cannot answer them authoritatively, with a "thus saith the Lord." But here are some things for you to consider, in the context of the Bible and your African culture.

First, for some problems or situations there is no ideal solution. You cannot return to the time when the two of you were untroubled by moral and practical issues.

Second, you (a bride) were married to him in the church, and unless he divorced you, you are still married to him. But you should know that many Bible students would contend that his relationship with the other woman broke the marriage bond between him and you (see Matt. 19:9 and 1 Cor. 7:15). Given the circumstances of a seemingly endless war, before his return you would have been classified as a widow.

As for his second wife, society in general believes that a woman who lives with a man for twenty years and bears his children has the rights of a lawfully married wife. Western society does not have to deal with many situations like yours, but they are not unheard of. [Alfred Lord

Tennyson's epic poem, *Enoch Arden*, composed in the nineteenth century, is a story not unlike yours.]

You could move into the man's house, claiming to be the bride, but—theology aside—you would be one of two wives. He has already said that he intends to keep his second wife. Thus, he is asking you to decide to remain a quasi-widow or to become one of two women in a polygamous marriage.

In ancient Hebrew society, polygamy was tolerated, though it did not have the approval of God. In every description of it, there is a certain sadness. The church in your own society may accept the realities of a post-war society full of youthful widows and unmarried girls who want babies, and admit to membership men with two or more wives. They defend the new standard by interpreting the term, "the husband of one wife," as applying only to qualifications for elders.

In the end, you will have to decide between quasi-widowhood and polygamy. I would urge you to consider 1 Corinthians 7:39–40. Applied to your situation, Paul suggests that you would be better off remaining as you are than to reenter your home, no longer as the bride but as the least important of two wives.



The first thing to be said about

1 Corinthians 15:29 is that there is no other biblical reference to baptism for the dead. Inevitably, there have been many attempts to understand it.

In my judgment, only two make sense: first, that converts were being baptized to fill the ranks of dying believers. According to this interpretation, the "dead" possibly refers to martyred believers. But why take their places if there is no resurrection?

A second attempt to understand the passage requires a correction of the punctuation. We all know that the Greek text did not have capitalization, commas, or periods; and, like English prose, was sometimes guilty of ellipsis. Ellipsis is the omission of words needed to convey the meaning of a sentence. Headlines in newspapers often omit words that are understood.

Try this rendering of 1 Corinthians 15:29: "Now if there is no resurrection, what will those do who are baptized? *For the dead [they are baptized]*. If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized for [Greek word *huper*, meaning "in place of"] them?"

Obviously, these two attempts to understand the passage lead to the same interpretation: that by baptism—a public dramatization of one's belief in Jesus—converts were filling the positions held by dead or dying believers.

*What does it  
mean to be  
baptized for  
the dead?*



*What does it mean to be baptized for the dead? The*

*verse about this is 1 Corinthians 15:29. What was it, and did the apostle Paul promote it?*

*Their worship  
of me is made  
up only of  
rules taught  
by men.*

ISAIAH 29:13



#### TODAY AT MOODY

Thank you for keeping in your prayers our Missionary Aviation program through all its recent transitions. We thank the Lord for His faithfulness! Pray for Cecil Bedford who oversees this program.

#### *Read: Job 8:1–22*

#### TODAY IN THE WORD



In the popular musical, *Fiddler on the Roof*, the main characters, Tevye and his family, sing a rousing tribute to the backbone of their way of life . . . tradition! There's no doubt about each family member's role because of tradition. All life's questions are settled by appealing to tradition.

If Job's friends were to sing from *Fiddler on the Roof*, then Bildad, the second of Job's friends to speak, would sing "Tradition!" For Bildad, the explanation for Job's suffering is found in the wisdom of the ancients. Like Eliphaz, Bildad believes that suffering is the result of some sin, either on the part of Job or his children. Therefore the solution to Job's problem must be repentance.

Bildad begins his speech by affirming God's perfect justice (vv. 2–7). Job would certainly agree with these statements, but he would deny that they fit his situation. Bildad's dogmatism leads him to suggest cruelly that Job's children brought their own deaths upon themselves (v. 4). Job 1, however, in no way indicates that Job's children had done anything worthy of death. Bildad goes on to claim that there's still time for Job to repent so that he will not suffer the same fate. Bildad simply cannot entertain the possibility that there could be any explanation for Job's suffering other than sin.

Bildad supports his claims by appealing to the wisdom of

past generations (vv. 8–19). He cites proverbial statements about the fate of the godless. Just as papyrus reeds grow quickly but wither, and just as spider webs do not provide a solid foundation, so too the godless man will perish. The conclusion of these statements is that Job must be godless. If Job were as righteous as he claimed to be, then he would not be experiencing such suffering.

The conclusion of Bildad's speech most clearly shows his cause and effect thinking. If Job simply repents, his material wealth will be restored. As we have already noted, not every difficult circumstance is the consequence of sin. But, in Bildad's tidy theology, there's no possibility for a faith-building trial ordained by God.

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Bildad's intentions may have been good, but his approach leaves much to be desired. Because of his rigid dogmatism, Bildad can only understand Job's searching questions as blasphemy and can only exhort repentance. But Job has not denied God. Job isn't perfect, but his questions reflect the honest doubts of a sincere believer. This encourages us that questions do not indicate a lack of faith, especially when those questions are directed to God. This also encourages us that repentance may not be the solution to every problem.

*Read: Job 9:1–24*

TODAY IN THE WORD



The American institution of trial by jury is foundational to the governance of our country. The

underlying premise of this system is, of course, that a person is presumed innocent until proven guilty. Although we rightly retain our confidence in this system, many people have recently voiced concern about the growing power of the “court of public opinion.” With increased media attention, some people claim that high-profile defendants have a harder time getting a fair trial.

Job would likely agree with these sentiments. He challenges his friends that they have already judged him to be guilty before hearing his “case.” Because they’ve already reached a verdict, they aren’t really listening to him.

Job’s third speech draws upon the image of a courtroom, where he feels judged by both God and his friends. He begins by readily acknowledging the justice of God, just as he has done all along. At this point, Job agrees with some of the assessments of his friends. Job is also well aware of the sovereign power of the Lord. His statements in verses 4–13 all affirm the mightiness of God the Creator. But the justice and power of God lead Job to despair for he knows that no one can resist the power of God unscathed (v. 4).

Clearly Job resents being on trial by his friends, but he is terrified to bring his defense before the Lord. He knows that he can’t even find adequate words for an argument with God (v. 14). God is even more powerful than Rahab, a mythical sea creature and an ancient symbol of uncontrollable natural and supernatural force. Even so, Job’s desperation drives him to spill out his accusations against the Lord (v. 13). It’s clearly wrong for Job to accuse the Lord of mocking the despair of the innocent (v. 23) and of being unfair (v. 24).

We see God’s tender mercy that allows Job to vent his frustrations, even when they are misinformed. In fact, the rest of his speech (Job 10) shows a clear shift from accusing God to appealing to the Lord for a merciful end to his life. Even still, Job doesn’t deny the Lord.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



As we get to know Job’s friends, it’s easy to be put off by their insensitivity and dogmatism. But it’s always good to stop and ask ourselves if we are acting the same way. Are there people in our lives who are going through very difficult circumstances? Have we come to conclusions about why they have ended up where they are? Have we reached a verdict without giving them a fair trial? Like Job, most people want a chance to be heard and understood before they are convicted.

*Since I  
am already  
found guilty,  
why should  
I struggle  
in vain?*

JOB 9:29



TODAY AT MOODY

Thomas Shaw, Vice President of Student Services, and his team provide our students with all the necessary programs, information, and services for the efficient and effective learning process at Moody. Please uphold their ministry in prayer.

*Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart.*

ECCLESIASTES 5:2



#### TODAY AT MOODY

Please lift up in prayer our students today—they come to Moody from all over the world. Pray that the time they spend here would be rich and fruitful—in knowledge, spiritual growth, and friendships—leading to lifelong devotion to Christ.

#### *Read: Job 11:1–20*

#### TODAY IN THE WORD



The Austrian author Robert Musil once wrote, “Philosophers are people who do violence, but have no army at their disposal, and so subjugate the world by locking it into a system.” This may not be true of all philosophers, but in the case of Zophar, the final of Job’s friends to speak, it’s rather appropriate.

Zophar is the most critical in his approach. He tries to lock Job into the same system as his friends, namely that suffering comes from sin, so the solution must be repentance. We have now seen this three times: from Eliphaz (5:17), from Bildad (8:20), and from Zophar (11:14).

In the first part of his speech (vv. 2–6), Zophar dismisses Job’s words as idle chatter. He can’t hear Job’s anguished cries in the context of despair, but rather focuses only on Job’s bold outbursts and questions. He accuses Job of being self-righteous and mistakenly charges Job of claiming to be flawless and pure before God. Yet neither of these claims can be found in Job’s earlier speeches. Zophar prays that God would rebuke Job. At the end of Job, this is exactly what happens, but Zophar and his two companions are also roundly rebuked as well!

Zophar rightly claims that humans can’t presume to know God’s ways (vv. 7–12). But he also implies that humans shouldn’t even question God’s ways (v. 10). As we have noted earlier, Job has doubted and

challenged God, but he has not mocked Him as Zophar claims. Additionally, Zophar harshly says that a witless (or ungodly) man could never have the wisdom to know God’s ways.

Once again, the presumed solution to Job’s problem is repentance. Zophar paints a glowing picture of how Job would be restored, if only he would repent. Much of what Zophar says at the end of his speech is correct, even beautiful (vv. 13–19). The problem is that, although Zophar claims that humans cannot know God’s ways, he himself believes that he has discerned correctly Job’s situation and confidently asserts that he knows what God wants for Job. This is a dangerous presumption.

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Much of what Zophar says is doctrinally correct, but he lacks compassion. He has heard Job’s words, but not his heart. Part of what may be motivating Job’s friends is their own fears: if suffering comes from sin, then maybe they can avoid suffering if they avoid sin. But Job’s situation is much deeper than that, and it defies pat answers.

Is there someone in your life who suffers a trial now? Have you recognized an impulse to seek “solutions” for this person? Set up a time to meet with them, not to offer answers but to be eager to listen.

*Read: Job 13:1–28; 14:15–17*

#### TODAY IN THE WORD



Sometimes even well-intentioned Christians can hold simplistic views of

God. For example, we might hear a sports star claim after an upset victory that he had prayed and knew that the Lord would give him victory. Now it's entirely right to give God the glory, but the implication here is that God's answer could only have been victory. What if defeat had been part of the divine plan?

This is an important point to ponder. Job's friends were no doubt well-intentioned, but they had a rather simplistic theology. For them, it wasn't possible both to be in God's will and experience suffering. Consequently, they ended up being judgmental of those who suffered.

Today's passage is actually the middle section of a long speech by Job. In the first part (Job 12), he replies to Zophar, in essence, saying, "Tell me something that I don't already know!" Job knew that God's wisdom was beyond comprehension. And he knew that repentance was the answer to sin. But he also knew that life was much more complicated than his friends were willing to admit. Their heartless response to his suffering provokes some rather sharp accusations (Job 13:4–12). If they were experiencing what he was, how would they fare?

Despite his friends' claims, Job knows that he is not sinless (v. 23), but he doesn't believe

that his sin merits his suffering. Job realizes that a truly godless man would have no confidence to come before God (v. 16). Yet, though God may slay him, Job realizes that he has nowhere else to turn.

So again, Job comes before the Lord and asks for a fair hearing (vv. 20–28). These verses reveal how isolated Job feels from God. Whereas he once enjoyed fellowship, he now feels as if God has become his enemy.

In his current state, Job once again laments the frailty of his humanity. But for the first time, we find a glimmer of hope (Job 14:15–17). Job is beginning to envision a time when he will be restored to God. This is his first glimpse of the light at the end of the tunnel.

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Like Job, many believers eventually encounter a sense that somehow God is not there or that He doesn't care. Take some time today to reflect on part of a poem that Mary Kimbrough wrote, based on Job 13:15: "Though He slay me"—can I say it / When I feel the searing fire, / When my fondest dreams lie shattered — / Gone my hope and fond desire? "Though He slay me, I will trust Him," / For He knows just how to mold, / How to melt and shape my spirit — / I shall then come forth as gold!

*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*

PSALM 22:1



#### TODAY AT MOODY

Dr. Richard Epps leads the Stewardship division at Moody. We acknowledge before the Lord his faithful service to our donors and ask for God's guidance and favor for the many programs he oversees.

*When words  
are many, sin  
is not absent.*

PROVERBS 10:19



#### TODAY AT MOODY

As you pray today, please mention Stewardship's Donor Communications staff: Bruce Anderson, Paul Currie, and Renee Oommen. Pray that the Holy Spirit would guide them in various ways to keep the Institute connected with our friends.

#### *Read: Job 15:1-35*

#### TODAY IN THE WORD



The January 1997 issue of *Money* magazine published the results of a survey in which people were asked whether the Panama Canal or the Suez Canal was longer, and how sure they were of their answer. Among those who were 60 percent certain, half got the answer right. But among those who were 90 percent sure, only 65 percent got the answer right. In this group, although people had a greater degree of confidence in their answer, fewer were actually correct.

The survey results could have helped Eliphaz, whose speech begins round two of the debate between Job and his friends. Eliphaz was probably 100 percent certain of his response to Job, but he was actually mistaken on some key points. You may recall from Eliphaz's first speech (see Sept. 5) that the essence of religion was that people got what they deserved: suffering comes to sinners, and rewards come to the righteous.

Eliphaz's second speech continues this theme. Even if Job were blameless at the outset of his suffering, his recent outbursts surely made him worthy of judgment now. Eliphaz has no way of reconciling Job's "empty notions" and "hot east wind" with the conduct of a wise man.

Eliphaz believes that Job is dangerous because his questions seem to undermine the foundations of religion, as Eliphaz understands it. That's

Eliphaz's point in verses 7-16. He charges Job of presuming to be wiser than the ancients or of claiming to have some special wisdom. In verse 14, Eliphaz attacks Job's claim that his suffering is not the result of sin. In essence, he says, "No one is righteous." We can readily agree with this statement, but we must reject Eliphaz's simple equation that all suffering is the result of sin.

As Eliphaz continues (vv. 17-35), he notes that the ancients made clear the fate of the wicked. His speech may include specific references to Job's situation, such as the loss of riches (v. 29) and vitality (v. 33). In general, however, his views represent the retribution theology common in the ancient world, and they are still found in some circles today.

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Unfortunately, as Job increases his efforts to explain himself to his friends, they become less and less tolerant.

As we read through this second set of speeches, let's keep in mind two points. First, pat answers rarely leave room for heartfelt expression. When we are suffering, it is wise to seek out those who are mature in their faith to hear our hearts, even beyond our words. Second, when we minister to those who suffer, we need to hold off on quick replies and allow the sufferer to express freely.

*Read: Job 16:18–17:16*

#### TODAY IN THE WORD



In law, an advocate is a professional who pleads the cause of another in a court of law. In the American legal system, this is usually a lawyer. In the Bible, courtroom imagery is frequent. In the prophets, we often find God bringing charges against His sinful people, but here we find Job acting as his own advocate, pleading his case before the Lord.

Today's passage contains part of Job's fifth speech. In the opening section (16:1–17), Job expresses his exasperation with his friends. He questions what kind of comforters they really are (16:4–6). We also find another honest expression of Job's anger with God when he falsely accuses the Lord of turning him over to wicked men (16:11).

In the first part of today's passage (16:18–17:2), Job implores the earth to avenge his suffering. In the cosmic courtroom, Job recognizes that creation bears witness to human actions. More importantly, Job realizes that the only one who can defend his case is to be found in heaven. The Hebrew word that translates as witness (v. 19) refers to one who knows the innocence of the accused and who will see that justice is done.

There is considerable debate concerning the Hebrew text in verse 20, which could either refer positively to God or negatively to Job's friends. Either way, we see Job's confi-

dence that he would ultimately find justice, if not in this life, then beyond it. Despite the fact that his friends misunderstand him (17:3–12), implicit in Job's words is his understanding that God is the One to whom he must turn.

In the rest of today's passage, Job believes that his only hope is death (vv. 13–16). Despite his friends' claims that he would experience the fate of the wicked, Job is confident of his innocence and believes that he will finally find rest in the grave. Before we dismiss this as a morbid desire, we need to realize that Job probably has in mind Sheol. Although it is difficult to describe precisely this place, Job probably understood it as a place of rest where his torments had ceased.

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY



The exact identity of Job's heavenly advocate is unclear to him. Job simply knows that there is One in heaven who will defend his case before God.

Although this individual may have been unclear to him, we can look back at Job and see a heart longing for Jesus Christ. Today's verse from 1 John concisely states this aspect of Jesus' identity: He is the one who pleads our case before the Father. Although we may be misunderstood on earth, there is One in heaven who knows us perfectly.

*We have one who speaks to the Father in our defense — Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.*

1 JOHN 2:1



#### TODAY AT MOODY

We invite you to pray for one more Stewardship department: Marketing and Communications. We are grateful for Julia Baad, Lawrence Bohlin, Sandy Ferrara, and Rhonda Hastings—for the dedication and creativity they demonstrate in producing various Moody materials.

*Will your  
long-winded  
speeches  
never end?*

JOB 16:3



**TODAY AT MOODY**

Add these Marketing and Communications employees to your prayer list: Adam Kellogg, Elena Mafter, and Mark Rice. May they grow in faith and love for the Lord, “with the knowledge of His will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding” (Col. 1:9).

Read: Job 18:1–21

**TODAY IN THE WORD**



It goes without saying that nobody likes a temper tantrum. Crying, yelling, and flailing of arms and legs—this is not time for rational discussion! People often claim that temper tantrums are a toddler’s attempt to get attention, but some experts claim that children have tantrums when they hit a point of intense frustration. They may be trying to do something as simple as tying their shoes or as normal as asserting their independence. Whatever the cause, a temper tantrum is not a pleasant experience.

Unfortunately, Job’s friend, Bildad, would like to dismiss Job’s recent behavior as a series of adult temper tantrums.

According to Bildad, Job thinks that if he gets angry enough, he can change the laws of creation, such as the placement of rocks (v. 4). He exhorts Job to stop his foolish outbursts and to be sensible.

As we noted before (see Sept. 7), Bildad is a traditionalist. In his second speech, today’s passage, he returns to the same tune he sang the first time around, namely that the fate of the wicked has been clearly spelled out. Although he does not appeal to the ancients in this speech, he reiterates many of the points that he made the first time, based on the wisdom of the ancients. His speech reads like a series of well-worn proverbs. Each point that Bildad makes has some correspon-

dence with the events of Job 1 and 2, so it’s clear that Bildad sees Job as the wicked man of these proverbial statements. His current charge to Job, “Be sensible, and then we can talk,” sounds good at first. But being sensible for Bildad means agreeing that the root of Job’s problem is sin and the solution is repentance. So Bildad reminds Job—one more time—of the horrors that await those who refuse to repent and who do not know God (v. 21).

Bildad can only fathom one explanation for Job’s predicament. Clearly Job has sinned, and clearly he is refusing to repent. For Bildad, this only confirms that Job has a lot of repenting still to do.

**TODAY ALONG THE WAY**



We might wonder why the same arguments concerning suffering and sin are repeated so much in Job. Perhaps it’s because these faulty viewpoints are so popular, both in Job’s day and in our own. Bildad has only one way of looking at the world, and he refuses to reconsider his position when things don’t line up with it. If we’re getting tired of hearing the same thing, imagine how painful it is for the one who is suffering innocently to be told again and again, “Repent, and everything will be fine.”

*Read: Job 19:1–29*

TODAY IN THE WORD



One of the most touching Bible stories is that of Ruth and Boaz. You may recall that Ruth was the daughter-in-law of the Israelite Naomi. Because both Ruth and Naomi were widowed, they returned to the ancestral home of Naomi's husband. According to Israelite custom, Ruth hoped to marry one of her late husband's relatives to preserve the family inheritance. Eventually that person turned out to be Boaz, who acted as a kinsman-redeemer for Ruth and Naomi.

The responsibilities of this human redeemer included avenging a family member's murder or effecting the release of a relative forced into debt bondage. But the kinsman-redeemer also pictured God Himself, who released the nation from Egypt. Today's passage gives another powerful picture of God as our Redeemer.

After Bildad's speech (see yesterday's study), Job's sharp reply is no surprise. But as we look carefully at Job's and Bildad's words, we observe an important difference. For all Bildad's piety, his view of God is actually distant. Bildad talks a lot about God, but we don't sense that he's talking to God. Job, on the other hand, sees God actively involved in his plight and often speaks directly to God. Job doesn't abstractly say that the wicked are caught in a trap. Instead, he says that God has trapped him (v. 6)! Job feels utterly abandoned by God

(vv. 7–12), by his friends and family (vv. 13–14), and by guests and servants (vv. 15–16), and he is unafraid to say so. In his cries, we find an echo of the suffering servant of Isaiah 53:3, which pictures Jesus' own innocent suffering.

A significant shift occurs in verse 23. The written record of Job's innocence reflects his belief that he will be vindicated after his death. This confidence leads to Job's bold declaration in verse 25, where the word redeemer is the same one that describes Boaz. It may be surprising that Job calls God his redeemer after calling Him his enemy. But Job's faith is unshakeable, and he knows there is nowhere else to turn. Notice also that he warns others to heed this warning (vv. 28–29).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



It's hard to match the exalted words of Job 19:25–27. They have inspired several beautiful hymns, including the beautiful soprano aria in Handel's *Messiah*.

Notice the emphasis on *seeing* in these verses. Although he may not have understood his words fully, Job reveals a firm conviction that he will see the Lord in his own flesh after his death. These words anticipate the believer's hope in the resurrection, when we will behold the risen Lord Jesus. What we see partially now, we will see fully then (1 John 3:2).

*I know that  
my Redeemer  
lives, and  
that in the end  
he will stand  
upon the  
earth.*

JOB 19:25



TODAY AT MOODY

Heidy Hartley, Vice President of Public Relations and Corporate Services, will appreciate your prayer support today as her team works hard to represent Moody in Chicago and beyond—including press releases, community programs, publications, and news bulletins.

*How long  
will you  
torment me  
and crush me  
with words?  
Ten times  
now you have  
reproached me.*

JOB 19:2-3



**TODAY AT MOODY**

As the MBI Trustees arrive for their Executive Committee meeting, we'd like to use this opportunity to request a prayer for wisdom in making decisions for the future of the Institute. Please refer to the beginning of this issue for the list of the Trustees' names.

Read: Job 20:1-29

**TODAY IN THE WORD**



In music, a composition often presents a musical theme and then follows up with successive variations on that theme. A good example of this technique is Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*. The final movement repeats and develops various themes that were introduced in the first and third movements. Parts of this symphony can even be heard in several of Beethoven's earlier works, such as his *Choral Fantasy, Opus 80*.

In the "symphony" of speeches given by Job's friends, all three play a variation on the same theme. The theme is "retribution theology," and the variants include "You reap what you sow," or "Suffering is the result of sin." The fact that Zophar repeats his own variation shows how little he has heard Job.

About the only thing that Zophar has heard is Job's rebuke. It seems he cares more about his own reputation than about Job's spiritual well-being. The wording of verses 2 and 3 also suggests that Zophar is only interacting with his own thoughts and understanding. He's hardly the model of active listening!

Zophar is likely reacting to Job's warning of judgment (19:25-27). For Zophar, Job has rejected God by questioning the way that He administers justice. So Zophar condescendingly reminds Job of the obvious fact that from the beginning of time, as everyone knows, the joy of the wicked is fleeting and their life short-lived (vv. 6-8).

But Zophar presents only part of the story. In reality, the way of all humanity is brief, as Psalm 103:15-16 and other verses attest. At least Job has understood that despite the brevity of human existence, there is an afterlife where final reward or judgment occurs.

Zophar's insensitivity leads him to accuse Job of being greedy (v. 21) and neglecting the poor (v. 19), which was considered one of the worst sins in ancient Israel. But there's no basis for Zophar's claims, who seems to have gotten carried away with himself. As Gleason Archer writes, "Here again we see how unrelenting was the fanatical hostility aroused by Job's refusal to confess to sins he never committed." Moreover, we find no possibility of mercy with Zophar's God.

**TODAY ALONG THE WAY**



None of Job's friends could grasp the idea of innocent suffering, but it is very important that we understand this essential theological point. As we noted, much of Job's suffering anticipates the undeserved suffering of our Lord. Take some time today to read through Isaiah 52:13-53:12, which describe the Suffering Servant. Take note of the ways that Job's experience parallels the circumstances of our Lord. For example, both were rejected by family and misunderstood by friends. Both looked to God in heaven for their vindication.

*Read: Job 21:1–34*

TODAY IN THE WORD



From 1945 to 1949, the world followed with intense interest the Nuremberg war crimes trials. Hundreds of Nazi officers, such as Hans Frank, the so-called “Butcher of Krakow,” and Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop were tried and convicted. Yet despite efforts to track down and prosecute war criminals, the fact remains that some perpetrators escaped justice and quietly blended back into mainstream society. They took on new identities and led normal lives. In the end, they died, apparently never paying for their awful crimes.

This is only one example of the particularly difficult question that theologians call “theodicy.” Why is there evil in the world? Related to this is the question of why the wicked seem to get away with their wrongdoing. There’s no easy answer to this problem, and this fact forms the basis of Job’s reply to round two of his friends’ speeches. In this speech, for the first time, Job does not address the Lord, but instead counters his friends’ claims. This speech is also much less emotional.

The biggest problem with retribution theology, Job begins, is that it doesn’t really explain the ways of the world. As he looks around, he finds numerous examples of the wicked prospering. They grow old (v. 7), they are safe (v. 9), and they are successful (vv. 8, 10–11). What’s more, they die happy

(v. 13), even though they deny God. The picture that Job paints here is similar to the one that Eliphaz drew of the good man (5:17–27), so it may be that Job intends a deliberate contrast. Ironically, Job’s friends have accused him of opposing God by challenging His ways, but it is they themselves who have been, in essence, telling God how the world should be run.

Job makes three additional points that challenge his friends’ view. First, he challenges the idea that the judgment of the wicked should fall upon their children (vv. 19–21). Second, he notes that the wicked and the righteous both end up in the grave (vv. 22–26). Finally, visitors from distant lands also attest that the wicked prosper (vv. 27–34).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



The book of Job doesn’t answer the problem of evil. We need to look elsewhere in Scripture to consider various aspects of this difficult question. Psalm 73 is a good place to start. Here the psalmist considers the apparent success of the wicked and wonders if he has been faithful in vain. The turning point comes in v. 17, where the psalmist begins to understand the final destiny of the wicked beyond this life. Then his heart is encouraged, as he considers his own eternal destiny with the Lord.

*He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.*

MATTHEW 5:45



TODAY AT MOODY

As a member of the leadership team, General Counsel Robert Gunter demonstrates true Christian service with his commitment to integrity and professionalism. Ask the Lord for continued excellence in leadership and in implementing the MBI vision.

*A despairing man should have the devotion of his friends.*

JOB 6:14



**TODAY AT MOODY**

Today and tomorrow, join us in prayer for Moody's Constituency Response Team. We thank the Lord for Sharon Cluff, Norma DeJesus, Patricia Fletcher, David Kocourek, and Jennifer Leber who process mail from our donors and answer questions.

*Read: Job 22:1-30*

**TODAY IN THE WORD**



One of the most popular recent TV shows, *Friends*, followed the lives of three men and three women who were close friends living in New York City. For five of the ten years this show ran, it ranked the number-one comedy show among adults aged 18-49. Much of the program's success no doubt has to do with the desire all of us have for close-knit, supportive friendships.

Such friendship is what Job wanted from his three friends. Instead, in this final round of speeches, we find that Job's friends leave much to be desired.

Eliphaz's final speech is especially sad. It's clear that he really cares about Job. While he has misdiagnosed the problem, he's concerned for the patient. But he's frustrated. Consequently, he's becomes harsh, even cruel.

He begins by refuting Job's idea that God is indifferent to the ways of the wicked. He claims that God doesn't determine if a person is good or bad—he gains no benefit from the affairs of humans because He is the Almighty (vv. 2-4). Instead, success or failure lies within individuals. Therefore, Job's claim that he suffers innocently is unthinkable.

Because Eliphaz hasn't found real examples of sin in Job's life, he invents some. He accuses Job of being wicked (v. 5), unjust to family members (v. 6), and uncaring to the poor

and oppressed (v. 7-9). With his tidy list, Eliphaz confidently asserts that Job is now getting what he deserves (vv. 10-11). But if Job had done such cruelties, everyone would have seen it.

Eliphaz accuses Job of concealing his sin from both God and his friends. He seems to respond to Job's claim that the wicked go unpunished in this life (see yesterday's study) by suggesting that Job is like that godless person. Even more cruelly, Eliphaz implies that he rejoices in the ruin that Job apparently deserves (v. 19).

Eliphaz concludes his speech with his familiar appeal to repent. As we read carefully through this final section (vv. 22-30), we find more than one suggestion of a "salvation by works" mentality.

**TODAY ALONG THE WAY**



It's clearly right for Eliphaz to care about correct doctrine, namely that sin doesn't go unpunished. But it's wrong for him to insist on only one way of viewing things.

As you minister, ask the Holy Spirit to enable you to see the person before you with His eyes. How can you really hear this person? How can you encourage him or her? It's easy to be so concerned about the right doctrine that we actually add to a person's wounds. Often the anguished heart must first experience comfort before correction.

*Read: Job 23:1–24:12*

#### TODAY IN THE WORD



The story of Martin Luther is one of the most inspiring in history. After nearly being struck by lightning, Luther entered a monastery in 1508, hoping to find a deeper relationship with God. But over the next few years, despite all Luther's efforts, he felt that God was not only distant, but that His wrath burned against Luther. Unable to meet the demands of the Mosaic law, Luther finally came to the realization that salvation was possible only through faith in Jesus Christ.

In today's passage, we find a similar yearning for God. Job laments that he can't find God, and his complaint remains bitter (23:2). Despite all the words that have passed between Job and his friends, Job has not given up his conviction that his only hope is to be heard before God. Although Job has said some harsh things about God and although he now believes that God is difficult to find, Job retains his steadfast belief that a righteous man can ultimately find justice with God (vv. 6–7).

More importantly, Job recognizes that God knows the truth about his life (v. 10), and that He is purifying Job by using this trial. Here Job articulates one possible divine purpose for suffering, namely, the testing of our faith and our sanctification. Still, Job is unafraid to admit that in the meantime, God seems to have His hand against Job,

which makes him faint of heart (v. 16). Job implies that if God can be found, it must be a gift.

Today's passage shows us the flip-flop of emotions that often accompanies severe trials. After so clearly understanding that his only hope lies with God, Job goes on to list examples of others who suffer innocently (24:1–12). In part, this list supports his claims that suffering isn't always the result of an individual's sin; it may be the result of others' sin. For example, the orphan and widow are robbed, or the children of the poor are seized (v. 9). Yet this list also leads to Job's mistaken claim that God somehow fails to render justice (v. 12).

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Job's bold declaration about the path that he has followed (23:11–12) is a powerful example for all believers. Despite his trials, Job has maintained three practices that are vital for the life of a believer. First, he has continued to follow God's ways: he has not forsaken the Lord as Satan had predicted, and he has not sought the counsel of unbelievers. Instead, he has continued to walk steadfastly with the Lord. Second, Job has kept God's commands. Third, Job has continued to treasure God's Word in his heart.

*If only I knew  
where to find  
him; if only  
I could go to  
his dwelling.*

JOB 23:3



#### TODAY AT MOODY

Again, we'd like to encourage with our prayers the members of MBI's Constituency Response Team—Janet McVay, Amelia Mendez, Stephen Moore, and Jeffrey Spang. Ask the Father to bless their time at the workplace.

*These are  
but the outer  
fringe of his  
works; how  
faint the  
whisper we  
hear of him!*

JOB 26:14



#### TODAY AT MOODY

In your prayers today, please remember MBI President Dr. Joseph Stowell. Pray for the safe travel and for the inspired, powerful message as he speaks in the Brooklyn Tabernacle service in New York.

*Read: Job 25:1–26:14*

#### TODAY IN THE WORD



In the field of logic, careful attention is given to how a conclusion is reached.

It's easy to see that if initial assumptions are wrong, then you won't arrive at a correct conclusion. It's not as easy to see that even with a correct premise, you can still end up with a wrong conclusion.

For example, yesterday we saw that Job correctly observed many examples of innocent suffering, but he wrongly concluded that God is unjust. Today we'll see Job's friend, Bildad, also coming to a faulty conclusion.

Bildad begins his final speech by accurately observing God's power and sovereignty (25:1–3). And he correctly observes that humans are utterly helpless before God's power. But he goes on to describe humans as mere worms. Bildad falsely says that humans have no hope of righteousness before God and are actually insignificant before Him. Yet humans are not disgusting maggots; rather, humans are created in the image of God and have inestimable worth. Bildad's conclusion is wrong.

It's not clear who's speaking in Job 26. Some commentators believe this section continues Bildad's remarks. But it's more likely that this is Job's response, because it doesn't reach the same neat conclusions that Bildad usually does.

Job begins by once again despairing of the advice and

comfort that his friends have offered. But he continues by challenging his friends' view of God. Throughout their speeches, they have tried to instruct Job in what they believe are the true ways of God. But in the second part of Job 26, we find a magnificent declaration of the awesome power of God in creation. The God of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar is far too small! Instead, Job looks out over the heavens and the earth, and he's amazed.

There's no error in Job's logic here. Looking at the vastness of creation, one has to admit to seeing only a part, not the whole. Viewing creation is like seeing a shadow or hearing a whisper of the totality of God. Job's view of God is beginning to expand.

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Commentator Andrew Blackwood writes, "Faith does not comprehend the divine plan. Yet faith knows that God reigns in the world visible and the world invisible. And, though he does not understand, the man of faith can trust."

Part of our human experience means accepting that everything about God cannot be understood or explained. This doesn't mean we look at horrific events and blindly call them God's will. It does mean, however, that we acknowledge that God's ways are beyond our comprehension. Even without a clear understanding of God, we can learn to trust Him.

*Read: Job 27:1–23*

TODAY IN THE WORD



In his classic book, *A Grief Observed*, C. S. Lewis writes, “In grief, nothing ‘stays put.’ One keeps on emerging from a phase, but it always recurs. Round and round. Every-thing repeats. Am I going in circles, or dare I hope I am on a spiral? But if a spiral, am I going up or down?”

Today’s passage concludes Job’s interchange with his friends. Throughout this debate, we’ve observed Job’s journey. Chaplain David Atkinson lists the stages of Job’s grief: silence, lament, questioning, denial, anger, anxiety, and the beginnings of hope. But this hasn’t been a neat progression. Like the circles that C. S. Lewis describes, we’ve seen Job begin to hope and then return to despair. We’ve seen him express both anger and fear in the same breath. In short, we’ve seen a real person dealing with real pain.

Job begins his final response to his friends by reaffirming his integrity and honesty. His friends have been cruel and unjust. They have falsely accused him of committing and concealing grave sin. In essence, they have told him that his situation is hopeless, because there appears to be no hope for the godless (vv. 8–10).

In this final response, he once again acknowledges that unrepentant sinners suffer in this life or through their posterity (vv. 13–23). Some commentators ascribe this last speech to

Zophar, but they are more likely Job’s summary remarks. (It’s probably just as well that Zophar doesn’t say anything in this third round of speeches, because he’s clearly the harshest of the three!)

In his defense, Job once again affirms that he’s never denied God’s justice for the wicked, despite his friends’ claims. At the same time, he has steadfastly claimed that this doesn’t describe his situation. Job summarizes earlier comments and refutes the conventional wisdom that has been defended and repeated by his friends. As we noted earlier, the repetition of their views stresses the emptiness of these arguments. They show that Job’s friends have talked around or past Job, but they haven’t really engaged with Job. So Job now rests his case before God.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



In verse 6, Job declares that his conscience is clear, but our conscience is not always a reliable indicator. It’s only as we surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ that our conscience becomes a more reliable guide. Dietrich Bonhoeffer stated this well when he wrote in his book, *Ethics*, “Jesus Christ has become my conscience.” This underscores the importance of remaining in the Lord at all times, but especially in the midst of severe trials. Thus, our conscience must ultimately be directed by God’s Word and the Holy Spirit.

*Give ear to  
my words, O  
Lord, consider  
my sighing.  
Listen to my  
cry for help.*

PSALM 5:1–2



TODAY AT MOODY

Tricia Boyle, William Davis, Mary Martin, Christopher Segard, and Timothy Svoboda serve in Broadcast Production, working “behind the scenes,” making sure all the details of the radio broadcast come together flawlessly. Would you pray for them today?

*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.*

PROVERBS 9:10



#### TODAY AT MOODY

Dr. Michael Kane, Vice President of Educational Resources, requests your prayers today as he, and the team he leads, provide our students and faculty with all the necessary equipment and materials for the productive learning process at Moody.

*Read: Job 28:1–28*

#### TODAY IN THE WORD



When most of us think about gold mining, we envision gold-panning prospectors in the Wild West. But gold mining is quite complex. Today, gold is extracted from ores that often contain little gold. The ore is crushed to expose small gold particles. Chemical treatments complete the process.

The opening verses of today's passage (vv. 1–11) describe other difficulties associated with extracting precious metals and gems. Miners are willing to risk descending deep into the earth's dark caverns in search of these prized elements. Now you may be wondering why Job has switched from talking about God's justice (the end of Job 27) to a lecture for Mining 101! Indeed, some have questioned whether this passage even belongs here in the book of Job. Yet this interlude serves two important functions.

First, to paraphrase this passage for today, Job marvels at humanity's technological abilities. Humans are able to do what even the mightiest of the animal kingdom can't do (vv. 7–8). But even with this ability, humans aren't able to find the most important treasure, wisdom.

This is Job's second point. Although men can enter dark tunnels to find ore, people can't enter the darkness of life and find wisdom. Wisdom simply cannot be found in the same way as precious material elements (vv. 12–19). In short, wis-

dom is hidden from every living creature and even from death itself (v. 22).

The point of this entire passage, therefore, is to show that there's only one source of wisdom, and that's God. God Himself knows the way of wisdom because He created the universe. Consequently, wisdom can't be found like gold or rubies. Instead, wisdom is God's gift to humans (v. 28). Wisdom must begin with God, and it can only come from God.

Today's passage also serves as a transition in the book of Job. The long and frustrating exchange between Job and his friends has finally ended. The solution to Job's problem can't be found in human wisdom. Only divine wisdom can help Job. So this hymn returns our focus completely to the Lord, where it belongs.

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Old Testament scholar Eric Heaton had defined wisdom as "the ability to cope." Job's hymn to wisdom helps him, and us, see that the way forward is only through God's wisdom. Because all the treasures of wisdom are hidden in Jesus Christ (Col. 2:3), our starting place must be Him, who leads to a true hatred of evil and avoidance of sin.

If you have time this week, consider reading the marvelous hymn to wisdom found in Proverbs 8 and reviewing this year's opening study in the book of Proverbs.

*Read: Job 29:1–25*

TODAY IN THE WORD



In her song, “Those Were the Days,” Mary Hopkins captures well that nostalgic longing for the “good ol’ days”: “Those were the days, my friend / We thought they’d never end / We’d sing and dance forever and a day.”

There’s a tendency to look back on good times longingly, perhaps remembering them better than they actually were. In Job’s case, however, we find honest reflection on truly better days. After the hymn to wisdom, Job begins an extended monologue (Job 29–31) that looks at his past and his present and offers a public testimony to his integrity and innocence. We’ll spend a day on each of these chapters, beginning with Job’s look at the past.

We are immediately drawn into Job’s pain in the opening verses. There are three things for which Job longs, probably in order of importance: his fellowship with God, the love of his children, and respect from others in his community.

Job recalls the high esteem in which he was held (vv. 10–11). Scholar Andrew Blackwood summarizes Job’s words as follows: “He was blessed and tried to be a blessing to others.” This directly contrasts Eliphaz’s false claims that Job had neglected the poor (Job 22:6–9; see Sept. 17). Perhaps this is why Job gives so many examples of his care for the oppressed (vv. 12–17). In addition to vindicating Job’s charac-

ter, this list gives us great insight into the high moral standards of Job’s day. It’s important to notice that much of Job’s focus is on proactive conduct. In other words, Job was not only concerned to avoid evil, but he also took the initiative to do what was right regarding others. To use New Testament language, we could say that Job was willing to go the extra mile (Matt. 5:41).

Because of his righteous conduct, Job came to anticipate a long and prosperous life (v. 18). He was full of confidence for the future, and he enjoyed tremendous respect in the present (vv. 21–25). This is not arrogant boasting. Instead, Job’s past conduct underscores the true bewilderment that he presently feels regarding his suffering.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Job’s ministry to those around him is quite remarkable.

Indeed Job 29:12–17 is a wonderful model for all believers. Yet this passage also shows that our ministry often goes “unrewarded” this side of heaven.

That’s why we need to keep in mind Gal. 6:9–10: “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”

*How I long  
for the months  
gone by, for  
the days when  
God watched  
over me.*

JOB 29:2



TODAY AT MOODY

Thank God in prayer today for our Engineering Operations department: Alan Berg, Al Campa, John Fraats, and Jaime Ixcaragua. All MBI departments rely on their work to ensure a trouble-free operation of the Institute’s systems. And they always do a great job!

*I cry out to you, O God, but you do not answer.*

JOB 30:20



**TODAY AT MOODY**

Please pray for these members of the Engineering Operations team: Chester King, Gerald Malozienc, Mark Millis, and Scott Rough. They like to work in the background, but the results of their work are evident to everybody.

*Read: Job 30:1-31*

**TODAY IN THE WORD**



In his book, *I Believe*, noted scholar Helmut Thielicke wrote the following about God’s own hurt in our suffering: “This is the holy God for whom our lost lives are an unspeakable hurt, and who nevertheless says *Yes* to us . . . God himself suffers there where the Crucified hangs. That is what all this means. When he cries, ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ the eternal heart abandons itself to all the forsakenness and despair that a man suffers in his separation from God.”

Truly when we hear Job’s heart in today’s passage, we see poignantly the forsakenness and despair that Job felt when he believed that God had abandoned him. What a contrast to Job’s reflection of how his life had once been that we read about yesterday. How difficult it must have been to be mocked and ridiculed by those who formerly would have shown well-deserved respect to Job. The very dregs of the community, whose fathers had been shunned from decent society, now spit upon Job in disdain (v. 10). Recall from yesterday’s study that Job went out of his way to help the less fortunate. The bitter irony that some of these same individuals now refused to show Job any compassion no doubt only increased his pain.

The cruelty that Job experienced from his own community was in addition to the

chronic physical pain that had come to define Job’s existence (vv. 16–17).

Job is more than willing to point the finger squarely at God to explain his condition. Moreover, the sheer horror of Job’s perception that he has been utterly abandoned by the Lord comes to its fullest expression (vv. 20–23). Notice that even in his accusations, Job doesn’t deny the Lord. Though he wrongly attributes malicious actions and motives to God, he still directs his anguish to Him.

The injustice of the three friends’ insinuations is perhaps most fully expressed at the end of this passage. If, as they claim, a man reaps what he sows, then why is Job now reaping rejection when he had sown compassion (vv. 25–26)?

**TODAY ALONG THE WAY**



Job’s reaction to tribulation isn’t that uncommon. During trials, it’s easy to think that God has somehow rejected us. Once again, however, our greatest example is Jesus Christ. On the cross, he experienced the full brunt of God’s wrath and true separation from God. But because of Him, as believers, we’ll never have to face the horror of complete abandonment by God. Instead, although we may feel separated from God, the truth is that He is always with us (Matt. 28:20). This is what Job was also about to discover.

*Read: Job 31:1–40*

TODAY IN THE WORD



On April 16, 2004, the Associated Press ran a story about a man who served 18 years in prison for a murder he didn't commit. DNA evidence led to the conviction of another man, who confessed to the crime. "Finally, my innocence is recognized," Darryl Hunt said. "For so many years I have been trying to prove my innocence only to be told I was lying and to finally have it official means a lot." Hunt received a "pardon of innocence," and monetary compensation for his time imprisoned.

We might call today's passage Job's request for a "pardon of innocence." After reflecting on his past and present (Job 29–30), Job refutes charges leveled without evidence. This long passage uses the legal formula, "If I have done X, then may some curse Y happen," summarizing the high moral standards by which Job lived.

In the preamble (vv. 1–4), Job upholds the law of retribution for sin, which he has never denied. His own commitment to righteousness begins by keeping his eyes pure. He then declares his innocence regarding dishonest business practices (vv. 5–8) and adultery (vv. 9–12). Neither has Job been unjust toward servants (vv. 13–15), whom he sees as fellow heirs of grace, a startling thought in Job's day.

Job again refutes Eliphaz's reckless accusations (22:6–9) concerning his conduct toward

the poor. The strength of Job's denial is seen in the curse that he invokes (bodily dismemberment, v. 22) if he has failed in this regard.

Job continues, denying greed and idolatry (vv. 26–27). He hasn't rejoiced in his enemies' misfortune (cf. Matt. 5:44), or failed to show proper hospitality, which was supremely important in Job's time. Finally, he denies concealed sin.

After his long recitation, Job "signs" his written defense and rests his case. He welcomes the one who would bring charges against him, including the Almighty. He concludes with one final, if odd, addition concerning stewardship of his land. Perhaps this refers to Job's understanding that God has placed humans on earth to till the soil—even this, Job has done. He has nothing left to say.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Job's righteous conduct is remarkable. It's actually close to the high standards of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7).

Job's declaration isn't meant to curry God's favor, as if he were trying to earn salvation. Instead, he simply wants the truth about his innocence to be known. But it's possible to detect a note of pride in Job's words. This is always a danger we face when we've been falsely accused. That's why humility is so vital when we attempt to declare our innocence in a matter.

*I have been blameless before him, and have kept myself from sin.*

PSALM 18:23



TODAY AT MOODY

Richard Campbell, Chief Financial Officer at Moody, expresses gratitude for God's provision toward MBI's ministries year after year, and for the faithful friends through whom He provides. We pray that this partnership would grow as we move forward.

*I tell you,  
in this you  
are not  
right, for God  
is greater  
than man.*

JOB 33:12



**TODAY AT MOODY**

We invite you to pray today for the Institution Research staff: Gregory Gaertner and Norma Malave. We value their contribution to the Institute's mission with all the statistical research they provide.

*Read: Job 32:1-14; 33:1-25*

**TODAY IN THE WORD**



In many parts of the world, titles of respect are reserved for the elderly.

For example, in Greece, an esteemed old man is called *geronda*. In many Hispanic cultures, an older woman is addressed as *Doña*. These titles affirm the honor associated with age in many world cultures throughout history.

Such respect explains why the youngest human character in the book of Job, Elihu, waits to speak last. He has heard each side's argument, and he's bursting to say something (32:19), but he has held off out of respect. Yet he's not afraid to speak because he's prompted by the Spirit (32:8).

Elihu gives one of the longest speeches in the book (Job 32-37). He will offer an important rebuttal to Job, because he has unfairly criticized God, and to his friends, because they haven't been fair to Job. They've given up on him because "he was righteous in his own eyes." Elihu attempts to provide a mediating position.

Although Elihu demonstrates the proper respect for his elders, his words sound a bit pompous. He seems at times rather confident of himself! Yet Elihu is a fair theologian, who argues for God's wise and loving providence. Unlike the first three friends, Elihu moves beyond retribution theology to suggest that God has His own purposes for the circumstances of life. Because of this, the only

human response is humble submission. Elihu shows that both sides have misunderstood the situation.

After reminding Job that all people have faults (33:8-11), Elihu directly challenges Job's claim that God has ceased to speak to him. In fact, Elihu suggests that God has been speaking to Job in numerous ways, beginning with dreams and nightmares that warn against wrongdoing and pride. God also speaks in pain and distress by means of mediating angels, who offer a ransom for the afflicted individual (33:24). Eventually, this individual comes to repentance and testifies to others of God's redemption. In these verses, we see a faint glimpse of the later intercessory work of our Lord Jesus who offered His very life up as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45).

**TODAY ALONG THE WAY**



Simone Weil once wrote, "The extreme goodness of Christianity lies

in the fact that it does not seek a supernatural remedy for suffering, but a supernatural use for it."

Her words summarize a major shift in the book of Job. Here we move away from a cause-and-effect understanding of suffering to a view that God can use suffering for His supernatural purposes. Even in the midst of our most difficult trial, we can hold on in faith to the belief that God is using every circumstance for His glory.

*I desire mercy,  
not sacrifice.*

HOSEA 6:6



## TODAY AT MOODY

Please extend your prayer support to the staff of WCRF, Moody Radio station in Cleveland, Ohio. Pray that through the work of Alice Andrews, Gary Bittner, Paul Carter, and Douglas Hainer the message of Jesus Christ would reach more homes in the Ohio area.

Read: Job 34:1–37

## TODAY IN THE WORD



Perhaps you've heard a story like Deborah Johnson's.

After an accident on the job forced her out of work, she battled for nearly five years to get her workers' compensation claim settled. When it was finally paid, she found out that her medical bills wouldn't be covered. It was like pouring salt on wounds.

That's likely what Job felt. Although Elihu claims to have something new to say, in reality, he continues very much like Job's friends, insisting that God is just to punish evildoers. Like them, Elihu missed the fact that Job has never denied this. Thus, right when Job might have hoped for comfort, he receives insult on top of injury.

Elihu claims that Job "drinks scorn like water." In other words, Job should be counted among the wicked. Now Elihu is right to question Job's claim of complete innocence. As we've seen, there's an element of pride in Job's protestations (see Sept. 24), as he himself will come to realize. And Elihu would be right to challenge Job's claim that it profits a person nothing to please God (v. 9), except that Job never claimed this. Instead, Job pointed out that calamity falls upon both the righteous and the wicked (9:22–24) and that the wicked do prosper in this life (21:7–13).

Much of what Elihu says is perfectly correct. God cannot

do evil (v. 12). He's so intimately involved in the world that if He withdrew His life-giving spirit, all would collapse (v. 15). And because nothing truly escapes God's notice (vv. 21–30), Job is wrong to suggest that God overlooks evil.

We can appreciate Elihu's efforts to show that Job's argument could lead to a rejection of faith. His intention is good, but it must have hurt Job, because Job never denied the Lord. Moreover, Elihu presents a rather heartless God when he says that God owes no one an explanation of His ways (v. 29). It's true that the Sovereign Lord of the universe need not explain Himself, but Elihu has overlooked God's mercy and grace. Elihu's view of God is too small.

## TODAY ALONG THE WAY



We need to be fair to Elihu. We have an insight that he didn't have, because we were allowed to overhear the interview between God and Satan (Job 1–2). So even though Elihu understood a lot about the Lord, more than the first three friends, there are ways and purposes belonging to God that even Elihu could not imagine. As we have suggested before, we need a lot of humility when we attempt to counsel those who suffer. We just don't see the entire picture as the Lord does.

*He is wooing  
you from  
the jaws of  
distress to a  
spacious place  
free from  
restriction.*

JOB 36:16



#### TODAY AT MOODY

Once again, thank you for praying for Moody Radio's WCRF and its staff: Richard Lee, Janice Markiwitz, Philip Villareal, and Mark Zimmerman. As they spread the Word of God over the airwaves, pray that the Lord would continue to bless their ministry.

*Read: Job 36:1–7; 36:22–37:26*

#### TODAY IN THE WORD



When it first began over twenty years ago, no one anticipated the popularity of The Weather Channel. The idea of an entire cable station devoted to the weather was a bit risky. But today, it's not that uncommon to hear people confess that they enjoy watching The Weather Channel, even beyond the local forecast. Perhaps people are fascinated by the weather because, despite modern technology, it remains somewhat unpredictable and mysterious. Forecasters can still be surprised by tornadoes or a hurricane's path. This is a good reminder that God retains final control of His creation.

This is the point that Elihu makes in the conclusion of his speech. At last, we find some softening in his words, although his presumptuous claim that God has spoken directly to him implies that God hasn't spoken to Job or the other three.

We find increased sensitivity toward Job as Elihu acknowledges that the afflicted need not necessarily be sinful (v. 6). Thus Elihu also introduces a whole new idea by stating that God does not just give affliction as punishment, but that he “woos” the afflicted and heals them. For the first time, the idea is presented that God is compassionate and brings people into a new understanding of the world through suffering that heals.

Although Elihu may have started off a bit arrogant in the first part of his speech (see yes-

terday's study), he certainly ends it on a glorious note. The second part of today's reading focuses on the sheer wonder of who God is (vv. 22–26). To illustrate God's wonder, Elihu offers a marvelous description of a mighty thunderstorm, in which the deafening sounds of thunder appear as God's voice. At such a display, Elihu can only marvel. The point of this weather lesson is to show that God is in complete control. The series of questions that follow show that Job is not!

Elihu concludes with a beautiful picture of the peace that settles in after a storm (37:21–24). Elihu's speech serves as a bridge to the voice of the Lord that comes from within the whirlwind.

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY



As we noted, Elihu's speech has shifted the discussion's focus. Job's first three friends looked for reasons to explain his suffering, hoping to find some hidden sin in Job. But Elihu begins to look upward, anticipating what God might be doing. He doesn't ask “Why?” but “What?” . . . “What is God doing through this?” This opens the door to a deeper understanding of God. We may never know the reasons why things happen, but we can be confident that the Lord will lead us just as He directs all the forces of nature.

*Read: Job 38:1–11*

TODAY IN THE WORD



In the beloved classic books, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, one of C. S. Lewis's characters, Mr. Beaver, offers a profoundly insightful picture of Christ, portrayed in the books as Aslan the Lion. Mr. Beaver says, "One day you'll see him [Aslan] and another you won't. He doesn't like being tied down—and of course he has other countries to attend to. It's quite all right. He'll drop in. Only you mustn't press him. He's wild, you know. Not like a tame lion."

Not like a tame lion. That's what Job must now learn. God doesn't govern His universe as Job, or anyone, else thinks He should, but according to His unsearchable wisdom. God isn't "tame"—He speaks to Job out of the storm—but He is perfectly good and completely loving.

So, when Job finally gets the audience with the Lord that he requested, he's not the one asking the questions! Instead, like a prosecuting attorney, the Lord fires off the questions and informs Job, "You will answer me" (38:3). God challenges Job's insinuation that He wasn't administering justice fairly. This interrogation covers Job 38 and 39, but it could be paraphrased in this one penetrating question: "Were you present at creation?" (38:4). Of course, Job wasn't. Therefore, Job isn't in a position to accuse the Lord of being unjust or unloving.

To be fair, Job has had a few moments of brilliance in understanding God's wisdom and perfection (see Job 28). But he's also slipped into pride because he'd judged the Lord solely based on what he could see. He had failed to consider that there was more to the picture than what met his own eyes or came from his own understanding.

Although this encounter includes rebuke, it's clearly a sign of God's tremendous care because He so personally responds to Job. The Lord reminds Job that because He has created everything and alone knows the intimate operations of the universe, then He surely knows Job and what he's been going through. Notice also that rather than answer why Job has suffered, the Lord brings to Job to a deeper understanding of Himself.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



As we come to the end of our study, it's a good idea to review some key points. Job is rebuked by the Lord, not because of some rebellious sin, but rather because he was unwilling to let God govern the universe as God sees fit. This is something that all of us must learn. Like Job, sincere followers of the Lord may encounter pain and suffering for no apparent reason. But like Job, we must realize that a trusting submission to God's greater purpose is required.

*Our God is a consuming fire.*

HEBREWS 12:29



TODAY AT MOODY

Our Missions department faculty share their knowledge and wisdom with our students every day, helping them follow God's calling in their lives. Your prayers will encourage the department's professors: Edwin Bernard, Walter Cirafesi, Stephen Clark, and Kyeong Park.

*We know that  
in all things  
God works for  
the good of  
those who love  
him, who have  
been called  
according to  
his purpose.*

ROMANS 8:28



#### TODAY AT MOODY

Continue to pray for Moody's Missions department—Elizabeth Lightbody, Samuel Naaman, and Michael Rydelnik—and their work of training future missionaries who will bring the love of Christ to the lost and broken of this world. What a privilege to serve the Lord in this way.

*Read: Job 40:1–14*

#### TODAY IN THE WORD



We all know how easy it is to be critical. Whether we're in work situations or personal relationships, we're all pretty good at finding faults in others! Seeing the problem is usually the easy part—but when it comes right down to it, it's often hard to come up with positive suggestions to improve the situation.

In today's passage, we find the Lord taking Job to task for his harsh criticism of His ability to administer justice. In essence, the Lord says to Job, "If you're going to be so critical, then show Me that you could do a better job!"

Recall from yesterday's study that Job finally got his demand for a personal encounter with the Lord. But rather than Job questioning the Lord, the Lord cross-examined Job! This first series of questions ends with a stern rebuke: If you want to accuse the Almighty, then you'd better be prepared to answer Him (v. 2)!

And what answer does Job have? Not the one that he thought he'd have. Instead, Job is speechless. He begins to realize his own unworthiness as well as his limitations in understanding God.

You'd think that the Lord's next response to Job might be a little harsh. Instead, He repeats the exact same exhortation that He uttered before the first cross-examination: "Let him who accuses God answer him" (v. 7;

cf. 38:3). The Lord continues to press Job because He knows that until the root of Job's pride is addressed, Job won't be able to enjoy the deep communion with God that he so longs for. To have Job simply stop speaking doesn't get to this root issue. In fact, it's possible that Job would just quietly smolder if the Lord didn't press hard. As Andrew Blackwood comments, "God desires, not Job's silent rebellion, but Job."

So the Lord continues. If Job can prove that he could do a better job, then the Lord will concede (v. 14). It becomes obvious to Job that the Lord really does know what He's doing. The rest of Job 40 and 41 illustrates this by showing the Lord's control over two frightful beasts, the behemoth and leviathan, known to us as the hippopotamus and crocodile.

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Much of our focus has been on Job's innocent suffering, but Job isn't fault-

less. In fact, all of us have probably felt at some point that we could do a better job running the world than God. Job forces us to confront this pride.

Are you in a difficult situation and deep in your heart you feel that you could do things better? The way forward is to recognize that you don't see things the way the Lord does. Like Job, the Lord presses us to come to this realization.

*Read: Job 42:1–17*

TODAY IN THE WORD



Missionary Carl Brown, who works in a Hindu country, relates the following story. A young woman, who had recently come to faith in Jesus Christ, began to take Bible classes. Soon after, she became quite ill. Her family told her this happened because she had forsaken the local deities. So they kept her isolated and refused to help because they felt she was being punished.

When one of the Christian teachers found out about her condition, she rushed over and suspected a serious infection. Because they were convinced that she was cursed to death, the family agreed to let the Christian help the young woman. After receiving a series of antibiotics, the young woman made a full recovery and the entire village began to express interest in the Lord Jesus!

The belief that illness is judgment is common. As we have seen, Job's three friends were convinced of this. But the book of Job shows clearly that God can use suffering to bring people to a deeper understanding of Himself. Had this young Hindu woman not experienced her illness, an entire village might not have become interested in the Lord. Had Job not suffered, neither he nor his friends would have come to a truer understanding of the Lord.

After his long cross-examination, Job finally recognizes his own humility and the Lord's

greatness. Job's statement in verse 6 reflects an ancient Israelite way of expressing sincere humility. Most importantly, Job experiences restoration with the Lord beyond all that he could imagine.

Job had never truly forsaken God, despite his friends' unjust claims. Now they must face the Lord and repent of the cruel things they said about the Lord and Job. What supreme irony that these "comforters" would now have to seek Job as an intercessor before the Lord (v. 8)! But the Lord's charge to these three also forces Job to forgive them fully, as he must.

The Lord not only fully restored Job's fellowship with Him, but He also publicly vindicated him. As with the young Hindu woman, God's purposes extend to many others beyond the individual who has suffered.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



As we conclude our study, we still haven't received a definite explanation for innocent suffering. The "why?" remains largely unanswered. But we have learned a lot about what God might be showing us, a deeper understanding of Him, or how He might be using suffering in our lives, to display His glory.

It's appropriate to end with 2 Corinthians 1:3–4: "Praise be to . . . God . . . who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble."

*I know that  
you can do  
all things;  
no plan of  
yours can  
be thwarted.*

JOB 42:2



TODAY AT MOODY

Thank you for your partnership in prayer with us this month! As we come to the end of this study, let us thank God for His work in every human life. Thank Him that His sovereignty and mercy are revealed even in trials and suffering, and that His grace is always sufficient.

Pastor Donald Cole is a man who loves stories—the kind you read, the kind you tell, the kind you live. This is one from his years as a missionary in Angola.

“One time I was asked to see the provincial governor of Angola about the annual Mission Report I’d written. ‘This report is magnificent!’ he said. ‘This is a model of clarity . . . and that’s the problem!’”

“The governor explained to me that in the diplomatic community you must never write clearly. If people know exactly what you think you’re left exposed to too much criticism. Instead he coached me to create loopholes with phrases like ‘some believe’ and ‘evidence may support,’” Pastor Cole remembers.

Moody Bible Institute might want to

send a thank-you card to that provincial governor of Angola. Thanks to that little lesson, Pastor Cole gave hope to MBI officials in the early 1970s when he wrote a loosely worded letter to turn down the job of radio pastor. “I wrote something along the lines of, ‘I would not believe God is leading me in this direction *at this time*,’” he says. “Moody interpreted that as me saying I might be open to the position in the future, so they didn’t fill it. And sure enough, a month later I’d changed my mind.”

Thirty years later, in 2001, Pastor Cole retired from his service as the radio pastor for the Moody Broadcasting Network. He saw a lot of changes in his thirty years at MBN. “We went from owning just three sta-

men were listening. “I’d get letters saying things like ‘How dare you have her on the program!’ and so on. And I’d just write back, ‘I’ve warned her not to say anything intelligent but sometimes she slips it in,’” Cole grins.

Despite his retirement, Cole remains an active member of the Moody community. He is a familiar face on campus, and listeners to *Open Line* still hear Pastor Cole answer questions from his national audience on Monday and Thursday nights. He also writes the popular “Q & A” column for *Today in the Word*, volunteers with MBN’s annual SHARE event, and keeps up with correspondence. On top of all this, he

spends one month in Angola every year (see sidebar).

“My wife keeps asking me what ‘officially retired’ actually means,” he laughs when talking about his ongoing work. “The difference now is I only have to go downtown [to MBI’s campus] when I feel like it.”

“The real business of the preacher is to help people apply Scripture to life,” says Pastor Cole. And that’s just what he has dedicated his life to—through his writing, missions work, and the airwaves. ■

Before becoming Moody’s radio pastor, Donald Cole and his wife Naomi spent 18 years

tions to owning more than thirty," he says. "It all started out as an AM operation and then MBN ended up pioneering satellite broadcasting and now we supply programs to more than three hundred stations in addition to the ones we own."

During those years Pastor Cole became the trusted voice that thousands of radio listeners turned to with their questions about the Bible and the Christian life. Through classic programs like *Dial the Pastor*, *Christian Perspectives on the News*, and *Pastor Cole's Commentary* he built a relationship with his audience that continues to this day.

One of his favorite programs was *The Living Word*, a verse-by-verse study of the Bible he did with wife Naomi. The daily fifteen-minute program covered books of the Bible including Romans and Ephesians. Pastor Cole received flack from a few people who objected to a woman teaching the Bible, because

## This Month at MOODY

**September 10-11**

**MBN Broadcasts from the United Center—**

***Just Give Me Jesus* with Anne Graham Lotz**

*Chicago, Illinois*

**September 17**  
**Friday Night Sing**

*Moody Memorial Church*

*Chicago, Illinois*

**September 25**  
**Toward a Growing Marriage Conference—**  
**with Dr. Gary Chapman**

*Brainerd United Methodist Church*

*Chattanooga, Tennessee*

*For more information on events and conferences, please call 1-800 DL MOODY (356-6639).*



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