

CCF Study Notes
Tuesday 7 AM Study
12 September 2006
Job 22-28

Before beginning to read from Job let's spend time in prayer, considering how we ought to live in humility, considering God's grace shown us in Christ Jesus. Let's ask God to help us to:

1. **Walk humbly** with our God and with all men;
2. **Lead** those who are suffering or lost to be reconciled to God in Christ;
3. **Make the most** of every God-given opportunity to show forth God's love and justice;
4. **Live** in the fear of God, knowing He is absolutely Holy and all-powerful;
5. **Embrace** the grace of God who became a man and dwelt among us – infinite as He is;
6. **Speak the truth** concerning wickedness and God's absolute justice, and
7. **Find wisdom** in fearing the Lord and departing from evil.

We must remember that Job's trials serve a very important purpose in Job's life. Though Job is blameless and upright and shuns evil, still there is much of "self" in Job: self-reliance, self-esteem, self-confidence and even a bit of self-centeredness. God works to purge Job of these through trials, thus bringing Job to "the end of self". Key to this process is learning to walk in absolute humility with God and with all men. This involves gently leading those who are suffering or lost toward being fully reconciled with God. Many who suffer are bitter towards God. Many who lose their way doubt the existence of God. We must show them God's love and justice and mercy in our every word and deed. We must hold God in highest reverence and respect. Yet we must also see His love and grace expressed toward us in sending His Son to die for us. Wickedness is a real issue and must be spoken against, lest people misunderstand the goodness, forbearance and longsuffering of God. Knowledge puffs up. True wisdom comes as we fear God and depart from evil – it involves feeling and action as well as thought.

There is a subtle pride that often comes to those whom God has used in ministry. We somehow think that God relies on us, or that our ministry is vital to the well-being of the body of Christ. Yes, the body suffers when any member fails to do its part, but the body also adapts to changing conditions. Perhaps we see others as being desperately in need of our wisdom and advice. We may think that God is really very pleased with us and is blessed beyond measure because we are so faithful. When such pride creeps in we often begin to abuse our brothers and sisters in Christ. God sees things from a much higher perspective. Though God uses the wicked He will deal with their sin. God will reward those who put Him first in their hearts and lives. God will show mercy to the humble person who is less than perfect – a thought which offers great relief!

Job is suffering, and doesn't understand why. "If I could just reason with God!" says Job. Many who suffer are similarly confused and sometimes even angry with God. Likewise, Job doesn't sense the presence of God in the midst of his troubles. Job feels abandoned by God. So it is with many who suffer: they feel abandoned by God and cut off from God's people. Job has

great insight at this point. God performs what is appointed for each of us. And if God works through everything that happens to us, we know that all these things work together for good and not ultimately for evil in our lives. (Romans 8:28)

Job considers the work of the wicked – how they bring suffering upon so many people in so many different ways. God allows the mighty to continue for a time, giving to them a certain sense of security in their sin. In the end they are brought down. The wicked man and the mighty man don't understand that the goodness and forbearance of God is designed to bring them to repentance. Those who are humbled and oppressed by the wicked and the mighty come to walk humbly with their God. Whether mighty or powerless, all are humbled before God.

"Since God has all the forces of the universe at His disposal and man is a mere maggot compared with God, why would God use such means to improve men?" asks Bildad. This is a question that is central to reformed theology. Reformed theology is again becoming popular for this very reason: it holds a high view of God, and of God's sovereignty in particular.

Job now launches into his longest discourse. The thought of the sovereignty of God and the utter depravity of man removes all hope from those, like Job, who are helpless and powerless against suffering or sin. This world needs more than fine sounding theology. It needs the very word of God coming by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Power isn't the only attribute of God. We must also consider His providence and grace as demonstrated in His provision through creation, in the awesome beauty of everything God creates, and in salvation.

God is alive! Systematic theology often uses the methods of anatomy. The subject being studied is usually dead. God is dissected. But God cares for you and for me and we know that well. We must not speak as if God were absent. The hypocrite has no hope. But God is at work in Job's life. The wicked do not endure forever. God will finish His work in our lives as well as in the lives of hypocrites and wicked men. We must have an eternal perspective!

Job returns to the whole concept of wisdom. Job uses the illustration of prospecting for and mining of precious minerals. No effort or expense is spared in search of the elusive minerals. Can we use a similar approach to finding wisdom? No, for wisdom is found only in God. As we live in constant awareness of God's awesome presence and depart from evil we find true wisdom and real understanding. Why do people reject the ultimate wisdom – the good news of Jesus Christ? Their evil deeds blind them! (John 3:18-21) Wisdom is not about abstract knowledge but skillful living. Knowledge puffs up; love builds up. They are exalted who humble themselves before God.

Let us pray that we may learn to walk humbly with God and all men. God gives freely of His wisdom for skillful living to all who ask. Let us ask Him daily for the wisdom to walk humbly!

P.S. Recordings of these studies in John, the Prophets, and Job and copies of these notes are now available on a new website at <http://www.jstoker.name>. A podcast is also available there or at <http://feeds.feedburner.com/CCF-T-Podcast>.