

CCF Study Notes
Tuesday 7 AM Study
29 August 2006
Job 8-14

Before beginning to read from Job let's spend time in prayer, considering what it means to take up the cross and follow Jesus. Let's ask God to help us to:

1. **Honor** God as being completely just – even if we don't understand His work;
2. **Acknowledge** our own weakness and unrighteousness before Almighty God;
3. **Trust** that the God who made us knows our limits and loves us even in our imperfection;
4. **Show** mercy and patience and understanding and compassion toward those who suffer;
5. **Avoid** putting God in a box, remembering nothing is impossible for God;
6. **Represent** God rightly, neither putting words in God's mouth nor putting God on trial, and
7. **Remember** that if we have died with Christ to the things of this world we also live in Christ.

This week we finish off the first round of dialogues with Job, hearing from Bildad the Shuhite (the shortest person in scripture?) and Zophar the Naamathite. Eliphaz spoke as the proponent of reason and experience. Bildad now speaks as the proponent of tradition, an intelligent orthodoxy. Zophar speaks last as the proponent of dogmatism. All three essentially conclude that Job is suffering because Job has sinned horribly. It is far too easy to dismiss those who are suffering in our midst as being those who are but suffering the consequences of sin. This allows us to escape our duty to love these people. But in blaming these people for their suffering we misrepresent God and wrongly turn people away from God. This is the problem with "tough love".

First we hear from Bildad. He's right: God is absolutely just. Only we don't always understand His justice, because we don't know all of the facts or what the future holds. Notice how heartless Bildad is in accusing Job's sons of sin that brought judgment. When we judge others, especially before those who grieve we are not being loving towards those bereaved. We are foolish when we accuse people without evidence – as Bildad accuses Job of forgetting God. Yes, in the end the righteous and unrighteous receive their just rewards – but not usually while they are still alive. Verses 8 through 10 of chapter 8 show that Bildad as the basis for reasoning with Job. Tradition often brings death and destruction by making us believe untruths.

Job answers with several objections. 1) How can a man be righteous before God? 2) God can do anything – even things He has never done before. 3) Who can answer God? 4) Nobody knows the wickedness of their own heart. 5) My life is fleeting and my righteousness is as filthy rags. 6) Lastly, God is not like us, that we could put God in the box that tradition tries to put God into. Job is coming to know that His righteousness isn't enough. Self-righteousness must die if we are to die to self.

Job pleads with God for mercy, since God knows exactly how Job was made. God made each of us in our mother's womb. Surely He knows our limits! God is the source of life. Yet God concludes wrongly that God is out to get him. Sometimes we start to see God this way too! So Job begins his "poor me" song. "Why was I ever born!?" Self-pity and thanklessness turn God's blessed gift of life into a curse. Let's not do it!

Zophar speaks his peace. Zophar gets right to the point and takes no stock in reasoning. There is also no kindness or courtesy in his words to Job. The concern is not with people but with pureness of doctrine. As with the Ephesians, pure doctrine is too often the enemy of love and compassion. Zophar calls Job foolish and goes on to suggest that Job hasn't gotten half of what he deserved. There may be a grain of truth in the words, but they were not helpful to Job in his suffering. Dogmatically Zophar lays the blame on Job, that his iniquity brought this disaster and will surely bring loss of life if Job doesn't turn. Central to our theology and doctrine must be the goodness, forbearance and longsuffering of God – God's love and grace as it has been shown to sinful men.

Job replies smartly (Job 12:2-12), defending himself by pointing out that God has done this – not Job. The danger of even Christian counsel is that it often suggests we are the masters of our own destiny. Job extols the wisdom of God instead, that brings down even the most powerful. But can God humble Job? Can God humble me? Can God humble you? Often this is why suffering comes into our lives – to make us humble. (Phil 3:8-12) We become more like Christ when we learn to suffer without always having to defend ourselves.

Job wants to speak with God, but must first silence those who speak deceitfully for God. When we bring false doctrine or misrepresent the grace and love of God, we speak deceitfully for God. Job looks to God for salvation, calling on God to continue working in his life and allow him to dwell in God's presence without anxiety. "Show me my sin!" says Job. Here we see that selfishness within rising to contend with God. When we contend with God we always lose – we decay like rotten fruit.

Job has a basic misunderstanding concerning death – that death is the end for humans. Job doesn't seem to understand that the soul is eternal. So we see Job's hope crumble as he looks at his own body and knows his own mortality. But Jesus is the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in Christ, though they may die, yet they shall live! (John 11:25-26) Life without Christ is dark and hopeless because it leads to eternal judgment – the second death. But we see this life as the beginning – and not the end. We never die if we put our trust in Christ as our Lord and Savior.

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