

Monday, January 28, 2019—Exodus 1-4

God is unchanging. He never forgets the promises He makes to His people, and He will never fail to fulfill those promises. People, however, are flawed, and sin affects every facet of life. Rulers are unjust, and leaders forget the truths of history. The interaction of God's rule and man's choice leads to sorrow and suffering as well as joy and victory.

Joseph experienced all of these. He suffered in jail but then became the governor of Egypt. He was able to rescue his family and watch them flourish before he died. Then, a new king came to the throne who did not know Joseph (1:8). He saw the descendants of Jacob as a threat and enslaved them to neutralize their power.

God remained sovereign and oversaw the miraculous survival and discovery of a Hebrew baby boy by the Pharaoh's daughter (2:5). Drawing him from the water, she named him Moses and raised him with all the privileges of an Egyptian child. As an adult, Moses had to flee Egypt because he killed an Egyptian, and he found his way to Midian. Years later and far from home, he heard directly from God, calling him back to Egypt to free the people who suffered under Pharaoh. This child who should not have survived, this murderer who should have died, this one who could not speak well was the one God chose to lead His people to freedom.

God was sending Moses, but God was going to make clear His character and His power were the keys to freedom (4:5). Praise God for His power. Pray for patience to wait for His timing.

Sunday, January 27, 2019—Job 38-42

People who are frustrated, suffering, or second-guessing become masters at speculating. "What if . . . ?" or "If only . . . ?" become the starting phrases for numerous conversations. They want a different outcome and consider a variety of ways that could happen.

While these speculators rarely get what they ask for, Job received more. Several times Job had said, "If only I had an advocate who could speak for me before God."

God Himself came to Job and made a powerful presentation about His character and power. Job would be the first to say to anyone playing the “What if . . . ?” game, “Be careful what you ask for.”

Job had asked what God was doing. In return God began asking Job questions. God asked Job where he was when God created the earth and made boundaries for the sea. He asked whether Job told the sun to rise and made precipitation to fall. Could he count the clouds? (38:4-41). What part did Job play in giving wild animals their instinct (39:1-30)?

Job had critiqued God’s workings, so God wondered how Job would answer these questions (40:1). Did he still want to argue? Job realized he had said too much (40:3-5). God was not finished, however, and further pointed out his power over man and nature (40:6-41:34).

Job repented (42:6) because he realized how magnificent God was. He did not know what God was doing, but he was in awe of who God was.

Pray for a fuller understanding of the greatness of God.

Saturday, January 26, 2019—Job 35-37

Elihu addressed Job and his friends with great passion. He was younger and had withheld his comments until their discussion had lingered on and was accomplishing nothing. Interestingly, Elihu did not come to an altogether different conclusion than Job’s friends, but he did give more attention to God alone, defending God (36:2) more than doubting Job.

When one sins, how does that affect God? If one is good, is this a gift to him? Elihu asked these questions (35:6-7) to show the transcendence of God. He was above all things. To be sure, sin is an affront to His holiness, and righteousness exalts Him, but they do not change Him. They only affect the people around the actor. God is faithful and unchanging.

Elihu concluded Job was wrong to say God doesn’t listen (35:13). He always does. “He will bring about justice if you will only wait” (35:14). God was working in Job’s

life for a reason (36:21), and His all-powerful ways were never wrong (36:22-23). Elihu told Job to praise God (36:24).

“God’s voice is glorious in the thunder. We cannot comprehend the greatness of his power” (37:5). Unknowingly, Elihu was taking Job down the path God Himself would soon take Job. Looking beyond the hardship of the moment and considering the power of God in all creation causes people to pause and worship (37:7, 14, 23-24).

Take a moment to consider the majesty of the sunrise and sunset. Praise God for the weather and the season. He is worthy of worship.

Friday, January 25, 2019—Job 32-34

Age can bring wisdom, but that doesn’t mean young people cannot possess it. Paul told Timothy not to let anyone look down on him because he was young but to set an example for the believers (1 Timothy 4:12).

Elihu had observed the heated exchanges between Job and his friends and remained silent because he was younger than they (32:8). Elihu was frustrated Job’s friends had not refuted his arguments. He would have argued a different way. He finally had enough and spoke up. He was going to burst if he didn’t (32:19).

Elihu assured Job that God speaks. People often are not listening (33:14). He uses dreams. He disciplines through thought and circumstance. The people of God have to recognize His speaking to them and their need to repent. God will restore the one who does so (33:26).

Elihu felt as if Job were rebellious and blasphemous (34:37), as if he were saying God was taking away his rights and trying to please God was a waste of time (34:9). Elihu affirmed, “God will not do wrong. The Almighty cannot twist justice” (34:12). He wondered why people didn’t simply say, “I have sinned but I will sin no more. . . . I don’t know what evil I have done; tell me, and I will stop at once” (34:31-32). God is just, and He has no reason to tailor His justice to the demands of people (34:33).

Pray for courage to speak truth. Pray for wisdom to speak in love. Make much of the greatness and goodness of God.

Thursday, January 24, 2019—Job 28-31

Satan was convinced Job would curse God if God took away all the blessings and comforts of his life. God knew the integrity in Job and allowed Satan to attack. Through the misery, Job sought God. He wanted answers. He defended himself to his friends, and he never cursed God. He questioned. He suffered, but he never cursed God.

Job knew the answers were with God. Wisdom and understanding were treasures more valuable than the most precious of metals, and they required effort to discover. He sought them but did not find them. His fear of the Lord prevented him from giving up and walking away.

He maintained his faith and integrity, but that did not prevent him from longing for how life used to be. He had honor in the city (29:1-11, 18-25). He helped those in need (29:12-17). Now, he felt alone, dishonored, and powerless (30:1-15). He was depressed and sleepless (30:16-19).

He reviewed his life and tried to find fault. He had been pure in his thought life. He had been fair to his servants. He had helped the needy. He trusted God rather than his money. “If only I had someone who would listen to me and try to see my side! . . . Let my accuser write out the charges against me. I would face the accusation proudly! . . .” (31:35-38).

Praise God for providing clear accusation of the debt we owe because of sin. Praise God for Jesus’ becoming human to see our side and pay our penalty. Pray for compassion to minister to those who suffer.

Wednesday, January 23, 2019—Job 25-27

Rhetoric is the art of persuasion, an art perfected by the ancient Greeks. Modern rhetoric seeks less to persuade and more to pummel. With 24-hour news cycles, political talk shows, and social media, those with a viewpoint have ample opportunity to make their point again and again with little regard for whether or not they are persuading anyone.

Job's friends made excellent points about the righteousness of God and the relative unrighteousness of man. "How can a mere mortal stand before God and claim to be righteous? Who in all the earth is pure?" (25:4). They continued to promote His righteousness and Job's sin as the basis for the misery Job was experiencing.

In response, Job asked, "How have you helped me?" (26:2). He didn't doubt their claims about the character of God. He wanted to know how their speech-making was helping him endure or escape his hurting. Job affirmed the overwhelming, incomprehensible power of God (26:5-14). He needed insight into something he didn't know—why he suffered.

Despite his suffering, Job affirmed he would never speak evil or tell lies (27:3). He didn't understand what God was doing, but he would not allow that frustration to lead him to sinful statements or petty behavior. He knew the wicked could not take delight in Him (27:10). They would eventually face tragedy (27:13-23). He did not want to be that man.

Pray for listening ears to hear the words of the suffering. Pray for wisdom to point them to the comfort of Jesus and conviction of the Spirit.

Tuesday, January 22, 2019—Job 21-24

Therapists know the power of listening. Giving the hurting an opportunity to bring their inner thoughts into the open can hasten the healing process. Job asked his friends for that favor. "Listen closely to what I am saying. You can console me by listening to me" (21:2a).

Job says all he needs from his friends is their listening ear. Their words will bring no comfort (21:34). His complaint is not against them (21:4). He looks around and sees the prosperity of the wicked, and that frustrates him. He knows God is the supreme judge (21:22), but he wonders at His operation. God seems complacent or slow to act.

Eliphaz proves to Job he is not listening. He immediately returns to accusing Job of some hidden sin (22:6-11). Rather than trying to bring comfort, he feels the need to

defend God and His righteousness. He goes further and says Job has said things Job has never said (22:13).

Job was so discouraged by the lack of compassion from his friends and the lack of response from God that he wondered whether he even knew where to find God (23:3). His only hope was the testing process God was using would refine Job and pronounce him innocent (23:10).

Job knew God would punish the wicked. He wondered why God delayed. Job saw the poor and the suffering and wondered why God did not respond (24:1-12). Try as he might, he simply could not understand.

Praise God for His righteousness. Pray for patience to trust Him. Practice listening to those who are suffering.