

January 2014

Friday, December 27th – 1 John 4: 7, 8

God is love. He is the infinite and eternal source of life and love for all who are truly His people. Our love is derived from His love, but He derives His love from no source apart from Himself. Love is God's nature and essence. He needs no outward influences to ignite, direct, or empower His love. Instead, His love is ever active and self-communicating. Creation and redemption manifest the love God has for His adopted children in Christ (Eph. 1:4-6). God lovingly made all things by and for Christ, who is the heir of all things (Heb. 1:2). When sin entered and marred God's creation, He did not cease loving His Son or His creatures who had sinned against Him. Instead, He remained committed to making sinners into saints and forming them into a fit bride for His Son. Nothing can separate the children of God from His love for and in Christ (Rom. 8:38,39). We who are in Christ are destined to be rooted and grounded in this divine love (Eph. 3:14-19). The one who does not love is not in vital communion with the God who is love.

Saturday, December 28th - 1 John 4: 7, 8

Our old nature was not only sinful but it was also a nature *created* by God. In Christ we are *begotten* of God. A man creates things apart from and other than himself; he begets living beings from himself who are of his nature. John has already indicated that we who are in Christ have been begotten by God and that the seed of His own holy and loving nature is developing in us (1 Jn. 3:9). When we love, it is not only because we have experienced the healing influence of God's love, but it is also because we have been begotten by God as new creatures in His image and likeness. Therefore, we love not only because we are commanded to love by our God, who has loved us, but also because we have partaken of His nature which is love. Those who have not been begotten of God cannot possibly love.

Sunday, December 29th - 1 John 4: 7, 8

Every one who loves does so only because he has been begotten of God and is developing into His nature and likeness. That development is nurtured by the believer's *knowing* God. Such knowing involves progressive discoveries of the attributes and actions as well as of the unfolding plans and purposes of God. This knowing involves both cognition and loving communion with the God who is the source and object of our love. Those who have been begotten of God have growing capacities and desires to know and practice conscious, vital, and consistent communion with the God who has loved them and who is transforming them entirely into love, as He is love (Mt. 22:27-39).

Monday, December 30th - 1 John 4: 9, 10

In vv. 7,8, John writes about our love and its source and object being God. In vv.9,10, the apostle tells us of the manifestation of God's love. From these verses we learn about the nature of God's love. It is a love in which God, the supreme and perfect being, has given of Himself the best to help and to have the worst beings. He who is holy loved those who were defiled and corrupted by their own sin. God did not give mere time or attention or resources to those in sin; He gave his only-begotten and beloved Son. John writes that God *sent* His Son, but the nature of

that sending was not that of visitation in which the Son taught sinners and acted kindly toward them. The Son was sent by the Father to die for sinners so that through that supreme sacrifice those who were dead in their sins might have eternal life. This aspect of God's love reveals to us that God's love is self-prompted and has been infinitely exercised for us. There was nothing lovely or desirable in us to prompt God's love. He did not discover in us anything lovely that He desired, but rather He loved us from the foundation of the world and determined to make us lovely at infinite cost to Himself (Eph. 1:4-6).

Tuesday, December 31st - 1 John 4: 9, 10

In v.9, we learn of the character of God's love. He who is the only supreme and perfect being gave His Son and therefore paid an infinite price to redeem His rebellious, defiled creatures. God's love is such that He who was supremely offended offered the supreme sacrifice to save such sinners. In v.10, we are told of the self-prompting motivation of the divine love. Our God did not demand or wait for sinners to reform and redeem themselves before He loved them. Nor did God wait for us to love Him before He regarded us in love. The magnitude of our sin against the infinite and eternal God, as well as the depth of our depravity and incapacitation in our sin, together made it impossible for us to love or to offer atonement to the God whom we have offended. However, because of God's love, and only because of God's love, the Lord took the initiative to accomplish our salvation. He did so through His giving His beloved Son to be the propitiation for our sins. This means that God made Him who knew no sin to become sin for us and bear in His person all that was required by the holy character of God to make sinners righteous. Only those who are righteous and who love righteousness can love and delight in the holy God of righteousness and not dread Him and seek to flee from Him.

Wednesday, January 1st - 1 John 4: 9-11

With v.11, John informs us of an obligation we have to love one another in Christ. This obligation is based upon the formulation that Jesus gave to the moral law when He declared that we should love God with all our being and our neighbor as we do ourselves. But there is more being said in these verses than that we ought to love one another. The obligation for us to love others arises not from the basis of a commandment but rather from the basis of God's compassion toward us. It is not that we should merely try to imitate the love of our God because He has so loved us. John is predicating this obligation to love upon the amazing fact that God has not only manifested His love *for* us but also He has manifested His love *in* us. The same Greek preposition that we translate, *in*, is used in vv.9,12,13,16. This informs us that the very love of God has not only been exercised for and toward us in redemption, but it also has been implanted into our new natures at regeneration. The phrase, *we also ought to love*, in v.11, therefore, speaks not so much in terms of moral obligation and legal requirement as it does in terms of natural progression and delighted self-determination as a result of who we are as new creatures in Christ.

Thursday, January 2nd - 1 John 4: 11, 12

Since God has loved us to the extent of His planting within us the seed of His own nature (1 Jn. 3:9), and since it is His nature to love (1 Jn. 4:8), it is our new nature to love as He has loved. John teaches us that since God is a Spirit, no person has ever apprehended Him due to His essential incomprehensibility. We have not and cannot discover God; but God has revealed

Himself to us in His loving actions by which we have been redeemed from our loveless and killing sin and regenerated as His living and loving children.

Friday, January 3rd - 1 John 4: 11, 12

If we love, we do so as a fruit of God's having loved and saved us. If we love it is not only because God has released us from our self-caused misery, but also because He dwells within us by His Holy Spirit. The work of the Holy Spirit is more than His comforting us as we emerge from darkness into God's light and heal from our wounds that our sin has wrought in us. The work of the Holy Spirit is supremely that He positively and effectually works to conform us to the perfect character of our God. The Apostle Paul writes of this as the nine-faceted fruit of the Holy Spirit, with love being the primary facet (Gal. 5:22,23).

Saturday, January 4th - 1 John 4: 12, 13

The love of God has prompted Him to save us from our miserable plight in sin. The divine love has also prompted our God to re-establish the relationship with Him that was severed by our sin (Is. 59:2). That relationship is infinitely more than one of civil and polite mutual acknowledgement. God has come in Christ to establish between Himself and us a mutually intimate and lovingly interpenetrating relationship, wherein He abides *in* us (v.12) and we abide *in* Him (v.13). This mutual indwelling forms the most strong and lasting bond between our God and us. He not only upholds us with His almighty hand, the grip of which nothing can break (Jn. 10:29), but He also dwells within us with His entire divine being. At the same time, we, as new loving creatures, cling to Him by faith that works itself out in a love that will never let Him go from us, even if at times it might appear that He would leave us. Recall the loving and prevailing grasp Jacob and the Canaanite woman had upon God (Gen. 32:24-28; Matt. 15:22-28). If we have begun to love God, our grasp will surely grow to be as theirs was.

Sunday, January 5th - 1 John 4: 12, 13

We abide in God through Christ and God abides in us through His Holy Spirit. The abiding is strong because it is bound by love (Jn. 17:23-26; Rom. 8:37-39). It is not an occasional visitation but rather a constant state. Through this mutual abiding, we grow into progressive conformity with the character of our God until we are changed into His perfect likeness on the final day. His Word and Spirit and works all tell us that this blessed, mutually loving, and everlasting relationship with God is ours now in growing measure until we see His face and then know even as we are known by His love for us and our love for Him.

Monday, January 6th - 1 John 4: 12-14

John writes that no one has seen the unseen God who, apart from His revealing Himself to us, would remain incomprehensible to us. However, we have seen God through the person and work of His Son. Jesus responded when His disciple, Philip, requested to see the Father, that all who have seen the Son have seen the Father (Jn. 14:9). But such beholding of God through Christ and His saving work is not by physical sight. It is by faith. In response to the same question by Philip, Jesus calls upon His disciples to believe in Him and in His works (Jn. 14:11). Such faith gives us the conviction of things unseen, even of God Himself who is unseen apart from our exercise of faith that believes He is and that He rewards all who seek Him (Heb. 11:1,6).

Tuesday, January 7th - 1 John 4: 13, 14

The assurance of our abiding in God and His abiding in us arises from the operations of His Holy Spirit in our lives. The Spirit testifies *to* us that we are God's children, but He also testifies *with* our spirits (our new natures) that we are children of God (Rom. 8:1). God works in us by His Spirit leading us to know, will, and do His will (Phil. 2:13). The result of the Spirit's sanctifying work in us is that we grow in the true knowledge of God through Christ.

Wednesday, January 8th - 1 John 4: 13-15

If we have the testimony of God's Spirit and of our own new natures telling us that we are children of God (Rom. 8:16), then it follows that we as beloved children abide in our loving and saving God. It also follows that as children who have partaken of His nature, we love our heavenly Father. We further manifest our love as a fruit of His Spirit working in us to transform our minds with the liberating truth of Jesus as God's Son whom we love and love to confess before God and men.

Thursday, January 9th - 1 John 4: 16

In this verse, John declares that all who are truly in Christ have come to know with a grateful certainty and to believe with an even stronger faith that God has loved them with a saving love. But the apostle is saying more than that by his writing literally that we have known and believed the love which God has *in* us. The Greek preposition in our verse, which few if any English versions translate as *in*, has *in* as the primary meaning for that word. John is not primarily writing about the love God has *for* us here. Instead, he is writing about the love God has planted *in* us by the regenerating and sanctifying work of His Holy Spirit. We have come to recognize and believe that we love others because God has imparted His love to us. If we love, it is because we have the seed of His nature in us (1 Jn. 3:9). It is God's nature to love not only with benevolence toward us but also in such a way that He transforms us into new creatures who live in Him, and He lives in us. We therefore exercise that love which is His Law that He has written on our new hearts.

Friday, January 10th - 1 John 4: 16, 17

Because we are born of God's Holy Spirit and have God's nature growing in us, we enjoy the comfort of our current communion with our God. This comfort was touched on in 1 Jn. 3:21. However, in v.17 of our reading for today, John takes us beyond our current communion to the final day of divine judgment. The love we now perceive through faith in our redeeming God, and the love we now exercise because we are regenerated and growing into His nature, together form in us confidence that we have truly been saved by God's grace from being guilty and dead sinners to being justified and beloved children of God. Now we believe that there is for us no condemnation from God because we are in Christ and He is in us (Rom. 8:1ff). But in the final day we shall experience the perfection of our new natures and find that we have not only freedom from the fear of God's judgment, but also inexpressible joy in our seeing the face of Christ and reigning with Him in glory forever (Rev. 22:4).

Saturday, January 11th - 1 John 4: 17, 18

John writes in v.17 of God's love being perfected *with* us. His use of the unusual preposition, *with*, speaks of the various aspects of God's relationship with us and our relationship with Him. The expression contains the implication that the divine love will be perfected in our personal

thoughts and emotions. In that perfection, our attitude will never fail to be anything other than purely loving toward our Lord and our brethren. However, the preposition, *with*, also indicates the perfection of all our actions as we related with our Lord and our brethren. Now we may love truly but then act in ways that may not truly represent the love of our hearts, or be perceived as loving by others. When we are perfected in God's love, we shall then love perfectly in attitude toward all others and act in perfectly loving ways with all others. As those who love and act in such love we shall have nothing to fear from any source.

Sunday, January 12th - 1 John 4: 18

In our sin we dread God and seek to flee and hide from Him. Yet when we realize that He loves us and has demonstrated that love in the saving person and works of His Son, our fear melts and we rejoice in our God. When we sin against our God (failing to love Him entirely or our neighbor as ourselves), the dread of the Lord rises within us again as a dark shadow, if not a condemning substance. However, the more consistently we confess our sins to Him the more thoroughly we become convinced that He readily forgives us because He unchangeably loves us and is committed to correcting us for our highest good (Rom. 8:28) and not to condemning and punishing us. The more we fear, the farther we show ourselves to be from our being perfected in His love.

Monday, January 13th - 1 John 4: 19

With this succinct sentence of five words John states most clearly and profoundly that our love is a fruit of God's love having blessedly sought, found, and mastered us. The Greek states emphatically: *We, even we, love*. We who were so loveless and self-absorbed have become lovers of God and man. Our love is the effect of God's love. By His love, God planned and purposed our salvation from eternity (Eph. 1:4-6). He also has applied it to us by His effectual calling and our consequent justification, sanctification, and glorification (Rom. 8:29,30). To these majestic and affectionate things we can say nothing except thanks be to our loving God, who has saved us from our own loveless and fearfully miserable selves!

Tuesday, January 14th - 1 John 4: 20

As he did in the previous chapter (vv.10-18,23) so again John draws out the concrete expression of love. True love does not remain a hidden attitude without manifesting action. Nor does true love seek to separate what God has joined together. If anyone professes to love God while hating his brother he is demonstrating no love at all. The God whom we are commanded to love is the One who commands us to love our brethren in Christ. Jesus inextricably linked our loving God and loving our neighbor (and certainly our brethren) into two sides of a single coin (Matt. 22:32-40).

Wednesday, January 15th – 1 John 4: 20

John writes of a person claiming to love God while hating his brother. So irreconcilable are these two things that John does not hesitate to assert that only a liar, who loves neither God nor man, can say the former while doing the latter. Furthermore, John writes of the pietistic hypocrite hating his *brother*. The singular noun indicates that a person cannot hate even one who might be the least in the kingdom of God and, at the same time, truly love God. The nature of the love that has been imparted to us by God impels us to prefer our dying over our hating

even our most unlovable brother. Such dying is precisely what our Lord did rather than justly hate us for our sins.

Thursday, January 16th - 1 John 4: 20

What does John mean by the liar hating his brother? In Matt. 25:31-46 we learn that such hatred is not necessarily manifested in acts of cursing, beating, or killing one's brother. The one whom the Lord condemns for hating his brother is one who simply ignores his brother in need. Our giving or withholding a meal from the hungry, a drink from the thirsty, clothing, shelter, or fellowship from a brother in need of those things, is taken into ultimately great consideration by our Lord, especially in the final day of judgment.

Friday, January 17th - 1 John 4: 20, 21

The God whom all in Christ profess to love has commanded us to love Him and our brother. We may imagine that we can love God and hate our brother because he is in sin or is simply so unlovely to us. We may imagine that we can love God and yet ignore our brethren as we find those whom Jesus warns in Matt. 7:21ff doing. Such ones fancy that they are serving the Lord and have no time to trifle with inglorious and undeserving people. Yet Jesus warns that they are vainly building their house on sand. God commands us to love our brother with no exceptions allowed.

Saturday, January 18th - 1 John 5: 1

John continues to develop the theme of the inter-related actions of one's faith in Christ and one's love for his brethren. In this verse, the apostle anticipates objection from those whom he has designated as liars in 4:20. Those failing to love their brethren might reason that they are not saved by their love but rather by their faith in Jesus Christ. John responds by declaring that true faith in Christ, the only-begotten Son of the Father, issues only from those who have been regenerated by God. If they have been regenerated, they have the seed of God's nature in them (1 Jn. 3:9), and that nature is one of love (1 Jn. 4:8,16). Those begotten of God's saving love become lovers of all who have been begotten of the God who is love. Orthodox profession is no substitute for the loving performance that is the primary fruit of God's Spirit living in a person who truly believes in Christ.

Sunday, January 19th - 1 John 5: 1, 2

True faith unites us to Christ, who is God's loving gift for our salvation and who has Himself loved us and given Himself for us (Gal. 2:20). True faith prompts us not only to receive God's salvation but also to love the God of our salvation. Those who truly love God love all of the children of God, even the least of them. Those who love the children of God can be assured that they do so with true, holy love, rather than with mere sentimentality, when they first love God and live by His loving and righteous commandments. Our love for and obedience to God and our love for the children of God are all effects of God having first loved us and made us alive together with Christ (Eph. 2:4,5). Such love and obedience are fruits of our being saved through faith that is a gift of God (Eph. 2:8) and of our being God's workmanship created in Christ for good and loving works (Eph. 2:10).

Monday, January 20th - John 5: 3

Our loving God and our brethren and our obeying God's commandments are not for us harsh

duties. If we are regenerated by the Holy Spirit and united to Christ by faith, we know that we are loved by God, saved by His grace, and find our refreshment and joy in our being yoked to our Savior and in our bearing His light burden of loving obedience to the Father (Matt. 11:28-30). We who are truly saved apprehend the love of God in His calling us to obey His commandments, and such love of God for us and our reciprocated love for Him together make even our most sacrificial obedience to be sweet. The spring of true obedience is love, not fear, not duteous drudgery.

Tuesday, January 21st - 1 John 5: 1-4

True faith in Christ is exercised only by the regenerated children of God who love God and love their brethren (v.1). Such regenerated ones have assurance that their love is true and holy and that their faith is genuine when they love God and obey His commandments (v.2). Their love and obedience rise far above duty into the realm of delight (v.3). With what he writes in v.4 of today's passage, John elucidates another effect of our regeneration and exercise of faith. This additional effect is that we are made to be victors over the world that is hostile to our God (Ps. 2) and that entices, distracts, and intimidates the children of God. We who are in Christ have not only been delivered from the world that is passing away with all of its sin (1 Jn. 2:17); we are even now more than conquerors over the world (Rom. 8:35-39).

Wednesday, January 22nd - 1 John 5: 4, 5

John connects our overcoming the temptations and tribulations of the world with both our regeneration and our exercise of faith. Here the perspective has shifted from our enjoying fellowship with God in light, righteousness, and love, to our maintaining that fellowship amid our conflict with a hostile world. The Christian is always as were those Jews who rebuilt Jerusalem's broken city wall in the days of Nehemiah. He builds up with one hand while holding a sword in the other (Neh. 4:17). But our new natures give us indefatigable hearts for the fight as well as for the work, and our faith rightly shows us our saving God in Christ, who has overcome the world for us so that we might have peace with God even amid the world's attacks (Jn. 14:1; 16:33).

Thursday, January 23rd - 1 John 5: 4, 5

Our victory over the world is based upon our regeneration and our exercise of faith. In this we are like Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead (Jn.11). When Jesus called to Lazarus in his tomb, He did not command the dead man to make himself live. Our Lord, with His gracious and almighty power, made Lazarus to live again, and as a miraculously revived man Lazarus heard, believed, and obeyed the voice of Jesus commanding him to come out of the tomb. Afterward, the enemies of Jesus sought to kill not only our Lord but also Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead (Jn. 11:49-53; 12:9-11). The sinister plan of those enemies was an absurd and vain thing, since Jesus had already demonstrated in His raising of Lazarus that He had the keys of death and was victor over death and the source of eternal life for His people (Rev. 1:18).

Friday, January 24th - 1 John 5: 4, 5

We are new creatures in Christ and because of our regeneration we cannot be overcome by the world. We who are of the Spirit have indestructible, eternal life. While we live in this world that

is as hostile to us as it is to our God and His Christ, we are not only justified before God by our faith but we also live victoriously over the world, flesh, and devil by our faith. For the children of God, the exercise of faithful trust in and obedience to God becomes increasingly the most natural thing for them to do. The results of such exercise of faith are always stunningly productive to the glory of God and for the good of the faithful.

Saturday, January 25th - 1 John 5: 4, 5

John writes of our faith overcoming the world. Here we should understand that John is not speaking of faith as an intermittent belief in the facts of the Bible or that God will perform a certain miracle or make some specific provision for us. By the word, *faith*, John means our vital and continuing resting in and relying upon Jesus for our salvation and for all that pertains to our eternal, abundant, and triumphant living. This faith John refers to as *our* faith. It is an instrumental power that each regenerated soul personally possesses and exercises to abide in union with Christ. We find a most encouraging example of faith being victoriously exercised in the account of Jesus being tempted by Satan in the desert (Matt. 4:1-11). There the Son of God was tried repeatedly and there He stood repeatedly by His trust in and reliance upon His Father. Jesus is the author and of our faith, as well as being the object of it (Heb. 12:2).

Sunday, January 26th - 1 John 5: 4, 5

John defines our victorious faith as our believing that Jesus is the Son of God. This definition is actually the completing portion of what John had written previously. In 1 Jn. 4:2, John emphasized the incarnation and true humanity of our Lord. Now John completes the definition of what the faithful believe when he writes that we believe Jesus was the Son of God. This speaks of the full divinity of our Lord. The world finds it incredible and ridiculous that the God whom sinners had offended should come into the world He had cursed because of our sin and assume our human nature in every way, except in His being sinful, and yet submit to being accounted sinful and executed—all to save sinners. The regenerate find all of this wonderfully believable and by their receiving and resting in it they rise up in triumph over the world of unbelieving scoffers as well as over death, judgment, and hell.

February 2014

Thursday, February 27th – 1 John 5: 5, 6

If our faith is to be in Jesus as the unique God/Man, how are we to know that the claims of John and the other apostles regarding Jesus were true? John anticipates such a question and responds to it in vv.6ff by bringing before his readers several witnesses to the trustworthiness of his proclamation of Jesus being the Christ. The first two witnesses John brings to our attention are the water and blood by which Jesus came. The way John refers to these two witnesses in v.6 is somewhat cryptic to us, but would not have been so to his original readers, many of whom were Jewish or Gentiles somewhat familiar with Jewish rites. The primary elements in those Jewish rites were ceremonial washings and bloody sacrifices. These elements, representing cleaning (water) and death (shed blood) pointed graphically to the vital need God's people had to be cleansed of their sins through the vicarious sacrifice of one whose life was perfect. Only Jesus Christ was that perfect One who died to save His people from their sins in accordance with the signs and shadows of Scripture (Mt. 1:21)

Friday, February 28th - 1 John 5: 6

The cleansing water and atoning blood of the Old Testament rituals provide the general background for the person and work of Christ who came, as John writes, by water and blood. There are other significant events in the life and death of Jesus that John likely intends to convey to us by his reference to water and blood. There was the water of John's Baptism to which Jesus submitted in order to fulfill all righteousness for us (Matt. 3:13-15). John the Baptist applied water to Jesus yet spoke of Him as the Lamb of God, meaning the Passover sacrifice, who takes away the sin of the world, referring to the cleansing effect of His atoning death (Jn. 1:29). The Baptist also testified to the moral perfection and divine nature of Jesus as we learn from the opening chapter of John's Gospel (Jn. 1:30-36). No person other than Jesus in all of human history has come close to fulfilling all of the requirements and prophecies of the Word of God.

Saturday, March 1st - 1 John 5: 6

In addition to the previous connotations to be drawn from John's reference to the witness of water and blood, we have the remarkable observation John himself made of Jesus' death on the cross. In his Gospel account, John records that he witnessed a soldier piercing the side of Jesus with a spear (Jn. 19:33-35). The soldier had already determined that Jesus had died, and yet John saw water and blood flowing from the side of Jesus. The remarkable thing about this event is that nothing flows from a dead man. Coagulated blood may ooze from a piercing made in a body but without a beating heart nothing would flow out in the way John described it. Yet in this event, John saw and shared with the readers of his Gospel a divinely given sign that Jesus was the unique fountain of cleansing for sinners and for their reconciliation with God. Our life issues from His death and the God who is satisfied with the atoning sacrifice of His Son gave this marvelous sign to indicate His acceptance of all who would be cleansed by that blood of the Lamb of God.

Sunday, March 2nd - 1 John 5: 6

The water and blood that John saw flowing from the pierced side of Jesus indicated the cleansing power of the shed blood and death of the Savior. As those who have come to have new life through the death of Jesus, we are cleansed from our sins not only in terms of our outward transgressions having been forgiven but also in terms of our inward characters being renewed in the holy image of Christ. His death has been reckoned by God to be our death to sin, and His life that He lived on earth and forever thereafter lives in heaven is now imputed to us as our life and is being progressively imparted to us as we grow in sanctification (Rom. 6:10,11).

Monday, March 3rd - 1 John 5: 6

The blood (death) of Christ cleanses us from all sin. However, our sin has aroused the holy wrath of God in reaction to our rebellious offenses against Him. Our offences against God are of infinitely greater magnitude than is our personal defilement, guilt, and misery that result in our lives due to our sin. Yet the blood of Christ not only cleanses us but also satisfies the holy justice of God and assuages His wrath against us. This is the propitiatory dimension of the death of Jesus (1 Jn. 2:2). In his death, we are reckoned by God to have died, and in His resurrection and ascension we are reckoned by God—and called by God to reckon ourselves—to be dead to sin but alive to God (Rom. 6:10,11). We are also called to believe and trust that God is reconciled to us and we are reconciled to God through the death of His Son (2 Cor. 5:14-21; Heb. 9:11-14; 10:11-18).

Tuesday, March 4th - 1 John 5: 6, 7

John himself was a witness to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. This apostle set out his testimony in the Gospel account he wrote prior to his writing this letter (Jn. 20:30,31). Yet, when he writes in this letter of the witness of the water and blood by which Jesus came, he is referring to significant testimonials regarding the divine person and the redeeming work of Jesus in His life and death. To those two testimonials that came directly from the Son of God, John adds a third. The Holy Spirit of God also bore testimony that Jesus was the Son of God and Savior of all in the world who would believe in Him. By this testimony of the Holy Spirit, John appears to refer more to the inward, renewing work of the Spirit in the lives of believers than he does to such outward manifestations of the Spirit as His having descended from heaven to rest upon Jesus at His baptism (Jn. 1:32). Of this inward working of the Spirit John Calvin writes in His Commentary on John (p.304): *He adds a third witness, the Holy Spirit, who in fact holds the first place, for otherwise the water and the blood would have flowed in vain. He it is who seals in our hearts the testimony of the water and the blood. He it is who by His power makes the fruit of Christ's death come to us, who makes the blood shed for our redemption penetrate our souls....For whatever signs of divine glory may shine forth in Christ, they would be obscure to us and we should overlook them, unless the Spirit opens for us the eyes of faith.*

Wednesday, March 5th - 1 John 5: 6, 7

John refers to the Spirit as being the living truth, as was Jesus (Jn. 1:14; 14:6). John learned this from Jesus, who taught His disciples that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth who guides the children of God into all of the truth (Jn. 16:13). The central essence and the radiating light of all truth is Jesus, whom the Spirit glorifies (Jn. 16:14). It is by the testimony of the Holy Spirit through the Word He inspired and through His illuminating work within us that we know that Jesus is the Son of God and that we have become children of God in Him (Jn. 1:12,13; Rom. 8:16,17).

Thursday, March 6th - 1 John 5: 8

We are informed by this verse that the three witnesses mentioned by John in vv.6,7 are in harmony together. We should cherish the renewing work of the Holy Spirit neither more nor less than we cherish the person and work of Christ. Respecting the saving work of Christ, we should cherish His cleansing work for us (the water) neither more nor less than we cherish the propitiatory and reconciling work He accomplished for us (the atoning blood). These three witnesses compose an irreducible complexity in which the omission of a single component results in no salvation for the sinner.

Friday, March 7th - 1 John 5: 8, 9

God has graciously accomplished salvation in Christ and He has graciously borne testimony that is clear and convincing regarding the unique person and infinitely precious and potent work of His Son. The clear and abundant divine testimony leads believers into the liberating truth and healing love of the Lord. The divine testimony also leaves those who refuse it without excuse for their sin. For all who refuse the magnificent gift of God's salvation do so because they regard the ignorant mocking of finite and sinfully misguided men to be of greater value than the saving testimony of God. As David, the servant of the Lord, wrote long before John wrote his letter: *Transgression speaks to the ungodly within his heart; there is no fear of God before his eyes, for it flatters him in his own eyes, concerning the discovery of his iniquity and the hatred of*

it (Ps. 36:1,2). On the other hand, David also wrote in that same psalm: *How precious is Thy lovingkindness, O God! And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Thy wings. They drink their fill of the abundance of Thy house; and Thou dost give them to drink of the river of Thy delights. For with Thee is the fountain of life; in Thy light we see light.* (Ps. 36:7-9). The clear testimony of God concerning the person and work of His Son abundantly convinces and comforts all who receive it, while the finite and fallible testimony of men only confirms all who receive it and live by it in their sin, misery, and death.

Saturday, March 8th - 1 John 5: 9, 10

Every person lives either by the testimony of God, and what He says and shows about our need and His provision, or by the testimony of other people and what they say and show about life and the world of which they have but a miniscule apprehension. Those who believe in God, and particularly in His Son whom He has sent into the world, know from their own conscience and experience that God's testimony is true and blessed. Those who do not believe in God and the Son He has given do not simply maintain their own opinion but actually call God a liar since they think, feel, and act as though God's gift were non-existent or irrelevant instead of their being what it is: the one thing necessary.

Sunday, March 9th - 1 John 5: 11, 12

The summation of all divine testimony is given in these verses. That testimony begins with the being of God as the One who is and who is the Rewarder of those who believe in Him (Heb. 11:6). God is the source of this testimony and the One who gives His authoritative and absolutely reliable revelation. We who believe in Christ are not basing our lives upon fables concocted by men (2 Pet. 1:16).

Monday, March 10th - 1 John 5: 11, 12

The general content of the divine witness is that God is not what we sinners think Him to be. When Adam heard the Lord God approaching him after his sin and fall from original righteousness, he fled from God because he dreaded Him (Gen. 3:10). Every sinner who has lived on the earth since then has fearfully sought to suppress the truth of God (Rom. 1:18). Sinners do so because they are ashamed of themselves (Gen. 3:10) and rightly dread what a holy God who is almighty and who has all authority might do to them. But our fears are based only upon partial truths about God. The whole truth is not that God comes to us to punish us, to execute us, to condemn us to eternal perdition as we so richly deserve. The whole truth is that God has come to us to give to us what we have lost due to our sin. He has come to give us life, not only bare survival but abundant life in its quality and life that is eternal in its duration. The only thing God takes from us is our sin that is destroying us. What He gives to us is every spiritual blessing in heaven and on earth, as an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and that will never fade (1 Pet. 1:4).

Tuesday, March 11th - 1 John 5: 11, 12

The divine testimony is that God has given eternal life to dead sinners. That testimony also specifies how God has provided this life to us. He has not automatically applied it to all sinners, nor has He made it potentially available to those sinners who try to reform themselves and make themselves worthy of it or who work to attain it. If God's gift depended in any way upon our worthiness or working, none of us would have hope of eternal life. Sinners are naturally dead in

their sin and so are unwilling and incapable of doing anything that contributes to their salvation (Eph. 2:1-3). The divine gift of eternal life is in God's Son alone. In Christ is life (Jn. 1:4), and He came into the world not to judge and condemn the world but to save the world by giving to sinners who are dead in their sin new, eternal, and abundant life.

Wednesday, March 12th - 1 John 5: 11, 12

The testimony of God is that it is impossible for sinners to have eternal life apart from His Son. It is the fatal error of all of God's opponents that they believe that their highest hope and reasonable capability is that they can of themselves improve the quality and extend the duration of their lives. Such puny impulse indicates the deadness of the sinner and finds its clear illustration in what Jesus taught about the rich man in hell who sought only a drop of water to relieve by the smallest measure his anguish (Lk. 16:19-31, especially v.24). Even the religious opponents of Jesus sought for eternal life as a vague state of being separate from Jesus and discoverable by them through their studies of the Scriptures. But Jesus has made clear that all of the sacred writings given to us by inspiration of God's Holy Spirit point to Him (Jn. 5:39). Abundant and everlasting life is not in the world or the things of the world or in an imagined world better than this one. Eternal life is not in other people and our various personal, familial, or civil relationships with them. Eternal life is only in Christ, whom to know is eternal life (Jn. 17:3).

Thursday, March 13th - 1 John 5: 11, 12

The eternal life that God gives to sinners is not only in the person of Jesus Christ. Those who have Christ do have eternal life but they also possess infinitely more than everlasting biological existence. John declares specifically that the witness of God is that His gift of eternal life is in His *Son*. This means that if we come to possess the Son of God we have a relationship not only with Him and a quality of life through Him, but we also have a relationship to His Father (Jn. 14:8,9; 1 Jn. 1:3). That relationship is most fully revealed to us in the high priestly prayer of Jesus. In that prayer, He makes clear that only He gives eternal life to sinners (Jn. 17:2). He makes clear that such life consists in sinners knowing the Son and the Father through the Son (Jn. 17:3). Jesus also makes clear that our knowledge of the Father through the Son consists in our common union with the Father and the Son in their infinite and eternal joy (Jn. 17:13), unity (Jn. 17:21-23), glory (Jn. 17:24), and love (Jn. 17:24-26).

Friday, March 14th - 1 John 5: 11, 12

Those who have the Son of God have the very life, love, glory, and joy of God in their souls and in all of their circumstances that God is orchestrating for their good (Rom. 8:28). Those who do not have the Son of God, whatever they may think they have, possess only mental darkness, emotional corruption, and physical disintegration that will consume them through all time and eternity because they have refused the gift of God's saving grace in Christ. Only that gift can reconcile them with God and re-integrate them into a loving relationship with Him who is the only source of all life and blessing.

Saturday, March 15th – 1 John 5: 13

With this verse John states the intention in his writing this letter. He seeks to give believers assurance of their salvation. In his Gospel account, John aimed to lead his readers to faith in Christ and to new life in the Son of God (Jn. 20:30,31). In his letter he seeks to lead those who

have faith in Christ to grow in the knowledge and vital power that their faith in Christ instrumentally conveys to them because it unites them to Christ who is the liberating truth of God and the eternal life of God. Those who truly believe grow in their knowing, trusting, loving, and obeying the Son of God. They believe not in their own speculations or passions but rather in *the name* of the Son of God. This means that we believe in the attributes of the person of our divine Savior as He has revealed them to us in His Word, and we believe in His atoning work as it has been recorded for us in Scripture. Belief and assurance drawn from any other source will prove false and shatteringly disappointing in the final day to those who merely think or feel that they have attained eternal life. Then the Savior and Judge of all mankind will declare to them: *I never knew you.*

Sunday, March 16th - 1 John 5: 13

The aim of John is not that he give his readers comfortable feelings but rather that he give them sure and certain knowledge in the saving result of their faith in the one true Savior. That assured knowledge issues from our knowing Christ, whom to know is eternal life (Jn. 17:3). That eternal life consists not in a mere extended duration of our living in sin and death. Instead, it consists in our living ever more truly and purely the life of God, or life in God and as God lives and would have us to live it. Such life is self-contained and self-moved. As God has within Himself all power and holy purpose for His own actions, so we in Christ grow into a holy freedom from the dictates and pressures of all that is in this sinful and transitory world. This is the self-sufficiency of which Paul writes in Phil. 4:11 and it is the essence of what Paul means when he also writes that we are in Christ more than conquerors in all things (Rom. 8:37).

Monday, March 17th - 1 John 5: 14, 15

The knowledge that we have eternal life by our union to Christ through faith breeds within us confidence in our relationship with God. We approach Him with such confidence because we know that He loves us, just as He loves His Son (Jn. 16:25-27). We love Him because He has first loved us (1 Jn. 4:19), and we love others because our God has given us new lives and new transformed minds and new loving hearts. Because we love others we pray for them. We are our brothers' keepers and as such we ask our Father, in a spirit of loving and familial confidence, for His blessings to adorn their lives. As God answers our prayers, even beyond our asking, we grow in confidence to ask Him again and again.

Tuesday, March 18th - 1 John 5: 14, 15

The scope of our prayerful asking our God for ourselves and for the growing number of those whom we love is given in the words, *ask anything according to His will.* This does not mean that we must divine the Lord's secret will of His good, wise, but largely inscrutable plans and purposes in His providence. What it does mean is that our asking is to be guided by His revealed will that sinners should come to know the Savior and that saints should abide in their Savior (2 Pet. 3:9; 1 Thess. 4:3). The revealed will of God is exceedingly broad (Ps. 119:96), and excludes nothing except what is sinful and thus harmful and inconsistent with His holy love and righteousness. Accordingly, John records in His Gospel that Jesus tells His people seven times (the number of perfection) to pray for anything in His name (Jn. 14:13,14; 15:7,16; 16:23,24,26).

Wednesday, March 19th - 1 John 5: 14, 15

Our learning that our prayers are limited to God's will is a truth that is far from spoiling our

motivation to pray. In fact, such knowledge should spur us on to pray far more than we do. God's will is not boring, lifeless, and joyless. Only our God knows true joy and how best to lead us and those for whom we pray into that joy (Ps. 16:11). Our knowing and asking according to God's will keeps us from asking in blind, sinful, and selfishly small presumption. The better we know our God and His will, the more we will ask with understanding of and delightful relish for His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. When our prayers grow out of our communion with the God of all truth, righteousness, goodness, love, and joy, the more we will seek that His will be done to the glory of His name. Nothing redounds to God's glory more than that He shower the lavish blessings of His grace and love upon His people who ask Him for such blessings. As the old Scottish mystic, George MacDonald, has written somewhere: *He who seeks the Father more than anything He can give, is likely to have what he asks, for he is not likely to ask amiss.*

Thursday, March 20th - John 5: 16, 17

The prayers we offer to our God are not only for ourselves (supplications) but also are for others (intercessions), especially for our brethren in Christ. Cain's ancient and cynically evasive question regarding whether he was his brother's keeper has always been answered by the Lord in the affirmative. The love of our new hearts as well as the directives of God's Word together prompt us to rejoice in our caring for our brethren (Phil. 2:1-4). We are inclined and directed to pray extensively (*for all the saints*, Eph. 6:18) as well as intensively for a single brother or sister (*pray on my behalf*, Eph. 6:19). As we pray for others we can have confidence that our God, who teaches and empowers us to pray, will take the needs of those for whom we pray into a wise and loving consideration that is infinitely greater than ours.

Friday, March 21st - 1 John 5: 16, 17

Our love leads us to pray for our brothers even when they are at their worst. John not only directs us to pray for a fellow believer who is sinning, but he also encourages us with the understanding that such prayers will have a transforming effect upon that sinning believer's life. We who have assurance of eternal life do not condemn, reject, or ridicule the sinning brother. Neither do we despair of his ever repenting, nor do we simply ignore his sin as though it did not matter. We run to our Father and carry through our intercessions our wayward brother to Him, as the friends of the paralyzed man carried him to Jesus, lowering him through a hole they cut in the roof of the house in order to lower him to the Savior (Mk. 2:1-5). In response to our faithful praying, we are told that God will give life to the sinning soul, meaning that the Lord will lead that person to repentance from his sin and to a renewed exercise of faith in the God of righteousness and resurrection.

Saturday, March 22nd - 1 John 5: 16, 17

In these verses, John briefly touches on what many refer to as the unforgivable sin. He does not here define what he means by the expression, *sin unto death*. However, from what he writes here and elsewhere and from what we gather throughout the whole counsel of God we should understand that we are being encouraged to pray for actively and even badly sinning brethren. We are not being discouraged from praying for any except those who sin rarely and mildly. John reminds us that whereas all unrighteousness is sin, not all sin is as determined and implacable as it could be. We are encouraged to embrace our sinning brethren in our prayers with but one vital distinction. We are to pray for our Lord to grant the grace of repentance to our brother, turning

him from his sin to righteousness and from death to life. We are not to pray that God would simply indulge our brother in his sin and take him to heaven along with his sin. That would be our asking God to do something that even He could not and would not do.

Sunday, March 23rd - 1 John 5: 18-20

John wrote this profound and practical letter in response to false teaching regarding the person and work of Christ that was spreading through the churches of his day. He has exposed the false and expounded the true throughout this letter. Now he concludes his writing with several profound statements that deal with true and vital knowledge of truth, salvation, and sanctification. Such knowledge is true in terms of veracity as well as vital importance. There is nothing better or more real that we can know and there is nothing more necessary for us to know than what John shares with us in this letter. The Jesus whom John knew and of whom he taught was for John and is for all who would be saved the one thing necessary for all of our needs and desires.

Monday, March 24th - 1 John 5: 18-20

It is true and vital knowledge that we have when we know that our regeneration has broken the dominion of sin in our lives. Those who are in Christ can and do sin, as the mention of the sinning brother in v.16 indicates. Yet, by the Lord's planting of the seed of His nature in us at our regeneration, a serious battle commences within us against our old sin nature that has been rendered a body of death (1 Jn. 3:9; Rom. 7:19-25). Our battle against our residual sin progressively issues in fuller and deeper victories for our new nature, tending toward our ultimate perfect victory over all sins when we are changed and glorified at the last day (1 Cor. 15:51,52).

Tuesday, March 25th - 1 John 5: 18-20

The true and vital knowledge we have in Christ informs us of why we will increasingly emerge victorious over all of our sins. We shall be victorious because we have been made in His likeness. At the same time, Jesus, the One who was born into the likeness of our sinful flesh, to become sin for us so that we would become righteous in Him, guards and preserves us from succumbing to the dominion of sin. Christ ever lives to intercede for us (Rom.8:32), and by His prayers for us we are protected and our faith is strengthened so that we are enabled to resist sin and Satan (Lk. 22:31,32; Jn. 17:11,12; 1 Pet. 5:9).

Wednesday, March 26th - 1 John 5: 18-20

The true and vital knowledge we have in Christ is that our being of God has aroused against us the hatred of the devil. We know, therefore, that we are at war with him and his minions. In some fashion and to differing degrees, all of the unregenerate in the world arise with their father, the devil, against our Lord and against us (Ps. 2; Jn. 8:44). Yet our God has provided for us spiritual armor for our spiritual warfare (Eph. 6:10ff). When we put on that armor, we stand even in the evil day. The manifold provision of our God enables us to extinguish all of the flaming missiles of the evil one because that same armor was worn by Jesus and protected Him from becoming a casualty to temptation and sin (Isa. 59:15-21; Mt. 4:1-11).

Thursday, March 27th - 1 John 5: 20, 21

The true and vital knowledge we have in Christ is our knowing that the Son of God has actually

come to destroy the works of the devil (1 Jn. 3:8) and to bring us into vital communion with Himself who is the all in all and one thing necessary. John's final reiteration is that Jesus is the living truth and that we are truly in Him by God's saving mercy. In Christ we are secured by God's almighty power wielded by the One who is our Father and who cherishes us as He cherishes His Son in whom we live. This is the true gospel given to the world by the true, living, and eternal God. This God has not barely saved us. He has given to us glorious eternal life for which the powers of our new natures, now being developed through our earthly afflictions and struggles, will enable us perfectly to perceive and delight in that glory into which God will exalt us. This is our Savior and this is the salvation we are to work out with fear and trembling, knowing that our God is for us, with us, and in us. This comforting and empowering truth is not designed by God to make us complacent but rather vigilant to guard ourselves from counterfeit gods and gospels as we cleave in growing love and with increasing tenacity to our God in Christ who has loved and saved us.

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Friday, March 28th – Job 1: 1-3

Many people know something about the character of Job, but few understand very much about him. Job is famous even among those who have never read the Bible. He is recognized as the man who bore terrible sufferings. He is either extolled as a paragon of patience or regarded as a poor soul to be pitied and whose plight makes our own troubles seem slight. Yet there is so much more to Job and his experiences as they are recorded for us in God's Word. The closer we study him the more we find that deeply troubling questions arise and confront us. If Job is godly, why should he, of all people, suffer so much pain, loss, and anguish of soul? What incentive does his plight provide for us to hunger and thirst for a righteousness that cannot shield us from such terrible waves of affliction? Far from such questions representing our discovery of problems and defects in the substance of this marvelous book, they are the thorns embedded in Job by divine design that prod us to make vital discoveries of the sublime treasures contained not only in Job's life and experience, but also in our lives as those who are blameless in God's sight through our being in Christ.

Saturday, March 29th – Job 1: 1-3

We naturally regard problems and pain as curses to be avoided or alleviated. Yet, when we understand that such afflictions produce virtues and powers in us we begin to regard them as the blessings that they truly are. Before we encounter the sufferings of Job and the practical and spiritual challenges those sufferings present to us, we must consider some general and introductory problems with which the written account of the Book of Job confronts us. The fundamental problem we face is the question of whether Job was an historical character or a poetic creation produced by the inspired writer as a moral teaching device. The literary structure of Job is strongly poetic throughout. Real people do not speak in the profound and exalted language of Job and his associates. Real people especially do not express their anguish in such artistically majestic language. Therefore, it would appear that Job is a literary abstraction from life rather than a prosaic record of a real, living individual. We can certainly be moved by such literary creations as Shakespeare, for example, has given to the world. Furthermore, Job is considered part of the wisdom literature contained within the Bible (that includes Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon as well). We profit from the virtuous and vile

characters that fill the Proverbs, not because actual sluggards or harlots are paraded before us, but rather because they are illustrative characters that represent to us the true and universal human situation. However, before we conclude that Job was not an historical character we should realize that he is treated as such in this book, as well as in Ezekiel 14:14,20 and James 5:11. If this man truly lived and suffered, then why is he represented as thinking, speaking, and acting in poetic fashion? The answer may be one of the greatest hidden treasures in Job. The truth is that the exquisite sufferings of a godly man, while being perplexing and painful, are far from being mundane and meaningless. When the righteous suffer, their afflictions are pregnant with profound blessings and beauties that are most accurately expressed in the music of poetry (2 Cor. 4:16-18). The greatest reality that permeates the Book of Job as well as the lives of all who are righteous like him in Christ, is that when a soul trusts in the redeeming God it is because God is in that soul and working for that soul to cause all things to serve not brutally against but rather beautifully for the good of that soul.

Sunday, March 30th – Job 1: 1-3

The authorship and date of this book are both uncertain. We can ponder the text, as students and scholars have done for centuries, and never come to a conclusive grasp of who wrote Job or when Job lived. What we do perceive is that there is a universal appeal contained in the man Job, who is shorn of any specifically Hebrew characteristics. All people suffer, although only some, in fact relatively few among the world's population, have lived as physical descendants of Abraham. Job is similar to Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18-24), who suddenly and briefly appears to Abraham, wrapped in mysteries that the writer of the Hebrew epistle helps to unlock for us (Heb. 7). Job and his situation speak to us of practical, applied religion—heart religion—more than of the outward rituals associated with religion. Therefore, he has an ageless and universal appeal to every soul who suffers in any time and place of the world and its history.

Monday, March 31st – Job 1: 1-3

Every person endures pain and perplexity in life. Our natural tendency is to hate and avoid them. However, God, in this portion of His Word, reveals to us that He is not only sovereign over such afflictions, ordaining that they fall on the just as well as the unjust, but also that He uses them for the highest good of those who love Him and are called according to His gracious purpose (Rom. 8:28). There is always a good divine purpose in all of the painful things that His providence brings upon us.

Tuesday, April 1st – Job 1: 1-3

The Book of Job is not only about pain. It is also about perplexity. Job's reverence for God was a fruit of his faith by which he believed that God existed and rewarded those who diligently sought Him (Heb. 11:6). His sufferings and the insult his uncomprehending and unsympathetic friends added to the pain of his afflictions all seem to contradict his faithful expectation. Therefore, we shall find Job working through a protracted puzzle that poses for him and for us many questions and, for most of his ordeal, yields few answers. Job wrestled to understand his trying course and devastating losses as well as to endure his unspeakable pain. Far from those mounting pains and perplexities destroying his faith, they stimulated the growth of his faith until

he found peace, not by his finding the answers he sought, but rather by his beholding the face of His God who is for all suffering sinners the one thing necessary.

Wednesday, April 2nd - Job 1: 1-3

We are introduced to the man and his character before we are told of his afflicting circumstances. Surely this order alerts us to the key for our rightly assessing dark providences. We are to judge the sufferings by the person suffering and not judge the person by those sufferings. When a godly soul suffers there is always a commendable and sanctifying purpose in that soul's afflictions. When the wicked suffer we behold the just judgments of the Lord. If we fail to use this key of understanding we will find ourselves at least feeling if not believing that those who mocked Jesus on the cross were reasonable in their assessment that His sufferings revealed His weakness and follow, rather than the strength and glory of His redeeming love.

Thursday, April 3rd - Job 1: 1-3

Job is introduced to us as a man living in the land of Uz. That land is unknown to us, although some scholars suggest that it was somewhere between Edom and Arabia. He certainly did not live in any portion of the Promised Land with which any scholar is familiar. His name in Hebrew comes from the noun *enemy* or *assailant*. It is ironic that this truly godly soul should be even slightly associated by his name with assailants when he was, in fact, the one so sorely assailed by Satan. Naturally, by his name and dwelling place, we can find nothing about Job to commend him to us. Yet, the God who looks not on surface appearance but rather knows the heart, thoughts, and intentions of all people informs us that Job was a true worshipper of the Lord. Jesus tells us that many who regard themselves as righteous, and are regarded by others as being right with God, will not enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 7:21-23). Job was a man truly known and graciously made righteous by God. Job learned by his experience and he teaches us that it is infinitely better for us to be known and commended by God and regarded by all people as evil hypocrites than it is for us to be known by God as hypocrites and regarded by people as godly.

Friday, April 4th - Job 1: 1-3

While Job's natural and religious relations are not disclosed to us, the man's character is clearly drawn out in detailed specifics. Scripture records four facets of his attitude and actions. Natural endowments and attainments are regarded by the Lord in His Word as rubbish that we should cast away in view of our knowing and having the character that He does not condemn, even in His most severe treatment of us, but rather that He always commends, especially in the final day when He owns us as His righteous servants (Job 42:7-9; Phil. 3:1-16).

Saturday, April 5th - Job 1: 1-3

We are first told that Job was blameless. That designation does not mean that he was personally perfect and sinless. Instead, it indicates that he was a man of faith by which he was justified in the sight of God. Not only was Job accounted as being without guilt by the gracious imputation of his redeeming God, He was also one who by the sanctifying grace of the Lord hungered to know and to do God's will and to live by his faithful appropriation of the means of God's grace. Job must have been a loving man as well, since the essence of the moral law is that we love God and our neighbor. By this first dimension of Job's character we know that he was a trophy of the

Lord's saving grace, which is the foundation upon which rests all of his acceptance by God and approbation from God.

Sunday, April 6th - Job 1: 1-3

The second aspect of Job's character flows from the first. Only those who have been redeemed from the dominion of sin and freed from all guilt are empowered to live lives of moral elevation. Sin and guilt pull us ever downward, as the pathology that the Apostle Paul draws in Romans 1:21-23 indicates. There we find blameworthy sinners being ungrateful to God and unknowing of the world in which they live. They stoop ever lower to worship and serve other people, then the beasts, and finally the bugs of the earth. In contrast, the righteous, like Job, are heavenly-minded and so mount up with wings like eagles to perceive, possess, and practice the truth in love (Col. 3:1-4; Eph. 4:14-16).

Monday, April 7th - Job 1: 1-3

At the heart of Job's character was his attitude of highest reverential regard for God. The words, *fearing God*, do not mean that Job was afraid of the Lord or regarded Him merely with a sense of dutiful obligation. Dread of God exists only in those in whom sin and guilt have dominion, as was true with Adam after his fall (Gen. 3:8-10). The dutiful attitude is that of a slave and of the wicked and lazy one-talent man who was condemned in the parable told by Jesus (Matt. 25:14-30). True fear of the Lord is a holy love of righteousness and of the God of righteousness, in whose presence is fullness of joy and in whose right hand are eternal pleasures (Ps. 16:11). The only dread a man like Job would have would be of his grieving his God or drifting from Him. By his cleaving to his God in holy love, Job enjoyed peace and joy.

Tuesday, April 8th - Job 1: 1-3

The fourth characteristic that Scripture specifies about Job is that he had an aversion to evil. This means that he was a man who hungered and thirsted for truth, righteousness, virtue, and love, while at the same time he hated all deceit, unrighteousness, vice, and lack of love that leads to murder, as in the case of Cain with Abel (1 Jn. 3:11,12). Job was a man who discerned the difference between good and evil, while he loved and embraced the good and hated and eschewed the evil (Rom. 12:9). He had no appetite for the deceptive pleasures of sin but he longed for the pure and enduring delights that only his God provided.

Wednesday, April 9th - Job 1: 1-3

When Scripture informs us that Job was blameless, upright, fearing God, and turning away from evil, we perceive that this man possessed a full, complete, and balanced character that equipped him for every good work and motivated him by gratitude and love. Sin fractures us and fills us with vile and contradictory passions. Salvation heals our brokenness and fills us with rich and powerful virtues that do not conflict but rather harmonize with each other.

Thursday, April 10th - Job 1: 1-3

In addition to Job's rich and godly character, we learn that he enjoyed the blessing of having numerous children and an extensive and prosperous worldly estate. In his character and circumstances no one was more blessed by God than was Job in his day. What could anyone imagine adding to this man's bounty? The Lord could and did add greatly to Job's blessing (Job

42: 10-17), but it appeared for a time as though the Lord took all away from Job. Pains and deprivations ordained by God only work for our profit (2 Cor. 4:16-18).

Friday, April 11th - Job 1: 4, 5

These verses speak to us about the quality of family life that the children of Job enjoyed. The sons were all generously considerate of each other and of their three sisters. This brief but fundamentally characteristic summary of their familial lives and relationships shows mutual loving consideration and delight among all of Job's children. Surely such mutual sibling respect and loving rejoicing that each enjoyed in the company of the others is a rich fruit of Job's godly loving, generous prayers, faithful precepts, and holy example. Who could ask for more for this holy and happy family? Yet God was about to give them more that would seem like a total and unrecoverable loss.

Saturday, April 12th - Job 1: 4, 5

The complement of Job's sons was a full and perfect number. Each son proved to be generously considerate of all his siblings, and together they devised a way to perpetuate their loving service to each other and their joyful communion together. Their number fit a weekly rota of hospitality that repeated without stopping. There is also no indication that any of Job's sons tired of or resented fulfilling his own commitment to provide once each week such generous hospitality. How good and pleasant and rare it is to behold brethren dwelling together in such loving unity (Ps. 133). Surely we think that anything added to such holy and harmonious familial life would be a spoiling curse and not an improving blessing. That is how our thoughts and feelings run, but it is not how the higher thoughts and purposes of our heavenly Father flow.

Sunday, April 13th - Job 1: 4, 5

If we look for faults in the way that Job's children lived, the only hint that Scripture gives us of something that might be improved is that their constant feasting could perhaps indicate a sensual and somewhat self-regarding indulgence. As fine as their celebrations may have been, there is no indication that they extended them to their neighbors or to anyone outside of their immediate family. Nor is their gratitude to either their earthly father or heavenly Father made explicit. However, their constant happy harmony does seem to spring vitally and largely, even if not perfectly, from godly roots. After all, the family of God's redeemed children is destined to enjoy the unspeakable and unceasing delights of the marriage feast of the Lamb who has loved them and given Himself for them. It is undeniable that Job's children enjoyed such domestic bliss that would appeal to outsiders. Too often Christian families experience loveless discord that would repel any outsiders who might know of it.

Monday, April 14th - Job 1: 4, 5

The possibility that his children's perpetual feasting might indicate in them a more carnal than spiritual disposition was something to which Job was not blind. His godliness would incline him to be discerning and lovingly corrective if need be with his children. But this godly father found nothing blameworthy in his children's *practice*. He did, however, consider the possibility of their sinning in their *hearts*. Yet, we do not find Job probing His children with questions, insinuations, and warnings. Instead, he makes provision for their potential sins by offering

regular sacrifices for them. Some may criticize this action. They read into Job's words in 3:25 about what he had feared having come upon him, that Job knew but refused to acknowledge that his children were sinning in their feasts. However, the ceaseless sacrifices of Job indicate the opposite of his refusing to recognize his children's sin. All parents do well to offer the ceaseless sacrifice of prayer for their children through the person and work of Christ who alone can convict and cleanse their children of potential, actual but unintentional, or actual and intended transgressions. Our Redeemer ever lives to plead the merits of His sacrificial death for us as He intercedes for us whether we appear or actually are right or wrong.

Tuesday, April 15th – Job 1: 5

The godly man knows that neither he nor anyone else, however dearly he may regard them, is without sin (1 Jn. 1:8). Job, who was clearly a godly man, neither ignored this truth nor denied it. Instead, he took effective action to deal with it by his committing his children to the Lord through the sacrificial means that God had prescribed and that pointed to Christ. We are impressed with the vital spirituality of Job when we learn that he was as concerned with his sons' attitudes as he was with their actions. Job was as concerned with their hearts as he was with their hands. How blessed the children of Job were to have a father who truly understood their weaknesses and vulnerabilities as well as their strengths and virtues and who lovingly made provision for them in every good way.

Wednesday, April 16th - Job 1: 6-12

The scene shifts in this passage from earth to heaven. It is this higher, unseen reality that affects the world we see, experience, and think we understand. We are fatally blind and ignorant if we regard and reason only about the things we see with our eyes and are told by finite and fallible people. There is more to life than we can know from our own experience and understanding. Our God here lifts the veil between heaven and earth and shows us the heavenly council that affects all that Job hereafter experiences. We are given this vision so that we, too, might be effectively heavenly minded and not ignorant either of the devil and his wiles or of our Lord and His infallible wisdom, immeasurable love, and almighty power that work together for us and for our ultimate good.

Thursday, April 17th - Job 1: 6

This verse describes a heavenly council convened by the sovereign Lord of all creation. The designation, *sons of God*, refers to the angelic beings God had created before He made the world. Satan is acknowledged as coming among them. He, too, was once a holy angel who had sinned and fallen from righteousness and was cast out of heaven by the Lord (Isa. 14:12-15; Matt. 25:41). We might think that Satan came among the holy angels of his own accord and as a spoiler of the heavenly council, not to mention as one intent on bringing upon Job all of the devastation that follows. However, the truth is that Satan was summoned by God and required to come before the Lord and to give an account of himself to the One who was and is and forever will be sovereign over him. There is not much teaching about Satan in the Bible, but what teaching we find is clear and vitally significant. In light of that teaching we must avoid both of two extremes: either our being dismissive of the devil and ignorant of his wiles; or our being obsessed with him as though he were as powerful (or more powerful) than our God. The truth is that our God sovereignly and sinlessly uses Satan and his sinful machinations to serve for our good. However long and painful the course may be that leads us to this realization, this is a truth

that sets us free from despair and equips us to stand prevailingly against the devil in the evil day that God allows him to have with us, not for our ruin but for our refinement (Lk. 22:31,32; Eph. 6:10ff).

Friday, April 18th - Job 1: 6, 7

In v.6 it appears as though Satan acts willfully to come before the Lord at his own pleasure and for his own nefarious purposes. Satan, no doubt, thought that at least to some extent this was true. But Satan is deluded by the moral and intellectual darkness that his sinful separation from God, who is light, has brought upon him. The truth is that God summoned Satan to come, and we see from v.7 that Satan was required by the Lord to account for his activities. The account Satan gives is telling and vital for our understanding. The devil says that he had roamed the earth. The wicked are consistently portrayed in Scripture as having no peace and no rest but they are, instead, always active (Isa. 59:8). This is so because their father, the devil, is always on the prowl to feed upon his destruction of others (1 Pet. 5:8). It is far different for the righteous, who are nourished and refreshed by their good Shepherd who gives them His peace and refreshing rest (Ps. 23:1-3; Matt. 11:28-30).

Saturday, April 19th - Job 1: 6, 7

The Lord does not ask Satan *why* he is in the heavenly council among the sons of God. Instead, the Lord asks Satan: *from where do you come?* This indicates to us that Satan did not come to God willingly or with the evil purpose of crashing the heavenly convocation. The question of the Lord reminds Satan of the high heavenly place from which he had been thrust down to the earth (Rev. 12:7-9). Satan answers the Lord's question and acknowledges that he had been confined to the place where the Lord had put him. God did not ask this question because He did not know the answer. God did not ask this question to verify that Satan had not escaped from his assigned domain. God asked this question to remind Satan of his servile estate that his sinning had brought upon him. The Lord also asks this question so that God's people who read this portion of His Word would know and be comforted by the knowledge that whatever the lying devil may deceptively speak to us, God knows the devil's place and the devil knows that he is among us on earth as an unwitting servant of the Lord.

Sunday, April 20th - Job 1: 7

The Lord asked Satan the question in this verse not merely to remind the devil of his place and to reveal to us that the devil ultimately knows his place. The Lord put the question to Satan as an exercise of divine authority that the devil was compelled to answer. It should be to us an unspeakable comfort to know that our great spiritual enemy, the devil, is accountable to our God and that our God is perfectly effective in holding Satan to that accountability.

Monday, April 21st - Job 1: 7

The answer Satan gives to the Lord reveals the restlessness of the devil's evil nature. He is always on the move. Yet, from Satan's own mouth we learn how futile his actions are in terms of his devouring the Lord's people. The devil reports continual activity but no triumphs over the Lord's preserving grace for His people. Surely this indicates to us that the devil is more subtle than strong. He cannot compel anyone to sin. He must use deceptive words to lure people into his snares. Yet, even when he thinks he has his prey, the Lord appears to deliver His beloved people from Satan's snares (Ps. 124:6-8).

Tuesday, April 22nd - Job 1: 7-9

The devil on his own would run endlessly and vainly. Surely that frustration will be part of his punishment in the lake of endless fire. Meanwhile, the Lord seems to help Satan by asking him another question. By His asking the devil whether he had considered Job, the Lord is revealing to us something of His profound wisdom and of the unconquerable strength of His grace in and love for Job, and for all who, like Job, are trophies of God's saving grace. The Lord virtually invites Satan to a contest with His righteous servant. The devil had clearly not considered Job as a target of his devouring devices because he ignorantly considered that God had surrounded Job with blessings and with the protection of His almighty arm, and that those external divine provisions accounted for Job's devotion to the Lord. Satan did not know, but God did know, that Job could stand and would stand in faithful devotion to the Lord even if all the things mentioned by the evil one were removed from the Lord's servant. Job would stand and prevail and profit through all his pains and the anguish of soul that the course of Satan's evil trials would bring upon him. This God knew because He knows the end from the beginning, due not only to His omniscience, but also due to His supreme and sovereign control over all of our afflictions. Job comes to know this too, at the end of his trial, when his questions and complaints cease and his adoration and praise for His God are unbounded (Job. 42:5,6). God is sovereign over our trials and employs them not for our harm but for our help in knowing how greatly loved and secured we are in Him.

Wednesday, April 23rd - Job 1: 8

The assessment of Job by the God of heaven matches the one given to Job in v.1. The opening verse of this book does not give us man's opinion of Job, but rather faithfully reports how the Lord regarded him. In fact, the heavenly assessment of Job exceeds how he was regarded on earth. The Lord refers to him in v.8 as being His servant and adds that there was no one like him on earth. The humility of the godly, as well as the way they are accused by Satan and derided by the worldly, can cause them to form lower opinions of themselves than they will find to be true of them in God's sight on the last day (Matt. 25:34-40).

Thursday, April 24th - Job 1: 8-10

In response to God's commendation of Job, Satan shows his cynical contempt for both Job and his Lord. The contempt of the devil is based not on reality but on his own twisted reasoning that is perverted by his evil nature. To the impure, all things are impure (Tit. 1:15). Satan accuses God of procuring Job's devotion by lavishing circumstantial blessings upon him, while he accuses Job of self-regarding insincerity in his feigning of devotion just to keep the circumstantial provision coming. The truth is that God truly loved and saved Job, and that Job truly loved and gratefully devoted himself to the God of his salvation. The enduring reality of this mutual love will show with increasing clarity and brightness in the furnace of Job's afflictions.

Friday, April 25th - Job 1: 10, 11

Satan speaks the truth and a lie in these verses. The truth is stated in v.10. God had greatly blessed Job circumstantially. If the wise, loving, and almighty God is for us, who can prevail against us? The Lord is a refuge for His people and He rewards them richly in many ways. However, those things are the least of God's blessings that are showered upon those who seek Him first and above all of His blessings (Mt. 6:33). Satan spews out the lie in v.11, where he

arrogantly declares that if God were to remove His hand of blessing and bring upon Job the touch of divine cursing, Job would curse God openly and directly. Many do profess godliness from a carnal sense of their earning God's material rewards. But Job was different. He was a genuine trophy of God's saving grace and preserving love. Satan cannot conceive of a man standing by God's grace and for God's glory through a severe course of afflictions. Satan cannot comprehend the power of God's grace and the strength of God's love for and in a redeemed soul. But Satan and we are about to witness what seems inconceivable. Job will stand and bless and serve God, even when the Lord ordains that he should lose all of the apparent blessings that his God had lavished upon him.

Saturday, April 26th - Job 1: 12

In this verse, the Lord does something that appears to be strongly contrary to His love for His servant. The Lord permits Satan to afflict Job within prescribed limits. The devil is allowed to have his evil and destructive way with all that pertains to Job. This divine permission is bounded by the Lord's command that Satan should not harm Job personally. The purposes of God in His sovereignly ordaining Job's suffering will be seen to comport with and not to contradict the Lord's love for His servant. But we only gradually see this as Job goes through his sufferings. It is in the furnace of affliction that God perfects His people and refines their faith. It is as we go into such furnaces (Dan. 3:19ff) and into life's fearful storms (Matt. 8:23-27; Mk. 4:36-41), and face what appears to be divine opposition (Gen. 32:24ff; Matt. 15:22-28) that we come to know more vitally and powerfully the love of our God who ordains our sufferings so that we can bear them with Him and in Him as He stands for and with us in those afflictions.

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Sunday, April 27th - Job 1: 12

The permission the Lord gave to Satan to afflict Job was enormously considerable. *All* that Job had was given by God into the hand of the devil. The relish with which Satan received this divine permission is evident by his immediate and hasty departure from the Lord. That Satan departed from the Lord shows that he, by his own sin, had lost all capability to find any delight in the God in whose presence are eternal joys (Ps. 16:11). Satan and sinners truly would rather reign in hell than serve in heaven. But the supposed reign of the devil and his infernal brood is one of sheer destruction as we shall witness by what Satan brings upon Job. Here we gain insight into the wisdom, goodness, and love of the Lord in His ultimately consigning to hell all men and devils who take no delight in Him and only seek to destroy others. What a mercy, even to the wicked and certainly to the redeemed, that all unregenerate sinners should be banished from the presence of Him who reigns sovereignly in all places and causes all to work for the blessing of His people.

Monday, April 28th – Job 1:13-19

Satan wastes no time in bringing a thorough destruction upon all that Job had. There is no mercy in the devil. Even when he measures out his fiery assaults it is only to prolong Job's suffering and to expand its magnitude by awful degrees of affliction and waves of destructive attacks. We do well to see evil here in its true colors and to know that all of the temptations of this wicked

foe are designed not to give us pleasure but only to bring upon us pain. He who promises us kindness is only capable of delivering to us killing.

Tuesday, April 29th – Job 1: 13-15

The first wave of affliction that Satan brought upon Job was one of the destruction of some of Job's livestock and servants. This delivers to Job the first of four demonically designed shocks. The only apparent sparing that Satan allows is that of a single servant who survived, not because the devil cares about the servant, but rather so that the servant might deliver the devastating news to Job. Even the seeming kindness of the devil is maliciously designed to inflict pain and anguish upon us. We do well to bear this in mind when he tempts us with pleasing prospects. Behind his sweetest promises lurk the bitterest provisions. He is always as Jesus tells us he ever will be, a liar and a murderer.

Wednesday, April 30th – Job 1: 13-16

The mention in v.13 of Job's sons and daughters feasting anticipates the increasing magnitude of Job's afflictions. The first salvo of Satan's attack deprived Job of his beasts of burden and some of his servants. As painful as that loss was, it did not touch the children of Job who were the apple of his eye. With the second wave of the devil's attack the livestock and more servants were destroyed. The loss of the beasts of burden touched the livelihood of Job and his family. The loss of the flocks took the sustaining food from their tables. The hand of Satan is moving progressively toward Job himself. Even though the devil was compelled by God to let Job live, the evil one was determined and cunningly capable of making Job wish he were dead and so cursing God, the giver and governor of his life. We who apart from Christ can do nothing are no match for this infernal foe. Yet, in Christ we can do all things, including our standing in the evil day of Satan's power being unleashed against us (Eph. 6:10ff).

Thursday, May 1st - Job 1: 13-17

The third wave of demonic attack that came upon Job is mentioned in v.19. In that affliction, Job's camels were stolen and more of his servants were killed. Camels were valuable vehicles for long-distance travel and their loss signaled Job's increasing isolation and confinement in his growing furnace of affliction. Our security is not found in our means of escape from trouble. Satan can and at times does cut us off from all means of escape. When our God ordains and permits the evil one to immobilized and besiege us, we shall find that we can stand and prevail when we put on the full armor of God's provision for us in Christ (Eph. 6:10ff).

Friday, May 2nd - Job 1: 13-19

In the fourth wave of increasing satanic torture, the devil touches the apple of Job's eye and succeeds in breaking the heart of the Lord's righteous servant. Here we see that in the strategy of the evil one, the bitterest wine is served last. Here Satan shows himself in his true colors because due to the Lord's permission he does not need to practice deception. Instead, he goes straight to murder. This is always his nature (Jn. 8:44), and we do well to recall this when he disguises himself for us as an angel of light to lure us to our destruction.

Saturday, May 3rd - Job 1: 13-19

The devil delights in and of necessity practices deception in his dealings with the Lord's people. He disguised himself as a serpent and played the part of the concerned counselor with our first

parents. He did this not from love but from hatred; not to help but to hurt; not to bless them and make them more like God but to alienate them from God and to bring cursing upon them. It should be to us a comfort and joy to know that our God has prepared for him an eternal lake of fire that will confine him eternally away from the glorious and eternal blessedness of all of the redeemed. In the meantime, by the wise ordaining of the Lord, Satan is here allowed by God to act with little restraint so that Job and all of the faithful who read and seek to heed God's Word would know how wicked the devil is and how resolutely we should strive to resist him in the firmness of our faith (1 Pet. 5:9).

Sunday, May 4th - Job 1: 13-19

Not only do these verses reveal to us the cruel nature of Satan and of all his children of wrath, they also indicate to us his preferred tactic when he is allowed to afflict the godly. Satan prefers not to deliver one sharp blow but rather to send against his targets waves of fiery missiles. With Job the devil employed four waves of misery, while with Jesus he used three waves of temptation (Matt. 4:1-11; Lk. 4:1-13). With Job Satan allowed little if any time for the Lord's servant to recover from one shock before he received another. In rapid succession the messengers of woe appeared to declare the awful news to Job. Finally, each attack from Satan was worse than the previous one. There is an evil perseverance that results from the devil's ruthless determination to devour his marked target. By our knowing of these awful wiles we can better prepare ourselves to stand against him by our putting on and keeping on the full armor of God.

Monday, May 5th - Job 1: 13-19

Another vital feature we observe from these attacks is how hidden the devil remains throughout them. The first assault against Job was attributed to the Sabaeans (v.15), the second to fire from God, most likely lightning (v.16), the third to the Chaldeans (v.17), and the last to a great wind (v.18). One of the most dangerous aspects of Satan's activity is that he hides himself so thoroughly as though he were not in existence at all. Our failure to reckon on this reality leads us to conclude that we wrestle against other people, nature, and even God, when we in truth wrestle against the prince of the power of the air.

Tuesday, May 6th - Job 1: 13-19

If we observe that Satan is hidden in his activity, should we not also observe that God is also hidden in Job's trials? Job had been praying for his children (v.5). Can their deaths and all of this devastation of Job's estate be telling us that there is a God in heaven who hears and answers His people's petitions? Yet, recall how Job prayed. He asked the Lord to consecrate them. The will of God and the aim of all true praying is the sanctification of His people (1 Thess. 4:3). The answers to such prayers do not preclude but rather include some very severe suffering, including death (Ps. 72:14; 116:15; Rom. 8:35-39).

Wednesday, May 7th - Job 1:20

Natural wisdom would tell us to expect that Job would be in despair in consequence of his monumental and exquisitely painful losses. It would seem logical for this severely afflicted soul to curse God and die. But Job lived life on a higher plane than that of the natural and humanly logical. Job lived in the theological realm. Therefore, although we find that his earthly condition has greatly and painfully worsened, we see Job, contrary to all expectation but that of

His Lord, humbling himself and worshipping God in face of his devastating losses. In all of his undeniably excruciating afflictions, he stood as more than a conqueror because he by faith perceived the love of his God orchestrating even these dark providences for his good (Rom. 8:28).

Thursday, May 8th - Job 1: 20

Job's response to his great and sore afflictions is grief, as shown by his tearing his robe and shaving his head. He is in profound emotional pain. He expresses some of his pain by making his physical appearance—that had not been touched by all of the shocking news he had received—resemble the inexpressible inward pain of his broken heart. Our salvation does not shield us from such pain. In fact, because our new hearts are no longer cold and dead but are now living and loving we feel the suffering and loss of those we love more keenly than we would have in our unregenerate self-absorption. The Christian life is not one of a stoical indifference but rather one in which we can face the most painful and perplexing realities and not be destroyed by them or try to delude ourselves about them. Abraham faced the reality of his aged body but still had hope that God would give him a son (Rom. 4:19-21). Similarly, Abraham, once he had Isaac, was willing to sacrifice his beloved son, rightly reckoning that the God who had given him could raise him from the dead (Heb. 11:17-19). Our God does not shield His beloved people from severe pains, but He does give them faith and hope in their pains that make them to be more than conquerors in their furnaces of affliction.

Friday, May 9th - Job 1: 20

Job gives a sincere expression to his deep and genuine grief. However, that is not all that is in Job. Even as this righteous servant of the Lord is confounded by and reels from his massive attacks and enormous losses, he contains himself through that self-control that is a fruit of his spiritual nature (Gal. 5:22,23). He is not reduced to humility by the weight of his burden, nor is he driven to despair. Instead, he humbles himself under the mighty and merciful hand of God, choosing to prostrate himself and all that pertains to him before his Lord, rather than to be compelled to collapse in a hopeless heap. Job in his greatly diminished state grieves, yet with hope in the Lord who helps him.

Saturday, May 10th - Job 1: 20, 21

Job fell to the ground not as a thunder-struck victim but as one who by his faith and hope in his God prostrated himself willingly and in a spirit of worship. Here the Lord's servant reacts to his sufferings in a way inconceivably beyond the sinful stupidity of Satan. Far from his cursing God, as Satan cynically boasted that Job would do, this righteous man worships his God and blesses Him in affliction as readily and sincerely as he had done in his affluence. This response of the suffering servant reveals to the evil one and to all readers of Scripture the key to Job's character and to the secret of his contentment in his being abased as well as in his abounding. That secret was God dwelling in him and revealing to the eyes of his faith the divine lovingkindness in his condition that is now besieged with shattering loss (Ps. 31:21; Phil. 4:11-13).

Sunday, May 11th - Job 1: 20, 21

The actions of Job in v.20 are accompanied by his words of worship and devotion in v.21. These words reveal a number of significant aspects of Job's faith. They issue from him not as lifeless

dogmas but as vital truths that set him free and enable him to soar above his trials to behold the God who is working all things for his good. These words reveal the foundation upon which Job will stand through all of his remaining trials that unfold in the rest of this book.

Monday, May 12th - Job 1: 20, 21

We observe Job declaring a perspective on his life that issued from the exercise of his faith and sanctified reason. The basic, natural reality that all people can easily perceive (but most deny) is that we did not create ourselves but, instead, we received our being from outside ourselves (1 Tim. 6:7). We brought nothing to contribute to our own being, and once we had being in our mother's wombs, we were dependent upon them for life and sustaining nourishment. Once we were delivered into the world, we entered having nothing but our bodies and souls that, in their infancy, were highly vulnerable and depended upon our parents and others in the world. At our life's termination we can carry nothing out of the world but are obliged to make a solitary exodus from this life. The things Job had lost, he confesses were but on loan to him. It was not so in the beginning of creation. Adam and Eve were created naked but possessed adult faculties and immediately exercised dominion over all things. The course of life that Job describes is due to our first parents having forfeited their lives and all that pertained to their lives when they sinned against God. This is the undeniably natural way of our cursed, groaning world now. Therefore, a reasonable person should appreciate his possessions and personal relationships while he has them, but should also be prepared to lose them ultimately and at a time not of his own choosing. This is the lowest level upon which Job erects his contentment amid his trials. There are much higher levels as well, but for now let us observe how Job's operation of faith keeps him reasonable and self-possessed in tribulation, and delivers him from irrational expectations and an illogical blaming of God or others for his losses.

Tuesday, May 13th - Job 1: 20, 21

Job is rational and therefore recognizes that all human existence is contingent and not absolute. Yet Job is more than rational due to his exercise of faith in his God. This leads him to express his perspective on the source of all those gifts he had possessed and enjoyed before they all were removed from his life. He declares: *The Lord gave*. Here Job testifies that he, by faith, sees *through* his suffering to behold the Lord as the source of his life and all that it had contained. In his seeing through his suffering to behold his God, he sees and understands that suffering and loss in our lives cannot erase divine blessings we have enjoyed. The calling and gifts of God are irrevocable (Rom. 11:29). The hope to which we have been born again is living and cannot die, though our loved ones and we do die. Our inheritance is imperishable, undefiled, and will not fade away, being reserved for us in heaven (1 Pet. 1:3,4). Therefore, it is our lack of faith rather than our true perception that regards our gifts from God to be lost when they are in fact stored by Him in our heavenly home, and are taken from us not for our harm but so that we would seek them in His arms.

Wednesday, May 14th - Job 1: 20, 21

Job confesses that the Lord had given to him all that he had possessed in his life. He also confesses that the Lord had taken away all that he had lost. Here in this true and full apprehension of divine sovereignty, Job is not merely stating a correct fact but rather he is declaring a comforting reality. His comfort does not come to him through his mental recognition that an overarching hand has ruled over his gains and losses. Nor does his peace flow from his

dutifully humbling himself under such a sovereign hand. Job's comfort, peace, and hope flow from his vital and loving knowledge of the God who is his sovereign Lord. Faith focuses us not upon the actions of our Lord only, but also and especially upon His exalted and exalting thoughts and purposes for us as well as upon His immeasurable and unchangeable love for us.

Thursday, May 15th – Job 1: 20, 21

The Lord's taking away from us may seem like a betrayal of the goodness of His having given to us. Logical thinking regards it so, but not theological thinking. Our God has given us more than we ever realize. With all of our good and delightful possessions He has also given us His great and precious promises, telling us that our sufferings signify our higher blessedness (Matt. 5:10-12); that our losses betoken our gains (Matt. 16:25); that our outer decay testifies to the production of an eternal weight of glory (2 Cor. 4:16-18); and that even our ultimate suffering of death will be our eternal gain (Phil. 1:21). Jesus has promised (and by his faith in God Job apprehended and accepted the promise) that in the world we will have suffering, but only as a rehearsal for our passage through death into the victorious eternal and glorious life He has wrought for us.

Friday, May 16th - Job 1: 20, 21

When Job ascribes to the Lord responsibility for his gains and losses, we might think that the Lord's servant is only half right. Surely God gave him all, as the Lord is surely good to all Israel (Ps. 73:1). But we know from the account of the heavenly council that it was Satan who maliciously took all of Job's possessions and beloved children from him. Job was not in possession of such specific knowledge. Accordingly, it would seem that Job attributes wrongly to God responsibility for his losses. However, Job's confession is more radically right than we might think. This righteous and faithful man truly reckoned that God's sovereignty extended over all things—good and evil. Our Lord sinlessly uses sin when he brings good from what others intend for evil. We can and should reckon on the wiles of the devil, but never in a way that his wiles overshadow the sovereign and prevailing will of our Lord for our highest good.

Saturday, May 17th - Job 1: 20, 21

We see another aspect of Job's faith in vital action when he ascribes blessing to the *name* of the Lord. At its fundamental level, this action of blessing the Lord does not add to anything to God but is rather a matter of His servant speaking well of the Lord who had blessed and continued to bless Job. It is also Job's acknowledgement that he saw blessing coming to him from the Lord in both the Lord's giving and His taking away. There is always cause for us to bless the Lord, whether we abound or are abased. When we learn the secret of constant reliance upon our God as the one thing necessary and the good part that can never be taken from us, we will delight in this truth (Lk. 10:42; Phil. 3:8-11; 4:11-13).

Sunday, May 18th - Job 1: 20, 21

Job ascribes blessing to *the name of the Lord*. This means that Job had sought to know God neither in any vague and superficial way nor in the fullness of His inscrutable divine essence. He hungered to know the essence of God but he also humbled himself to feed from the gifts of God's self-revelation as He has given to us in Scripture. The attributes of the Lord, that God's inspired revelation provide for us, lead us to know with clarity and firm conviction that He who is all wise, all loving, and all powerful, is able and actually does cause all things, including our afflictions and deprivations, to work together for our good. It is our vital grasp of this truth that

sets us free from our thinking ill of our Lord and inclines us to think and to speak only well of Him. And as we sincerely give Him such praise and glory, we shall find that, whatever may be our current condition, it is and always will be well with our souls.

Monday, May 19th - Job 1: 22

This verse ascribes to Job two things: he did not sin, and he did not confess anything unworthy of God. This double ascription to Job is a commendation of the faithfulness of the Lord's suffering servant. The Lord's inspired Word comments upon Job's response to his suffering, including his dramatic expression of his grief, by telling us that in all of his words and actions Job committed no sin. Let us never think, then, when we experience deep shock and profound grief over the dark providences of the Lord, that we are failing to exercise faith. Such faith laces our grief with hope, but does not immediately vanquish our grief.

Tuesday, May 20th - Job 1: 22

The second commentary on Job's words and actions is that he did not, even amid the disorientation of his grief, express any attitude toward the Lord that was untrue or unworthy of God, either in His person, or in His works, or in the way He was dwelling by faith in His servant. This commentary is for our comfort. Scripture is in this verse placing the divine seal of approval on Job's declaration that in the Lord's giving to us and in His taking away from us, He is blessed and ever blessing us. Our Lord blesses us with every spiritual blessing kept fully for us in heaven (Eph. 1:3), but He also significantly lavishes His blessings upon us on earth (Eph. 1:13-23).

Wednesday, May 21st - Job 1: 20-22

The perplexing question remains: why should a loving God ordain that His righteous servant should suffer? A part of the answer is found in the end of this amazing book, where Job is blessed in his latter days more than in his former days (Job 42:12). We should learn from this to be patient and content with the knowledge that our Lord's reasoning for His dark providences in our lives does not become clear to us until we have passed through the entire course of our fiery trials, and then we shall see and possess glory that overwhelmingly compensates for all that we thought we had lost (Rom. 8:18). In the end, every believer will find that throughout the whole course of his life he never had any real cause to offer God anything but thankful praises.

Thursday, May 22nd - Job 2: 1-3

The scene now shifts from Job worshipping the Lord on earth to the Lord exercising His sovereignty in heaven. Satan (and perhaps we, too) would naturally think that Job's sinless stand for God amid his painful afflictions would be rewarded by the Lord sovereignly declaring an end to His servant's suffering. However, what actually occurs is a second heavenly council and a second satanic campaign demanded by the devil and permitted by God. Instead of his trials ending, they continue; instead of his trials easing, they intensify. The thoughts and ways of our God are sometimes disappointingly different from our thoughts and ways, but they are always higher and better for us in the long run than would be the case if our will were always granted. For his continued trials, Job would need and the Lord will provide perseverance. For his intensified afflictions, Job would need and the Lord will provide endurance. Faith would continue to be Job's essentially effective power of resistance against the devil's attacks. The

gracious provision of our Lord is and always will be sufficient for us in all of our afflictions (2 Cor. 12:7-10).

Friday, May 23rd - Job 2: 1-3

There are between the first and second heavenly councils general similarities and some significant differences. The sons of God again come to present themselves to the Lord. Satan is once more distinguished from them but in this second council we are told that he especially was sovereignly summoned *to present himself before the Lord*. Satan had requested divine permission to test Job and the Lord had granted that request. Whoever receives anything from the Lord will be required to give an account to the Lord regarding how he has made use of the divine granting. No one ever lives free of accountability to our God. Accordingly, the Lord requires Satan to report once again on his general earthly actions, and once again Satan reports that he has restlessly roamed the earth. The devil also, as in his first accounting, has no demonic triumphs to report. Yet Satan omits from his report his total failure with Job. This omission is not overlooked by the Lord, who confronts the devil with his failure and extols Job even more in 2:3 than He had done in 1:8. Now, thanks to Satan's wicked attacks, there is added to Job's godly character and righteous living the laudable feature of his having been severely tested by a vicious, determined, and powerful enemy, only to withstand all of the assaults by his having cleaved faithfully to his Lord. Far from the integrity of Job's character or of his communion with God having been broken, Job remained united even more vitally to his true nature and to his saving God. Far from Satan having incited Job to curse God, the devil prompted him to bless the Lord. From this divine declaration in the heavenly council we should learn that our earthly losses that we endure for Christ's sake are regarded by our Lord to be glorious triumphs. It is, then, no wonder that Jesus tells us that we are blessed, not cursed, when we suffer persecution for His sake, and that we should rejoice, knowing that our reward in heaven is great (Matt. 5:10-12).

Saturday, May 24th - Job 2: 4, 5

Satan persists in his contention that the Lord is either mistaken in His estimation of Job or else is boasting vainly in what He knows to be untrue about Job. To prove his point, the devil asks the Lord to give him continued power over Job, this time allowing him to afflict the Lord's servant not only in his possessions and personal relationships but also in his body and soul. That Satan should imply divine ignorance of Job or deceitful promotion of him flies in the face of the facts that have been established on earth and in heaven. That Satan should persist in his insistence that he could make Job curse God shows to all with eyes to see that it is Satan who overestimates himself while he underestimates the strength of the love of the Lord for Job and the love of Job for the Lord that forms a bond between them that is stronger than anything in life or death, heaven or earth, time or eternity (Rom. 8:37-39).

Sunday, May 25th - Job 2: 4, 5

Satan cites a proverb in v.4: *skin for skin*. The meaning is that while a person may grieve the loss of possessions and the death of loved ones, when it comes to the matter of his own personal suffering or to that of another, the man will always choose to save his own skin even if it costs his dearest friend his life. Satan's glib citation of this proverb shows how stupidly ignorant his

sinful and evil nature had made him of the saving love of God. For the Lord would not only assume to Himself human flesh in His incarnation, but He would willingly, lovingly, deliver up that flesh to appalling sufferings and death in order to save those whom He loves. By the wounds, afflictions, and death of God in Christ we are healed and made alive in Him forever. Job, by his faith in the substance of salvation to whom the sacrifices he had offered for his children pointed, knew that the Lord loved him, and he accordingly loved and trusted the Lord so much that in his deepest anguish, far from his cursing God, he would cry out: *Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him* (Job 13:15).

Monday, May 26th - Job 2: 6

We might think that Job had suffered enough and that for the Lord to allow his afflictions to continue and increase would militate against the divine goodness, wisdom, and love. However, the Lord once again grants Satan's request and delivers seriously battered servant even more fully into the malicious power of the evil one. The only limitation the Lord placed on Satan's power was the requirement that the devil should not kill Job. With the word, *behold*, God calls on Satan and his demons, the holy angels, the people of the earth, and especially Job himself, to witness not defects in the divine goodness, wisdom, love, and saving work, but rather the highest perfection and glory of the Lord's saving love and power. Through these increased trials, the glorious goodness and saving grace of God will be manifested in Job's triumphant stand against Satan and all sinful temptation, even when that stand made Job's life for a long time a living hell.

May 2014

Bible Reading Notes

Tuesday, May 27th - Job 2: 7

Once again Satan hastens from the Lord to put his malignant hand on Job. Previously, the devil was permitted to touch all of Job's possessions, including beloved members of his family. Now the evil one has divine permission to afflict Job personally. Previously, Satan took away what Job had loved. Now the devil adds to Job something that he loathed. The enemy of our souls is eagerly willing to employ his wiles to ply us with pleasure or torture us with pain with one end in sight: that we curse our God. The Word of God here warns us of this not so that we might dread the devil but rather so that we might stand against him in the might and armor of God and so defeat him whether he toys with us or tortures us.

Wednesday, May 28th – Job 2: 7

The haste Satan makes to increase Job's suffering shows how utterly merciless and malicious he is. The effectiveness of his afflicting hand has not so much to do with his will as it does with the Lord's will. As we shall see throughout this book, the Lord permitted the evil one to afflict Job for his good, wise and loving purposes. Without such divine permission, Satan can do nothing to touch the people of God. It is a comforting thing for us to realize that Satan's hateful will is subservient to our Father's loving will by which He causes all things to work for our good (Rom. 8:28).

Thursday, May 29th – Job 2: 7

Satan struck Job with excruciatingly painful boils. Due to their extensive spread over his

body, they made Job miserable in every waking position he could assume and surely robbed him of sleep. His was also a nasty condition that would have been revolting to Job's friends, neighbors, and even to any stranger beholding him. He therefore suffered shame as well as physical pain. No soul alive then or in any age would envy Job and desire to be like him in his sufferings. Yet the Lord ordained these sufferings of His righteous servant not as a cursed punishment according to what his sins deserved, but rather as a blessed ordeal that would draw Job, and those who like him live by faith in their Lord, into deeper and more vital communion with the Lord's suffering Servant by whose stripes we are healed.

Friday, May 30th – Job 2: 7

In this verse we have the last mention of Satan in the Book of Job. The devil does not appear again in this record of Job's long course of mental and emotional afflictions that are piled onto him by his uncomprehending and unsympathetic wife and friends. Satan does not appear, but his malicious hand remains evident through his use of human agents. It is true that we do not wrestle against flesh and blood but instead we wrestle with great spiritual foes (Eph. 6:12). However, it is also true that our spiritual foes can and do use some of our closest human loved ones against us. It is significant that the warfare and armor passage (Eph. 6:10ff) immediately follows the passage dealing with our domestic and work relationships (Eph. 5:21-6:9). Our knowing this helps us to make a vital distinction between the human agents who disappoint us and the demonic agents who seek to destroy our communion with our Lord. In an evil day, when Satan orchestrates all things against us, it is only by our firm exercise of faith in our Lord that we can stand and prevail over such tribulations and profit through them.

Saturday, May 31st - Job 2: 8

This verse provides a summary of the painful and pitiful depths to which Satan had thrust Job. His pleasures had been reduced to the miniscule and momentary relief that he improvised for himself with a bit of broken pottery. He no longer stood upright or walked with respectability among men. Instead, Job sat alone among the ashes, probably of the burned refuse of his estate or village. Everything about him reflected the painful and paralyzing devastation of his life. There are times when the Lord ordains that the best of His servants suffer the worst torments. Why God does this may be to us unfathomable, but only for a time. He who treated his sinless and beloved Son as One to be judicially smitten and painfully afflicted unto death, manifested His supreme love and saving grace in that Son's death and resurrection. Weeping may last for a time, but God delivers us into eternal and inexpressible joy in due time (Ps. 30:5; 1 Cor. 15:58).

Sunday, June 1st - Job 2: 8, 9

Job sat among the ashes in silence for a time. Can we know what he was thinking and feeling in that place of ruin and in his physical and mental anguish? His wife breaks the silence with her speaking to him. At least her life had been spared from Satan's murderous rampage. But we learn that she was spared for the evil purpose of her adding to Job's monumental misery. Rather than her expressing to her husband words of loving compassion and sympathy, she speaks to him with contempt. Instead of her encouraging the one to whom she was to be a helpmeet, she becomes the mouthpiece of Satan, delivering to him the infernal counsel in the very words that the devil had spoken to the Lord in the heavenly council (v.5). Job's loving soul mate had heaped further misery upon him as he sat suffering among the ashes. Will this man listen to the

voice of his wife as our first father had done in the garden? The cunning capacity of the devil to inflict ever-increasing torture appears to have no bounds. Now the seeds of Job's cursing of God have been sown in the ears of the Lord's servant. Surely we all can understand if he breaks under such abusive stress. If Satan is against us, who can stand with us? There is, of course, an answer. But it is only perceived by faith, not by sight or by the sound of others' faithless words.

Monday, June 2nd - Job 2: 8, 9

The fact that Job's wife spoke such loveless and faithless words to her husband and gave to him satanic rather than godly counsel does not indicate that she was a vile person. She had lost all of her children and possessions, as had Job. Now she beholds her husband covered with boils and sitting on an ash heap. Her words issued from wretchedness more than from wickedness, just as Peter's words to Jesus at Caesarea Philippi issued from his folly more than his faith (Mt. 16:22,23). We may be disappointed when friends and loved ones do the devil's work in our lives. Yet we must reckon on the hidden malice of Satan and aim our holy anger at him rather than become enraged with our own flesh and blood.

Tuesday, June 3rd - Job 2: 9, 10

We know how Job's wife was holding up under the strain of her husband's trials. She broke and let out words that revealed her despair. Yet her words drew from Job not a response of sinful anger or even of holy indignation. Job expresses loving grief when he tells his wife that her words do not come from her better self but rather from a source of folly. He speaks truth and love when he does not cut her off from his affections but tells her appealingly that they together should trust in the Lord and wait upon Him to show to them His blessing in all things—even in this harrowing experience. Here is a husband who in his deepest anguish shows love for his wife, as Christ loved the Church and sanctified her by cleansing her in His blood when she was at her worst.

Wednesday, June 4th - Job 2: 9, 10

With the boils Satan afflicted Job's outer man. With the words spoken by Job's wife Satan penetrated Job's mind and heart. Yet when Job speaks we perceive how firmly he stood in his faith in the Lord. Though his body sat in a dejected heap, Job's soul stood in the strength of the Lord and mounted up like an eagle above his sufferings to behold his saving God. Nor does the Lord's suffering servant silently maintain the integrity of his trusting communion with his God. Job speaks words of faith and love to his despairing wife, drawing her back into her own trust in the Lord. Because Job cleaved to the Lord in love, he was inclined and enabled to love his wife who might have cursed God herself if Job did not do it. Here we see a man not defeated by his sufferings but rather in them being more than a conqueror. Job serves to glorify God and minister good to his wife and to all who read and rightly ponder his words.

Thursday, June 5th - Job 2: 9, 10

In all he suffered and said, Job did not sin. Scripture plainly tells us this in v.10. Therefore, Job was not failing to exercise faith in the Lord when he shaved his head, tore his clothes, and sat among the ashes. Those gestures were fitting expressions of his grief and holy hatred for the bitter fruits of God's curse on the world due to man's sin. It also means that the words Job spoke to his wife were spoken as his faith working itself out in love. He rebuked her, but tenderly and

with loving commitment to her, as is evident in his use of the pronoun, *we* in v.10. Faith in the Lord keeps us loving the Lord and loving others as well.

Friday, June 6th - Job 2: 11

With this verse, the seventh and final trial of Job begins. The Lord's righteous servant has sustained four waves of satanic attack in which he lost all of his possessions as well as all of his children (Job 1:13-19). Added to those afflictions were two more attacks in which Satan brought upon Job personally his loathsome physical malady of boils and then the deeply painful inner attack leveled by the devil through Job's wife, in which she told him to curse God and die (Job 2:7-10). Surely there is not much more, if anything at all, that Job can yet suffer. Yet we underestimate the cunning malice and destructive capabilities of the devil. He has worse wiles and more consuming attacks in store for us than we can imagine. However, where his sinful attacks increase, the preserving love and power of our Lord abounds all the more.

Saturday, June 7th - Job 2: 11

Here the friends of Job are introduced. Their names and dwelling places are almost unknown to us apart from their mention in the Book of Job. However, the city of Teman, from which Eliphaz came, was renowned in the ancient world for its wise sages. Jeremiah alludes to this when he writes concerning Edom, asking whether there was no longer wisdom in Teman (Jer. 49:7). This is a facet of Job that indicates the historical, as opposed to merely poetic, character of the book.

We come to know Job's friends through their interactions with the Lord's suffering servant. They all appear to be wise and truly godly men. Yet, they present, through their persistent and misguided arguments against Job, the most sustained and severe trial of Job's faith. As shocking as the first six attacks against Job were, the seventh protracted attack leveled against the mind, heart, and above all, the faith of Job, came closest to dragging him into despair. Many fortresses in the military history of the world have withstood shocking and awesome attacks, only to capitulate eventually under the steady and persevering pressure of a siege. Only faith extinguishes all of the fiery darts of the evil one.

Sunday, June 8th - Job 2: 11

These friends intended to minister sympathy and comfort to Job. This good intention led them to make a fine start in their approach to their suffering friend. When they heard of Job's afflictions, they did more than simply acknowledge the sad report. They arose and left their homes, families, and comforts in order to be with their friend. They came together in agreement to go to Job and be *with* him in sympathy and to bring him some relief in his painful throes. It was the furthest thing from their thoughts and godly purposes that they should become tools of the devil serving *against* their friend and succeeding in magnifying his pain. Unless we are certain that our Lord is calling us to go to those who are suffering, we do well to spend our energies in prayer for them, rather than in our going to them and serving to increase their pain by our speaking insensitively to them. Our good intentions are far inferior to the effective ministrations of our Lord who alone perfectly sympathizes with His people and brings them help in their need (Heb. 2:17,18; 4:15,16).

Monday, June 9th - Job 2: 11-13

Job's friends came close to accomplishing their mission of sympathy and comfort. With their

first distant glimpse of Job they were shocked at his disfigured appearance and with strong sympathy they entered into his sorrows. Their journey to be with Job, their weeping with him in his weeping, and their disheveling themselves as an echo of Job's miserable appearance—all were fitting aspects of their fellow-feeling with their suffering friend. This must have ministered some degree of comfort to Job, and, so far as it went, was good and loving service. Our doing good, even in small ways, is good. It is, however, when we try to overdo our good that we undo the good that we have done. As the psalmist prays that the words of his mouth would be acceptable to the Lord (Ps. 19:14), so we should ask the Lord to make our words to our brethren, always to be as apples of gold in settings of silver for them (Prov. 25:11).

Tuesday, June 10th - Job 2: 11-13

The silent and sympathetic company of Job's friends was good and appropriate under the circumstances. Yet it was far from adequate comfort for Job's painful suffering. However inadequate their silent company may have been, their repeated speeches to Job were worse than inadequate. The words of these friends will prove to be neither true nor loving. Job will tell them how greatly their words were increasing his pain (Job 13:5), and the Lord will declare their words to be sinful (Job 42:7,8). Yet, we shall see these friends bashing on, being guided only by their mistaken certainty. When we speak to people who are hurting, we can hurt them more than help them. Let our words come from our faith working itself out in love, or let us be silent toward them and pray for them.

Wednesday, June 11th - Job 2: 13, 3: 1

We have seen how Job's poor wife turned from being with him, as his loving and faithful helpmeet, to being painfully against him as Satan's mouthpiece. Job's three friends prove to be no better and, in fact, they dish out much worse torture through their incessant words. They do not tell Job to curse God, but they do constantly tell Job that he is cursed of God when he is righteous before the Lord. Before they speak, however, Job senses their attitude of condemnation that was growing in their silence and would pour out when they opened their mouths. Job realized that he was without any earthly help or relief, and he cried out in his anguish, cursing neither God nor himself but, instead, cursing his existence that had come to this painful phase that appeared to be the culmination of his life. Job here vents his overwhelming desire for relief. The pain that racked his body ignited his emotions, and he expressed his gloomy wish to have his existence either undone or ended as desperate expedients to erase or end his pain. Job's cry is a higher pitch but essentially the same as the groaning that cannot be uttered, that the Spirit of God makes by His intercessions for us to God who hears and answers them not according to our asking but according to His good and loving will for us. The sin of Job's friends is that they launch a long campaign of words wherein they try to answer Job with correction and conviction before God answers Job with true comfort that quiets Job's rage and heals his wounded soul.

Thursday, June 12th - Job 2: 2-10

These verses record the words in which Job cursed the day of his birth. Here we should note a significant feature that characterizes the Book of Job from this point to the end. The language is that of profound and beautiful poetry. Surely Job did not use such masterful poetic expressions when he cried out in his anguish. How, then, do we account for the beautiful poetry in which the agony of this suffering servant erupted? The beauty of the words and images are those of the

writer of this book. Far from such elegant and sublime language representing an idealizing of Job's sufferings or a sanitizing of his raw language of rage and anguish that he most likely used, the poetic beauty of what is written under the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit portrays to us the precious and beautiful essence of what Job was and was becoming in and through his tribulations. As grim as our sufferings are, when we bear them in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings they attain a beauty that is unspeakable except in the highest poetic strains. Our knowing this casts a comforting light on our darkest tribulations and puts them in true perspective of their being momentary, light, and productive of inconceivable glory for and in us.

Friday, June 13th - Job 3: 2-5

Here Job curses the day of his birth. This is not the same thing as his cursing his life or cursing the God who had given him his life. Actually, Job is cursing literally the *day* of his birth to the gloom of non-existence. It is an ingenious conception whereby Job indulges a desire that God would never have created the actual day of his birth. Had that day never been, Job's current sufferings would never have been. If we think that such a desire is but a clever yet sinful offence against the holy and sovereign will of God, let us recall two things: 1) that God declares Job to have spoken rightly of Him through this whole course of suffering (Job 42:7-9); and, 2) that Jesus prayed in a similar way when in Gethsemane He cried out asking God to let the cup of His crucifixion pass from Him, if possible (Matt. 26:39; Mk. 14:36; Lk. 22:42). One who expresses deepest loathing for sin and all of its bitter consequences expresses the cry of a holy heart that yearns for the Lord and for the life and joy that He alone can give.

Saturday, June 14th - Job 3: 6, 7

These verses express most clearly that Job was cursing the day of his birth and not his God or himself. In v.6 he expresses the desire that the day could be removed from the history of the world and from the year's calendar ever thereafter. His intention in this desire is that no one else would be born on such a day when initial joy would turn to darkest sorrow due to unbearable suffering. Here is the cry of an anguished heart that yet contains traces of love for others in that Job would wish himself to have been without existence rather than for him to experience or know that others would experience what he was then suffering.

Sunday, June 15th – Job 3: 8-10

Job desires that others join him in cursing the day of his birth (v.8). He calls for that day never to have seen the light of existence, even to the slightest degree of the twilight stars but dimly twinkling on that day (v.9). Then Job gives the reason for his cursing the day of his birth (v.10). It is because that day did come into being, and because in its existence nothing that it contained had prevented his birth in order to spare him his current and crushing troubles. It lies within the power of pain, applied in torturous fashion, to drive even the keenest and most godly soul into depths of mental anguish and darkness wherein the recollection of one's brightest and most pleasant days seems badly outweighed by the crushing burden of the current troubles. This is the perspective we have in the moments of our afflictions, and such a perspective will change when the suffering moments yield to the Lord's delivering mercy and power.

Monday, June 16th - Job 3: 11, 12

These verses contain several rapid-fire questions posed by Job. He longs for the non-existence of the day of his birth and all that it contained. Failing that desire, he longs for his life to have

been cut short, either by his death at birth or shortly thereafter by his mother having deprived him of life-sustaining nourishment. Such thoughts may seem horrible and insultingly ungrateful toward the Lord and toward Job's parents. However, in these mental abstractions the man is really giving expression to the extreme suffering of his soul. His testimony, dark and raw as it is here, gives comfort to all who pass through similar anguish and entertain similar thoughts. Such suffering souls are not alone but share in a fellowship of living death that only the One who has the keys of death and Hades can and will relieve (Rev. 1:18).

Tuesday, June 17th - Job 3: 11, 12

With these verses we observe how Job moves through his hellish ordeal. He advances toward despair when he stops cursing the day of his birth and starts preferring death to life. Yet, while it was more serious for him to despise his life rather than to curse a day, the form in which Job expresses this movement indicates a significant change. He is no longer positively cursing. He is, instead, pitifully questioning and groping for answers. His rage softens into sobs of bewilderment, in which he reaches for a glimpse of a reasonable explanation and justification for his sufferings. There are answers to these cries of the soul, but our discovery of them begins with our asking, not with our asserting.

Wednesday, June 18th - Job 3: 3: 13-15

In these verses Job declares the reasons for his desiring death. He would no longer be sitting in ashes as a loathsome spectacle of constant pain and unutterable loss. Instead, he would be lying in soft comfort and enjoying a sleep that would refresh him. These notions arise through at least an echo of Job's understanding of life after death. But the real importance of them is their indicating to us how weary Job was of his sufferings and how greatly he longed for relief, even if such relief were to be ministered through death that comes as the wages of sin. Here we see how low were Job's hopes and how drained were his emotions. He felt little like a super-conqueror, but that is what he was.

Thursday, June 19th - Job 3: 13-15

Job shows that he longed not only for the relief of a refreshing sleep in death, but he also desired the stimulation of a fellowship with regal and prosperous men such as he had before the devastations of Satan came upon him. The redeemed do find blessed rest from earthly vexations and blessed communion with just souls made perfect to be components of their gain after death (Phil. 1:21; Heb. 12:22-24). However, they also find that to live is Christ, even if the living is done in the most awful afflictions.

Friday, June 20th - Job 3: 14-19

This passage captures Job's conception of death as being a great equalizer between the various people who live in this world. There is in Job's thought a universally reducing power in death that brings down the highest kings and most greedy princes to the level of a miscarried infant. Likewise, the disparity between master and slave, great and small, wicked and innocent, prisoner and taskmaster is erased among the dead who together find rest and ease from their exertions and sufferings. These expressions do not represent Job's faith laying hold of a sure hope of glory so much as they are an irrepressible eruption of his anguish in his woeful condition that causes his eyes to open to the suffering and inequality that fills our world. He considers refuge and relief in an imagined state of non-existence or death in infancy. But his considerations will move,

gradually and painfully, to the higher and more certain hope he has in his Lord, whom he will trust whether he lives or dies.

Saturday, June 21st - Job 3: 20-23

Once again Job retreats from his declarations concerning imagined relief in death and returns to his questioning the painful features of his life. The former is a pitiful grasping at straws; the latter is a practical groping for understanding. There is also an advancing to be noted from the series of questions Job posed in vv.11,12 and those he expresses in vv.20-23. The former questions were almost rhetorical, asked by Job of no one in particular and showing little if any expectation of receiving an answer. The current questions begin to bring God into focus. Someone is giving light and perceptive capacity to the sufferer. Someone denies the longing of the sufferer for death. From this blurred focus Job moves in v.23 to a definite apprehension of God. It is the Lord who is the One who has given and sustained the life of the sufferer, who has ordained this course of afflictions, and who denies the sufferer his deluded hope of finding relief in death. Job's seeking answers from the God who is sovereign over the perplexing aspects of his painful suffering marks his recovery of some understanding and wisdom. This recovery will sustain and advance him through all of the torturing waves of words that lie before him as they are about to gush from the uncomprehending and compassionless mouths of his friends.

Sunday, June 22nd - Job 3: 20-23

Job asks for understanding because he does not have it. He confesses that his way is hidden (v.23). His lack of understanding is what makes his painful path to be a frustrating mystery to him. Yet, the Lord knows Job's way because He knows the plans and purposes He has for His afflicted servant, to give him a future and a hope (Jer. 29:11). Our highest wisdom lies not in our understanding all features of our way, but rather in our knowing and trusting the Lord who knows our way and who leads us in it as our loving and good Shepherd.

Monday, June 23rd - Job 3: 23

Job speaks in a confused and contradictory way in this verse. On the one hand, he confesses that his way is hidden from him. He is not at all sure of why all that was happening to him had occurred and continued. Yet, he declares with a degree of certainty that God had hedged him in. No longer does Job sense the Lord as his securing refuge—the One whom Satan said had hedged Job about with blessings (Job. 1:10). The securing, protecting, and prospering hand of the Lord was now regarded by Job as being a confining and afflicting hand. He sees his God as having turned against him. Yet, he sees his God, and he who sees God cannot long remain in the shadows of mistaken notions and unworthy apprehensions of the Lord, but he will be led by God into His light in which all we see is all there is: the wisdom, love, and power of God who is ever for us and never against us.

Tuesday, June 24th - Job 3: 24-26

In these closing verses of the third chapter, Job concludes his searing lament by listing a number of features in his situation that make persuasively rational and practically pressing the questions he had asked in previous verses (11,12,20-23). Job specifies eight things that have changed drastically in his life. The first four changes are 1) his *groaning* in painful yet substantially

inward response to his afflictions; 2) his *cries* that are the outward eruptions of his inner agony; 3) his *fear*, the intense anxiety and panic that result from a sense of his vulnerability that has been destructively exploited by an enemy; and, 4) his *dread*, the foreboding sense of approaching or actual danger. No one would welcome any of these changes. Yet all of them together were added to Job's life, forming an almost unbearable burden for the Lord's servant. They were added to Job by the devil who intended them for evil. But superintending that evil affliction is the holy and loving hand of the Lord, who ordains such dreadful wounding for the good of His servant.

Wednesday, June 25th - Job 3: 24-26

Job lists four more painful things in v.26. They are: 1) no ease; 2) no quiet; 3) no rest. These three are negations of the delightful and fundamental blessing that the Lord's people enjoy in their Sabbath rest and *shalom* peace in and with their God. The fourth thing listed is an undesirable addition: turmoil. Job states his condition as though the Lord had hedged him in (v.23) by taking away all that was pleasant and precious to him, while giving to him all that was painful and loathsome. Together, these eight aspects form a burden that no person could bear for long, if at all, without the Lord. But Job was bearing this manifold burden and will do so through the worst afflictions that are yet to be thrust upon him by his friends. Surely Job could endure such a crushing load only because he was yoked to his Lord whom he has trusted before and whom he would only grow to trust even more through this tribulation.

Thursday, June 26th - Job 3: 24-26

The Lord has given an increasing number of evil things for Job to bear, and He had taken from Job an increasing number of good things. Does Job still determine to bless the name of the Lord now as we found him doing in Job 1:21? We do not find recorded in Scripture that Job concludes his course of cursing with such a doxology. Yet because God's Word is silent on this question does not mean that we cannot and will not find its answer. The next voices to be heard will be those of Job's friends. They will speak in ever more strident terms of censure against their afflicted friend. All that they say will only make sense if Job had been sinning against God, and we know from the *alpha* and *omega* of this book that Job was not sinning. Their words will not issue from piety but will flow from their prejudice. Job will be sorry to endure his friends' words, but those friends will be more sorry that they spoke them when they find themselves, in due time, rebuked by the God who speaks only words of commendation for Job (42:7-9). Let us learn from this not to consider the character of our brethren superficially and uncharitably in our zeal for righteousness. If we do judge and speak rashly and lovelessly we will no doubt find ourselves corrected by the God of righteousness and saving love.

June 2014

Friday, June 27th - Job 4: 1, 2

Job's friends begin to speak with a degree of gentleness but their language soon grows increasingly strident. Their comforting determination gives way to condemning charges. It is challenging for us rightly to understand and interpret the nature of this contest between Job and his friends. All four men appear to be godly and mutually respectful. Much that Job's friends have to say is spiritually astute and true, but only if their fundamental premise, that Job brought his afflictions upon himself by his having sinned significantly, were true. Scripture informs us, however, that Job was righteous in the sight of God (Job 1:1,8,22; 2:3; 42:7,8). This divine

assessment of Job is hidden from his friends. Yet they could have and should have judged their suffering friend with charity and ministered comfort to him instead of adding their condemnation to his afflictions. Too often we can become like Job's friends and let a prosecuting zeal carry us away from a loving determination to edify our struggling brethren. Then we do the devil's cruel work and fail to do God's compassionate work.

Saturday, June 28th – Job 4: 1, 2

Job's friends speak in response to Job's words of anguished cursing (ch. 3). Eliphaz is the first to speak to Job. He was probably the oldest of the three (Job 15:10) and was likely the most wise (cf., Teman in Jer. 49:7). He had been a longstanding good and loving friend to Job, as were all of these three friends (Job 2:11). If any man could help Job, it should have been Eliphaz. But this wise and virtuous man fails to help his friend and succeeds only in hurting him. This unfulfilled promise of sympathetic and understanding comfort comprises the deepest disappointment for Job. It also serves as the most dangerous poison for his pure heart. The devil's deepest blows can come to us through the most promising and closest of our friends. In the evil day, the arm of flesh—even the best and closest flesh—will fail us, while only the arm of the Lord will uphold us.

Sunday, June 29th – Job 4: 1, 2

The words of Eliphaz begin well. He tenderly asks permission to speak (v.2a) but also intimates that he is under compulsion to speak (v.2b). Had Eliphaz exercised the loving self-control of the fruit of the Spirit, he would have continued to speak edifying words of loving comfort. Had he freely allowed himself to have and show compassion for his suffering friend and smothered the flames of his zealous compulsion to correct and prosecute Job, he himself would have had divine commendation as his reward, instead of the divine chastisement he actually received. The love we are commanded by God to have for others will always be our safest and most effectual guide to blessing them and ourselves.

Monday, June 30th – 4: 3-6

The words of Eliphaz continue to be well, though not perfectly, spoken. He acknowledges how Job had been an example of godliness as well as an effective counselor and helper to many. Yet, Eliphaz adds that Job's current performance in his time of affliction does not live up to the counsel he had given to others. What Eliphaz faults is the godly man's apparent spirit of impatience and dismay in the furnace of his affliction. The dismay is evident in Job's repeated questioning the course of his treatment (Job 3:11,12,20,23). The impatience shows in his preferring non-existence or death over his current living hell (Job 3:3ff). The cure for these failings Eliphaz prescribes in v.6 when he insinuates that Job's reverence for God was faltering and that the integrity of his ways of trusting obedience was perhaps showing its defects in this time of trial. In sum, Eliphaz maintains that a man's aversion to pain and perplexity is inconsistent with true godly virtue and faithful reverence. If this assertion were true, then the same charge would hold true for Jesus, who despised the shame and anguish of the cross, even though He bore them with a view to the joy that was set before him (Mt. 26:38,39; Phil. 2:8; Heb. 12:2). The godly are not stoically indifferent to pain and perplexity, but feel them keenly and cry to the God of wisdom and truth for light and to the Lord of mercy and love for relief from their painful burdens. Those who are godly counselors understand this and seek to convey sympathy more than censure to those suffering in painful confusion.

Tuesday, July 1st - Job 4: 7-11

Here Eliphaz expresses orthodox words that fail to apply to Job's unorthodox situation. According to the justice of God, the innocent should not perish, the upright should not be destroyed, and the dominating sowers of iniquity should be terminated by the blast of God's holy wrath. However, God is more than just and holy. He is loving and merciful to the point of giving his beloved, only-begotten Son to die for sinners. He calls and empowers the innocent to suffer for the guilty and the sinless One to die for those who are dead in their own transgressions and sin, in order that they might live. Job, the righteous, is in the economy of God suffering as though he were a great and guilty sinner. His sufferings are in fellowship with Christ's sufferings and they foreshadow the substance of God's saving grace in Christ. Eliphaz speaks according to what he has seen (v.8). In calm and measured determination to exalt the justice of God, he is blind to the loving heart of the Lord of salvation. Whereas Job's raw cries were in conformity with true reverence and godly character, the lecture on righteousness that Eliphaz delivers fails to apprehend, still less to fulfill, the royal law of God's saving love and costly salvation (Jas. 2:8).

Wednesday, July 2nd - Job 4: 7-11

Eliphaz speaks more according to what he had seen (v.8) than he does according to what God had shown. Although the Word of God gives us understanding, it is a subtle but destructive fault when we rely on our understanding to the point of our becoming blind to the being and ways of our infinite and eternal God (Prov. 3:5,6). The thing we are called most clearly and vitally to understand about our God is His love to us in Christ, which surpasses knowledge but fills and empowers a heart hungering to know and to share that love (Eph. 3:17-19).

Thursday, July 3rd - Job 4: 12-16

In these verses Eliphaz seeks to support his assertion that Job had been suffering because of his sins. He begins to recount a vision he had received in a dream. We cannot fault the man for his respect for dreams and visions. In those days before God had given His whole counsel in Scripture and before He had spoken His final and perfect Word in His Son, the Lord did reveal Himself in various ways and portions (Heb. 1:1,2). We do, however, fault Eliphaz for his failing to test this vision to see whether it was truly from God. Not all visions are of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, while it may have been true that Eliphaz had such a vision in his dream, it does not follow that what he saw and heard applied to Job. The truth that we know from the Lord's assessment of Job's friends, given in the final chapter, is that they wrongly applied their theological formulations to Job and thus misrepresented the Lord whom they assumed they were faithfully serving. How careful we must be rightly to divide the word of truth! Our glib citations of verses without due regard for their contexts within the whole counsel of God and our loveless endeavors to apply the Word to others will always hurt others and bring divine censure upon ourselves.

Friday, July 4th - Job 4: 12-16

There are aspects of this dream that should raise strong suspicion as to whether this vision was from the Lord. Stealth and whisperings seem to go beyond the Lord's speaking to us in the gentle voice of His truth and love. Dread and trembling may be features of one being under conviction of sin but they actually are closer to the effects of demonic accusations. Finally, when any sinner apprehends the genuine Spirit of the Lord, his hair does not stand up so much as

his whole body falls as a dead man before the glorious divine majesty (Rev. 1:17). There are some spirits that we should discern to be unholy and therefore rejected rather than to be holy and revered as divine.

Saturday, July 5th - Job 4: 16, 17

The apparition that Eliphaz saw spoke. Its speaking began with a good and necessary question, asking how any person could be found righteous in God's sight. It is a question that sinners dare not ask seriously because they know the answer to be that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and that the consequence of sin is death and that after death comes judgment. This question provokes the answer that is the sobering reality and bad news for all sinners. The answer precedes and prepares the way for the good news of salvation. Yet here is precisely where Eliphaz badly misses the mark in his relating the vision to Job. The question had been faced and answered by Job long ago. He was already a trophy of God's saving grace. For him this question serves only to increase his anguish by insinuating that he is a hypocrite in need of divine conviction and conversion. Neither all dreams and visions, nor all thoughts and imaginations are meant for us to share with others. If we uncritically communicate them we may well find that we are doing the devil's dirty work.

Sunday, July 6th - Job 4: 17-21

The question may be good and necessary for some, but not applicable to all. However, the answer that follows in vv.18-21 is neither true nor loving for any person. It is a counsel of sheer despair, holding out no hope for sinners and denying the love of God while distorting His holiness by making it to any degree an incommunicable attribute of divinity. The truth is that God does have confidence not only in His holy angels but also in his sinful but redeemed people. His confidence is in His knowing that the good work He has begun in them He will bring to perfection through His living in them to will and to do His good pleasure. The Lord converts and changes sinners into His perfection. Job was a converted and changed man (although in process of becoming a perfect man). The apparition Eliphaz heard spoke only of condemnation.

Monday, July 7th - Job 5: 1-7

The words of Eliphaz grow more heartless and untrue in this passage. His challenge for Job to call for help on angels, the ones that Eliphaz has already denounced as being guilty of error in God's sight (4:18), is a presumption based on an assumption. The assumption of Eliphaz (4:18-21) was an exaggeration of truth and therefore false as well as being inapplicable to Job. The presumption is that Job was looking for help from angels, or worse, men, when he should have been looking only to God. Job may have hoped for sympathy and comforting love from his friends but through the words of Eliphaz he was surely beyond any expectation of his receiving understanding or help from anyone except his God. It is a shame and a sin when our words are as thorns that drive our friends to the Lord when they should be as apples of gold in settings of silver (Prov. 25:11) that lovingly draw them sweetly to the Lord and confirm them in Him.

Tuesday, July 8th - Job 5: 2, 3

Eliphaz charges Job not only with folly but more fundamentally with his being a foolish man. The fool in Scripture is not just a silly person but rather is a perverse and wicked person. How quickly Job's friend has forsaken compassion for a spirit of condemning prosecution. Here is a

warning for us to be on our guard even when we begin a good and loving work of helping a brother in need. The devil is an expert at turning our good intentions to love a brother into a punishing zeal to prove him wrong.

Wednesday, July 9th - Job 5: 2, 3

Eliphaz not only insults Job by implying that he is a fool, but he also threatens the Lord's servant with death. His words make it clear that he regards Job's lament and cries of anguish to be expressions of sinful anger that will lead to Job's death. In addition, Eliphaz declares holy war against Job when in v.3 he rises to an insufferable height of pietistic arrogance and says without hesitation that he curses the abode of the fool. Here Eliphaz comes close to exceeding the boundaries that Satan observed when he abided by the Lord's prohibiting him from taking Job's life. Yet Satan was surely firing up Eliphaz's sense of righteous indignation so that he threatened Job with death. If we allow our compassion to grow cold we will quickly find ourselves to be ready instruments to do Satan's worst bidding.

Thursday, July 10th - Job 5: 4,5

The loveless abuse that Eliphaz dishes out to Job increases to an appalling magnitude in these verses. With cruel words he tells Job that the deaths of his children and the destruction of his crops and possessions all resulted from Job's proud folly that he had tried to pass off as being his faith. In reality, it was Eliphaz who was the sinful hypocrite as he was masquerading as God's holy spokesman when he was in fact puffed up by his own vanity. We play a dangerous game when we regard ourselves as being competent to judge others. We grow deceived and duplicitous when we exchange the judgment of charity for that of a condemning spirit that acts from loveless ignorance and mistakes a strong but wrong sense of certainty for a true and confident stand on God's truth. A cruel spirit never comes from God above but rather arises from infernal depths.

Friday, July 11th - Job 5: 6, 7

Eliphaz rightly maintains that we all live in a cause-and-effect world. More specifically, he asserts that our natural, sinful natures breed our troubles and multiply our miseries. He speaks the truth, but not all of the truth. The universal miseries of mankind result from our sin and the Lord's curse on the world, due to our sin, as well as from the divine opposition to proud sinners. Yet, Eliphaz does not speak of the Lord's gracious redemption of sinners or of their transformation into godliness with which the Lord is pleased, however imperfect such godliness may be in this life. We sinners are born for trouble because we are by nature children of wrath (Eph. 2:3). Yet God, because He is rich in mercy, delivers us from our sins and miseries, awakens us to enjoy new life with Him through Christ (Eph. 2:4-6). Anyone who, like Eliphaz, claims that a regenerated child of God, such as Job, lives in divine condemnation due to his sins, is himself accursed because he despises the precious and saving mercy of God (Gal. 1:8,9).

Saturday, July 12th - Job 5: 8-16

In this passage, Eliphaz declares to Job the way of salvation. Again, he speaks the truth. He does not misrepresent the Lord in anything that he asserts about Him. Nor does Eliphaz appear to be insincere when he declares that he would seek God in this massive tribulation of Job's. However, Eliphaz fails to speak the truth in wisdom or in love. That he lacks godly wisdom is evident by his insistence that Job is suffering due to his sin when in fact, as we know by the

testimony of God, Job is suffering for his righteousness (Job 2:3). That Eliphaz lacks love we perceive in his insistence that Job is hiding sin that Eliphaz is determined to prosecute. All of his fine and accurate assertions about God are declared by this misguided man to the end of his bringing Job to conviction and repentance. Yet Job did not need to repent or to be urged to seek the God whom he already possessed by faith. Had Job allowed himself to be pressured by Eliphaz into repentance, he would have been turning away from his God and not seeking to stand by faith in and with Him.

Sunday, July 13th - Job 5: 8

It is most likely that Eliphaz is speaking sincerely and truly in these words. He and his friends do appear to be genuinely godly and orthodox in their piety. However, when Eliphaz distinguishes himself from Job by declaring that he would seek God and implies that Job was not seeking the Lord, his is not the offense of truth but rather is an offense of loveless and unnecessary counsel given in ignorance. It is really Eliphaz who is the fool here, and his folly is magnified because it is expressed immediately after he had castigated the foolish man (vv.2ff). Even such a foolish man, had he remained silent, would have been regarded by the godly Job to have been wise, sympathetic, and compassionate.

Monday, July 14th - Job 5: 9

Eliphaz speaks the truth when he declares that God does great and unsearchable things that are wonderful and countless. One such inscrutable divine wonder was unfolding before the eyes of Job's friends and they were the ones who disregarded it. The Lord was applying affliction to His servant not as a punishment for his sin but as a rewarding blessing for his faithfulness.

Tuesday, July 15th – Job 5: 10, 11

With these words, Eliphaz commends the goodness of the Lord as manifested in His common grace and good providence. However, his assertion of God's goodness is incomplete. The whole truth is not that God causes His blessed rain to fall only on the just. The Lord showers His common blessings upon the just and the unjust (Mt. 5:45). The stark discrimination of the divine blessing, as stated by Eliphaz, implies that only the righteous abound while only the unrighteous are abased. He apparently means to convey this to Job as another barb to prick his supposed sinful pride. Still, Job may have found some comfort from the statement that the Lord sets on high the lowly and lifts the mourner to safety. The Lord's suffering servant knew that he had been reduced to being a lowly mourner by the hand of God beneath which he humbled himself, despite his friend's false charges to the contrary.

Wednesday, July 16th - Job 5: 12, 13

Following his distorted declaration of God's common grace, Eliphaz speaks of the righteous government of the Lord as it is exercised over the wicked. The specified form of wickedness is that of sinful cunning. Once again we see how this man seeks to turn truth that God gives to set His people free into an implement to torture them into a confession of a sin that is not theirs. Eliphaz has heard Job's cries of anguish and we see how he misinterprets them. He thinks that Job is angry with the Lord because the Lord had reduced his worldly estate. He is convinced that Job is proudly relying upon his own wisdom and regarding his suffering to be senseless. Accordingly, Eliphaz targets those who are wise in their own eyes because he thinks of his friend as being such a person. Yet, it is Eliphaz who is too wise by half, as he cunningly seeks to bring

false condemnation upon Job. The Lord will frustrate Eliphaz, while approving Job's integrity. Eliphaz will be captured by his own shrewdness and the Lord will condemn his cunning advice, while Job will be commended by His God.

Thursday, July 17th - Job 5: 14

Eliphaz speaks of how the Lord delivers the proud, who are puffed up by their own wisdom and cleverness, into the web of their own conceits. The darkness they encounter is due not to there being any lack of light, for they cannot see even in the light of day. They are blinded by the deceitful power of their own sins into which the Lord has justly delivered them (Rom. 1:21-24). This profound truth that Eliphaz so accurately states is intended to apply to Job, who has just cried out in his anguish about the darkness and gloom of his soul in his extreme tribulations (Job 3:5,6,9,16,17,20-26). In reality, it is Eliphaz who is plunging himself into increasing darkness by his stubborn dogmatism, while Job sees and is gradually moving toward ever greater light. Let us be careful not to twist the truths of Scripture to our own destruction (2 Pet. 3:16).

Friday, July 18th - Job 5: 15, 16

These are ironic words in view of the relative positions of Job and Eliphaz. It is the contention of Eliphaz that Job has sinned and brought upon himself his sufferings and that Job has compounded his sins by his crying out in his pain. The implication of Eliphaz is that God would save him and his friends from the strong and sinful words of Job. However, the reality is that the Lord would save Job from the cutting words of his friends who assumed superiority over him when he appeared to be impoverished by his sufferings. The seemingly helpless Job has hope in God who will shut the smug mouths of his self-righteous friends.

Saturday, July 19th - Job 5: 17-27

With these words, Eliphaz concludes his first attempt to convince Job that he was suffering because of some hidden sin in his life. What Eliphaz says in this passage is not only true but hopeful. However, because his assumption that Job was being reproved by God is false, all of these fine and true words are neither necessary nor helpful to the man who is suffering for his righteousness. In fact, because these truths are lovelessly and foolishly spoken, they hurt Job and tempt him to despise even the truths themselves. It is of vital importance that we speak the truth in love because if we do not we provoke those to whom we speak to hate not only our lovelessness but also the truths of the Lord who does love them. For that kind of service we will answer not to other people but rather to the Lord.

Sunday, July 20th - Job 5: 17

The reproofs of our God do serve for our highest and everlasting good. That is why we should see them as serving for our ultimate joy (Jas. 1: 2-4). The psalmist declares that it was for his good that he was afflicted (Ps. 119:17) and wise Solomon tells us that God's reproofs lead to life (Prov. 6:23). However, Job's afflictions do not represent divine reproof. Nor is Job despising the discipline of his all-powerful Lord. Job is in emotional shock, raw physical and emotional pain, and in anguished mental perplexity. But in all of this he clings to the reality that his God is not reproving him for sin. Job may waiver but he will not break under the torture that he has only begun to taste, as Eliphaz tries to choke this man of God with the very truths of God administered in a spirit that is foreign to those truths and in a way that does not apply to the Job's true needs.

Monday, July 21st - Job 5: 18-20

Now Eliphaz asserts the effective sovereignty of the Lord. God gives pain and God removes pain. Job has already declared this not from the context of clinical observation and philosophical reasoning, but rather in the matrix of his worship given to the Lord even as the worshipper was in the depths of manifold pains (Job 1:20-22). God delivers His people from all sorts of suffering. By his enumerating six then seven troubles, Eliphaz appears to trivialize Job's endurance of the five waves of trouble that have so far come upon him. With the mention of famine, war, and death, Eliphaz relativizes Job's trials by alerting him that worse things could yet come upon him. When Eliphaz paints the security of the faithful sufferer in these trials in such glowing colors as their not being touched by evil, he insinuates that Job's howls of anguish, because they do not measure up to such serene piety, reveal a failure of his faith. The truths are wonderful, their applications are needlessly and cruelly wounding.

Tuesday, July 22nd - Job 5: 21

These words, promise divine blessing, yet provide insult to Job. Far from Job experiencing a covering from the scourge of tongues, he was suffering the caustic flow of Eliphaz's words, the violence he threatened in his cursing of the abode of the foolish (vv.3-5), and the warnings of worse afflictions yet to come (vv.19,20). Eliphaz speaks as though all of the faithful, if they live righteously, are preserved from all afflictions. The truth is that the Lord does not preserve His people *from* afflictions, but He perfects them *in* afflictions (Rom. 8:37).

Wednesday, July 23rd - Job 5: 22, 23

There is comforting truth expressed in these verses. When a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him (Prov. 16:7). Even if the enemies of the righteous are wild lions, God can shut their mouths, as He did when Daniel was thrown into the lions' den (Dan. 6:16-22). On the other hand, there are times when the Lord ordains that His people suffer according to His wise, holy, and loving purposes. Read Hebrews 1:32-40 and notice there how some of God's people have, *conquered kingdoms...shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword...*, while others, *were tortured...experienced mockings and scourgings...chains and imprisonments. They were stoned, they were sawn in two...put to death with the sword...*. Yet all of them are described as being ones of whom the world was not worthy and as being those who were approved by God. Eliphaz speaks only half of the truth in these verses, telling Job that all of the faithful only abound while it is the unrighteous souls who are abased by God. Such half-truths undermine the whole counsel of God (Phil. 4:11-13). They are worse than silence.

Thursday, July 24th - Job 5: 24

The words of Eliphaz continue cruelly to afflict Job. He mentions a secure tent when the whole of Job's extensive and solid household lay in ruins. He glibly tells of the righteous visiting his abode, having no fear of loss, when Job, the righteous servant of the Lord, had already lost all of his earthly estate. Job's loss was due not to the cursing of the Lord, but rather to the cruelty of Satan who spoke through the smug curses of Eliphaz (vv.3-5). What grace we need truly to help one another in our common tribulations! Our hearts should stop our mouths from speaking anything other than truth and love to our suffering brethren, while we open our mouths with interceding cries to our Father for His effectual help to be showered upon those brethren who are afflicted and downcast (Mt. 9:36).

Friday, July 25th - Job 5: 25, 26

How promising and idyllic these words seem. Yet they surely struck Job as the twisting knife of a torturer who probed his wounds not to heal him but only to increase his pain. Job had lost all of his descendants to death. God would give to him more children while preserving in His near presence those who had gained the beatific vision of the face of their redeeming God. However, Eliphaz was not prophesying such restoration as he was reminding Job painfully that he then and there on his ash heap had no children and enjoyed no vigorous health, but only endured a covering of painful and repulsive boils. Scripture does not encourage us to minister songs of joy to the suffering. It tells us to weep with those who weep, until their joy comes to wipe away the tears we share with them because we love them, understand their throes, and sympathize with them in their anguish.

Saturday, July 26th - Job 5: 27

Eliphaz concludes with brief and imperatives. He began with a humble request to speak a word with Job and expressed a desire not to excite impatience in his suffering friend (Job 4:2). Now, after many words calculated to convince Job that his sins have brought upon him his sufferings, Eliphaz finishes with dominating orders. The sufferer is commanded to: 1) *Behold this*, to see the force of Eliphaz's arguments; 2) *hear it*, taking them into his head and heart; 3) *know for yourself*, applying them to himself. The basis for these dictates is the faulty consideration of Eliphaz (*we have investigated it*), by which he has determined his assertions to be true (*thus it is*). How far we can drift from our speaking the truth in love when we lean on our own understanding and mistake our sense of certainty for the conviction of truth.

July 2014

Sunday, July 27th - Job 6: 1-7

In patient silence Job listened to all of the arguments and charges that his friend, Eliphaz, had brought against him. Now it is time for Job to speak. The Lord's suffering servant opens his mouth not to express thanks to his friend. That is because all that Eliphaz declared missed the mark. He was judging the man, Job, by his sufferings, and not judging the sufferings by the man. The proven godliness of Job should have commended him to his friends and drawn from them unreserved sympathy and comfort. Such was their original intention (Job 2:11). However, when they saw Job's affliction they were astonished and prostrated with grief. Then, when Job cried out in his piercing and profound anguish, Eliphaz proceeded to criticize and prosecute him. Any person in the kind of pain and perplexity that Job was enduring should be ministered to with loving and sympathetic tears, not with callous teaching.

Monday, July 28th – Job 6: 1-4

It is the magnitude of Job's anguish that prompts his cries. He admits that he is a sinful man but he rightly declares that his immense sufferings cannot be the result of God's righteous punishment for his sins. Still less is his great vexation commensurate with any loving chastisement his merciful God would bring upon him for residual imperfections. It is this enormous burden of affliction and the excruciating pain it has brought upon Job that causes him to cry out in raw anguish. His true sense of the Lord's sovereignty leads him to acknowledge that his God has ordained the massive blows that have landed upon him and penetrated him deeply. His trust in the Lord has, therefore, become tainted with his apprehensions of almighty

divine terrors that combine and crash against him as a cruel and overwhelming army. Eliphaz made no acknowledgement of this enormous pain that had seized Job, and yet it was that pain that compelled Job to rage in a way that his friend refused to understand. If we encounter our brethren in great pain and fail to factor their pain into our consideration of them, we will fail to speak and act in relation to where they really are, and we will be sorry comforters to them.

Tuesday, July 29th – Job 6: 5-7

In these verses, Job refers to natural examples that indicate true cause and effect connections. The braying of the donkey and the lowing of the ox occur not when they are satisfied with feeding. A man does not without complaint feed on tasteless food. It is not that he loathes the food and its vital nutrition, but instead its savorless preparation renders the food repulsive to him. Similarly, a godly man does not cry and curse when he enjoys the comfort of the Lord and the peace that passes understanding. Something sinister compels his expression of rage. We know that it is Satan's malice that has imposed these painful afflictions upon Job, and that the Lord has sovereignly permitted this Satanic mauling not as a punishment for Job's sins but as a privilege that would serve ultimately for Job's highest good. Our cries when we experience pain should not be regarded as evidence of our sin or failure of faith, especially when our Lord is the last to chide us for our weeping and the first to wipe away all of our tears.

Wednesday, July 30th – 6: 8, 9

God did not make man to suffer. It is for this reason that we naturally desire pleasure and avoid pain. We brought all pain and suffering into our world because of our sin. Our knowing this does not make our suffering less painful. Neither does the strongest faith of the most sanctified and spiritually mature believer make him impervious to pain and anguish. Anyone whose hand is thrust into a fire will seek to pull it out. That is why we find Job once more expressing a strong desire for his death as a merciful deliverance from his overwhelming anguish. He does, however, resist the impulse to take his own life. Instead, he expresses a strong desire that God would cut him off from this world of woe and bring him into the eternal gain of his salvation. In essence, Job is saying even in the confusion of his deepest anguish, *Not my will but Thy will be done*.

Thursday, July 31st - Job 6: 10

Job cries, he curses, he rages, he contemplates desperate possibilities. Yet, in all these swirling emotions he remains more than a conqueror because he cannot and will not be separated from the largely concealed but still consoling love of his God. The effect of this glimpse of divine love that pierces his darkness is to him like that of a drowning man catching a life-sustaining breath of air. It is a small blessing but it is enough to make him rejoice in his trials and to cleave more faithfully to his wise, loving and holy God.

Friday, August 1st - Job 6: 10

In the face of all that has rushed crushingly against him, Job still finds consolation from his Lord. If the hand of God has smitten him through the course of dark and painful providences that have come upon him, the words of God continue to give Job current comfort and hope of future blessing. Had Job accepted and submitted to the faulty counsel of Eliphaz, he would have confessed himself a condemned sinner when in truth the Lord had made him to be a trophy of

His saving grace and one for whom there was no divine condemnation but only divine commendation (Rom. 8:1; Job 1:1,8,22; 2:3; 42:7,8).

Saturday, August 2nd - Job 6: 10-13

Job can yet rejoice in his unsparing pain, but he also asserts his right to cry in his pain. In the form of several rhetorical questions he essentially asserts that he is not made of metal or rock but that he is a man of flesh and blood. He also possesses godly virtues that make him more tenderly sensitive to such things as the deaths of his children, and not stoically indifferent to those excruciating losses. True spirituality prompts sympathy in us toward those who are in pain. It does not fill our veins with ice so that we expect and demand of others that they hold their peace even when their hands are in a fire.

Sunday, August 3rd - Job 6: 14-20

In vv. 11-13, Job is pleading for the sympathetic understanding of his friends. In vv.14-20, he registers how badly his friends had failed him in their attempts to minister comfort to him. All who are godly would agree that a suffering man's friends should be strongly disposed to be kind to him. Even if a man is caught in transgression, as Job's friends believe they have caught him, the Word of God enjoins us to treat such a person with restoring lovingkindness (Gal. 6:1). Yet Job declares that the only loving consolation he had thus far received from his friends was like that offered by shallow streambeds that promise refreshment to those perishing of thirst but provide only arid disappointment. Let us learn from this how we can raise hope in our suffering brethren by our drawing near to them in their need with a promise of loving help, but then magnify their pains and dash their hope when we proceed to lecture them on their faults and failings rather than lovingly embrace them and weep with them.

Monday, August 4th - Job 6: 14-20

A suffering man should expect to receive kindness from his friend, and even more kindness from his brother (v.14). Job does not disown his friends because of their callous failure to be kind, nor does he refuse to own them as his brothers. He continues to love them and he knows that they do, despite their faults, love him (v.15). However, Job is compelled to express his deep disappointment in them while he appeals for them to repent of their treating him as though he were their enemy and the enemy of God. We can, in our zeal for truth, speak without love. Then we no longer speak the truth. The love of God opens our minds to understanding others in their plight. It opens our hearts to feel tenderly toward them and opens our mouths to speak words of comfort rather than criticism to them. This is the truth that sets those whom we love free from their despair.

Tuesday, August 5th – Job 6: 21-23

Job concludes that his friends have failed to prove his sin. But they have proven, by their callous words, that they are like shallow streams that are dry when their refreshing water was most needed. It is a heart-breaking matter when our Christian profession exceeds our loving performance. It is an awful fact that our determination to correct others can overshadow our determination to owe them nothing except love (Rom. 13:8).

Wednesday, August 6th – Job 6: 21-23

Job declares why his friends had failed to minister kindness to him. It was because they took

self-regarding counsel of their fears and were not exercising faith that works through love (Gal. 5:6). They beheld a truly terrible reality when they came upon Job, shorn of all his children and possessions, sitting in an ash heap, wrapped in his torn clothes, and being covered with repulsive and agonizing boils. Yet rather than their drawing Job to themselves in loving sympathy, they proceeded to keep their distance from him and salve their consciences by their speaking words of pious correction that pushed Job away from them. They feared that their lovingly and uncritically drawing near to Job would subject them to being infected with his afflictions. Such fears fanned the consuming flames of Job's fiery furnace when love would have and should have cooled those flames with healing comfort and fortifying consolation.

Thursday, August 7th - Job 6: 21-23

The fears of Job's friends distorted his appearance in their sight. Those fears caused them to regard their brother who needed their love as a beggar who by his sin had impoverished himself and was now demanding that they bear sacrificial cost for his relief. The questions Job asks show how their fears have driven them to regard him as one making ever-greater demands of them. They consider him as a man whose sinful folly had landed him in the clutches of kidnappers demanding a ransom, then of enemies who sought to kill him and anyone who sided with him, and finally of tyrants settled in places of government who held dominating sway over Job's life. In fact, all Job desired was loving sympathy which would have cost his friends nothing. He knew that his plight was far beyond their ability to rectify, and for that rectification he looked only to his God. From his friends, he only desired compassionate understanding, and they gave him increasingly sharp criticisms.

Friday, August 8th - Job 6: 24, 25

Job moves from his telling his friends of their failure to his asking them for their true and loving help. By his asking, Job demonstrates that he is not proud and arrogantly resistant to correction. It is not words of rebuke that he resents. He values such words as the faithful wounds of a loving brother. It is the presumptuous and false words that his friends bring against him that he resists precisely because he is a godly man of faith. It is one of the highest marks of true godliness when a child of God recognizes his need for faithful correction and welcomes it as a loving and edifying administration.

Saturday, August 9th - Job 6: 26

Here Job makes a critical and valid point. When we are inclined to reprove a brother or sister in Christ, we must consider what they say and do in the context of their current circumstances. No one lives in a vacuum. A man who cries, *Fire!* in a crowded auditorium when there is no fire, is guilty of disturbing the people in the audience and putting them in danger of injuring each other as they hurry to escape the non-existent flames. One who cries the same word when there is a fire is a helping hero. Job's friends judged his words as though they issued from placid and pleasing circumstances. They took little if any consideration of the physical pain, mental perplexity, and emotional anguish that he felt in his furnace of affliction. They lacked understanding of Job's despair and therefore judged him wrongly, given his true circumstances, as though a man in pain should not cry out for relief. Our Lord, who bore unspeakable agonies for our salvation, is the first to treat us with most kind and understanding sympathy when we are in our times of painful need (Heb. 2:18; 4:15,16).

Sunday, August 10th - Job 6: 27

With these words, Job may seem to go too far in his response to his friends. Yet, those who demonstrably lack the love, patience, kindness, and gentleness that are components of the fruit of the Spirit are capable of doing such things as Job here mentions. If we think, feel, and act in the flesh, there are no limits to the callous and hurtful depths to which we can sink.

Monday, August 11th - Job 6: 28, 29

Job appeals to his friends to consider him as he is in his horrible plight and not as an abstraction of their own intellectual making. He is appealing for their loving consideration. The loving soul regards and accepts the one he loves as that one truly is. Even if the loving one beholds his beloved in sin, he offers loving and tender rebukes to restore and not harsh and false judgments to condemn his beloved. Job follows his appeal for his friends' love with an appeal for them to stop pursuing their course of harsh and false prosecution against him. The emphatic request Job makes for his friends to desist from their malicious prosecution is based not only upon love but also upon holy justice. Job is not lying or exaggerating in his cries. In all of this he is the Lord's righteous servant.

Tuesday, August 12th - Job 6: 30

Job's friends judged his words from their detached perspective. They were not in the furnace of affliction where Job was. His raw and imprecise howling was not issuing from the calm deliberations of a scholar. They erupted from the highly sensitive heart of a godly servant who had been thrust into the dark night of his soul. Spectators are never competent to judge the performances of those who suffer as they run the race set before them by their Lord who leads them through many tribulations. The most valuable thing that such spectators can know is that they are witnessing something they do not know from personal experience. The most valuable thing that such spectators can give to those suffering is their loving sympathy, and if not that, then their prudent silence.

Wednesday, August 13th - Job 7: 1-3

Job's faithful words have silenced his friends, at least for a time. He uses this reprieve to turn from speaking to his friends and returns to expressing his moans of lamentation to his God. The sufferer declares from his anguished perspective that people in general are compelled to lead hard lives. This declaration is not a false generalization that has resulted from the distorting power of Job's sufferings. The man of God is here declaring truth he has discovered in his furnace of affliction. His eyes have been opened through his sufferings to the hard plight of all sinners who must eke out their daily bread through the sweat of their brows. Job was not so sensitive to this aspect of common human misery in his days of prosperity. This period of dark and empty allotment came from his Lord who was stimulating his growth in grace, knowledge, and tender sympathy for others through his appointed trials. Only our Lord can make our pains so productive for us.

Thursday, August 14th - Job 7: 4-6

Job's pains serve for his good by making him more compassionate toward others whose lives are dominated by misery. Yet, the development of this process is not smooth and even. Job truly

represents his current grim perspective. His life is caught in what appears to him to be an endless night (v.4). It is not a night that brings him refreshing sleep. He remains awake and he is aware, not of the things that light would reveal, but only of the darkness that obscures everything. He also truly represents his awareness of his loathsome physical condition (v.5). Then he speaks of the erratic course of his life by saying that whereas his pains and perplexity seem slowly and tortuously to drag on, at the same time his days are swiftly being consumed in his misery. Yet, Job goes too far in concluding that his days would come to an end without hope. With that assertion he expresses how he *feels*, and not necessarily what he *believes*. He senses that the current course will become permanent. He sees no indication that light and life will return to him. However, as he senses these grim apprehensions he also senses and expresses at least the seeds of hope in two things: 1) that his time is allotted; and 2) that his days pass like a weaver's shuttle. The one allotting is the Lord, and it is the Lord who is weaving Job's life with holy purpose and loving design to give him a future and a hope (Prov. 23:18; 24:14; Jer.29:11).

Friday, August 15th – Job 7: 7-10

Job feels that his life is about to be extinguished, and that his days of enjoying good things are past. Even more grimly, he speaks with little if any consciousness of or hope in his resurrection from the dead, and he expresses no awareness that for him to die would be gain (Phil. 1:21). Surely this dark apprehension of his own death would have also colored his understanding of the status of his dead children and would have magnified his grief. Such feelings arise when we are struck and stunned by massive calamity. The only effective help one can offer such a sufferer is prayer to God and patient tenderness toward the one in such anguish. Patience is required because the sufferer is truly and deeply wounded and must heal over the course of time before he will see more accurately. We only retard such healing when we try to rush it with our challenging words.

Saturday, August 16th - Job 7: 11-15

These words may seem rash and irreverent. They are directed by Job not to his friends but to his God. The singular pronoun, *Thou*, indicates that Job knows that the Lord has sovereignly ordained his sufferings. Yet, rather than his meekly submitting to them, he determines to vent his anguish and express his bitter complaints. The question of reverence really does not enter into these anguished howls of the godly sufferer. If anything, Job is honoring his God by demonstrating his sense of security in which he feels safe to express to his God, with unreserved honesty, the pains and bewilderments that plague him. The Lord who desires truth in our innermost being makes clear through His consistent approval of Job that He would rather that we express ourselves truly to Him than that we speak to Him from an artificial projection of righteousness.

Sunday, August 17th - Job 7: 16-19

In these words, Job appears to conceive of God as his enemy and persistent torturer. We, the readers, have the advantage over Job because we know from the account of Scripture that it was not God but Satan who hounded the man with ceaseless accusations and loveless words of condemnation. Job does not see this truth at this point in his tribulations, but he will come to see it in due course. He may be stumbling in this contest with his unseen, infernal foe, but still he cleaves to his God by directing his anguished cries to Him. In the dark night of a saint's soul, the Lord allows and even encourages His suffering servants to cry to Him. Our God understands

that our misapprehensions formed in the furnace of our afflictions are but the dross within us that He is purging from us for our lasting good. Our questioning God and complaining to Him under pressure of severe pain are things far removed from our cursing God and renouncing our faith.

Monday, August 18th - Job 7: 20

From his raw and rash complaints Job once more humbles himself into a learning mode in which he sobbingly questions God and gropes for understanding of His mysterious ways in this dark providence. He seeks desperately to know from the Lord why he has been reduced to the point of hating his own life. Far from Job stoutly denying his sin, as Eliphaz had charged him with doing, the Lord's servant seeks to know from his omniscient God how he may have transgressed and brought upon himself his afflictions. The children of God can always afford to acknowledge their sins because their God has pledged Himself to be faithful and just to forgive them their sins and cleanse them from all unrighteousness, not to condemn and punish them for their sins.

Tuesday, August 19th - Job 7: 20, 21

From his inviting God's holy conviction Job proceeds to the saving compassion of the Lord. Boldly he asks the Lord to forgive and cleanse him from whatever sin he may have committed. He confesses that without such saving divine mercy he will die. Here we perceive the course that the godly take when they are charged by men or Satan with sin. Before the loveless charges of men and certainly under the pressure of Satan's malicious accusations, believers put on the breastplate of their righteousness (Eph. 6:14). However, when Satan and men are silenced, the godly can safely and do humbly ask their God to reveal to them if they are in any sin (Ps. 139:23,24). Even godly believers are not competent to judge us. Only our God knows us truly and loves us unchangeably so that He can effectively cleanse us and not condemn us (1 Cor. 4: 3-5).

Wednesday, August 20th - Job 7: 20, 21

Even as Job cries out for the forgiving mercy of his God he declares that he is about to sink into a death from which even God could not retrieve him. Job's faith rises and falls. It shines brilliantly but then is covered by the ashes of his former life. His friends serve not to fan his faith into a growing brilliance but rather to extinguish its smoldering flickers. Yet whether he is up or down, whether he sees the light of truth and love of his God or is plunged into darkness and despair, he continues to acknowledge and cleave to his God. He has asked God to speak and answer his pleading questions. Job will soon hear words. But they will not be from his compassionate God. Instead, those words will be spoken by another of his critical friends. Yet, our Lord does speak to us even when He is silent and when man and devils rush to foist upon us their false remedies for our miseries. Because God does not speak to convict Job, that righteous man will be empowered to weather more seas of satanic affliction administered through Job's uncomprehending friends. Let us, like Job, cling to our God who has suffered to save us and to make of our days, our trials, and our tears not death and dissolution but life and glory and joy.

Thursday, August 21st - Job 8: 1-3

Job has called upon his God but has received an answer from his friend, Bildad. We come to know the character of Bildad from the words he speaks to his suffering friend. We find him lacking the encompassing wisdom and humanity of Eliphaz. He is an intellectual, a theorist, and a logician. Such qualities may be desirable by those who want to lord themselves over others in

argument, but they fail to comprehend the totality of the human condition that includes thoughts and also emotions, imaginations, and capacities for love and sensitivities to beauty. If Eliphaz failed to help Job, we shall find Bildad failing with an aggressive vengeance. He opens his speech by declaring Job's words at best empty wind and at worst pernicious attacks against the glory of God's justice. Bildad addresses Job's painful anguish with dismissiveness and theories that he considers substantial and compelling. His concern is not to relieve Job but rather to reprove him. His tool is not love but logic. He is a dogmatist who exalts the righteousness of the Lord above His redeeming mercy. Bildad represents those in the Church who seek to argue people into their own conception of the kingdom of God rather than lovingly to attract them into the Lord's true kingdom.

Friday, August 22nd - Job 8: 4-6

Bildad offers Job theorems in these verses. They may be valid expressions but they lack humanity and loving consideration. They insinuate that the death of Job's children and Job's own sufferings all resulted from their sins. Even if these theorems were true, there would be no blessing, benefit, or common human consideration in their being spoken when a man is freshly and deeply in the agonies of his grief. These theorems are also too rigid in their conceptions and deficient in their assertions. For example, God actually delivers His children through their deaths not into the power of their transgressions but out of the presence of their sins and into the great gain of their perfection and joy in His presence (Phil. 1:21; Heb. 12:23). But we already know that Satan's malice and not Job's sin is the cause of Job's suffering. Bildad, therefore, speaks neither truth nor love.

Saturday, August 23rd - Job 8: 4-6

Bildad's use of the word, *if*, in v.4 presupposes a condition that did not apply to Job. There is no evidence in Scripture that indicates the death of Job's children was a divine judgment upon their sin. When Bildad twice uses the word, *if*, in vv.5,6 the conditions do apply to Job. The Lord's servant had been seeking God and His compassion; he was pure and upright in God's sight. Yet when Bildad declares that the Lord would restore and increase Job, it is clear that he implies that because Job's estate had not been restored at the current time, Job was in sin. The fallacy in such reasoning issues from a failure to reckon on the reality that the Lord would ordain the affliction of a righteous man and prolong it until such time as His perfect purposes were fulfilled for that man through the course of his sufferings. Bildad's contention was the same as that of the mockers of Jesus at the cross. Those mockers insisted that if God took pleasure in His Son, He would deliver Jesus from the cross (Matt. 27:42,43). The truth was that the Father was never more well-pleased with His beloved Son than He was when Jesus submitted to His Father's will to deliver Him up for the salvation of sinners.

Sunday, August 24th - Job 8: 6, 7

The truth is that Job was upright before God and that God would restore Job's fortunes, making his latter days more blessed than his earlier days (Job 42:10-13). However, the way that Bildad presents this promise of restoration being dependent upon Job's repentance is not only simplistic but is also untrue and unloving. Job's friend is propounding salvation by man's works and not by God's grace. He would suspend the resurrection of sinners upon the good deeds of those sinners rather than upon the atoning death and justifying resurrection of Christ. Bildad's words are truly a counsel of despair given by one who perverts the glory of God's saving grace.

Monday, August 25th - Job 8: 8-10

Although Bildad appears to direct Job to seek God (v.5), he in fact bases his counsel upon the finite and fallible discoveries and analyses of man. Bildad calls for Job to humble himself and repent of his confidence that he was right with God. But in these verses he calls for him to humble himself before men, not God. Jesus spoke truly when He said that it is not what goes into a man's mouth but it is rather what comes out of his mouth that defiles him (Mk. 7:18-23). The words of Bildad reveal the reality of his trust in the traditions of men. They do not reveal any truth about Job or his God.

Tuesday, August 26th - Job 8: 11-14

Bildad goes on to lecture Job in the cause and effect nature of our world. His arrogance is insulting in that he treats Job, who had demonstrated his profound and effective understanding of the workings of this world through his competent rearing of his family and maintenance of his estate, as though he knew nothing about the cause and effect dynamic of nature. Bildad's lesson on logic runs thusly: as plants need water to flourish and without it they wither, so Job is withered and therefore he is without God. This is man's logical but not his theological thinking. It is, in fact, Bildad and his friends who prove to be withering in view of Job's sufferings while Job, for all of his pains and cries, is growing stronger in the Lord. It is Bildad and his friends who are concocting fragile webs in which they trust and into which they seek to thrust Job, while Job retains his confidence in the Lord and he, alone, will be commended by the Lord while his friends will be corrected by Him (Job 42:7-9).

August 2014

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Wednesday, August 27th - Proverbs 27: 1,2

Presumption and pride are both here forbidden. Our lives are not our own, either to predict or to promote. The rich fool thought that all of his tomorrows would be enjoyed in secure and prosperous ease; yet he discovered that his life had been given by One who would require it in the time, not of the rich fool's choosing, but of His own appointing (Lk. 12:15-21). Similarly, we must resist the impulse of self-promotion, for besides it being unseemly, we tend to overvalue our due. It is better for an unbiased stranger to note and announce our worth—it is best of all if we trust the Lord to honor us and keep and direct us all of our days. We will never be disappointed ultimately in his allotment of time and praise for us.

Thursday, August 28th - Proverbs 27: 3,4

Some burdens are heavy, but none so much as the fool's provocation. Neither our reasoning, retreating, nor retaliating can call off such a dog once he latches onto us as his target. May the Lord preserve and deliver us from such provocation. May He also deliver us from sinful jealousy, which emotion proves stronger and more destructive of ourselves and others than the most violent passion.

Friday, August 29th - Proverbs 27: 5,6

We may prefer flattery (26:28) or silence to open rebuke. Yet when reproof and rebuke are what we need, those who love us would be concealing their love should they give us quiet

acquiescence in place of a necessary challenge. Loyal and loving friends will wound us, cutting as a surgeon to remove a life-threatening tumor. Such superficial wounds beget deepest healing. Yet the flattering kisses of an enemy serve only to set us up for a kill. Let us recall this when our Lord and our brethren—our truest friends—speak to us in ways that convict and turn us from the sin that truly harms us.

Saturday, August 30th - Proverbs 27: 7

Here is a proverb concerning the relative nature of taste in this life. It is a fact that when one has an abundance of good things, gratitude, instead of growing commensurately, often diminishes. Yet when we lose all, then we are thankful even for crumbs that may fall our way. Though this phenomenon is true, it ought not be so for believers. Our gratitude for and delight in God's blessings should increase as the blessings increase. The more of Christ we have, the more we should hunger and thirst for Him. The more pure a ministry of the Word is, the more the people sitting under it should be grateful for it, especially when there are many in our day who would give almost anything to hear one of the sermons which a blessed congregation may take for granted weekly.

Sunday, August 31st - Proverbs 27: 8

A bird wandering from its nest departs from its comforts, security, rest, and responsibility. So it is with a person who is never content to stay at home. Flighty souls flee from blessings. It is true that we are pilgrims in this life, and in a sense are always on the move with Jesus, the pioneer of our faith. Yet He provides us with at least a tent, the lines of which are set in a place He knows to be most pleasant and beneficial to us, if only we would see it (Ps. 16: 6). Sin makes us restless; our Savior invites us to enjoy domestic tranquility.

Monday, September 1st - Proverbs 27: 9,10

We are born into our families, but we choose our friends. These verses extol the precious benefits and mutual responsibilities of friendship. We are reminded, for example, that counsel, whether given or received among intimate friends, is fragrantly medicinal and deeply appreciated. Thus we should neither withhold our counsel from friends, nor despise them when they give their counsel to us. Indeed, we are taught to maintain friendship across generational lines, and to rely on near friends sooner than distant relatives. For in the case of believing friends, though blood is thicker than water, spirit is thicker than both. Let us then value and nourish our friendships within the body of Christ above all relationships.

Tuesday, September 2nd - Proverbs 27: 11

Here is another word for both parents and children. Christian parents should be glad above all not that their children grow to become rich, famous, and successful in worldly terms, but rather that they grow to be wise, knowing and loving the Lord, and appropriating His grace. In countless ways we should communicate this to our children. Likewise, children of believers should know that the aim and prayer of their parents is that their children grow in godliness. Thus should Christian children adopt and pursue this aim so that gladness and freedom from reproach would result for themselves and for their parents.

Wednesday, September 3rd - Proverbs 27: 12,13

Wisdom enables one to discern danger and bad risks and to proceed accordingly. The willfully

naive person presses ahead without exercising such discernment. He may think that pious good wishes and fond hopes will guide and preserve him. Yet how can anyone hope to be protected from life's dangers when the preserving power of godly wisdom is despised? Wisdom enables us to see things in their true character, and to consider both circumstances and personal responsibility. Thus the wise live ordered, useful lives, avoiding loss, or taking reasonable steps to minimize it. Naivety pays no such dividends.

Thursday, September 4th - Proverbs 27: 14-16

Inconvenient, inconsiderate friends can be a temporary curse. Others may truly want to see us, but we should be considerate of their schedule lest we, by imposing our company on them, cause them misery. Wives are greatest blessings to their husbands. But a contentious wife will frustrate and madden her husband to no end. Thus let us all seek to know and fulfill our godly duties in timely, loving, considerate manner, so that we serve to bless and not to curse, those closest to us.

Friday, September 5th - Proverbs 27: 17

We all have within ourselves latent potencies that can be discovered and developed only when we commit ourselves to communion with like-minded souls. In plain terms, the Word of God exhorts us to maintain such communion (Heb. 10: 24,25). Although solitary meditation should form a necessary part of our Christian lives, we were not made or redeemed to walk alone. Iron sharpens iron only when the two have vital, consistent contact. Nor do we develop as we should when we share our company with those whose minds and hearts are less committed to the Lord than are our own. Iron does not sharpen itself against wood, hay, or straw.

Saturday, September 6th - Proverbs 27: 18

This verse is a variation on the Fifth Commandment. When we, with loving submission, serve and honor those in authority over us, we find that increasingly they reciprocate a care that blesses and nurtures us as does the love of a mother and father. If we treat those over us as hard and unreasonable taskmasters, we should then read Luke 19:11-17, especially vv.22-24, to see what we can expect to experience in response to our paranoid treatment of our superiors.

Sunday, September 7th - Proverbs 27: 19

Mirrors do not lie. Reflective surfaces, such as a pool of water, can reveal to us the true image of our faces. But such mirrors do not reveal a man's character. For us to perceive the true nature of our character we need to reflect upon our hearts. The inner thoughts and intentions, when considered honestly, disclose to us whether we are pure, holy, and loving, or defiled, unholy, and selfish. Naturally, all hearts are bad, despite their attempts to deceive us into thinking that we are good. But the Word and Spirit of the Lord compel us to take honest stock, and by saving grace to receive and nurture new, true hearts. So with renewed minds we can more accurately judge ourselves, not by outward appearance or action, but by inner motivation, which weighs most with God (1 Sam. 16:7).

Monday, September 8th - Proverbs 27: 20

Death and hell are never full, though they claim countless multitudes. Similarly, one's eyes may view the entire created order, and still not produce satisfaction, even if one could possess all that was surveyed. The reason is that we were made not to subsist on this finite, fallen world, but

rather to partake of that which only the eye of faith can behold. The lust of the eyes never satisfies because only this world, which is passing away, can be seen through those eyes (1 Jn. 2:15-17). Yet faith beholds and inherits the city of God, which gloriously endures and satisfies its citizens (Heb. 11:9,10,13-16).

Tuesday, September 9th - Proverbs 27: 21,22

Praise and affirmation, we are told, help lift sagging psyches from their negative self-image. Though such praise may help one *feel* better, it will not necessarily help one to *be* better. For praise can intoxicate a man, feeding his sinful pride and filling him with vaunting ambition. Thus we should be judicious in our giving of praise, knowing that it can tempt others. We should not withhold due praise, but rather realize that excessive praise is flattery, which ruins. We should also avoid seeking and accepting undue praise. The highest commendation we should seek is that from our heavenly Master when He says, *Well done, good and faithful servant*. The sort of praise we seek reveals our character. Yet neither praise nor pounding can change a fool. He is insensitive to all except his own beloved folly. How hopeless are such fools!

Wednesday, September 10th - Proverbs 27: 23-27

Men may aspire after material wealth and high position in life, thinking that thereby they will attain security and freedom from their having to work to earn a living. The Word of God and the experience of life teach us that such are misplaced aspirations. Recall the rich fool (Lk. 12:13-21). Our ambition should be to lead a quiet and industrious life (2 Thess. 3:12,13). We should view our callings as careers assigned to us by the Lord, and so assigned not out of perversity, but from gracious provision. It is by our diligent work in our callings that we get our daily bread. And although work has become hard since the fall (*By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread...* [Gen. 3:17-19]), Christ transforms drudgery into fruitful delight. Therefore, we have assurance that our labor in the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58) and for the Lord (Col. 3:23,24) will not be in vain, but will be graciously and richly rewarded.

Thursday, September 11th - Proverbs 28: 1

The wicked have as one of their greatest enemies the debilitating burden of their own sin and guilt. Their doing wrong makes them paranoid, so that they place the most threateningly sinister construction on all that surrounds them. Think of how they view the Lord and His anointed Son as threatening enemies to be opposed, saying of them, *Let us tear their fetters apart, and cast away their cords from us*. (Ps. 2:1-3). Indeed, the wicked prefer self-annihilation to facing the Lord, and by extension, the responsibilities they have in His world (Rev. 6:15-17). Like Cain, they are perpetual fugitives (Gen. 4:12), fleeing from monsters of their own making. Yet the righteous, being emboldened by the peace with God that they enjoy and being protected by the full armor and unrestricted approbation of Almighty God, stand fearlessly against any foe (Eph. 6:10ff).

Friday, September 12th - Proverbs 28: 2

People get the government they deserve. If they give themselves to sin, there will result a breakdown of governmental authority, until chaos reigns, with every man declaring himself a petty prince, each doing what is right in his own eyes. True national blessing comes when people submit to godly leaders, ultimately to one leader--the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,

Eternal Father, and Prince of Peace, on whose shoulders the government rightly and gloriously rests (Is. 9:6).

Saturday, September 13th - Proverbs 28: 3,6,11

Riches tend to blind a man to his weaknesses and need, unless the man is exceedingly humble. The pitiful thing is that when such blinding takes place, it only blinds the possessor of riches, not others who see through the sham, pretense, and pomposity. Yet being poor is no guarantee of godliness, either. The poor man can be just as blinded to his poverty, seeking and finding those poorer and weaker than himself, not to help them, but to oppress them. The rich boaster is simply pitiful and foolish; the poor oppressor is obnoxious and impoverishing. Our focus should be not on outward estates, but rather on righteous character. Godly character, along with its imputed righteousness, consequent peace with God, and adoption into the Lord's family, all leading to increasingly sweet communion with the Lord and His people and the sure hope of glorious perfection—these are the greatest treasures which God has given us in Christ.

Sunday, September 14th - Proverbs 28: 4,5

Affinity between people is always drawn along moral and spiritual lines. There are those who praise the wicked, not because the wicked inherently deserve praise, but because those who cheer them are themselves lawless. There are those even in Christian fellowships who maintain and express undue sympathy for those in the assembly who show a constant penchant for perversity. Such sympathy for the wicked and consequent antipathy for those growing in righteousness is revealing. True godliness ever strives against sin, both in one's self and in others. Such striving is not hypocritically casting condemning stones at others; nor is it an unspiritually sentimental indulgence of sin, either. The wicked will never see or understand this. The godly see and understand this and many other wonderfully liberating things because they submit themselves unreservedly to the Lord of justice, grace, wisdom, and love.

Monday, September 15th - Proverbs 28: 7,8

The testimonies, precepts, and commandments of the Lord seem restrictive, except to the discerning who see, acknowledge, and accept the truth that God's law only serves to mortify sinfully undisciplined appetites that, if indulged, would ruin our lives and the lives of others. Such discernment enables us to recognize the love of our heavenly Father in the law, and so prove ourselves to be sons of a holy nature like His. Accordingly, we should neither indulge in gluttony, nor keep company with gluttons, nor seek riches through rapaciousness. Rather, we shall do good and trust the Father to reward us with His riches (Mt. 5:5; Rom. 8:15-18; Rev. 22:12-14).

Tuesday, September 16th - Proverbs 28: 9,10

Ignorance of the principles of God's Word is no excuse. Our responsibility is to study and show ourselves approved (2 Tim. 2:15). If we refuse to be students of the Word, then eventually our professed devotion to the Lord will grow corrupt and unacceptable to Him, even to the point of being abominable. But the awful fruit of such ignorance grows to include the active leading of others away from the Lord and into evil. Such straying leads only to the pit of a personal hell, stoked by fires of the wayward one's own making. In contrast, the blameless, who make it their

business to know and abide by the divine standard—not in their own power, but through Christ by the Holy Spirit—obtain good, not which they have earned, but which is granted to them as a gracious, godly inheritance.

Wednesday, September 17th - Proverbs 28: 12

Men generally prefer the fruit of righteousness, even if they despise its root. Most people rejoice when their boss or neighbor is kind, loving, and fair, but they hate having to endure the mean and capricious actions of the wicked. When wicked Haman was honored and a death decree was sent out against the Jews, even the godless city of Susa was in confusion (Esth. 3:15). Yet when Haman was hanged on his own gallows, and the godly Jew, Mordecai, was honored, the city of Susa rejoiced (Esth. 8:15). May more people in this world learn to be consistent in this instinct, following the fruit of righteousness to the root of the cross and crown of Christ.

Thursday, September 18th - Proverbs 28: 13,14

The fear of the Lord is the sort of fear referred to in v.14. Such godly reverence serves to keep us out of sinful by-ways and in the narrow way of righteousness that leads to life and blessing. The one who hardens his heart to the testimonies of the Lord, plunges blindly but surely into the wilderness of sin and misery, endeavoring to deny or hide his sin and so insuring only his continued bondage in that wilderness. Yet, the one fearing the Lord, who stays out of much sin, employs confession and repentance to find liberation from sin and misery when occasionally he stumbles into them. Such godly contrition always stirs the compassion of God, resulting in restored blessing.

Friday, September 19th - Proverbs 28: 15,16

The lion roars and the bear rushes when each stands triumphant over its helpless prey. A wicked ruler abuses his authority, employing it as brute force to subdue and feed upon his people. Yet such determined oppression is self-defeating, for God hears the cries of those oppressed, and He arises as their Helper to release them from bondage (Ex. 3:7-10). Thus let us determine not to abuse whatever authority the Lord gives to us, but rather to use it lovingly for the good of those under us. And when we find ourselves oppressed, let us, like Daniel (Dan. 6:16-22) look above the roaring lions to our Deliverer, the Lion from the tribe of Judah (Rev. 5:5).

Saturday, September 20th - Proverbs 28: 17

Any murderer, like the first murderer, Cain, not only hates his fellow man, but also seeks to destroy the image of God in him. Such heinous crime places one beyond the pale of any human reformation. Would that our justice and penal systems learn this! God requires, through judicial execution, the life of the murderer (Gen. 9:6), and any who seek to support such killers do so in opposition to God and to the slain, whose blood cries out to God for justice (Gen. 4:10). Yet although murderers are required to pay the supreme temporal penalty, even they may find saving grace from the One who prayed with reference to those who put Him to death, *Father forgive them....* (Lk. 23:34).

Sunday, September 21st - Proverbs 28: 18

Those who are blameless before God may still find themselves in trouble with other men. In fact, the more righteous a man, the more likely he is to draw the ire of the godless against himself. Yet our concern should not be to exonerate ourselves before men, but rather to be found

blameless before God. Then He stands to deliver us, as Daniel testifies regarding his deliverance from the lions, saying first that he was saved primarily because, ...*I was found innocent before Him* [God]; then, *toward you, O king, I have committed no crime.* (Dan. 6:22). Thus do the righteous stand, while the devious are cast down suddenly, as were Daniel's enemies (Dan. 6:24).

Monday, September 22nd - Proverbs 28: 19,20

Although sin has transformed work into wearying labor (Gen. 3:17-19), we still reap in proportion to how we sow. Industrious and efficient labor applied to legitimate pursuits will pay off handsomely in due season. Contrarily, if we pursue vanity, we shall reap only emptiness. The fact that there is a moral, rather than merely a mechanical dimension to this equation is made clear in v. 20. It is when our labor is a fruit of our faithfulness to the Lord—as we work by His direction and power and for His glory (Col. 3:22-24)—that we truly prosper. If we are motivated purely or even primarily by material considerations, we shall be like the rich fool (Lk. 12:13-21), who wrongly thought that life consisted of monetary abundance, rather than blessed fellowship with the God to whom we are ultimately accountable.

Tuesday, September 23rd - Proverbs 28: 21

If partiality, rather than justice and equity, characterizes our dealings with others, sin will abound. Such partiality is in itself sinful, being based on the principle of selfishness. It also lays a sinful snare for others, who learn by their dealings with us to pursue their own selfish ends, adopting sinful means to appeal to our partiality and thereby to be rewarded by us. Partiality breeds a conspiracy in which the parties reject the just sovereignty of the Lord over their lives, as each party looks to the other, rather than to the Lord, for direction and reward.

Wednesday, September 24th - Proverbs 28: 22,27

Our eyes were given to us not for us to close them to the needs of those around us, nor to lust after material things (1 Jn. 2:15-17). Instead, our eyes are properly employed when we use them to read God's Word, and so to open the eyes of our heart to the riches of God's grace in Christ (Eph. 1:18ff). When we appropriate the Lord's bounty, we then look out lovingly upon those in need around us, and go to them with the Christ who has so wonderfully filled our lives (Acts 3:1-6). By such giving we are only increasingly filled with the blessing of God and of those to whom we minister Christ. The blind pursuit of money begets only want and curses.

Thursday, September 25th - Proverbs 28: 23

With flattery we tell others not what is true or what they need to hear, but what they want to hear. Many respond favorably to such sweet speech, but eventually most, realizing the emptiness of the copious compliments, rightly despise the flattery. Conversely, faithful communication will include rebuke when appropriate (which it is for all of us at one time or another). No one enjoys being rebuked, but when its sobering power turns us from the wretchedness of a sinful course, we express gratitude to the faithful one who issued the deserved rebuke. Reality counts most with real people, who seek to receive not empty applause but the precious perspective of truth, and who give the reward of deep and lasting favor in return for it.

Friday, September 26th - Proverbs 28: 24

Parents give all to their children while the young ones are dependent upon them. But as children

grow, they become able to bear responsibility for themselves, and eventually they will be able and expected to make some provision for their aged parents. A selfish child, however, refuses to bear his growing share of responsibility. He wants ever to take from his parents, or to spend all he has on himself. Hypocrites will even do this under pretense of religious devotion (Mt. 15:5-9). But such self-indulgence, which denies that robbing one's parents is a sin, is a transgression of general destruction. It impoverishes not only parents, but eventually all others in society, including the self-indulgent children.

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Saturday, September 27th – Job 8: 15

The man who had blessed the name of the Lord and worshipped Him in response to His giving and to His taking away (Job 1:20-22) is now accused of having made an idol of his house and earthly estate. There is not a shred of evidence that Bildad can cite to support this allegation. His charge lacks charity, due consideration, and logic. The only basis for this charge is the consequence of Job's great suffering and loss. The cause of this consequence is truly a mystery. Yet to Bildad it is inconceivable that the sovereign and just Lord should ordain such affliction for any reason other than His punishing those who had sinfully forgotten Him. Those who find it inconceivable that the righteous could be thrust into a furnace of affliction are close to finding it unbelievable that God's sinless Son should suffer unimaginable anguish to save sinners. Let us learn to believe in the marvels of God's saving mercies, however mysterious they may be to us.

Sunday, September 28th – Job 8: 16-18

This is a lurid image that would be accurate in its application to a person who had exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for images of creational things (Rom. 1:23). It likens the godless soul to a plant that bears no useful fruit while it only extends its reach to things of the earth for nourishment. The things it enwraps are lifeless and loveless stones rather than the living and loving God of heaven and earth. However, this image is inapplicable to Job who, by God's own estimation, is the godliest soul on earth in his day (Job 1:8). Nothing could be less loving and true and painfully insulting to Job than is this misapplied image that Bildad was urging upon Job. May we never be like this sorry comforter.

Monday, September 29th - Job 8: 19

Bildad declares that the cause and effect dynamic he drew in vv.11-18 results from the plans and holy pleasure of God. A man's house (v.15), the stones of the earth (v.17), and even the dust of the ground all have been created, and all are sustained and governed by God for His glory and for the good of His people. Job, because he was godly, surely agreed with this assertion (Job 9:2). It is not only useless but also insulting when a loveless soul presumes to teach theological lessons to those who already know and trust the God of love.

Tuesday, September 30th - Job 8: 20-22

Bildad concludes his first speech to Job with words of encouragement. They are all true words. When applied appropriately they can serve to convict the proud and promote his repentance. Yet, as we have seen now with two of Job's three friends, their words ultimately fail to be true and loving. This is so because both have twisted Scripture into a simplistic and stark pattern of

moralistic black and white, right and wrong, that fails faithfully to express the full truth and merciful love of God. The words of Bildad would only be true and loving if Job were indeed in sin and in need of repentance. Because of the character of the Lord's servant, the words of Bildad are worse than irrelevant; they are false and cruel. Here is a warning to us when we seek to speak God's Word faithfully to others. We do well to gain an understanding of those with whom we seek to share the Word. Otherwise, we too can abuse the Word by our misapplying it.

Wednesday, October 1st - Job 8: 20-22

The Word of God is living and active (Heb. 4:12). It is the breath of the living God (2 Tim. 3:16) that is delivered to living souls whose variations in character and circumstances can only be rightly apprehended by our omniscient Lord. Job's friends are revealing their tendency to regard God's Word as set of mechanical principles. Accordingly, Bildad speaks as though God never rejects, or even appears to reject, those who have godly integrity. This wooden conception drives Bildad to charge and with growing zeal to prosecute a godly man who appears to have been rejected by God. At times God does appear to support evildoers, as Asaph observes in Psalm 73. That is why we are called by our God not to judge by appearances but rather to judge righteously. In order for us even to approximate such judgment we must spend considerably more time praying for our own hearts to be pure so that we will see our God (Matt. 5:8) and in His light see the light of truth (Ps. 36:9). We must also pray for His grace to enable us to know and to love others before we seek to minister the truth of God to them. Such prayers to God are distinctly lacking in Job's friends while their words to Job abound in loveless distortions of God's truth.

Thursday, October 2nd - Job 8: 20-22

It is true that God will not reject a man of integrity. When we judge by God's providence, it may appear that the Lord rejects the godly, at least for a time. However, when we judge by the veracity of God's Word, we can know and be comforted by the truth that He will never leave us or forsake us (Dt. 31:6,8; Josh. 1:5; Heb. 13:5). According to Bildad's assessment, Job lacked godly integrity for which God had forsaken him. Therefore, Bildad urged Job to repent and enjoy his reconciliation with God and rejoice in a restored communion with the Lord. Yet, Job was a man of integrity whom the Lord was testing but had not forsaken. Job was in reality highly esteemed and commended by the Lord, and it was the Lord who was very near to His righteous servant, enabling him to sustain all of his trials as more than a conqueror. Had Job acted on Bildad's counsel, he would have repented from his stand in the strength of God's might and love.

Friday, October 3rd - Job 8: 21, 22

Bildad here holds out to Job the incentives of God's restoring to him joy, vindication, and liberty from his oppressors. Yet it all, according to his misguided friend, would depend upon Job's repentance. This alluring temptation Job resists. He refuses a facile and faulty solution to the painful mystery of his costly afflictions. He rejects the call to renounce what he knows to be not his sin but rather his strong adherence to God. Job's mouth will again be full of laughter, his lips with shouting, and he will be vindicated by God, while those who treat him hatefully (as his friends are doing increasingly) will be clothed with shame. But all of this will result not from Job's capitulation to the urgings of a false repentance, but rather from his continuing to stand steadfastly in the Lord, with and for the Lord, and by the Lord's enabling might.

Saturday, October 4th - Job 8: 20-22

With his closing words Bildad, the logician, commits both a logical and a theological fallacy. His major premise is that God is just and would cause only the wicked to suffer (vv.3ff). His minor premise is that Job is suffering (vv.13-18). His conclusion is that Job must be wicked (v.13). Bildad's fallacy lies in his major premise and is therefore transmitted to his conclusion. God is just, but He is more than just. The Lord is also merciful. God saves sinners through the atoning sacrifice of His Son, who knew no sin and yet was punished for our sins. God gives us new and eternal life through the death of His Son. That life of God in our souls removes all of the destructive force from our sufferings and presses those sufferings into forces that sanctify us and confirm us in our new life (Rom. 8:28). This is the glorious theological perspective that Job maintained. Because he maintained it, Job would not be moved by his friends, but he would instead lead them out of their defective theology and into the fullness of divine truth that would set them free.

Sunday, October 5th - Job 9: 1, 2

In response to Bildad's counsel and accusations, Job replies at length in chapters 9, 10. The first thing that Job expresses is his agreement with Bildad's contention that God is just. Job sincerely believes that God does not pervert justice (8:3) by His punishing the innocent. And yet Job contends that there is more to the matter of his afflictions than the justice of the Lord punishing him for his sins. If the issue were decided solely on the basis of divine justice, no living soul would escape personal and perpetual suffering because in the sight of God all have sinned. Job apprehends his need for more than justice. He hungers and thirsts for a righteousness that would permit those possessing it to stand before God without dread or shame and with boundless divine blessing (Eph. 1:3-6). How can a man be right with God? That is the vital question Job asks. He is not interested in his merely appearing for a time to be right with God. He is not concerned with how his fellow finite and fallible sinners regard him. Job is asking for a righteousness that the holy and omniscient God would regard as perfect and acceptable. For an answer to this question Job seeks and knocks in chapters 9,10, not because he does not possess the answer, but rather because his settled convictions regarding the answer are being severely challenged. Therefore, he is examining all that he is, all that he knows, and all that he is experiencing, in order to make his calling and election sure. We also do well to examine ourselves regularly in similar fashion (2 Pet. 1:2-11).

Monday, October 6th - Job 9: 3-10

In these verses, Job expresses his knowledge and acceptance of certain attributes of God. In particular, he speaks of the Lord's infallible wisdom and almighty power. No finite creature could ever become wiser than God or perform anything as intricate and stupendous as the Lord does every day by His upholding and governing all that He has made. Still less can any sinful creature out-think or out-do this God. Man cannot be right with God by his becoming as wise or as powerful as God. It is not man's educational progress or practical advancements that commend him to God and justify him before the holy One of Israel. It is our highest wisdom to know our profound ignorance and puny power before the Lord of infallible wisdom and almighty power. If we think we can match God in these areas, as the serpent tempted our first parents to do, we find that we only succeed in plunging ourselves into deeper folly and greater practical

weakness. That is why our God tells us to trust Him and not to rely on our own understanding (Prov. 3:5,6). Let us not become like Job's friends who overestimated their own knowledge. Let us be like Job, who knew and humbly accepted that God was doing something in his life that he did not understand, but that he also would not let diminish his trust in his Lord.

Tuesday, October 7th - Job 9: 3-12

Job expresses the wisdom and power of God in vv.3-10. He bases what he says about those divine attributes on the manifestation of the Lord's glory through what God had created and how God governed all things He had created. Yet, Job also declares that the Lord not only manifests Himself, but that He also hides Himself (v.11). God has revealed to us in His Word that there are things secret to us that belong only to the Him (Dt. 29:29). Those secret things affect our lives more than we realize. Some of the hidden things come to light through the unfolding of God's providence. But many if not most of them are not for us to know in this life. When we see the face of our God in the glorious eternal day, we shall know as we are known (Rev. 22:4,5; 1 Jn. 3:2; 1 Cor. 13:12). Until then, we must trust in the Lords' wisdom, power, justice, and love to make right and good all that can seem wrong and bad to us now.

Wednesday, October 8th - Job 9: 13-15

From his acknowledgement of the divine attributes of omniscience and omnipotence (vv.2-10), Job returns to his consideration of how a man could be right in God's sight. The anguish of Job's suffering continues to obscure his grasp of the truth that alone could set him free. Yet, part of the God's design in afflictions is that we might be driven to a deeper and more thorough consideration of the God in whom we believe. It was not until the disciples were led by Jesus into the terrifying storm on the Lake of Galilee, where they beheld Jesus stilling the storm, that they asked the vital question: *Who is this?* (Lk. 8:22-25.) Job's anguish prods him to search deeply for the God whom he knows to be great, but who is infinitely greater than any of us can ever fully know.

Thursday, October 9th - Job 9: 13-15

Job's gloom returns and deepens as we gather from his words in these verses. He confesses that God manifests holy wrath against His enemies. Even the most proud and mighty of God's enemies, such as Egypt (referred to here poetically as *Rahab*), are compelled to bow under His almighty hand. The infallible wisdom, almighty power, and perfect justice of God similarly compel all people to acknowledge the truth that they are sinners who fall short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). However, this gloomy prospect is actually a harbinger of glorious light. Job is confessing that no soul can stand before God and find divine acceptance on the basis of that soul's natural endowments or attainments. This is the dying of self-reliance that releases a person blessedly to cry to the Lord for mercy. That is what Job declares in v.15. He renounces any determination to make himself acceptable to the Lord, and confesses that if he is right with God it is due entirely to the Lord's mercy. It is true that no sinner can be right in God's sight; it is the deeper truth that God, by His mercy, can do what is impossible for any person to do. This is, of course, the gospel to which Job cleaves in the storm of his afflictions and accusations.

Friday, October 10th - Job 9: 15-17

Job glimpses the truth of God's mercy (v.15), but then quickly sinks under the burden of his misery. The reasoning Job expresses in vv.16,17 is understandable but false. He reckons that his

prayers would be ignored or, if answered, would be misleading promises of false hope. The controlling feature of his reckoning is the accumulating and ceaseless affliction that Job is enduring. Physical and emotional pain can speak to our hearts and minds louder than does the quiet voice of the Lord through the promises of His Word or even through His answers to our prayers. Our Savior, who learned obedience from what He suffered (Heb. 5:8), is the first patiently to understand this and the last to condemn us when the waves of woe wash over us and threaten to drown our faith.

Saturday, October 11th - Job 9: 17-20

These are hard and bitter thoughts that Job expresses in these verses. He declares that God bruises him with overwhelming force and multiplies (not simply adds to) his wounds. All of this, Job contends, is without cause. God has might and right on His side and is using both not for His servant's good but rather against him for his destruction. How can Job think and speak such things about the God whom he had previously blessed even in the wake of his having experienced the Lord taking from him all things (Job 1:21)? The answer is that all believers, even at their best, think inadequate, ungrateful, and unworthy thoughts about their Lord. Pain and perplexity magnify these thoughts, causing them to rise to the surface of our consciousness and be expressed in our communications to others. The Lord ordains this refining process precisely so that such dross might rise to the surface. As this dross rises in Job, he does not cling to it but he renounces it in favor of his truer apprehensions of God (Job 42:5,6). We are all works in the same sanctifying process.

Sunday, October 12th - Job 9: 20, 21

These words may appear to continue in the dark vein that Job had expressed in vv.17-20. It is true that Job continues to pour out dark words, indicating that his faith and hope in the Lord were extremely low. Yet, his faith is evident, although it glimmers like a feeble wick burning amid a dark cloud of smoke. We see his faith in his declaring his righteousness (v.20) and in his maintaining that he is guiltless (v.21). Such declarations may seem to those like Job's friends to be appallingly arrogant in view of his crushing afflictions. But what Job says is true and is verified by the Lord's pronouncements at the beginning and at the end of this book. Job is not puffed up with pride; he is standing in the strength of the Lord having covered himself with the breastplate of righteousness (Eph. 6:14).

Monday, October 13th - Job 9: 20, 21

When Job cries that in spite of his righteousness, his mouth condemns him, he is not admitting that he is a hypocrite who claims to be righteous while his performance belies his claim. He is instead acknowledging the frustrating reality that our hearts can sense the truth at times with greater fidelity than our minds can comprehend or our words can explain. Such frustrated speaking can be taken by the uncharitable to represent the attempts of one with a guilty conscience trying to cover his guilt with words of denial and deception. Those who are charitable, however, can understand the language of another's heart and know that it is from the heart that flow the issues of life (Prov. 4:23). As there are times when actions speak louder than words, so there are times when emotions tell the truth more accurately than do words.

Tuesday, October 14th - Job 9: 20, 21

When Job confesses that his words are inadequate to reveal his righteous heart, he is expressing a

profound truth. Yet, when he goes on to declare that although he is guiltless God will declare him guilty, he is speaking both truth and error. The truth he speaks is that he remains painfully perplexed and greatly frustrated by this course of darkest divine providence. It appears to Job, in the gloom of his protracted anguish, that God is indifferent to his suffering. It even appears to Job that God, who knows what is in the hearts of all men, inexplicably delays the vindication of His servant whom He knows to be clothed in the righteousness that God Himself has provided. This is where Job expresses error. God does care for His servant with an immeasurable, unchangeable, and everlasting love. It is precisely that divine love that has prompted the Lord to ordain this course of sufferings for Job, for in that course he will rise up to the greatest height of a super-conqueror, precisely through his apprehending the just and holy love of God from which nothing can ever separate him (Rom. 8:35-39).

Wednesday, October 15th - Job 9: 20, 21

Job confesses the truth when he maintains twice in v.20 and once in v.21 that he is righteous and therefore without guilt before God. Yet, despite this glorious truth filling him with gratitude and joy, he admits that this reality does not keep him from slumping into self-loathing. He takes no delightful notice of himself as being at peace with God because it appears to him that God's almighty arm has turned inexplicably against him with an adamant determination. What he does sense about himself, he despises. Job has been reduced to a reversal of the question Jesus asked about the profit a man might gain to have everything in the world and yet lose his own soul. Job's current condition is perilously close to a point where he asks: *What does it profit me to have a redeemed soul when I have lost everything in the world as well as in heaven?* Yet even in his nearly despairing state, Job speaks a vital and profound truth. Our being redeemed and judicially acquitted by God cannot fully satisfy us. We, as new creatures in Christ, hunger and thirst for loving fellowship with our God, and it grieves us deeply when He hides his face from us.

Thursday, October 16th - Job 9: 22-24

Our being right, even with a perfect imputed righteousness provided by God Himself, is not enough to satisfy our souls. If we perceive our God to be against us or even indifferent toward us, we shall find our souls cast down (Ps. 42). Our righteousness is not its own reward. Nothing can bring us joy so long as we believe—however wrongly—that we are not in vital and loving communion with our living God. Job senses wrongly that God does not treasure him but instead lumps him in with the wicked to suffer His wrath. Job senses wrongly that God is capricious and callous. Job senses wrongly that if God does reward anyone, it is the wicked. This godly man is on the verge of renouncing of his faith in God. These things are written for our instruction and admonition. If this stalwart of faith can be brought so low, so can we be reduced.

Friday, October 17th - Job 9: 22-24

Job is on the verge of losing his faith in God. He has come to this by degrees. Satan took measured steps to deprive Job of all his earthly treasure and pleasures. Then the evil one added massive physical pain to poor Job. However, the most deep and destructive blows against Job have been delivered by his friends, who regard Job's suffering from a prison of their own inadequate logic and not from the love and light of a theological perspective. Job has substantially resisted their logic, but he does begin to show signs of his being affected by it. His wrong thoughts about God arose from his own inadequate understanding, and such faulty

reliance was urged by his friends. How hopeless and devastating is faulty theology! Let us strive to know and live and speak the truth of God in love.

Saturday, October 18th - Job 9: 24

Job is on the verge of faithless despair. Yet, he does not plunge over the edge of this precipice. At the very point of his breaking and of his cursing God he pulls back. Job retreats from the height of pride in his own understanding, to which Satan and Job's friends have imperceptibly lifted him so that he might cast himself down due to a defective faith (Mt. 4:5,6). His retreat is neither radical nor dramatic but it is significant and vital. He stops declaring his erroneous views and returns to asking good-faith questions. The treatment Job has received and described has been chillingly accurate. His only faults have been his attributing his punishment to the hand of God and his attributing to God loveless and wicked motives. Now in his deepest and darkest throes, Job realizes that his woes could be coming upon him by the hand of someone other than God. This is a sanctified and saving suspicion that Job considers. We must not believe every spirit but we must test them all because deceivers are abroad (1 Jn. 4:1). Job is right, too, in his suspicion. He suspects the truth that an enemy has assaulted him. His knowing this will make a crucial difference in how he faces his trials.

Sunday, October 19th - Job 9: 24

We should never despise the day of small things. With Job's asking whether it might not be someone other than God causing his suffering, the faithful servant of the Lord once again emerges from the rising flood of his torturers' devices to catch a life-sustaining breath of truth that sets him free from despair. It is a small breath but is sufficient to empower him to endure the numerous other waves of affliction that the now suspected culprit vainly has lined up to overwhelm Job.

Monday, October 20th - Job 9: 25-29

The relief Job attained from the vital breath he took with his question in v.24 does not last long. He is quickly drawn, as by an overpowering maelstrom, back into his conceiving God as an all-powerful and merciless Judge. Job sees his life as being caught in a current that carries him swiftly toward divine rejection. He confesses that his dark thoughts control him, although he has tried to lift his mind above his course of woes and to find cheering encouragement through his dwelling on things above. His pain keeps its crushing hold on him. Observe how Satan not only accuses the redeemed before their God (Job 1:8-11; 2:3-5), but also accuses God in the minds of His redeemed. This is a horrible reality of our pilgrimage through this world. Yet, it should not surprise us, but should enhance our joy as we look through our tribulations to the joy that may not bring us cheer today but will be ours in the day of God's perfect time (1 Pet. 4:12,13).

Tuesday, October 21st - Job 9: 28-31

These words express dark and terrifying thoughts that are hard for us to credit as coming from the lips of a believer who has tasted and known the goodness of the Lord. Yet, they are words filled with deep significance and complex meaning. The first thing we note is that they issue from Job's fear, not from his faith. Fear lies to us all, and it is a relief for us to discover that our fears are unfounded. Job is caught in a bad dream that Satan has cast him into but from which God will soon awaken him. We all do at times heed our fears but we truly need never heed them.

Wednesday, October 22nd - Job 9: 28, 29

The numerous, varied, and continued pains Job has suffered have battered his faith and bolstered his fears. So imposing have his fears become that Job's confidence in the mere possibility of divine mercy (v.15) has faded and in its place has arisen a certainty that he will be condemned by the Lord. The malicious touch of Satan and his infernal use of Job's friends as instruments of the devil's deceptive accusations of both Job and God have almost rendered the Lord's servant a spiritual casualty. Job is where Asaph found himself as he describes his near capitulation in Psalm 73. If God rewards the wicked and condemns the righteous, why should the righteous not grow weary in their doing good? The answer is that God is not rewarding the wicked but is allowing them rope to hang themselves, as wicked Haman was hanged on his own gallows (Esther 7:10). The Lord puts the wicked in slippery places (Ps. 73:18-20), while the righteous are always accumulating an eternal weight of glory through their sufferings (2 Cor. 4:16-18). We are encouraged to persevere in our doing good, knowing that in due time we shall receive our reward (1 Cor. 15:58; Gal. 6:9). We may at times, under great stress, lose sense and sight of this truth, but we shall never lose its substance.

Thursday, October 23rd - Job 9: 28-31

Logically, emotionally, and pragmatically what Job says in v.29 makes perfect sense. If a sinner can have no hope in being right with God, why should that sinner suffer for the sake of such an empty hope? The logic holds so long as God is as Job has come to perceive Him to be. It is not the clarifying power of his faith, however, that has shown Job this distortion of the Lord. It is rather the demonic ambush that has temporarily stunned and confused this upright man of faith. Even in our walk by faith, Scripture informs us that there will be times when we shall stumble and even fall. Therefore, when we or our brethren do fall, we should not be surprised (Gal. 6:1,2). Nor should our enemies rejoice over us, for we shall rise again and again and again (Micah 7:8).

Friday, October 24th - Job 9: 28-31

Job's words bristle with declarations that are untrue of God and unworthy of a man of faith. Yet Job is at this point not sitting comfortably in his home contemplating theology. He is in the storm of satanic attack. Accordingly, we observe him stumbling and reeling under the growing pain and perplexity that his demonic foe unceasingly heaps upon him. Yet, while Job shows evidence of faithless fears, he also shows evidence of his unceasing exercise of faith. In all of his grim and terrifying perceptions, he continues not only to speak of God but actually to address the Lord. He refers to the Lord not in the third person, *He*, but in the second person, *Thou*, in vv.28,31. Even when a true believer views God at what he mistakenly regards to be His worst, that faithful soul will never let the object of his faith go until that Object blesses him (Gen. 32:26).

Saturday, October 25th - Job 9: 32-35

These words continue to sound like faithless complaints. However, they touch upon the most marvelous aspects of the person and work of God in the salvation He accomplishes for His people. Here we behold Job's faith in growing exertion, prompting him to fight his fears and grope for those things in the economy of God's redemption of sinners that are essential to that salvation. In vv.32,33, Job apprehends the judicial aspect of redemption. He expresses his absolute need for a mediating advocate to effect his acceptance by God. He touches in v.32 upon

the incarnation, not with perfect focus but with essential apprehension. In Job's day, God was not man. But in the fullness of time God would become man in Jesus. In v.33, Job yearns for an umpire. There could be no umpire for that would mean there was a being above God. But an advocate for Job God could and would provide in His Son, who, being very God of very God could faithfully represent the divine interests, and, being truly man could faithfully represent sinful man's interests (Heb. 2:14-18). Job's faith alone prompts him to hunger and thirst for the incarnation of God in man who would be his effectual Advocate and Mediator with God.

Sunday, October 26th - Job 9: 32-35

In vv.32,33, Job yearns for Christ as his mediating Advocate. In vv.34,35 the Lord's suffering and stumbling servant yearns for the Lord God Almighty, sovereign King of glory, who dwells in unapproachable holiness and who exercises effective and majestic dominion over all of creation, to humble Himself and provide him with relief that would enable him to have communion with the God of grace. This is here mere yearning on Job's part. But it is a yearning prompted by his faith. As such, this yearning is prophetic of God in Christ calling to Himself all who labor and are heavy laden so that He who is humble and meek might give them rest and joy in their communion with Him (Matt. 11:28-30).

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Monday, October 27th – Job 10: 1,2

What Job was groping for in the closing verses of chapter 9 was an advocate to act as mediator between himself and the God he was pressed into regarding as his overwhelming enemy (Job 9:33). Even at the mere thought of such mediating provision Job grew more confident, declaring that if he but had some reprieve from his afflictions, he could address God without dread. Yet, Job quickly sinks back into despair in the opening verses of chapter 10. His anguish and the relentless pressure of his torturing friends again nearly break him so that he hates his life as it then was (v.1). However, his faith is not extinguished, as is evident from his crying out to his God (v.2). This prayerful determination of the suffering saint is in stark contrast to the dogmatic declarations of Job's friends, who speak confidently but mistakenly about God while neglecting humbly to speak to God, asking Him for understanding and sympathy so that they might speak the truth in love to Job. Even if our prayers are reduced to groaning that cannot be articulated they still arise from faith in our merciful God, and He hears and answers them beyond what we ask or think.

Sunday, October 28th – Job 10: 1, 2

Job declaration that he loathed his life was made under the crushing pressure of his afflictions. His current pains had blotted out his recollection of the true and prolonged pleasures of his life prior to his sufferings. Those pains also clouded Job's apprehension of the even greater blessings that he would enjoy after he would emerge from his course of suffering. What Job really hated was not his entire life but only this painful portion of it. We do well to observe how our sufferings blind us to the joys we have tasted in our lives and to the joys we yet shall taste as our God reserves for us His best wine for the last.

Wednesday, October 29th - Job 10: 1, 2

While Job blows off the scalding steam of his heart's anguish, he yet keeps his head as well as

his faith sufficiently to direct not only his cries but also his specific requests to his God. Job asks the Lord not to condemn him. That request had already been granted to Job long before his pleading for no divine condemnation. Prior to his afflictions, throughout them, and after he emerged from them, God did nothing but commend His servant (see Job chs. 1,2,42). If we, the children of the living God, ever feel that we are in danger of being condemned by our saving Lord, we do well to bear vitally in our minds and hearts that there is now no condemnation for us in our Christ (Rom. 8:1). We do well to recall that nothing can separate us from His love (Rom. 8:37-39), and that if any thought, feeling or other being accuses us, it does not come from our God who tells us plainly that no weapon formed against us will prosper and that every tongue accusing us in judgment we shall condemn (Isa. 54:15-17).

Thursday, October 30th - Job 10: 1, 2

Job asks the Lord to withhold condemnation from him. He also asks his God to grant something positive to him. Job asks the Lord to give him understanding regarding why he was being afflicted. To this suffering servant it seems as though his divine master has turned against him for no apparent reason. Job is strongly certain that his friends are not providing him with this understanding. Accordingly, he cries out to God who promises to give wisdom to those who lack it and ask Him for it (Jas. 1:5). We learn from how and when God answers Job's prayer that we may have to wait some time before we are granted the wisdom that we seek from the Lord (Job 42:1-6).

Friday, October 31st - Job 10: 2, 3

Job moves from his asking the Lord in v.2 into a more active seeking from the Lord in v.3. He appears to question the divine justice and wisdom. This may seem to us an irreverent thing for him to do. However, if we have loving sympathy, we can understand how his being pressured by his pain and confusion could push him into a world of mistaken notions about his God. All will yet be made clear by God and in God's timing. Job may ask the Lord for understanding of His plight, but it is the Lord who knows best how and when such a petition should be answered. When that answer comes, whether quickly or slowly, it will indicate to all of God's suffering children the wisdom and love of their Father in all that He has ordained and patiently allowed them to endure. Meanwhile, Job is growing in the exercise of his faith. We see this in how he takes to the Lord not only his concerns but also himself, pleading that he is the fruit of God's saving grace (*the labor of Thy hands*).

Saturday, November 1st - Job 10: 4-6

In these verses, we find Job's questioning the Lord yielding some early fruit of right understanding for the suffering questioner. It is a tentative and inadequate understanding that Job has at this point, but it pertains to the incarnation of God in Christ. Job essentially poses to God three questions to which he clearly expects negative answers: 1) Does God have eyes? Job's high and accurate understanding of theology leads him rightly to apprehend that God is a Spirit, having no material essence (cf., *Westminster Larger Catechism*, question 7). 2) Does God perceive as man does? Man perceives partly and sequentially attains knowledge from what he perceives. God is omniscient, eternally knowing all things. 3) Does God have a limited lifespan that prompts Him to hasten to know and quickly to judge man's sin? God is eternal, and as such, all things are ever present to Him (*I am that I am*). As Job had been rightly grasping for an advocate to mediate between himself and God (Job 9:33), so here Job seeks after the God who

will assume humanity, entering the world of time, space, and matter—with all their limitations—to redeem sinners. Job gropes for what is to him at this point beyond his asking or imagining, but he will receive all for which he asks and infinitely more through the incarnation of the Son of God.

Sunday, November 2nd - Job 10: 4-6

In v. 4, Job asks the Lord whether He perceives as man does. Our powers of apprehension are finite and fallible, and so we make mistakes and, when guided by our fears and lovelessness, we fixate on others and find fault with them. Recall what Jesus taught about the log in our eyes and the speck in the eye of our brother. God is not like man in his fault-finding perspective. God is not like Job's friends who, lacking pure and loving hearts, do not truly see Job or God. They do not see light in God's light, as Job does, however dimly at this time. However perplexed Job might be over the Lord's dark providence, he knows that no one sees him better than does His God. And God does see him, better than even Job sees himself. God sees the righteousness of his servant more clearly and steadfastly than does even His servant see it. Here is great comfort for us. When we lose a true perspective on our lives, let us know that God never loses sight of us, nor will He ever leave us, deny us, or forsake us.

Monday, November 3rd - Job 10: 4-6

In v.5, Job's question indicates his grasp of the eternity of God. Men and devils, knowing that their time is short, hasten their pace and drive themselves with incessant activity that never produces the peace that passes understanding or the joy that is inexpressible. The wicked flee when no one pursues because they fear everything around them. Above all, they fear death. Such fear makes them desperate to save and promote themselves at the expense of others. Job may feel and suspect that God is acting like that, but he knows that God is free from all of man's insecurities that drive him to abuse others in an attempt to better themselves. Our God does not make us suffer to preserve Himself from death. He is the God who has given Himself to die so that we might live.

Tuesday, November 4th - Job 10: 4-7

The finitude of man makes his mistakes inevitable. The mortality of man arises from his sin, for which death is the final payment. Together, man's finite perception and fear of death make him grasp at straws and claw at others to preserve himself. The sinner doomed to die has no sympathetic understanding of other sinners. Recall how the first man's sin drove him to blame his wife and even his God for his fallen plight. Sinners, who deny their own sin, see and magnify sin in others. God is not like. Job knows it and clings to that true knowledge of the Lord. Yet, the suffering servant remains frustratingly puzzled as to why his God should delay the deliverance of His servant from his sufferings. The painful ways and delays of the Lord cause us to wonder, but we do well always to bear in mind that the prevailing wonder is that by God's wounds we are healed and by His death we have eternal life.

Wednesday, November 5th - Job 10: 4-7

God is not like man that He should walk in sinful darkness and face death as the wages of His sins. However, in Christ, God became a man, not so that He could wallow in sinful ignorance and loveless self-regard as all sinners do. He became a man to learn obedience and gain from

human experience an understanding of our plight and become our sympathetic and saving high priest, sacrificing Himself for us (Heb. 2:14-18; 4:14-16; 5:7-9).

Thursday, November 6th - Job 10: 8-12

Job has been complaining, questioning, and searching for the truth about his sufferings. He does so in the knowledge that his having such truth would set him free from his perplexity, if not from his pain. Job is making progress in his finding the truth, however irreverent his search for the truth may appear to be. This is because at the heart of Job's cries and complaints is his faith. However smothered faith may become by the attacks of the world, flesh, and devil, faith always asks, seeks and knocks to possess its one true object. That object is the one true and living God, whom to have is to have eternal life (Jn. 17:3).

Friday, November 7th - Job 10: 8, 9

Job continues to address God, inquiring into the divine character and motives as they pertain to his sufferings. In vv.8,9, the sorely tried servant of the Lord raises the question of the Lord's plans and purposes for him. Here his questioning and complaining have given way to his more confident certainty in the goodness and wisdom of the Lord. Job states the truth of God's having created him, then questions whether God had designed his trials for his destruction. This question leads us to understand that Job does not expect his good and wise God to destroy the work of His hand. Job even rises to the point of pleading the promise implicit in the truth that the Lord had fashioned him into being to give him a future and a hope. Job reckons that the good thing the Lord has begun, He would perfect in the final day (Phil. 1:6). Here is the man God Himself had acknowledged as being righteous in His sight, working out his salvation by the power of the faith that had already justified Him before the Lord. Job is here wrestling with God, as Jacob had done, and by faith he will prevail!

Saturday, November 8th - Job 10: 10, 11

The image of a potter making a creation from clay is advanced by Job in vv.10,11. Now the good and wise artistry of the Lord in His creative work is considered through the images of milk elevated into cheese and Job's body having been fearfully and wonderfully made. The glory of God's wisdom, power, and goodness are evident in His creation (Rom. 1:20). Job reasons that the God who began such marvelous work would not destroy it out of caprice or evil intention. The closer we consider the world as it truly is, the more we shall see the truth of the benevolent God who not only has made all things, but who also improves what He has created. That work, as far as Job the believer was concerned, did not stop working at Job's first creation. It carried on to his new creation as a redeemed child of God.

Sunday, November 9th - Job 10: 11, 12

In v.11, Job confesses his belief in God as his good Creator. In v.12, this righteous believer carries on to confess his belief in God as his Redeemer. He knows that it was the Lord who gave him life. He further knows that it was the Lord who lavished His covenant mercies upon him, being prompted to do so from the eternal well of His lovingkindness (Eph. 1:3-6). It is not only these vital and transcendent truths that lift Job out of his despair. It is also Job's knowledge of and reliance upon the Lord's daily providential care for him that preserves his spirit from bitterness and faithless rejection of the God whom he knows as the lover of his soul, even when His painful providences appear to indicate otherwise.

Monday, November 10th - Job 10: 12, 13

In the furnace of his afflictions, Job expresses his clear and true apprehension of the Lord's dealings with him. The light of God's love shines brightly for him (v.12). Yet, Job also confesses that the divine fountain of lovingkindness resides within the heart of the Lord and is apparent to men only in the effects of His love shown through the providential working of His hand. Here Job confesses knowing what he does not yet know. Such knowledge of what we do not know is very valuable, as it humbles us and frees us from the blinding of arrogant and ignorant assumptions. Here we note how Job's pains are prompting him into a deeper understanding of the Lord. That understanding penetrates to an apprehension of the heart and mind of God. This is the working of Job's faith as it grows in strength through its exertions in the course of his struggles. This growth in his faith is precisely the good that God intends to effect through the evil intention of Satan and through the loveless blundering of Job's friends. This is also the loving purpose of our Lord in all of our trials (1 Pet. 1:6-9).

Tuesday, November 11th - Job 10: 12-17

In vv.12,13, Job attains a glimpse of profound truth about the character of God and about the Lord's working in his life. However, we see that this glimpse quickly fades and Job once more sinks into gloom. As Peter, who for a time walked on water until he was distracted by the wind and waves around him, so Job shifts his focus from the Lord's lovingkindness to other divine attributes and sinks. The omniscience of God will discover Job's sin; the justice of God will punish sin; the immutable dictates of justice will not allow the guilty to be acquitted. Job sees his sin in view of the justice of God, which hastens his sinking into despair. He envisions woe for himself and even when he does good, he gains no comfort but determines to keep a low profile in an attempt not to offend God. This downward spiral quickens so that he once more views God as an almighty and inescapable enemy, one who afflicts him relentlessly with intention to destroy him. How far Job has fallen from his grasp of the Lord's lovingkindness! The race we run by faith is not on a course that is level. There are ups and downs in it that are put there by divine design. Therefore, we should not be surprised when we plunge into dark valleys, but we should determine to press onward through them by the grace of the God about whom we can entertain some most unworthy and untrue thoughts in the cloudiness of our confusion.

Wednesday, November 12th - Job 10: 12-17

One way we could understand the wording of vv.12,13, is that while God has been good to grant Job life and lovingkindness, and while His care has preserved Job's spirit, something has changed in the Lord to prompt Him to hide His gracious disposition and deny any saving help to His faithful servant. If this is what Job intends to express, then he is filling the void in his knowledge of the Lord with sinister and false assumptions. Even if this is what Job is doing, his doubts and latent fears were what had been concealed in him even in the days of his prosperity (see Job 3:25). Job may have been unaware of them but they were not concealed from his omniscient God who had loved Job truly and unchangeably at Job's best and at his worst. It is through the fires of his affliction that these doubts and fears are being purged from Job.

Thursday, November 13th - Job 10: 14, 15

The seeds of Bildad's faulty logic have found soil in Job where they have lodged and brought forth bitter fruit. Compare Bildad's logic in Job 8:4-6 with what Job expresses in these verses.

Job reckons that no sin escapes God's notice and that no sin is acquitted by God. This is to say that the Lord is absolutely exacting with sinners. If this were the whole truth about God, then all people must despair because all have sinned. Then, in our despair we must conclude that whether we pursue wickedness or righteousness is immaterial, since God will discover and punish the least sin as well as the greatest. There is inexorable logic to this thinking. But it is false because God is gracious and loving, even when we lose sight of such glorious and comforting truths. God does acquit the guilty by taking the guilt of our sins upon Himself in Christ, so that He who knew no sin would become sin for us so that we who are sinners would become the perfect righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5:21).

Friday, November 14th - Job 10: 14-16

Job's slide into deeper darkness and more sinister thoughts about God is evident in these verses. From his acknowledging with dread the Lord's justice, he descends into regarding God as the supreme predatory power who feeds upon the misery He causes others. These are truly Job's thoughts but they are not true. His mind is incensed with baseless charges against God because his body is broken with pain and his heart is consumed with anguish. Job is once again close to cursing God and dying, as his distraught wife had told him to do (Job 2:9). If these awful considerations of godly Job are recorded in God's Word for our edification, how are we to profit from them? Perhaps, when we find ourselves in despair due to our sufferings, we can be comforted in knowing that others more godly than we are have suffered worse things—including their own horrible thoughts about the Lord. It should encourage us to know that even when we come close to cursing God, He never wavers in His loving commendation of us.

Saturday, November 15th - Job 10: 16, 17

In these two verses, Job transitions from the image of a wild beast overpowering him, to that of a skilled prosecutor overwhelming him with condemning evidence. Whether Job's mind moves into the most fearful and chaotic realm or into the most exalted and refined realm, he finds God there to prevail against him. Whether it is a matter of might or right, Job acknowledges that the Lord is supreme and will certainly crush him...if that is God's intention. This is the vital *if* that we need not be tortured by in our consideration of it. We *know* that God is for us (Rom. 8:31), even when all things—our circumstances, our friends' words, or our own thoughts and feelings—tell us differently.

Sunday, November 16th - Job 10: 18, 19

Now Job returns to his desperate desire not to have been brought into existence (cf. chapter 3). His question as to why he was born is not so much one that indicates a desire for understanding but rather one that expresses exasperated doubt that there could possibly be any answer that would vindicate God's giving a man a life that was bound for such misery. Job has been reduced to desire for non-existence or a quick death after his birth. These pitiful pleadings resemble the rich man in hell who asks for a mere drop of water to ease his pains (Lk. 16:24). Job is as close to hell as he will ever be for the rest of his eternal life. When the Lord he does truly and deeply trust brings him through his trials and shows to him the glorious face of his Redeemer, Job will exult in thankful joy that God did give him life, even with all the afflictions that serve to produce for him an eternal weight of glory (2 Cor. 4:16-18).

Monday, November 17th - Job 10: 20-22

Here Job sinks to perhaps his lowest point so far. He is no longer speaking to God but rather is referring to Him in the third person. He requests nothing from God more than that the Lord would leave him alone. He believes that he could find cheer without God, and he is resigned to death that will not provide ease (Job. 3:11-19) but rather will plunge him into eternal darkness and utter chaos. This may sound like sinful apostasy but it is, instead, the raging cries of a man in utter agony. The Son of God in His agony cried out, asking why His God had forsaken Him. He is the last to condemn and the first sympathetically to understand and comfort Job when he is at his worst as he is here.

Tuesday, November 18th - Job 10: 12-22

From Job's words in v.12 it is evident that he had attained a true and exalted vision of the goodness and grace of the Lord. Yet, it is also clear that his vision soon faded from his understanding. Why? The first thing we might note is a frank account of the pathology of spiritual depression. Job's depression was not his fault. He was being viciously assaulted by the devil and he was constantly in physical pain and emotional anguish. The assaults wounded him and his cycles of improvement followed by relapse are appropriate features of his gradual healing and growth into a more strong and faithful believer. The cycles are not indicators of futility and lasting spiritual debilitation. Instead, Job's movements are more like those of a climber ascending steps. He lifts one foot to place it down on the first step and the action repeats. The parts of the cycle may look the same but their continuation results in a climb upward. Let us learn from this that each of our movements of spiritually rising and falling amount not to our confirmation in failure, but rather to our walking by faith toward the God who alone is faith's true and exalting object.

Wednesday, November 19th - Job 10: 12-17

We can learn other vital lessons from a careful study of the cause-and-effect features we observe in Job's words in this passage. Specifically, it appears that when Job questions the Lord, he receives his answer in the form of a true and encouraging insight into the goodness, wisdom, and saving love of God. However, when Job begins to question what he apprehends by faith and contradicts it with his own thoughts and understanding, he begins to sink into dark despair. Surely it is not only a pious suggestion but rather a divine directive of vital necessity that we should trust in the name of the Lord—that is to say, in the Lord as He has revealed Himself to us—and not by our relying on our own understanding try to refashion and re-name God according to our mistaken apprehensions (Prov. 3:5,6).

Thursday, November 20th - Job 10: 12-17

The highest and most vital thing we should learn from our faithful reflection upon these verses is that our God is good, wise, and loving when He ordains that any of His children should be set in a course of affliction. Our pains prod us more deeply into the Lord and out of our fears, doubts, and darkened knowledge of Him. Our struggles purify and strengthen our faith and spur the development of our new Christ-like characters. There are valuable lessons for us to learn and vital growth for us to experience in the storms of our afflictions. These blessings we cannot have without the trials that we regard as curses. The Lord makes known to us His lovingkindness when we are under attack by the devil and the worldly, as well as by our own residual sin that is, as it were, squeezed out of us under the pressure of such attacks (Ps. 31:19-21).

Friday, November 21st - Job 11: 1-3

In this chapter the third of Job's friends speaks. Zophar is the most impetuous of the three, and, because of this and the fact that he was the last of the friends to speak, he may have been the youngest of Job's sorry comforters. Yet Satan makes use of him, though he only speaks twice to Job, whereas the other two addressed Job three times. The devil will use all things, great and small, to afflict God's people. What Zophar may lack in age and wisdom gathered from many years of experience, he seeks to compensate by his being the most strident of Job's friends. Whereas Eliphaz and Bildad with some gentleness maintained that Job was being chastised by God, Zophar bluntly and repeatedly asserts that the righteous sufferer was being justly punished by the Lord. While the Lord saves for last His best wine for us, Satan often reserves for last his worst blows for us. Let us determine and seek grace to persevere until and beyond our end, whether that end be one of our abounding or of our being abased.

Saturday, November 22nd - Job 11: 1-3

Zophar lays heavily into Job. His words are sharp and are intended to add to Job's pain. He calls Job talkative, boasting, and scoffing. With this last speaker's opening words, the last shred of hope for Job to find earthly help from his friends vanishes. Yet it is precisely here that Satan overplays his hand (as he always does) for now Job is clearly forced to rely on God alone. In his answering Zophar's attacks, we shall see Job ascend to one of the highest peaks of his faith in the Lord, when he cries: *Though He slay me, I will hope in Him* (Job 13:15).

Sunday, November 23rd - Job 11: 1-3

Zophar describes the painful cries of Job in terms that are dismissive and contemptuous. If Eliphaz and Bildad were loveless, Zophar is zealously abusive. Yet Zophar thinks that he is serving the Lord with godly zeal and hard love that is calculated to break the supposed sinner and prod him to repentance. Such zeal is without true knowledge of the God who says that He will not break a bruised reed (Isa. 42:3). If the Lord notes with grief those who have failed to entertain angels properly (Heb. 13:2), surely He will pronounce woe upon those who abuse His people who are their own brethren (Isa. 5:20,21). All zeal is not holy zeal and strong certainty does not always arise from one's being right. Zophar presumes to rebuke Job, whom God regards as the most righteous man on earth in his day. The love our God commands us to have for one another would never lead us to show anything but encouragement and respect, even in our loving rebukes that at times are necessary for us to apply to our beloved but erring brethren.

Monday, November 24th - Job 11: 5

Zophar sounds pious but he is prejudiced. He bases his abusive charges on the fact that Job claims to be suffering for his righteousness and not for his sin. The arrogance of Zophar has carried him away from what must surely have been his best and truest self. It has lifted his conceit above the height of God, for Zophar desires the Lord to speak against Job—something that the Lord refuses to do no matter how many devils and small-hearted men cry for Him to do. Job seeks an umpire (Job 9:33); Zophar claims to appeal to a mediating judge, while in reality he is determined to put his erroneous verdict in the mouth of that judge. True piety submits to God and does not dictate to Him.

Tuesday, November 25th - Job 11: 5, 6

Zophar claims the desire to have God speak wise words to rebuke and confound Job's supposed

folly. However, rather than his trusting the Lord and waiting for him to speak as He would with respect to Job, Zophar blunders on and declares what he strongly believes and asserts God would say. Zophar claims to know the secret divine wisdom and he declares it to be that Job's sins are twice as heinous and deserving of more punishment than what Job was then experiencing. It is true that God requites us less than our sins deserve (Ezra 9:13), but He does so according to His tender mercies and not because His zealous wrath somehow misses the mark (Ps. 103:10-14). This truth Job has already admitted and worshipped God for it (Job 1:20-22; 2:9,10). While Zophar has been busy rejecting Job's words like trash, what he has truly been rejecting is the treasure of God's saving grace that not only lightens a sinner's punishment but actually saves the sinner from all condemnation.

Wednesday, November 26th - Job 11: 7, 8

In these verses, Zophar attempts to extol the immensity, infinitude, omnipotence, and omniscience of the Lord. He asks Job if he, a finite man, could know everything about such a God. This contemptuous question Job also has already answered many times through the repeated cries he has issued to the Lord for greater understanding of God's purposes in his trials. It is Job who has humbly confessed his need for greater wisdom that only God could give and does give to all who ask for it from Him (Jas. 1:5). Job asks God in justifying faith, while Zophar declares this man condemned. Accordingly, Job will see the face of God and know all things in that glorious light and will gladly repent of his previously partial knowledge (Job 42:5,6). Zophar, who condemns Job, will not see God but rather will hear His words of rebuke. The Lord will also send Zophar to the man he is now dismissing as being a talkative boaster, so shutting Zophar's mouth except to give thanks to Job for his prayers (Job 42:7,8).

November 2014

Thursday, November 27th – Job 11: 9-12

Zophar continues to extol the glorious greatness of God. He has already spoken of the Lord's profound wisdom and immense being. In v.9, he tells of the infinite measure of all the Lord is and does. To such ascriptions of glory to God Job would heartily agree. Yet, Zophar does not touch upon the supreme glory of God. Regarding the tender mercies and redeeming grace of the Lord this professed theologian remains silent. For him the truth that God's mercy triumphs over His righteous judgment is unthinkable. But that truth contains another truth inseparable from it: that judgment will be merciless to the one who has shown no mercy (Jas. 2:13). Where is the mercy in Zophar's calling Job a man of falsehood, iniquity and vanity? Where is the righteousness in his likening Job to a stubborn donkey? The assessment of Job by Zophar radically and wrongly differs from the Lord's assessment of His righteous servant. Let us be careful how we judge our brethren and let us not care how wrongly others may judge us.

Friday, November 28th – Job 11: 13-15

In these verses, young Zophar uses a deductive argument as Bildad had previously used (Job 8:4-7). In his argument, Zophar displays two features. First, he shows how unoriginal an impressionable person can be. Zophar brings nothing new for Job to consider, very likely because his youth, inexperience, and weakly developed power of understanding prohibited him from deeply and vitally grasping the profound mystery of this righteous man's afflictions. Second, Zophar's virtual repetition, while it shows no advanced understanding, does bring

additional suffering to Job. Here is the Chinese water torture where a man is worn down by the incessant repetition of a mildly annoying application. Here Zophar shows himself to be more a thug than a theologian. He is intent on wearing Job down rather than building him up in God's truth and love. Such repeated droning is commonly used by Satan to wear down our resistance to his temptations. Let us resolve, like Job, to regard what we know to be wrong yesterday to be also wrong when the same proposition is foisted upon us today and tomorrow.

Saturday, November 29th - Job 11: 13-15

When Zophar says that *if* Job would rightly direct his heart and *if* he found iniquity in his hand, he is actually insinuating that Job's heart was not fixed on the Lord and that iniquity was prompting of Job's actions. This way of speaking to the afflicted not only lacks charity but also reeks of cowardice. If Job's actions had been sinful, then Zophar should have pointed to such actions. Zophar did not charge Job's behavior because he could not, as the godly attitude of Job was evident in his godly actions. Of course the small-hearted can always impute evil motives to good deeds. However, our God, who is love, commends to us the judgment of charity (1 Cor. 13:5-7). That judgment is more often than not right as well as gracious. It certainly would have opened the eyes of Zophar to the reality of Job's godliness had the young man exercised charity rather than indulge his zeal that lacked knowledge.

Sunday, November 30th - Job 11: 13-15

Zophar's indirect, conditional way of speaking gives the appearance of being a humble suggestion that Job should exercise godly self-examination. However, self-examination is rightly conducted by the individual before his God. It is not facilitated by the insistent intrusions of another person who speaks conditionally when his intention is in fact decided and categorical. Zophar would have displayed more integrity had he confronted Job with charges and supporting evidence. In contrast to Zophar's way of speaking, Jesus tells us to let our yes be yes and our no be no with all equivocation being avoided.

Monday, December 1st - Job 11: 15-19

The conditional statements in vv.13,14 actually call for Job's repentance. The consequential statements are contained in vv.15-19. They mention the many rewards of such repentance. However great the incentive of such rewards might be, they are in fact evil enticements as they issue from Zophar's ignorant mind and loveless heart. Zophar is ignorantly demanding that Job repent not from sin but from righteousness. He is tempting Job to turn from God to whom he was tenaciously clinging by faith. True repentance from actual sin does bring great relief and delightful rewards. However, our turning from our God under the influence of enticements brings no relief or reward. How can it, when we turn from Him who is the source of true joy and who makes His lovingkindness marvelous to us even amid tribulations (Ps. 16:11; 31:21; Rom. 8:37-39)?

Tuesday, December 2nd - Job 11: 15-19

There is considerable appeal in these promised rewards. For a man who was oppressed by the painful burden of his afflictions, the thought of his being lifted from his ash heap and released from his agonies would have been powerfully attractive. The ease with which he could have such relief was attractive as well. All he had to do was to confess his sin and repent of it. The only problem is that Job's sufferings resulted from his righteousness, not from his sin.

Therefore, the relief Zophar promised was false and the cost of Job's repentance from righteousness and from God would have been infinite. The only true reward at stake here is that of Job's false performance satisfying the smug spiritual pride of his friends, and that satisfaction would have been poison instead of holy pleasure.

Wednesday, December 3rd - Job 11: 16, 17

No one could have longed for his troubles to be drowned in a sea of restored pleasures more than Job. No one could have desired more strongly that the night of his ferocious afflictions would soon be vanquished by the daybreak of restored felicity. Zophar dangled these things before Job, as Satan dangled the satisfaction of Jesus' hunger before Him for the small price of His turning a stone into bread. But these promises are empty and their touted pleasures conceal the misery of sinful betrayal of God. They are part of the torture that is designed not to bring blessing to the sufferer but rather to draw from the sufferer curses directed to God. Such cursing of God by His beloved children is always the ultimate aim of Satan in his temptations.

Thursday, December 4th - Job 11: 18

In this verse, Zophar implies that Job is lacking three things. He asserts that Job is without trust in the Lord, without hope in the Lord, and without refreshing security in the Lord. Zophar maintains that Job is without these vital blessings because he is harboring sin (vv.13,14). In fact, we know from the opening and closing chapters of this book that nothing was more contrary to the reality of Job's situation. Despite all appearances, Job maintained his trust and hope in the Lord precisely because he was secure in the Lord's preserving grace. Job's pains and perplexity were part of the refining process ordained by God to purify and strengthen Job's trust and hope, not to destroy them.

Friday, December 5th - Job 11: 19

Zophar further adds to Job's pains by his reminding the sufferer that he previously had rested in comfort and enjoyed the acclaim of others but now was prostrated in misery and abandonment by all fair-weather friends. The implication of this painful assertion is that Job deserved his current agonies, but that he could easily end them by his repentance. Yet such repentance, Job knew, would only be from phantom sin and would be contrary to the trust, hope, and security he truly did have in his God. These accumulating tortures will prove inadequate to move the Lord's righteous servant to such false repentance. Job continues to stand fast in this evil day.

Saturday, December 6th - Job 11: 20

In contrast with the incentives that he presented to Job as encouragements for his repentance, Zophar concludes his speech with a lurid admonition. If Job does not repent, then he will be confirmed in his moral blindness and condemned to continue in his sufferings with his sole hope being that he would die. It is certainly true that those refusing the saving grace of God find that the Lord gives them over to the power of their sin (Rom. 1:22-32), and for them, even after death comes divine judgment (Heb. 9:27). But Job is not spurning the saving gospel of God. He is standing by faith in the power of that very gospel. If God has declared him righteous, who are these men who would deem him to be one who loves his sin? If God is for Job, who can be against him? Surely the God who has justified him was not against Him (Rom. 8:31ff). Although wicked men, devils, and misguided brethren should charge and accuse him, Job will let God and His justifying work be true, though every man were a liar.

Sunday, December 7th - Job 11: 20

With Zophar's final word the first cycle of challenging speeches of Job's friends concludes. All three of Job's friends have said essentially the same thing: that his afflictions have come upon him because he has sinned, and those afflictions would cease and the light of God's countenance would shine upon him whenever he should repent of that sin. It is true and logical that when we stray into sinful ways, the Lord afflicts us to bring us back to Him and His blessing (Ps. 119:67). However, there are also times when the Lord ordains affliction for the righteous, not to drive them to repentance but rather to exercise and strengthen their faith in and reliance upon Him. Love is a deep power that calls to and is heard by those being rooted and grounded in God's love (Eph. 3:17). The theology Job's friends is fixated upon a god of rigid demands and moral perfection. It has not occurred to them that the true God, who is holy and requires holiness in His people if they are ever to see Him (Heb. 12:14), is a God not only of truth and righteousness but also is the God of love. In love He has destined His people and in love He has redeemed them to be blameless before Him, inseparably in time and eternity (Eph. 1:3-6; Gal. 2:20; Rom. 8:35-39). It is not Job's eyes that have failed him, because he sees and stands in this truth.

Monday, December 8th - Job 12: 1-3

Job responds not only to Zophar's assertions but also to those of his other two friends. With holy sarcasm he mocks them for their posturing superiority. He does so because they have failed to speak the truth in love to him. They have aborted their initial good intention to show Job compassion in his sufferings. Instead, they have offered him faulty corrections that have only increased his anguish. Job is seeking truth; they have given him truisms made trite and offensive by their smug arrogance and facile claims of superiority. With his sarcastic response, Job levels the playing field, declaring to them the truth to which they were blind, that is that Job knows and accepts what they are saying and yet making void, not valuable, by their incessant repetitions and superficial misapplications. As He who sits in the heavens laughs at the absurd pretensions of ignorant sinners (Ps. 2:4), so He enables His maligned servants not to take the hurtful jibes of such sinners seriously (Ps. 52:6-9).

Tuesday, December 9th - Job 12: 3, 4

Job touches a truth that his friends were failing to take into account. He claims spiritual maturity and knowledge equal what they possess. Actually, Job's humility covers the fact that his spiritual acumen was superior to theirs, a truth that he is content to wait for the Lord to express (Job 42:7). Yet, Job's friends refuse to see his faith and spiritual wisdom, and so he is ridiculed rather than respected by his friends. Such treatment results from their blindness, not his (Job 11:20). Job's friends are judging the man by his sufferings and not judging the sufferings by the man. Such faulty reasoning prompted those at the cross of Jesus to mock Him for His sufferings, rather than to worship Him for His infinite condescension into suffering, sin, and death in order to save sinners.

Wednesday, December 10th - Job 12: 5, 6

Those who regard afflictions only as evils sent by God to convict and punish the guilty also regard their own comforts as divine rewards for their piety. Accordingly, they hold not only calamity in contempt, thinking that by their works righteousness it will not come upon them, but they also hold those who suffer calamity in contempt, thinking that they are only receiving their just deserts. Those who show such contempt do so based on their own false thinking, and not on

the revelation of God. Our Lord tells us to weep with those who weep and to help those who are in calamity (Rom. 12:15; Lk. 10:29ff). Those who fail to do so do not help, but rather hurt, their friends in need. How can the love of God dwell in such aloof and contemptuous hearts (1 Jn. 3:17)?

Thursday, December 11th - Job 12: 5-10

In vv.7-10, Job advances his argument against his friends' sense of moral superiority. Even the lower creation—its animals and the features of the earth—declare a lesson that Job's friends ignore. Are the animals sinful and is that why some of them suffer? Are the fields, mountains, and shores of the earth wicked, and is that why they suffer drought, earthquakes, or floods? Job knows that his suffering is in the hands of God, as all natural calamities occur according to His sovereign ordaining and for His holy purposes. Job's friends speak as though a man could stay the afflicting hand of God simply by his trying to be good. The thoughts and intentions of the Lord are far more profound and complex than such simplistic moralists think or imagine. We cannot discern the disposition of God by the works of His hand as accurately as we can do so by the declaration of His Word. In it He tells the righteous to rejoice in their sufferings, knowing that they are heaping up for themselves a reward that is incomparably greater than the pains of their momentary afflictions (Matt. 5:10-12; Rom. 8:18; 2 Cor. 4:16-18; Jas. 1:2-4; 1 Pet. 1:3-9).

Friday, December 12th - Job 12: 5-10

All living creatures as well as all of inanimate creation suffer adversity and painful changes. That is why all creation now groans (Rom. 8:22). It is only ignorant men, who fixate on their transitory ease, who can afford to hold calamity in contempt (v.5). Such people think that they, by their competent living, have attained a lasting position from which they can bid farewell to all sufferings. However, they fail to reckon on the existence and actions of the living God, who is infinitely more than a supreme moralist who mechanically rewards all good and punishes all evil in this world. The true God actually loves sinners too much to banish afflictions from their lives. He ordains and uses such afflictions to produce in them conformity to His holy and loving character, and to produce for them an everlasting weight of glory (Rom. 5:3-5; 2 Cor. 4:16-18).

Saturday, December 13th - Job 12: 11, 12

Job employs an image of our innate powers of perception and analysis by which we take in sensual data and grow in understanding. Through our hearing, a process begins by which we test the words of men such as Job's friends. We test their words of conjecture in the actual context of the cries of the many who are suffering in the world. Through our tasting, we detect that which nourishes us. We also detect combinations that delight us more than could our trying to feed upon the separated components of those combinations. Similarly, we need but taste the bitterness in combination with the sweetness of life to know something more profoundly delectable than either experienced apart from the other. The older and more experienced one becomes, the more one sees and accepts universal suffering, at least with the resigned recognition that it is unavoidable, if not with the faithful rejoicing over the prospect of the sweet fruits that will issue from life's bitter roots.

Sunday, December 14th - Job 12: 12, 13

With these verses, Job creates a transition. He moves from the partial understanding that the

honest apprehensions of an aging man may attain to the fuller understanding that those who know the Lord possess. Even the natural man can have a perspective that acknowledges suffering and accepts it. This is a more honest perspective than is that of those who try to deny or gloss over sufferings. The natural man attains some understanding of the universality of suffering because he is made in God's image and is living in God's world where the creation is revealing God's existence and glory. However, the regenerated soul possesses a more profound perspective because that soul stands in communion with the God of wisdom, love, and power who reveals to those He has made new creatures that He is causing all things, including their afflictions, to work together for their highest good.

Monday, December 15th - Job 12: 13-25

From his humble claim that he was equal to his friends in wisdom (v.3), Job proceeds to deliver in this passage a powerful declaration that his knowledge actually ascends far above their understanding. Here is food, indeed, for their palates, and words for their ears (v.11). Job expresses his knowledge of the omnipotence and omniscience of the Lord. Repeatedly he employs the pronouns, *He* and *Him*, to indicate that God is at the controlling center of all that takes place in the creation. The implications of Job's declaration are: 1) that he accepts that the control of all things is in the Lord's sovereign hand and not in any contrived repentance that Job might make at the insistence of his deluded friends; 2) that he knows God who to be the infinite and eternal source of all sound wisdom (v.16), and the One who has a wise, right, and good purpose in all of the afflictions that He ordains. Job knows and accepts the Lord in all of His profound and mysterious features and, unlike his facile friends, does not insist that God be reduced to the dimensions of man's personal desires.

Tuesday, December 16th - Job 12: 13-15

Job declares that wisdom and might are with the Lord, not in a specified and hence limited measure, but absolutely and infinity. Job also mentions elaborating features of wisdom such as counsel and understanding. By this significant arrangement, Job indicates his understanding that the mighty acts of the Lord are always performed in accordance with divine wisdom and never issue from negligence, ignorance, or caprice. Accordingly, when Job proceeds to mention in vv.14,15 representative works of the Lord's power, we are to know that such works are done in accordance with divine wisdom. Even those works that are painfully destructive and confining to man are wisely ordained. Also, those works that seem essentially contrary to one another, such as drought at one time and flooding at another time, are not inconsistent or wrought mindlessly. We are to judge their wise purpose not by our measure that regards them as capricious curses, but by our knowledge that the One who accomplishes them is the Judge of all the earth who can never and will never do anything that is not wise and right (Gen. 18:25).

Wednesday, December 17th - Job 12: 16

Job emphasizes in this verse that divine wisdom is ever in guiding combination with divine strength. This is clearly demonstrated when the Lord restrains the use of His compelling power. Far more often than otherwise, God acts by patience instead of performance. This is certainly so when He sinlessly uses sin to effect His wise and holy will. The God who cannot lie is the true Master of justly delivering people into the power of their sinful appetites that deceive and mislead them (Rom. 1:21-24). In that way, the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart (Ex. 4:21; 7:3,22). Also in that way, the Lord misled wicked King Ahab through the words of his lying

prophets as well as through the words of the Lord's true prophet, Micaiah (1 Ki. 22:5-40). God is ever true to His holy wisdom even when He seems to tolerate men's lying.

Thursday, December 18th - Job 12: 17

The Lord frustrates the counsel of worldly wise men. He sits in heaven laughing at their essential folly (Ps. 2:1-4), and in due course He exposes to the world that folly they had covered with a disguise of worldly success. Recall what Jesus said about the rich man who built bigger barns to contain his fortune: *You fool, this night your soul is required of you...* (Lk. 12:20).

Things are to us not what they seem, but they are always seen by the Lord to be exactly and truly what they are. At times the Lord permits us to glimpse what He sees and understands perfectly at all times. It is our wisdom not to judge Him by our own feeble sense.

Friday, December 19th - Job 12: 18

Earthly rulers claim and appear to have prevailing power over the lives of those who live under their authority. Yet, the Lord is the King of kings. If God wisely deems that certain men, in the confinement of kings, should go free, those captives are always released. Think of how Daniel and his friends lived as more than conquerors in their captivity under godless kings who tried but failed to put them to death in a fiery furnace and lions' den (Dan. 3, 6). Also recall how Peter walked out of his jail on the eve before wicked king Herod had scheduled his execution (Acts 12). While God sets His servants free from the power of worldly kings, He also binds kings with His prevailing power over them so that they serve to glorify Him whom they had denied in their pride. God did this when He struck Nebuchadnezzar down to make him live like a beast for seven years so that when that king's right reason was restored to him, he used it to testify to God's glory (Dan. 4:28ff). God does these things according to His wise purposes. And if God does not do these things, that also issues from the divine wisdom.

Saturday, December 20th - Job 12: 19-21

No person is shielded from the Lord's holy and wise sovereignty. No religious or civil office (priest or noble) and no power of personal competence (trusted counselors and elders) can protect sinners from the Lord's exposing and confining providences. The more men glory in such high offices and positions, the more the Lord opposes and humbles them in His perfect timing. Because it is true that, as Jesus said, without Him we can do nothing, whenever men grow intoxicated by their pride in their position or performance, God shows them their true poverty so that they may seek true riches from and in Him. That was the message of Jesus to the church at Laodicea (Rev. 3:14-22).

Sunday, December 21st - Job 12: 22

The Lord is the only One to reveal mysteries because only He knows all things that are hidden from finite and fallible men. Even a king like Nebuchadnezzar was mystified and terrified by his own dream that he could not understand. Yet, God answered Daniel's prayer for understanding with a clear revelation of the king's dream and its interpretation, so that Daniel, his friends, and all of Babylon's wise men were saved from death (Dan. 2). The wisdom of God is apparent in what He hides in darkness from some and in what He brings to light for others. We who desire wisdom in order to use it for God's glory and for the good of others can ask for it from God in the assurance that He will give it to us happily and abundantly (Jas. 1:5).

Monday, December 22nd - Job 12: 23

The Lord deals sovereignly not only with individual men or small groups of people. He also reigns over nations and empires. The Lord foretold the Egyptian captivity of the sons of Abraham, as well as their eventual return to Canaan because He ordained and effectively superintended those national events (Gen. 15:13-16). The prophet Habakkuk predicted the Babylonian captivity of Judah, and Isaiah and Jeremiah told of the Jews' return from that exile because God said these things would be so and they were so by His sovereign will and power (Hab. 1:5-11; Isa. 44:28;45:1; Jer. 29:10). In all of this, great suffering came upon the people of God, largely, but not exclusively because of their sins. The prophets, too, who were godly and faithfully living righteous lives suffered greatly with the apostates. In the great national upheavals of the earth, the Lord is doing much more profound and complex work than simply rewarding the godly with success and punishing the godless with failure and afflictions. Because so much of what God does is so vast, so complex, and so much of it is hidden in His secret will, we are told to cultivate trust and patient waiting upon the Lord and to avoid hasty and simplistic judgments based on whether others are up or down at a given time.

Tuesday, December 23rd - Job 12: 24, 25

These words are true in general, yet Job can rightly, and very likely he does, apply them specifically to his friends. The general truth is that God confounds worldly-wise people. Job's friends, because they were leaning on their own simplistic logic instead of the deep wealth of theological truth that God had revealed to them, were thinking and speaking to Job in fruitless and aimless ways. They with harsh pointedness are seeking to misapply to Job the general truth that the Lord chastises His erring children. Job with a more kind and gentle general reference makes a perfectly accurate application of truth to his friends, but one that they will fail to heed. So intoxicated were they with their sense of self-righteousness that only the painfully penetrating words that God would speak directly to them would sober them up to see the true light of the Lord's saving, sacrificial love (Job 42:7-9).

Wednesday, December 24th - Job 13: 1, 2

The sarcasm with which Job opened his response to Zophar in particular and to all three of his friends in general (Job 12:1,2) is dropped from Job's words in these verses. It is understandable that holy scorn should be poured out upon those who so badly misjudge a righteous servant of the Lord. Yet now Job makes a more gentle appeal to his friends, telling them that he agrees with all of the truth they have been urging upon him, while he disagrees with their application of that truth to him. Job is not suffering because he has sinned, nor is he suffering because he lacks a right understanding of the person and powers and work of God. Job is suffering because of reasons that only God knows. Therefore, we shall find Job once more turning from his friends and their sorry comforts and returning to his God for understanding and comfort (read ahead to vv.15,16 to see this). It is an ungodly thing when the godly act according to a God complex, thinking that they know the Lord and His purposes better than He knows Himself and His glorious designs. There are times when our cries for our brethren to hear and heed our counsel issue from a cry for our will, not God's will, to be done. Let us zealously guard ourselves against presuming that we speak for God when we speak against our brethren whom He is for in Christ.

Thursday, December 25th - Job 13: 3-5

Because Job's friends had so badly diagnosed his spiritual condition, even the various truths they have spoken are tainted with the lies of their continued insistence that Job was suffering because of his sin. Job therefore regards their words as useless. Because their speeches are piling insult and injury upon the afflicted servant of God, their words are worse than useless. Job therefore appeals for them to be silent. Even if Job were in sin, if he would not hear and heed God's convicting words, why would his friends think that he would listen to their words? There is a senseless and unspiritual ministry that manifests their own arrogant folly more than the edifying truth of God. It is no wonder, then, that God counsels us to be quick to hear and slow to speak, especially in His name (Jas. 1:19; 3:1).

Friday, December 26th - Job 13: 6-12

For all of the disappointing grief and pain his friends have brought upon him, Job remains remarkably patient and lovingly concerned with them. He has endured their zealous prosecution of false charges against him. Now he gently appeals to them to hear his arguments that support his contention that he is not suffering because of his sin. The sum of what he asks is that they cease their speaking because it is so badly wrong and unedifying that the more they argue, the more they will pile up their own sins against him and against the God who accounts him righteous. Here is a truly godly man seeking in his anguished suffering to serve his friends in love. The more they heap evil accusations upon him, the more he returns good and loving counsel to them. May our Lord grant to us a vital desire to be like Job in his sanctified sufferings rather than to be like his friends in their smug self-righteousness that is as filthy rags in God's sight.

December 2014

The following notes are revised from ones published in December 1991 & January 1992

Saturday, December 27th – Proverbs 28: 25-27

The arrogant soul aspires to be a big shot at the expense of others. One so self-absorbed and foolishly self-reliant invariably stirs up strife, as he tries to assert dominance and control over others. At his best, he is blindly inconsiderate of those in need, the way the Priest and Levite were with the wounded man whom the Samaritan helped. However, the faithful soul, who trusts in the Lord and walks wisely and lovingly with Him, will grow in true stature and blessedness. Such a godly character will strive to share his blessedness with others. He will work to produce peace between others and himself. He will also serve to produce blessed prosperity for both the receivers of his generosity as well as for himself, for he knows and rejoices in the truth that in the Lord's kingdom it is always more blessed to give than to receive. Nor will the one so growing feel that his increasing self-sufficiency warrants his freedom from his dependence on Christ. In fact, the more we grow in our liberty in the Lord, the more we lovingly accept our dependence on Him for our own deliverance and blessing and for our effectiveness in our lovingly serving others.

Sunday, December 28th - Proverbs 28: 28

This verse is but a variation and continuation of what is expressed in v.12. When the wicked ascend to power, men seek shelter, rightly sensing that the wicked will abuse their power,

impoverishing and destroying those under them. The only safe shelter to seek at such times is Christ, who will hide us and sanctify us in the shelter of His love, so that when He causes the wicked to perish (Rev. 6:15-17), we, His righteous ones, shall inherit godly dominion over the earth.

Monday, December 29th - Proverbs 29: 1

Reproof is designed to turn a person from a wrong pursuit. But one who is obstinately set in his determination to pursue a wrong path will find that reproofs will eventually lose their force. His sinful determination will strengthen him to resist the power of reproof. But it is a deceptive strength, the hollow strength of brittleness, which will quickly and fully be shattered one day when godly reproofs give way to deeds of divine judgment.

Tuesday, December 30th - Proverbs 29: 2

This verse picks up where Prov. 28:28 left off, and concludes with another look at the down side of the cycle. People rejoice when they have fair, gracious, and loving people in authority over them; they groan when a capricious, greedy, hateful tyrant ascends over them. In this fallen world we all experience cycles of rising and falling rulers, both righteous and wicked. Yet above them all is our righteous Lord, whose blessed rule never subsides, and who here and now uses the cycles of righteous and wicked rulers for our ultimate good (Rom. 8:28).

Wednesday, December 31st - Proverbs 29: 3

Fathers, if they are godly, rejoice as their children grow in wisdom. For wisdom deeply and expansively encompasses all of life, imparting to those possessing it true perspective and enabling them happily and fruitfully to bear responsibilities. By such wisdom we are blessed, and we serve for the blessing of others. However, a man who pursues harlots has his focus narrowed to exclude godly responsibility and graciously provided divine resources. His sights are fixed only on immediate, selfish gratification, to the impoverishment of himself and those around him. Such narrow focus wastes the wealth of both a man and his father, to the grief of both his earthly father and heavenly Father.

Thursday, January 1st - Proverbs 29: 4

Rulers give stability to those spheres over which they have authority only when they themselves are subject to the standards of righteousness and administer those standards equitably. Commitment to any other standard breeds caprice and partiality that serve to weaken authority and embolden rebellion. Let us then pray for and support godly rulers, and endeavor by God's grace to be such in our particular spheres of responsibility.

Friday, January 2nd - Proverbs 29: 5

A faithful, loving friend never flatters. This is so because flattery tends to intoxicate rather than edify others. Those so intoxicated are put off guard, and hence are vulnerable to all manner of exploitation. Therefore, we should view flattery not as pleasing congratulations, but as it truly is, sinful enticement designed to ensnare.

Saturday, January 3rd - Proverbs 29: 6

An evil man resorts to sinful devices to get what he wants. Yet his own transgression eventually serves as a trap for the man himself. Additionally, an evil man, being blinded by his sin and

lacking godly discernment, is himself an easy target for the sinful intrigues of others. It is not so with the righteous soul who perceives danger by the light of God's Word, and avoids it by the power of the Holy Spirit, whose heart is at peace with God, and who lovingly trusts the Lord to deliver, protect, and provide in all circumstances. Such a person rightly senses his security in Christ (Rom. 8:31ff), and openly rejoices in his salvation, rather than surreptitiously plotting his own destruction.

Sunday, January 4th - Proverbs 29: 7

The righteous soul is large in heart and mind. He concerns himself not only with his own interests, but also with the interests of others, especially those who are poor and needy (Phil. 2:3,4). He does this because he has been lifted out of his personal poverty and need by the Savior, and by that same Savior he has been directed and empowered to have compassion and practical concern for others. The dimensions of the world of the wicked do not exceed their own empty, small, and continually shrinking hearts. The wicked cannot and do not care for others.

Monday, January 5th - Proverbs 29: 8

Scorners ignite into a destructive blaze whatever society they inhabit. They do this doubly: first, by their scorn they spread seeds of cynical sedition amongst others, turning each man against his fellow and all against the authorities over them; secondly, by their arousing the wrath of God. In contrast, the wise, who have highest regard for the Prince of Peace, are peacemakers at every level, serving to settle strife between neighbors, and endeavoring to bring others into a saving relationship with the Lord. Accordingly, the wise turn away incalculable animosity, misery, and destruction. Does our influence promote peace between others, or stir up strife among others?

Tuesday, January 6th - Proverbs 29: 9

A fool either ridicules or rages against a wise man, but he will never submit to the wise man's reasoning, be it ever so cogent and sweet. Hence, the Word of God warns us not to be foolishly blind and unreasonable, lest we find ourselves railing against the light of truth. We are further warned not to expect those addicted to their own folly to understand or accept the weight of our best and truest arguments. The condemnation of such fools is manifestly just.

Wednesday, January 7th - Proverbs 29: 10

Ruthless pragmatists hate those who adhere to godly principles. People who will use and abuse their fellows for self-satisfaction are convicted by the very presence of a righteous soul, whose gracious heart restrains him from harming others and further prompts him to love and respect his neighbor. The bloodthirsty are convicted by the righteous because they know that righteousness has, as its source and goal, a sovereign Lord whom the bloodthirsty hate above all. Although the wicked hate the righteous, there is a fellowship of mutual love and practical concern among the upright, that more than compensates for the ire of the wicked. As blameless Stephen discovered (Acts 7:54,55), if we stand for Jesus, the world will stand against us (Ps. 2:1,2), but Jesus will stand for and with us.

Thursday, January 8th - Proverbs 29: 11,20

A fool respects no controlling authority and consequently has no control over himself. He easily is provoked because, unlike the wise man, he sees no rhyme or reason in the things he encounters. Rather than his patiently enduring contradiction while trusting the Lord to bring

good out of it, the fool can endure no contradiction. The wise man feels the pain of contradicting situations, but he reckons on higher, divine purposes controlling those afflictions (Heb. 12:1-4; 1 Pet. 2:21-23). Therefore, the wise man is slow to anger. He is also slow to speak, since he wisely waits to understand all necessary data before making his pronouncements. The rash speaker is too busy imposing himself on others to listen and learn. He is more hopeless than a fool.

Friday, January 9th - Proverbs 29: 12,14

Those in authority are swayed by falsehood only when they are either too incompetent to detect and oppose it, or too personally perverse to stand for the truth. Godly, responsible rulers make it their business to know, love, and promote the truth, while discerning and opposing falsehood. The incompetent or perverse ruler pays for his dotting on deception when all of his ministers become wicked in conformity with the disposition of their ruler. Then they all together sink into a miserable bog of their being deceived and deceiving. However, the ruler who knows and acts in accordance with truth, applying it equally to those under him from greatest to least, will be established by the truth that sets him free and sanctifies him and his subjects.

Saturday, January 10th - Proverbs 29: 13

The greedy rich man and the envious poor man may seem to be worlds apart. Yet both live together in God's world, and the Lord causes His common grace to shine on both. Furthermore, the Lord gives both eyes to see and consciences to know that they are accountable to Him (Rom. 1:18-20). Whatever our station in life, we do well to focus our powers of perception not on each other and our puny differences, but on the Lord and His loving grace and magnificent glory.

Sunday, January 11th - Proverbs 29: 15,17

The wounding rod of discipline and the challenging words of reproof may seem in themselves grim, negative, and destructive. Yet when wielded judiciously and lovingly, these sobering instruments serve to produce wisdom in those disciplined by them. The ones so chastised then live and serve in loving gratitude toward those who lovingly disciplined them. The only alternative to this happy arrangement is an ungodly, unloving neglect of our children, or those for whom we are similarly responsible. Such neglect condemns them to lives of ignorant perversity, undeveloped potential, and unbridled sinful passion. Such undisciplined ones will cause and endure much misery, to the shame of those who had power to guide them in the direction of the way of life and blessing.

Monday, January 12th - Proverbs 29: 16,18

When the wicked grow numerically and rise to prominent and influential places in society, their corrupt hearts lead them to set wicked examples for many to follow. Sin increases in such a society, despite the lamentations, protests, and precepts of the righteous. Yet, the righteous know that they will see the fall of the wicked, for the godly ever keep their sights fixed on the Lord, who in due course always casts down evil men. This vision keeps us cognizant of and blessedly submissive to the Word and ways of God. Without such vision, men's lives run into self-destructive riot. With it, holiness is constantly nurtured, leading to enduring happiness.

Tuesday, January 13th - Proverbs 29: 19,21

Our God is a God of order, who has given clear directions for us to live in a way which respects

His order. For example, there are those who have a servile disposition, if not a slave's place in life. Such people have no inward motivation. Education and reasoned instruction alone will not move them. They must be compelled to right action under threat of sanction. Yet there are those who would dishonor their God-given authority and pamper such subservient ones, fondly thinking that their largesse will serve to ennoble and liberate the lowly, when all it will do is make a slave presumptuously consider himself a son, demanding increasing rights and bearing diminishing responsibilities. Only Christ can transform slaves into sons by His Spirit (Rom. 8:15,16), and even then, He directs us to know and fulfill our place, as we respect the place of others (Col. 3:18-4:1).

Wednesday, January 14th - Proverbs 29: 22

An angry man ignites contention everywhere, not because he makes strong moral stands against which everyone reacts, but rather because his own heart is constantly in turmoil. Therefore, he disrupts the peace around him with his sinful anger. Only the Prince of Peace can transform such pugnacious souls into peacemakers. By His grace and to His glory there are examples of Him quenching the fiery threats of sinners, filling them with His righteous and pacific Spirit. Recall how He transformed Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:1ff).

Thursday, January 15th - Proverbs 29: 23

Ambitious self-promotion serves only to cast one down. It cannot be otherwise because if we think and act as though we have power and merit to advance ourselves through life, it will only be a matter of time before we discover how weak and increasingly impotent sin and alienation from the Lord render us. Think of how quickly the pride of the prodigal son ruined him. Yet those who humbly seek to know and love the merciful and gracious Lord discover how He delights to lift them safely and purely to heights far above those to which the proud aspire.

Friday, January 16th - Proverbs 29: 24

We know that it is wrong to steal. Here we learn that it is just as wrong for us to be accomplices in theft. Such accomplices may be seduced into participation—or at least into their countenancing the theft—thinking that thereby they, too, will profit in relative safety, they being further removed from the crime than the thief. Yet such partners in crime bear guilt and eventual punishment together. Our calling is not silently to watch others break the eighth commandment, feeling somehow bound not to divulge their crime. By such silence we break the eighth and ninth commandments!

Saturday, January 17th - Proverbs 29: 25

The one fearing God is free from all fear. Such reverential regard for the Lord leads to life, health, peace, and joy, as the Lord pledges Himself to be the protector and provider for those who fear Him. The alternative is to be a man-pleaser, or, more accurately, a lackey feeling driven to please others for fear of them. Such fear of man leads the fearful into countless miserable compromises, wherein one virtually sells his soul in desperate attempts to placate fickle and numerous petty tyrants.

Sunday, January 18th - Proverbs 29: 26

Most people think that by their ingratiating themselves with those more powerful than themselves they shall attain security. By their prostituting themselves in attempts to appeal to

the caprice of rulers, many seek to entice favorable rulings. There is no hope for justice to be sought or rendered amidst such mutual inveigling. We must look to the Lord, who will overrule even the caprice of godless rulers to give justice to His people who seek it from Him.

Monday, January 19th - Proverbs 29: 27

Goodness and evil can never peacefully co-exist. That is why the Christian life is characterized as warfare (Gal. 5:17; Eph. 6:10ff). Carnal people love fallen, sinful flesh, and hate the righteous life given by the Spirit. Those who are spiritual love the things of the Spirit, while hating and opposing all evil (Rom. 12:9). It is incumbent upon us not to live so as to blur these clear lines of distinction drawn for us not only by the Word of God, but also in the blood of the Son of God, who loved righteousness and hated evil unto death (Heb. 1:9).

Tuesday, January 20th - Proverbs 30: 1-4

Two of Solomon's proverbs are added those of two unknown writers, Agur and Lemuel (31:1). We know nothing of the men Ithiel or Ucal, except that from what is said they apparently sought wisdom from Agur. They got more than they sought, for Agur does not deliver only wise principles or intelligent propositions, but rather the authoritative oracle of God. In the light of God's Word we see two things with overwhelming clarity: 1) our own total depravity, or spiritual and intellectual bankruptcy, and 2) the infinite majesty, power, wisdom, and purity of the Lord. Agur begins with a disclaimer, in which he says that wisdom is not to be found in him, but rather in the Lord. Nor is wisdom the mere collection and correlation of data. It is a personal knowledge of and communion with the Holy God through His redeeming Son. Truly wise men point away from themselves and all lesser things to Him, saying, in agreement with God, *This is God's beloved Son, hear Him only.* (Mt. 3:17; 17:5).

Wednesday, January 21st - Proverbs 30: 5,6

We are tempted to think that wisdom, security, and joy are found in things other than the Lord. Like the prodigal son, we may seek our success and security in various prospects that are distant from Him, turning away from the Lord and His tried and true Word. Yet all peace, love, joy, and blessing are found only in Christ, to whom the Word of God testifies. Those who take refuge in Him find more security and blessing in Him than they ever could find in all the world without Him. Those who seek more than what God's Word gives, find their quest futile, find themselves living a cruel lie, and find their willing self-deception rebuked by the consequent emptiness and misery which are the only additional things to be had apart from Christ.

Thursday, January 22nd - Proverbs 30: 7-9

The wise and godly person asks the Lord for two things. First in priority is a vital knowledge of the truth, untrammelled by deception and lies. This request implicitly asks that the Lord would make us true in ourselves, as well as asking that He protect us from the ignorant or consciously malicious lies of others. Secondly, sufficient material provision is asked. Note that our daily bread is the quantity we should desire. To receive more would fatten us into a complacent state of forgetfulness of the Lord, and to receive less would serve to embitter us against Him. We may seek to limitless measure the truth, which sanctifies us and sets us free, and we may request material things in quantity determined by our wise, loving, heavenly Father (Mt. 6:33). All other seeking is vain.

Friday, January 23rd - Proverbs 30: 10

We may and should give ill reports of a person to those in authority over him when such reports are true and warranted. If we neglect faithfully to speak the truth in love in such circumstances, we are being irresponsible. However, it is never right to slander someone. It is wrong and self-defeating for a man to tell injurious lies about someone to his master. For a principled man in authority will investigate not only the slander, but also the slanderer, who may have the imprecations of the innocent servant rightly leveled against him. It will be by the faithful scrutiny of one's master, not by the slanders of busy-bodies, a man will eventually stand or fall.

Saturday, January 24th - Proverbs 30: 11-14

Agur may be commenting upon various generations, or upon the multifarious aspects of an evil generation that is ripe for divine judgment. The bitter social fruits of sin are here displayed so as to disgust and divert us from going into the wide way that leads to death. There is the rebellious spirit (v.11), the spirit of deluded hypocrisy (v.12), the spirit of pride (v.13), and the spirit of rapaciousness (v.14). Each of these is against some virtue, being anti-authority, anti-truth, anti-humility, and anti-love. All are individually and together anti-Christ.

Sunday, January 25th - Proverbs 30: 15,16

The evil characteristics of the generations described in yesterday's reading do not lead to satisfaction, but rather produce empty craving. Sin renders men demanding leeches, with appetites of infinite capaciousness. They become as death, which can consume all of the living, as the barren womb, which no amount of insemination can impregnate, as the earth's oceans, which can contain all streams and rain, and as fire, which consumes all it touches. Such infinite consumers ever want more. Let us be grateful to our God who regenerates and empowers us to live with increasing contentment (Phil. 4:11-13), and to serve others with growing fruitfulness (Phil. 2:3,4).

Monday, January 26th - Proverbs 30: 17

Our eyes were not made to provide ravens and eagles with food, any more than they were made to be perversely and cynically focused upon authority in general, and parents in particular. Yet when we abuse our powers of perception so as to scorn those who are the natural sources and supports of our lives, we are destined for a living death, wherein our spiritually lifeless bodies serve only to sustain the parasites and animals of prey that feed on us. How fearfully we should view rebellion against legitimate authority.