

An Isagogical – Exegetical Study of the Book of Job

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AN ISAGOGICAL-EXEGETICAL STUDY OF THE BOOK OF JOB

Part One

There are a number of reasons why an isagogical-exegetical study of the book of Job deserves a place on the agenda of a Pastors Institute. For one, the book *treats the problem of suffering*, a problem that has plagued the human race for a long time, including every person in this room, and which our Lord has told us will continue to cause trouble for people until he returns in glory. More specifically, the book of Job concerns itself with the *suffering of the God-fearing*. In the course of our study we're going to hear Job ask a question repeatedly, which we have heard people ask before, and that's the question: "Why?" "Why is light given to those in misery, and life to the bitter of soul, to those who long for death?" (3:20). "Why did, I not perish at birth?" (3:11). "(Lord), why do you hide your face, and consider me your enemy?" (13:24). "Why should I not be impatient?" (21:4). It just doesn't seem fair that Christians should be asked to live under suffering, and if our conscience reminds us that we are sinners, after all, and that God hates sin, we respond immediately: "How can I help that? I had nothing to do with being born sinful; I certainly wouldn't have chosen it. God could've done something to change that, but he didn't." And the conclusion seems to be inescapable: "Apparently God must want sin and suffering in the lives of his children." Make no mistake about it: Christian people are having problems with the idea of suffering. A related problem arises when people notice that God seems to impose so much suffering on one Christian, so little on another.

Another reason why the book of Job deserves to be read and studied is that it not only treats the problem of suffering but offers God's solution to the problem, a solution that is simply not well enough understood by the people whom we serve, as anyone who has made many sickroom visits will attest. Christian people, as well as non-Christians, have a great deal of difficulty reconciling human suffering with the existence of a God who is loving.

The book of Job is valuable for the person under-going suffering, because it shows us the right and the wrong attitudes toward suffering. But the book has unique value also for the person who is not suffering, because it can teach him how and how not to deal with a suffering brother or sister. It goes without saying that the book is especially valuable for the pastor, whose special assignment it is to comfort those who are having to carry a heavy load of suffering.

The essayist would not like to be misunderstood here. The book of Job offers us no easy and automatic solution to the vexing problem of suffering in the world. Our study of the book on these five Mondays will show us, however, that *three great principles* form the basis of God's world rule, three principles emphasized, in turn, by Job's three friends, by Elihu, and by God himself. The first principle of God's world rule is *his punitive justice* (that was the emphasis of Job's friends); the second is that of *God's saving love* (Elihu's emphasis); and the third is that of *God's secret, incomprehensible majesty* (that was God's emphasis).

If we need any additional reason for digging into the book of Job, Prof. Pieper has this to say to us in an article referred to on your outline sheet:

It is on the ground of Scripture that our theology must be rejuvenated, our practice made sound, our strength renewed. If we fail to use the Scripture, if we do not again and again study it thoroughly, we shall again become blind and lose spiritual discernment; we shall become dull, cold, lazy, and carry on the Lord's work indifferently; we shall become flat and stale in our preaching and *Seelsorge*, and our word will strike no ire. (WLQ 57:51)

A question may then arise: if the book of Job is so important for our understanding of suffering, why is it not read and understood as it deserves to be? Most Christians know, of course, that Job is the saint who was asked to suffer, but they don't generally know the development of the book's line of thought. For that Christians themselves are partly to blame. Dr. Fuerbringer puts it well: "In general, we do not read our Bible enough, we do not read the Old Testament enough, and in particular, we do not read Job enough" (*The Book of Job*, p 5).

Why is that? Undoubtedly part of the reason is the language of the book, beginning with Hebrew. The book contains more than a hundred *hapaxlegomena*, words used only once in the Old Testament. Luther confessed what difficulty he had in translating the book of Job into German. In a letter to Spalatin Luther wrote: "In Job, Master Philip, Aurogallus, and I hardly finished three lines in four days. Job seems to be far more impatient with our translation than he is with the comfort of his friends."

A quarter century ago Dr. Paul Peters put his finger on what many consider a big reason why so many Christians are so ignorant of the line of thought of the book of Job, and that is the English Bible translation which they've been using. In an article in the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* Dr. Peters quotes the writer of a Bible encyclopedia as saying: "The Authorized Version appears at its worst in the Book of Job" (55:272). A few examples may illustrate. In 6:3 Job is explaining why he has spoken out so vehemently. According to KJV he concludes: "Therefore my words are swallowed up." The NIV translates: "No wonder my words have been impetuous." In 10:1 KJV translates Job as saying: "My soul is weary of my life; I will leave my complaint upon myself." Pretty hard from that to tell exactly what Job meant. (NIV: "I loathe my very life, therefore I will give free rein to my complaint.") In 16:18, at the very depth of his despair, Job cries out: "O earth, cover thou not my blood, and let my cry have no place." The first half of the sentence is clear but the second half? (NIV: "O earth, do not cover my blood; may my cry never be laid to rest.") "My breath is corrupt," KJV translates Job as saying in 17:1. That kind of language may have been clear four hundred years ago, but in the language of 1981 Job is saying: "My spirit is broken." In 15:26ff the AV describes the rebellious sinner striving with his Maker in these

words: “He stretcheth out his hand against God, and strengtheneth himself against the Almighty. He runneth upon him, even on his neck, upon the thick bosses of his bucklers: because he covereth his face with his fatness, and maketh collops of fat on his flanks.” Language like that isn’t going to help anybody to understand the important message of this precious book. But here’s the thing: if it was difficult for a previous generation of Bible readers to read the chapters of this book with comprehension, that can certainly not be said of our generation, with the variety of contemporary translations God has made available to us.

Before taking up the isagogical matters pertaining to the book, the essayist wants to express his indebtedness to a series of three articles written for the *Quarterly* by Prof. August Pieper back in 1908 and published in translation in the 1960 *Quarterly*. Again, you have title and reference on the outline sheet. By all means, read the three installments, for your own spiritual growth and for the sake of the souls entrusted to your care, and you will agree that the time spent was a wise and worthwhile investment.

Who was this man Job, after whom the book is named? He’s described in the opening verse as a man from the land of Uz, which is in Edom, south and east of the Dead Sea. Luther thinks Job was a heathen, a descendant of Abraham, who had come to faith in the true God. The Talmud, ancient and official voice of the Jewish community, calls Job a typical figure who actually never existed. Dr. Norman Habel, formerly on the faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis and now at the seminary in Australia, writes: “The story is probably a non-Israelite folk legend whose historical roots are lost in antiquity” (*The Book of Job*, p 6). That view is representative of most of OT scholarship today, which considers the book of Job only poetry, not history. But that view of the book does not arise out of the text; that is a view that has been superimposed on the text. The prophet Ezekiel, on the other hand, mentions Job along with Noah and Daniel as outstanding examples of piety (14:14 & 29). The apostle James’ refers to Job as a model of perseverance under trial (5:11).

Luther makes this interesting comment: “I consider the book to be a history; but I do not believe that all that is written occurred in that order. People do not speak like that in trial and temptation. I believe that some good teacher has brought it into this order and dialogue form” (*WLQ* 55:277).

Which brings us to the subject of the literary style of the book of Job. One of the advantages of reading the book in a contemporary translation is the immediate awareness that the book of Job, except for the first two chapters and part of the last chapter is poetry. The language is picturesque, for one thing. But even apart from the masterful use of language, the narrative material of the book is arranged in highly artistic form. The author describes the dramatic dialogue between Job and his three friends as a contest in three rounds, in which each of the three friends, in turn, arises to speak, and is in turn answered by Job. As might be expected, since the book itself does not identify its author, there is wide variance of opinion. The high literary artistry may very well point to the classic period of Israelite poetry, the time of David and Solomon. The book’s place in the OT Canon was never questioned.

And now to the book itself.

The prologue sets the stage for the drama about to unfold before our eyes. More than that, it gives us the key to Job’s sufferings. It shows us that the misery that entered his life did not happen by accident. God let it come to Job, and for a reason. God had a special plan for Job, and the prologue tells us what that was. God’s plan was not, as the three friends insisted, to punish Job. God’s plan was not only to discipline him, but to refute Satan, to prove that Job’s piety was genuine, and in the final analysis, to bring glory to his own name. These divine purposes, of course, remained hidden to Job throughout his ordeal. God wanted to call forth simple faith and implicit obedience through this trial, but for him to have explained this in advance to Job would have destroyed that purpose.

We have a good picture of Job in the very first verse of the book. NIV translates: “This man was blameless and upright.” (KJV: “perfect and upright”). The first of those two adjectives comes from a Hebrew verb meaning “to be complete.” (The NT equivalent would be *teleios*). The word doesn’t say that Job was morally perfect, but that he was an all-around child of God. Job’s faith and works were of one piece. He showed his faith by what he did. Outsiders have often enough rubbed under our noses the fact that a man can be devout in church, but dishonest in business, and a very devil in his personal relationships. That wasn’t the case with

Job. There was a completeness to his piety. The last two verb forms in verse 1 are participles, indicating continuous action: in this case Job's "fearing God" and "shunning evil" express habitual conduct. The other adjective characterizing Job describes him as "upright." He was a man of integrity. His faith was genuine, not hypocritical.

Job is further described as "the greatest man among all the peoples of the East," referring to the nomadic peoples who lived in what we today know as the Arabian Peninsula. His immense herds of livestock and his large family made it clear that he enjoyed the blessing of the Giver of all good gifts. Perhaps you will agree that in reading the book of Job we tend to concentrate on the affliction the Lord permitted to enter his life, and that we tend to lose sight of the fact that affliction was the exception, and not the rule, in Job's life. It's too bad. God gives us a hundred good days, and two bad ones, and our perverse nature tends to concentrate on the bad ones, like the fellow who stuck his nose in Limburger cheese and imagined that the whole world stank. These opening words of the book of Job attest to the truthfulness of the statement of the psalmist: "Blessed are all who fear the Lord, who walk in his ways. You will eat the fruit of your labor; blessings and prosperity will be yours" (Ps 128:1f).

The opening verses of the book give us interesting evidence of Job's concern for the spiritual welfare of his children. Sons and daughters of the family took turns in hosting family gatherings, and after each of these it was Job's custom to gather the group together to sanctify them. He feared that in a moment of thoughtless hilarity his children might have forgotten God and acted as though they were out of his sight. The verb translated "cursed" in v 5 is actually the Hebrew word for "to bless." The verb is actually a formula of blessing used in taking leave of friends. (Cf. Ge 31:55, where Laban is said to have "blessed" his grandchildren and his daughters when Jacob returned to his homeland). Job was afraid his children might have said farewell to God in their hearts, and so he led them in offering burnt offerings. The type of sacrifice he offered was also significant. Under the Sinaitic Code the burnt offering was the sacrifice by which an Israelite declared his dedication, his devotion to the Lord.

Verse 6: "One day the angels came to present themselves before the Lord." The Scriptures nowhere give us special instruction, not to say a comprehensive picture, of the nature and activity of the holy angels. God is called "the Lord of hosts, Lord of the armies of angels who are loyal to him and carry out his bidding. This doctrine assures us that we live out our lives in the midst of a great world of spirits. Our battle against sin is not a private matter, but a battle involving a whole army of spirits. St. Paul urges us to remember that "our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Eph 6:12). Our lapse into sin involves more than just us. By the same token, our victory over temptation is again not the concern of just a single individual, but the occasion of rejoicing among the angels of God (Lk 15:10).

Surprising here is the fact that Satan appears among the angels who stand before God. What an unusual spectacle: the prince of darkness appearing in God's presence along with the holy angels, to offer homage, to report on work done, and to receive his assignment! There is much here we cannot understand, and it seems there are two ways of explaining the unusual passage. The words describing the heavenly council may be taken literally as a scene in the court of heaven. According to this understanding of the passage all of the angels, including the evil angels, actually had an audience with God. Prof. Pieper, on the other hand, takes the words as an anthropomorphism (*WLQ* 57:53). According to this view, vv 6ff are intended to express the truth that Satan is trying to find out whether God will decree, or at least permit, a plan which he has concocted. Satan knows that he has only as much freedom as God permits him to have. He is not at liberty to pursue his mischief wherever and however he pleases. There is a superior will to which he must bow, which sets limits to his hellish activity, and which allows him to continue only to further God's purpose. In this instance God had special plans in mind for Job, and intended to use Satan as his instrument in carrying them out. It's important when reading the book of Job that we see that Satan is on a short leash. If we fail to recognize this, the contest between Satan and Job seems fearfully one-sided; Job doesn't seem to stand a chance against the arch-fiend.

It's a sobering description we have here of Satan. The Apostle John describes him as "the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them, before God day and night" (Rev 12: 10). This is a description which citizens of the 20th Century need to hear. People today seem inclined either to scoff at the idea of a powerful evil spirit masterminding all the forces of evil in the world, or they seem, to show an unholy and unwholesome fascination with the demonic and the occult. But isn't it enough to make you shudder to realize that Satan, in league with the sinful nature inside each of us, has a measure of control over us, that he has direct access to our souls, influencing our very thoughts and emotions? Jesus called him "the prince of this world." An assassin can kill only the body: Satan is the murderer of souls. To yield to him in what may seem an insignificant matter is to incur God's displeasure and to put our eternal happiness in jeopardy. To come under his power is to be divorced from God.

Verse 9 presents Satan's accusation: "Does Job fear God for nothing?" In other words, "Job realizes that serving God pays off!" Here is the issue around which the testing of Job centers. Job is to be given an opportunity to demonstrate, by the most severe test imaginable, that God's man is capable of loving God for God's own sake rather than for the sake of what he might get out of so doing.

And so without warning or provocation, Job was struck by a series of catastrophes. Two of these catastrophes were the work of foreign bandits; two are acts of God. In the process all of Job's agricultural and commercial interests are wiped out and his family killed. He had much to lose, this "greatest man among all the people of the East," and now he had lost it all.

This series of tragedies demonstrated that God's verdict concerning Job was correct. By his reaction to this unbelievably severe load of suffering Job showed that he was indeed an all-around child of God, one whose life matched the profession of his lips, one whose trust in the Lord was genuine, not sham. In token of his grief he tore his robe and shaved his head, and then fell to the ground—not in an orgy of self-pity, but in worship:

"Naked I came from my mother's womb,
and naked I will depart.
The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away;
may the name of the LORD be praised."

Several things ought to be noted here. This is not simply resignation to fate or to the Omnipotent God, who does what he wants regardless of our feelings. Job used the OT Savior name of God, the name usually found in our English Bibles as "LORD" (spelled with all capital letters). It's a name that describes God as the God of *absolute independence*. His existence, unlike ours, is absolutely independent of anyone or anything else. Similarly, his grace is not dependent on your or my reaction to it; his grace is its own reason for being. The name "LORD" as translation of the Hebrew *Yahweh* describes God also as the God of *absolute constancy*, absolute reliability. It was in that unchanging Savior God that Job now took refuge. He continued to be absolutely convinced of the goodness of the God who was dealing with him. Job is saying more than merely: "Well, he gave, and he's got the right to take back." The ache that was tearing his heart was to Job only evidence of God's mercy, mercy that had surrounded him for so many years like sunlight on a bright day.

William Green of Princeton Seminary pointed out a century ago that to appreciate Job's conduct under trial properly we must remember that he went into his trial without the firm support which we Christians today take for granted. The many Gospel promises that we have known since childhood were unknown to Job. Try to envision yourself having to face crushing sorrow without knowing the facts of Gethsemane and Calvary and the empty tomb, and you will sympathize with Job the more in his trial. The precious assurances of the Scripture that we have known and loved as the very alphabet of our religion had not yet been written down for Job. How could he know, as we do, that there's an important difference between chastisement and punishment, that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, that behind God's frowning countenance he hides a smiling face?

And so the first stage of Job's testing was over, and the tempter had failed. "In all this Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing."

But Satan returned. St. Peter describes him as a lion forever on the prowl. Once again Satan slandered Job in the presence of God: "A man will give all he has for his own life. Stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and blood, and he will surely curse you to your face."

And so Job went through a second dreary and painful round of suffering. Stricken with what was apparently a loathsome form of leprosy, he was plagued with swollen joints and festering sores from head to toe. "My body burns with fever," he later said (30:30). The irritating itching moved him to scrape himself with a piece of broken pottery. His appetite must have failed, because he says: "I am nothing but skin and bones" (19:20). His facial features must have presented a caricature of his former appearance, because when his three friends came to visit him "they could hardly recognize him" (2:12). "My body is clothed with worms and scabs, my skin is broken and festering," he lamented (7:5). A rancid odor must have escaped from his tortured body, for he later complained: "My breath is offensive to my wife; I am loathsome to my own brothers" (19:17).

How long this went on we don't know, but after some time his wife added to his suffering. "Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!" (2:9). Again, "curse" is used in the sense of "Take leave of God! Forget about serving him!"

Commentators have often been less than kind to Job's wife, but surely the Eighth Commandment applies here, too. Can we put the best construction on her behavior? Like her husband, she had apparently borne the first terrible trial with meekness and resignation. She had lost property and children, too, and had faced adversity as bravely as Job. We don't hear a single complaining word from her lips. But it wasn't easy for her to see her husband suffering as he was. And when she saw her husband going downhill, her last earthly support apparently being taken from her, she became frantic, and angry words rushed out like a flood: "Job, give up trying to make sense out of this nightmare. Stop torturing yourself trying to figure out what God is trying to accomplish with you. God must be cruel. I can't praise a god who treats his loyal worshipers like this. My advice is: say good-bye to him, and it will be good riddance!" Without realizing it, Job's wife was adding immeasurably to the severity of her husband's suffering.

Job's reply to her is remarkably gentle under the circumstances: "You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?" It's as though he is saying: "I didn't expect to hear anything like that from you. Just because God has sent evil into our lives, should we now forget the blessings we have enjoyed from his hand?"

Once again, Job's trust in the Lord's goodness did not falter, and Satan's second temptation was foiled. But a third test was ahead for Job, and that proved to be more severe than either of the first two.

Part Two

When we left our friend Job last week, it seemed as though his sorrows had reached the ultimate. Unfortunately for Job, but fortunately for us, this was not so. The Spirit of God has recorded for us in great detail the visit of three of Job's friends. Consider, if you will the extensive treatment the book of Job gives to the comments made by Job's friends and to the anguished and sometimes angry answers they elicited from Job. 28 of the 42 chapters of the book deal with the matter to be treated in this afternoon's discussion. If these proportions mean anything at all, then the Spirit of God must be trying to tell us something by presenting in such bulk the message the friends of Job brought him in his suffering. It is important for us, first of all *as Christians*, to understand what these friends were trying to prove. It is important also for us *as Seelsorger*, as people concerned about people, to understand the point the friends were trying to make.

The appearance of Job's friends introduces the last and most terrible stage of Job's suffering. Job's physical condition had deteriorated to the point that he despaired of life. And as you all know from experience, the physical deterioration of a suffering Christian can contribute to his/her emotional deterioration. As was pointed out last week, a further complication for Job came when his nearest and dearest, the only surviving

member of his immediate family, turned on him and urged him to turn his back on God. And now an unexpected temptation came at Job from the three friends.

Satan knows a good opportunity when he sees one, and he certainly saw one here. He used the three friends of Job as his unwilling dupes in trying to push Job over the brink, to persuade him to relax his hold on the grace of God and to renounce his service of a gracious God. Any isagogical-exegetical study of the book of Job is going to have quite a bit to say about the three friends of Job, and it isn't going to be all that flattering. That's why I think it's important that at the outset we make extra effort to be fair to the friends.

To begin with, remember that they were friends. They made the trip to Job's home not to hurt him, but to help him, as friends will and as only friends can. Their intention was not to increase his burden but to lighten it. The fact that these were cherished family friends only intensified the temptation Satan directed at Job through them. But on the face of things the friends are certainly to be commended for their resolve to visit their suffering friend, to express their sympathy, to be with him in his time of need, and to speak words of comfort that would help him to carry a frightful load of grief.

But at this point the compliments have to stop. We cannot commend the friends for the behavior they showed once they saw their suffering friend and began to speak to him. Their behavior added immeasurably to Job's suffering and earned for them the Lord's rebuke (42:7): "I am angry with you ..., because you have not spoken of me what is right."

Let's examine carefully the description of the friends' behavior that the sacred writer provides: "When they saw Job from a distance, they could hardly recognize him; they began to weep aloud, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads. Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights. No one said a word to him ... " (2:12f).

In evaluating the friends' behavior, we surely don't want to forget that there are substantial cultural differences between life in ancient Edom and in contemporary America. We wouldn't ordinarily show grief the way Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar did. And when evaluating their seven-day silence you are as aware as I am that a Christian may sometimes think it better not to talk much when visiting a grief-stricken friend. Your very presence at his side in his grief may say very much to him.

But to evaluate the friends' behavior we must look also at what effect it had on Job. The very next verse (3:1) says: "After this Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth." Is it possible the friends were part of the reason for this violent reaction on the part of Job?

The hospital patient who has suffered long from a debilitating disease is very much aware of his physical appearance. When a friend comes to visit him, he's very likely going to look for signals indicating the visitor's opinion of him. Weeping aloud, tearing clothes, and sprinkling dust on their heads may have been tantamount to telling Job: "Oh, no! We didn't expect you to be looking this bad!" What a blow it would be for a cancer patient to have his pastor enter his room and say: "Why, I hardly recognize you!" By contrast, what a difference a warm smile, a firm handshake, and a friendly greeting will make!

And that prolonged silence! One would think that, despite the differences between their culture and ours, the friends would have had something to say to Job during the first week they spent with him, but "no one said a word to him."

It seems that this was the straw that broke Job's back. Prof. Pieper says: "After sitting in the ashes for seven days without a word, Job's patience and his resignation to the will and ways of God reached its end" (*WLQ* 57:62). Job unleashed a tirade in which he cursed the day he was born: "Why did I not perish at birth, and die as I came from the womb?... For now I would be lying down in peace; I would be asleep and at rest.... Why is life given to the bitter of soul, to those who long for death?... Why is life given to a man whose way is hidden, whom God has hedged in?" (3:11-23). In his vehemence Job made God responsible for his plight.

With Job's tirade the dialogue proper begins. Eliphaz leads it off, chs 4-5. "Job, you have instructed many.... But now trouble comes your way, and you are discouraged. Should not your piety be your confidence and your blameless ways your hope? Consider now: Who, being innocent, has ever perished? Where were the upright ever destroyed? As I have observed, those who plow evil and those who sow trouble reap it. At the

breath of God they are destroyed? (4:4-9). The friends' compassion has turned to condemnation. In Eliphaz's view, sin and suffering are inseparably linked in God's world rule. Eliphaz also questions Job's piety and integrity. "Job, God doesn't punish innocent people!" Eliphaz seems to qualify more as a lecturer than as a friend. "Job, don't be angry at God. What you need is to get right with him."

We're not surprised to see that Job is disappointed, that he feels betrayed by what his friend Eliphaz had said. "A despairing man should have the devotion of his friends, but my brothers are as undependable as intermittent streams" (6:14f). Job argues not only with his friends; he argues with God as well. "The arrows of the Almighty are in me; my spirit drinks in their poison; God's terrors are marshaled against me" (6:4). It's an unlovely accusation that he makes of God when he says: "You frighten me ... you terrify me.... Let me alone!... What is man that you give him so much attention, that you examine him every morning and test him every moment? Will you never look away from me, or let me alone even for an instant?" (7:14-19).

When Bildad, the second friend, responds to Job's words, we notice immediately that he's more outspoken than Eliphaz was. Saying to a suffering child of God: "Your words are a blustering wind" isn't going to win any friends, nor is it going to help a sufferer. There's more heat than light in Bildad's words. "If you are pure and upright ... God will restore you to your rightful place" (8:6). "God does not reject a blameless man" (8:20). Normally decency demands that you let the dead rest in peace, but Bildad rubbed under Job's nose: "When your children sinned against God, he gave them over to the penalty of their sin? (8:4). The children, of course, didn't hear the accusation, but their grieving father did, and it made his load heavier to bear.

In Bildad's speech we can see an unwholesome emphasis the three friends made throughout the eight speeches. In speaking to Job the three friends consistently referred to God either as God (Hebrew *Elohim*, the Creator who is to be held in reverence) or as the Almighty (Hebrew *Shaddai*, the God who displays power). Never once in all these chapters do we read that the friends referred to God as *Yahweh*, the God of free and faithful grace. They did not point their suffering friend to the Savior whose love is undeserved and at the same time constant, the God who has taken the initiative in contacting us with the offer of his love. This failure on their part had a particularly disastrous result on Job, in that when responding to the friends he now no longer referred to God as the covenant God. Instead he followed the friends in calling God "the Almighty," "the sovereign Creator." On one occasion (23:28) Job does say: "The fear of the Lord—that is wisdom," but the way that word "Lord" is spelled in our English Bibles tips us off that this is not the Tetragrammaton. Job is referring to God not as the God of absolute independence and of absolute constancy, but as Sovereign lord and master of all.

Chapters 9-10 give us Job's answer to Bildad, the second friend to speak. "How can a mortal be righteous with God?" Job asked. In other words, nobody ever wins his case with God, and for several reasons. For one thing, God can't be brought into court. Who can say to him, 'What are you doing?'" (9:12). Job's second reason why nobody wins his case with God is that God uses his power to destroy both blameless and wicked. Job's tortured mind argued: "How can I dispute with him? Though I were innocent ... he would crush me without a hearing. He destroys both the blameless and the wicked" (9:14-22).

You see the point Job is trying to make. The friends had argued: "Wherever God sees sin he must punish. God's punitive justice is *absolute*." Job disagreed. As he saw it, God's punitive justice is *arbitrary*. "I will give free reign to my complaint and speak out in the bitterness of my soul. I will say to God: Do not condemn me, but tell me what charges you have against me. Does it please you to oppress me, to spurn the work of your hands, while you smile on the schemes of the wicked?" (10:1-3). "Your hands have shaped me and made me. Will you now turn and destroy me?" he asks God. "Turn away from me so I can have a moment's joy before I go to the place of no return" (10:8.20f).

In chapter 11 we get to meet the third of the three friends. Enter Zophar in hobnail boots, heavy-footed, discourteous, and cocksure. He calls Job's words "idle talk," and adds: "Oh, how I wish that God would speak, that he would open his lips against you.... Know this: God has even forgotten some of your sin" (11:5f). "If I were God, Job, you would be in a lot worse condition than you are." Zophar restates the accusation made by the other two friends: "Surely God recognizes deceitful men.... If you put away the sin that is in your hand, and

allow no evil to dwell in your tent, then you will lift up your face without shame.... Life will be brighter” (10:11-17). Zophar saw Job as boastful and as a scoffer, but not as a person who was hurting, a person with needs crying to be fulfilled, a person who needed the sharing of Zophar’s love.

Job’s response to Zophar’s tirade was predictable. His answers were harsher and more bitter as the charges became more vehement. “Doubtless you are the people, and wisdom will die with you!” The irony of that statement would be funny if it weren’t so pathetic. Picture the epitaph: “Wisdom perished with Zophar.” “What you know, I also know; I am not inferior to you.... You are worthless physicians, all of you!” If only you would be altogether silent! For you, that would be wisdom” (13: 2-5).

As the dialogue proceeds, Job’s friends do not substantially advance the argument, but the passion with which they speak increases. “I have become a laughingstock to my friends,” Job laments, “a mere laughingstock, though righteous and blameless.” He’s not calling himself sinless (he has admitted his sin in a dozen different places), but Job denies being guilty of the flagrant sin which called for the special divine judgment the friends were alleging. The words “I have become a laughingstock” show that Job is hurting; his words have a pathetic quality. “I realize,” he admits in chapter 12, “that all things are in God’s hands, that what he tears down no one can rebuild, but” (he asks in chapter 13) “But what I’d like to know is this: by what right does God take his almighty power and persecute me, a leaf, dry chaff?” (13:25). “Isn’t man’s life miserable enough as it is, few days and full of trouble (14:1 ff)? Why must God bring such a poor creature into judgment? Couldn’t he let him spend his few years in peace? “Look away from him and let him alone (14:6) ... If only you would hide me in the grave and conceal me till your anger has passed!... But as a mountain erodes and crumbles and ... as water wears away stones and torments wash away the soil, so you destroy man’s hope.” At this point Job is near despair.

Strangely enough, the friends were blind to this and continued to view Job as a hardened sinner seeking to justify himself. When friend Eliphaz spoke for the second time (ch 15), his words had a sharp cutting edge. “Would a wise man answer with empty notions, or fill his belly with the hot east wind? Would he argue with useless words, with speeches that have no value? You even undermine piety and hinder devotion to God ... Are you the first man ever born?... Do you list God’s council? Do you limit wisdom to yourself? What do you know that we do not know?... Are God’s consolations not enough for you, words spoken gently to you? Why has your heart carried you away, ... so that you vent your rage against God and pour out such words from your mouth?” (15:2-13)? When Eliphaz spoke the words recorded at the close of chapter 15, when he repeated the ruthless charge that Job’s suffering was God’s judgment on a stubborn sinner, he earned the rebuke Job delivered (16:2): “Miserable comforters are you all! I could also speak like you if you were in my place. But my mouth would encourage you” (16:2-5). A few verses later Job shows the fearful torment he’s suffering when he accuses God of being an enemy who has set him up for target practice: “He has made me his target; his archers surround me. Without pity he pierces my kidneys and spills my gall on the ground. Again and again he bursts upon me; he rushes at me like a warrior? (16:12-24). Job’s words betray a fearful sense of abandonment. But coupled with that is his simmering resentment: “My face is red with weeping; deep shadows ring my eyes, yet my hands have been free of violence? (16:16f).

Here is Job’s sin: daring to blame God, so that he may appear to be righteous. “Let me speak, and you reply. How many wrongs and sins have I committed? Show me my offense, and my sin” (13:22f). The great big, powerful God; poor little helpless Job!

Bildad’s contribution to the second cycle of speeches continues the pattern set by the other friends. Not a syllable of compassion for Job or of sympathetic love! Instead he offers the sufferer sarcasm: “You who tear yourself to pieces in your anger, is the earth to be abandoned for your sake, or must the rocks be moved from their place?” (in other words, is the divine order to be changed just because you think God isn’t doing things right?) In addition to sarcasm, Bildad continues to judge the sincerity of Job’s piety: “The lamp of the wicked is snuffed out.... He is torn from the security of his tent and marched off to the king of terrors.... The memory of him perishes from the earth. He has no offspring or descendants.... Surely such is the dwelling of an evil man; such is the place of one who knows not God” (18:5-21).

This controversy was torture for Job. “How long will you torment me and crush me with words?” he asked. “Though I cry ‘I’ve been wronged!’ I get no response; though I call for help, there is no justice” (19:1.7). In his desperation he turns from God to his friends. “Have pity on me, my friends, have pity,” Job cried out, “for the hand of God has struck me.” It isn’t automatic, is it, that a Christian coming to visit a suffering fellow Christian, perhaps even in official capacity, brings into that sickroom a compassion for the sufferer?

Since Job had begun to despair of ever receiving justice in his lifetime, he now made an unusual request. He asked that his claim to innocence were recorded on a scroll, engraved on rock, so that future generations would know that this innocent man was forced to live this world persecuted not only by his friends but even by God. At this point Job was only a step away from total despair and unbelief.

And yet it was just at this unlikely moment when the faith of Job reached its finest and most beautiful expression, 19:25-27. The words deserve a closer look. “I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth.” The word Job used for “Redeemer” is the Hebrew word *go’el*, the person in ancient Israel who espoused the cause of his injured or impoverished relative. To be specific: The *go’el* 1) ransomed a poor kinsman from slavery; 2) he paid off a mortgage which a poverty-stricken kinsman had contracted; 3) he avenged a kinsman’s murder; and 4) he married the kinsman’s widow to prevent the extinction of his family line. The word translated “Redeemer” is frequently used of God as the deliverer of his people out of captivity (Isa 49:7,26; 54:5,8) and also as the deliverer of individuals from distress (Ge 48:16; Ps 19:14; 103:4). Job felt that his death was imminent, but he had the firm confidence that even death could not separate him from the one who would play the part of a kinsman-redeemer for him.

The last word in the sentence “He will stand upon *the earth*” is the Hebrew word for “dust.” The dust of disintegration and death, which Job felt was near for him, would not be the end of him. Job’s Redeemer will stand upon it as the last one, victorious to help and to save Job.

Job knows (אֲנִי יָדָעְתִּי = experiential knowledge) that he really needs no lifeless copper scroll or monument of stone to vindicate him, because he knew he had a living witness and defender, an everliving Redeemer, who had the power to save and to destroy, and who would rescue him from wrong, who would defend him from false accusation.

The Hebrew expression translated “in my flesh” has been interpreted variously. At the heart of the debate is the Hebrew preposition *min*, meaning “from.” Some commentators take this as the *min* of separation and translate: “Apart from my flesh I shall see God.” According to this interpretation Job will see God even though he is dead and stripped of human flesh. Dr. Norman Habel supports this view: “After death Job knows of nothing but oblivion (10:21f); resurrection is impossible (14:10-12). It seems more likely that Job is clinging to the hope of a last-minute intervention by a redeemer who will rescue his life and vindicate his integrity before he is destroyed by God, the heavenly destroyer” (*The Book of Job* p 1051). The other view is that the preposition *min* is to be taken as a partitive *min* and translated: “... from out of my flesh I shall see God.” After his tortured body has returned to dust he believes that his remains will be resurrected and restored, so that from out of his own flesh, with his own eyes, he will see the Lord who rescued him and vindicated him.

The question may trouble us: is this reading too much into the statement of a man who may have lived in the patriarchal period, before any of the OT revelation was written down? Was Job’s faith in the resurrection of the body the same as the faith that we have in Christ’s victory over death and the grave? In essence, yes; but not in the highly developed form in which we know it by faith. William Green summarizes the matter nicely: “When Job appeals to his Redeemer, he does so without even remotely apprehending that he is the second person of the Godhead; for of the distinction of persons in the divine being, and of the doctrine of the Trinity as unfolded in the New Testament he knew nothing.... As Abraham saw Christ’s day, it may likewise be said of Job that he rejoiced to see Christ’s day; he saw it, and was glad” (*Job*, pp 214f).

Job had to listen to three more speeches from his friends; perhaps these do not need to be examined in detail this afternoon. They contain nothing really new. Finally the friends have nothing else to say to Job; the law of diminishing returns is in effect. All three try to convince Job of the truth of their syllogism:

(major premise): God is just.
 (minor premise): As a just God, he must punish the wicked.
 (conclusion): Since God is punishing you, Job, you must be wicked.

A parting shot that Eliphaz took at Job was perhaps the most unkind cut of all (22:5-10):

“Is not your wickedness great?
 Are not your sins endless?
 You demanded security from your brothers for no reason;
 you stripped men of their clothing, leaving them naked.
 You gave no water to the weary
 and you withheld food from the hungry,
 though you were a powerful man, owning land –
 an honored man, living on it.
 And you sent widows away empty-handed
 and broke the strength of the fatherless.
 That is why snares are all around you ...”

Job’s parting words to his friends were: “How you have helped the powerless!” (26:2). “I will never admit you are in the right” (27:5). Instead of accepting their criticism and bowing to their cruel judgment, Job offered to instruct them: “I will teach you about the power of God” (27:11). Since God punishes the evildoer, to fear the Lord is the highest wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding (28:28).

The final three chapters of Job’s closing discourse (chs 29-31) are a pathetic soliloquy in which Job reminisces about another time in his life, about a better time. “How I long for the months gone by, for the days when God watched over me. Oh, for the days when I was in my prime, when God’s intimate friendship blessed my house, when the Almighty was still with me” (29:2.4f)! “Now my life ebbs away ... I am reduced to dust and ashes. I cry out to you, O God, but you do not answer. You turn on me ruthlessly” (30:16,21). “The churning inside me never stops ... my harp is tuned to mourning” (30:27.31).

Before we leave the discourses of Job and move on in our meetings of the next three weeks, to what Elihu had to say and to what God had to say to Job, let us look back over the words of Job. Does something disturb you in what Job had to say to God? We’ve heard Job say some terribly sharp things to God. We heard him accuse God of being his enemy, of being unjust, of being cruel, of being arbitrary; meanwhile Job stoutly affirmed his own innocence. Prof. Pieper asks: “Is not this quarreling with God sin that *eo ipso* blots out faith?” (WLQ 57:66). Perhaps you will recall having been bothered by that same question when you’ve made a hospital visit and a suffering—and complaining—parishioner unloads a burden of grievances against God. Isn’t faith essentially a trust that God is supremely good and gracious, one who does not only not treat us unjustly, but who has proved himself merciful in a thousand different situations every day? Why, the very object of our faith is the mercy of God. The question that may have bothered you in that hospital room and the one that bothers us when we hear Job speak, is this: when I quarrel with God, can an affirmation of his grace exist alongside that denial of his grace?”

Pieper emphasizes that although we cannot explain this psychologically, the fact remains that Job said enough to assure us that despite his quarreling he did not lose his trust completely. As we have observed Job from a distance, as we have listened to him react to what his friends were saying, perhaps it has seemed to you that you’re watching a strong swimmer swimming in a high sea. At times you can’t see him because he’s submerged, but then he reappears, to fight the waves. Job’s words are evidence that he vacillated between hope and hopelessness. On the one hand, there are dozens of statements from his mouth that show he was tortured by the image of an angry God, yet there is strong evidence that he never abandoned his faith in a living and loving

God. In 6:2f Job explains: “If only my anguish could be weighed, and all my misery placed on the scales! It would surely outweigh the sand of the seas—no wonder my words have been impetuous.”

We see, then, that Job’s quarreling with God and his attacks on God resulted not from malice, but from simple weakness. In chapter 7 Job says some sharp things: “I will not keep silent.... I will speak out in the bitterness of my soul. Am I the sea, or the monster of the deep, that you put me under guard?... You frighten me ... you terrify me ... let me alone ... Why do you not pardon my offenses and forgive my sins?” Now that is a foolish prayer (ascribing his suffering to God’s anger and asking God to leave him alone), but that is not the prayer of one fallen from faith. No unbeliever prays like that.

One more amazing expression of Job’s faith. In the closing verses of chapter 16 Job shouts out his cry of despair: “O earth, do not cover my blood; May my cry never be laid to rest!” But hardly are those defiant words out of his mouth when Job confesses:

“Even now my witness is in heaven;
 my advocate is on high.
 My intercessor is my friend
 as my eyes pour out tears to God;
 on behalf of a man he pleads with God
 as a man pleads for his friend” (16:18-21).

The book of Job helps us to see, then, that in the heart of a suffering Christian faith and unbelief, despair and trust are never far apart. The book of Job offers some practical exegesis of the statement of the prophet Jeremiah (17:9): “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?”

Prof. Pieper says: “In the midst of all his sufferings, of all his temptations and wrong thoughts concerning God, in the midst of all the willful raging of his heart and mouth, in the midst of all the despair, Job’s’ faith perseveres to the end. God carried his point over against Satan, who cast suspicion on Job’s godliness. Job was God’s faithful servant, his beloved, God-fearing child, when God handed him over to Satan. He proved himself as such in the temptation. God acknowledged him as such when he disclosed himself to Job, even though he sternly reprovved him for his folly and pride. And in the end he confirmed him as such by calling him “my servant Job” (42:7) and by renewing his blessing.” (*WLQ* 57:71).

Part Three

When we left Job last week, he had just silenced his friends. He had demonstrated convincingly that the principle they had so confidently urged to explain God’s dealings with him did not solve the problem of Job’s suffering. They had argued that God’s punitive justice was absolute. Wherever he sees evil he must punish it. Job countered by denying that God’s justice was absolute; matter of fact, it often seems arbitrary. God often seems to let the wicked go unpunished and cuts down the innocent, as in his own case.

After the lengthy dialog with the friends, Job still had no solution to his problem. In the intensity of his struggle Job had frequently expressed the opinion—and very vehemently, too—that he was right in attacking the fairness and the providence of God. Now another speaker enters the discussion. Elihu saw 1) that the friends were wrong, but also 2) that Job’s problem had not been solved. It was plain to Elihu that Job was conscious of his own integrity, which was dearer to him than his own life. His own conscience testified that he was not guilty of gross offense against the law of love. Bildad had accused him (22:5-10):

“You demanded security from your brothers for no reason;
 you stripped men of their clothing, leaving them naked.
 You gave no water to the weary
 and you withheld food from the hungry,

though you were a powerful man, owning land –
 an honored man, living on it.
 And you sent widows away empty-handed
 and broke the strength of the fatherless.
 That is why snares are all around you.”

But Job’s conscience told him the friends’ charges were not true. He appealed confidently to the searcher of hearts to affirm the uprightness of his past life.

But right there lay the problem. In the face of his innocence, how could he maintain his confidence in the kindness and the justice of God? How could a God be holy and righteous if he lets the wicked triumph and afflicts the innocent? Job could not shut his eyes to the fact that these two facts seem to clash. How was the righteousness of God to be vindicated? Even after the friends finished speaking, Job was as much in the dark on this point as ever.

His trial was almost over, and he had successfully met the test. His faith had been tested but not shattered, as God had told Satan from the outset. But now Job needed to know the purpose of his affliction in God’s scheme of things if he was to receive full benefit of the trial he’d gone through. It was to meet this need that Elihu now stepped forward to speak. Chapters 32-37 record four speeches of Elihu.

Most of contemporary OT scholarship questions the authenticity of the Elihu speeches and calls them a later interpolation. Critics have argued that this section ruins the form of trilogy that the book is supposed to possess. A major argument against the genuineness of this section is the lack of any mention of Elihu before or after. It is also argued that although Elihu condemns Job in essentially the same loveless way as the friends, he does not come in for the same kind of criticism as they do in the epilogue.

Let it be said, first of all, that there is no historical evidence to support the charge that the Elihu speeches were not an original component of the book. Chapters 32-37 are an integral part of the Hebrew text that has been transmitted to us, and not a textual emendation that is questionable and may therefore be discarded. It is important to note also that Elihu’s speeches teem with allusions to the earlier chapters of the book, so that he must have been present throughout the discussions, as 32:2-4 asserts.

There is wide difference of opinion on the four discourses of Elihu and the relation they bear to the Lord’s two speeches at the very end of the book. Is what Elihu says basically the same as what the Lord says, or basically different? How is what Elihu says related to what the three friends had said? Some have claimed that what Elihu said is really identical with what the friends had said, and that consequently what he said contributes very little to solving the problem of Job’s suffering. This, then, would also be the reason why Job did not answer Elihu: he had advanced no new argument that Job hadn’t sufficiently answered before. It seems improbable, however, that so much space would be devoted to a person who really contributes nothing whatever to the design of the book but who only repeats what the friends had said earlier.

It is clear that the writer of the book does not regard Elihu as siding with the friends against Job, because Elihu is described as equally displeased with the opinions of Job and of the friends. Let us survey the four speeches of Elihu and draw our own conclusions as to what he adds to the solution of the problem that was torturing Job.

It seems that although he had not spoken up to now, he had been present all along during the discussion between Job and his friends. Perhaps others had been present, too. William Green makes the point that if after Job’s restoration “all his brothers and sisters and everyone who had known him before came and ate with him in the house and comforted and consoled him” (42:11), so they no doubt did this also while his sorrows lasted. Perhaps of this large group of friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar were the spokesmen, perhaps because of their age or their superior wisdom. But all they could do was to seek to uphold God’s punitive justice by casting aspersions on the character of Job. After the three friends had finished speaking, Job’s problem remained unsolved. Elihu had apparently waited at the edge of the circle of friends, not entering into the conversation,

listening with increasing disgust to what the friends had to say, and growing more and more impatient to have his say.

More than that, Elihu was angry. He was angry, first of all, “with Job for justifying himself rather than God. He was also angry with the three friends, because they had found no way to refute Job and yet had condemned him” (32:2f). Elihu had no special revelation from God that permitted him to see that the sole purpose of God’s visitation was to prove Job faithful. If Elihu had had some special revelation, surely the author would have told us. He had to base his argument on the general revelation God had given regarding the divine purpose behind human suffering.

A hush fell over the group as this young man stepped forward to speak. Listen to his opening words and tell me what your immediate reaction is to them:

“I am young in years, and you are old;
 that is why I was fearful,
 not daring to tell you what I know.
 I thought. ‘Age should speak;
 advanced years should teach wisdom.’ ...
 But it is not only the old who are wise....
 I too will have my say;
 I too will tell what I know.
 For I am full of words, and the spirit within me compels me;
 inside I am like bottled-up wine,
 like new wineskins ready to burst.
 I must speak and find relief ...” (32:6-9,17-20)

Are you impressed? The pronouns “I,” “me,” “my” dominate the early part of Elihu’s discussion, occurring more than fifty times. He seems more intent on relieving the tension and irritation that had been building up in him than he is in relieving Job’s suffering. In Elihu we see an example of the truth St. Paul expresses in 1 Corinthians 8: “Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.” The three friends came to Job as judges, intent on condemning him. Elihu comes as a theologian, with the intent of setting Job straight. This may just be the reason why Elihu walks on stage in the book of Job, speaks four times, walks off stage, and disappears. Job doesn’t answer him. God has nothing to say about Elihu, either—nothing to reprove, but nothing to praise.

After this not-too-impressive introduction, Elihu got into the meat of his first discourse (ch 33):

“Job, listen to my words ...
 You have said in my hearing —
 I heard the very words —
 ‘I am pure and without sin;
 I am clean and free from guilt.
 Yet God considers me his enemy ... ‘
 I tell you, in this you are not right,
 for God is greater than man.
 Why do you complain to him
 that he answers none of man’s words?’”

To understand why Elihu says what he does, we will do well to remember that Job had argued that God did not answer his prayer. To that Elihu responded:

“God *does* speak—now one way, now another —
 though man may not perceive it.
 In a dream, in a vision of the night,
 when deep sleep falls on men
 as they slumber in their beds,
 he may speak in their ears
 and terrify them with warnings,
 to turn man from wrongdoing
 and keep him from pride,
 to preserve his soul from the pit,
 his life from perishing by the sword.
 Or a man may be chastened on a bed of pain ... “ (33:14-19)

Here is the first point Elihu makes. A good God often sends man terrifying dreams and visions, not in judgment, but for a salutary purpose. God hopes thereby to keep him from evil, or in Elihu’s words: “ ... to turn back his soul from the pit, that the light of life may shine on him” (33:30).

With these words Elihu struck a new note in the discussion which up to now had been sheer torture for Job. The friends had seen in Job’s suffering evidence of how God must punish sin. Job, on the other hand, had viewed his suffering as arbitrary affliction sent by God. But the idea that God might have a good purpose in sending earthly distress, the idea that this can be evidence of God’s love intended to accomplish a good purpose had apparently not dawned on either the friends or Job. Eliphaz came close to saying that in his first speech (5:17ff), but he insisted that suffering is basically punitive, flowing from God’s offended majesty and indicating God’s displeasure over sin. As Elihu saw it, a believer’s affliction is basically salutary and flowed from God’s loving concern for the true welfare of the sufferer. The two viewpoints are poles apart.

The friends had argued that in general a man gets from God what he’s got coming. Elihu insists that God’s love is independent of man’s behavior. God’s grace can be bound by no rules except by himself. Remember what God said to Moses (Ex 33:19): “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” God’s good purpose doesn’t depend on and isn’t determined by our response to him. No one can predict in advance what God’s love is going to do in a given situation. As Moses was permitted to view God only from behind, so we can judge God only after he has acted. Only God knows in advance whether in a given situation he will send joy or sorrow. He may choose to send us happiness and prosperity, to let us taste and recognize and appreciate his mercy. Or he may permit us to endure suffering, to toughen and purify our faith, to learn to lean harder on him, and to be the more appreciative of his relief when it comes.

It seems that at this point Elihu paused. Job had an opportunity to respond, but he didn’t. He had frequently contradicted the friends, and vehemently so; he did not oppose Elihu. Now there may indeed have been more than one reason for Job’s silence (and more about this later), but surely one reason was that Elihu had given Job something to think about.

In his second discourse (ch 34), Elihu takes up the charge: “I am innocent, but God denies me justice” (34:5). To this Elihu responded:

“Listen to me, you men of understanding.
 Far be it from God to do evil, for the Almighty to do wrong.
 It is unthinkable that God would do wrong,
 that the Almighty would pervert justice.
 Who appointed him over the earth?
 Who put him in charge of the whole world?” (34:12f)

“Can he who hates justice govern?
Will you condemn the Just and mighty One ... who shows no partiality
to princes, and does not favor the rich over the poor,
for they are all the work of his hands?” (34:19)

If there is a conflict between God and his creatures, it's absolutely certain that he is right and they are wrong, whether they can see that or not. And it is the height of presumption for mortal man to charge the supreme and perfect Ruler of the universe with injustice. “Job speaks without knowledge; his words lack insight” (34:35). To summarize, then: the emphasis in Elihu's second discourse is: “*God is just.*”

Elihu proves the justice of God somewhat differently in his third discourse, ch 35. “Job, you ask: ‘What do I gain by not sinning?’ But how dare you accuse God of injustice because he doesn't reward your piety or punish somebody else's sin the way you think he ought to?”

“If you sin, how does that affect him?
If your sins are many, what does that do to him?
If you are righteous, what do you give to him,
or what does he receive from your hand?” (35:6f)

Instead of complaining and accusing God, how much better it would be for Job humbly to pray to God and to wait for him. The person who does that will find out that *God exercises justice, though not necessarily in accordance with our way of thinking.*”

Elihu's fourth discourse was his final response to Job's complaint that the almighty God is loveless and cruel to those who are suffering.

“God is mighty, but does not despise men;
he is mighty, and firm in his purpose.
He does not keep the wicked alive
but gives the afflicted their rights.
He does not take his eyes off the righteous;
he enthrones them with kings
and exalts them forever.” (36:5-7)

Although God is exalted, he does not despise the lowly and afflicted. If he does permit affliction to enter their lives, it's only to remind them of their sin and to amend their lives, vv 8-10.

“Those who suffer he delivers in their suffering;
he speaks to them in their affliction.
He is wooing you from the jaws of distress ... “ (36:15f)

Elihu advises Job: “Instead of seating yourself up as judge over God, which you seem to like to do, submit yourself to your great God.”

“Listen! Listen to the roar of his voice” (37:2). Perhaps Elihu spoke these words during Edom's brief rainy season, on a day when the skies were darkening and sounds of thunder filled heaven and earth.

“He unleashes his lightning beneath the whole heaven
and sends it to the ends of the earth.
After that comes the sound of his roar;
he thunders with his majestic voice.

When his voice resounds,
 he holds nothing back.
 God's voice thunders in marvelous ways;
 he does great things beyond our understanding.
 He says to the snow, 'Fall on the earth,
 and to the rain shower, 'Be a mighty downpour.'" (37:3-6)

"The breath of God produces ice,
 and the broad waters become frozen.
 He loads the clouds with moisture;
 he scatters his lightning through them.
 At his direction they swirl around
 over the face of the whole earth
 to do whatever he commands them.
 He brings the clouds to punish men,
 or to water his earth and show his love." (37:10-13)

Torrential rains and winter blizzards may on occasion be a scourge, but they can also be a source of blessing.

"Job, stop and consider God's wonders," Elihu urged the sufferer, who had been accusing God. "Do you know how he controls the clouds and makes his lightning flash?... Can you join him in spreading out the skies?... Should he be told that I want to speak?... The Almighty is beyond our reach and exalted in power in his justice and great righteousness, he does not oppress? (37:14-23).

In other words, then, even when God reveals his majestic power, which seems frightening to us, his goodness is concealed, a fact which ought to lead us to revere him. Job could apply this truth to his own situation and realize that *even when God afflicts the God-fearing, he has only good in mind.*

As indicated earlier, different commentators have given widely differing evaluations of Elihu's words. What shall we think about them? Let there be no doubt, Elihu made a valuable contribution to the message of the book of Job. In his first discourse he sought to uphold the *goodness* of God; in his second, the *justice* of God; in his third, the *justice* of God; and in his fourth, the *goodness* of God. Why should he have emphasized just these two attributes of God?

Recall that Elihu spoke to refute not only the friends, who had condemned Job, but also to refute Job, who had justified himself rather than God. In the dark night of his torment, Job had cried out: "God is *cruel!*" "He seized me by the neck and crushed me. He's setting me up for target practice. He's cruel!" To this Elihu responded, in his first and fourth discourses: "No, Job, God is *good* even when he sends affliction. When God afflicts the God-fearing, he has only the person's good in mind."

But you will recall that Job had raised a second charge against God. Job had also argued: "God is *unjust!* He's treating me as though I were a criminal, as though he were my enemy. He's unfair." Elihu countered this by saying, "No Job. God is *just*. He may not always exercise his justice in accordance with our way of thinking but he is just."

The conclusion Elihu drew was: "Since God is good, and since he is just, therefore men revere him" (37:24). Quarreling with God, as Job had done, is wrong. The only proper posture for a human being in God's presence is humility.

It was indicated earlier that students of the Old Testament are sharply divided in their opinions of the role Elihu plays in the book of Job. Now that we have reviewed his four speeches, how shall we evaluate them? What part does Elihu play in the development of the line of thought of this Bible book?

First off, let it be emphasized that Elihu presented precious bible truths, truths which a suffering child of God must know if he is to bear up under a load of suffering. The prologue to the book of Job explained to us that one of God's purposes in permitting that awful load of affliction to enter Job's life was to frustrate Satan's

evil design and to refute his charge that Job was pious because his piety was paying off for him. Elihu shows us that this negative purpose—shutting down Satan—was not God’s only purpose. Nor can the reason for Job’s torment have been that God needed this test to satisfy himself that Job’s piety was for real. God knew that as thoroughly before the test as after it. Why, up front in the book God had testified to Job’s piety without qualification.

Any proper evaluation of Elihu’s message must recognize that he introduced a valuable emphasis into the discussion of the reasons for Job’s suffering. God did indeed have a salutary reason for permitting Job to go through what he did. God had Job’s spiritual good at heart.

We have seen some evidence of Job’s spiritual gain in some of the things he said. In spite of everything that could quite have extinguished his faith, Job confessed: “I know that my Redeemer lives.” His personal faith had been strengthened in the fires of affliction, purified of some of its imperfections. Surely this is a truth that Christians today need to hear as much as Job. Like Job, we find it difficult to see the justice of our suffering. And our limited human reason is quick to conclude, “Since God didn’t prevent it, he must have wanted me to suffer. He must be angry at something I did.” At such times we need to be reminded of Elihu’s emphasis: “Suffering is not punishment, but rather the loving correction of the Savior, whose purpose is not to unleash his fury on us but to cleanse and purify and perfect his children, to mold them into the kind of people he originally had in mind when he formed man out of the dust of the ground. If, e.g., God sees that our back isn’t strong enough to carry prosperity, he may in love send us hard times, to wean us away from our unholy love for the goodies our creature-centered culture dangles before our eyes. There is method in all that happens in our lives, and there is divine intelligence, and above all a loving purpose. We’re indebted to Elihu for making this clear.

But having said that, one must say something else about Elihu, and about his role in the suffering of Job. There are several things about this young man that do not impress us. One of his stated reasons for stepping forward to speak was that the friends had found no way to refute Job.

Is that a valid reason to visit a suffering child of God, to argue him down, by force of logic to show him where he’s wrong and to force him to be silent? One can state Elihu’s shortcomings positively. Look what he gave Job—a theological lecture!

One can state Elihu’s shortcomings negatively: Look what he withheld from Job: the sympathetic love which he craved and to which he was entitled! Edward J. Young has evaluated Elihu’s performance in these words: “There is a severity and harshness in Elihu’s speeches which is even stronger than in those of the three friends.” Horace Hummel speaks of the “pomposity and turgidity” of Elihu’s speeches and adds: “Even though Elihu claims to have the definitive solution to the dialogue, he really remains only an interested bystander and is more fittingly ignored by God than rebuked. By his very grandiloquent cocksureness, the brash young man backhandedly underscores one of the book’s major points: ‘flesh and blood,’ even when quasi-‘orthodox,’ must be converted, not merely convinced” (*The Word Becoming Flesh*, p 472). Elihu unfortunately forgot that in ministering to human need the lover must run ahead of the logician. The heart can open roads that the brain cannot.

In between his four speeches Elihu offered Job an opportunity to respond, but he didn’t. Why not? Undoubtedly one reason was that Job was convinced that what the man said was true. He had corrected some of Job’s wrong conclusions about God’s purposes in sending affliction. But surely there was a second reason for Job’s silence. Elihu offered Job correct theology, but that’s all. He offered him no sympathy, no love. And, as we all know, it’s difficult to build a fire with icicles. Prof. Pieper remarks “Even God himself finds nothing to reprove in Elihu’s discourses as he does in those of the three friends. But neither does he find anything to praise. He too passes over them in silence as though they had never been uttered, as though they were insignificant. Elihu was as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal, for he had no charity. As far as the practical solution to the situation was concerned, Elihu’s discourses were spoken into the wind. He might just as well have quit before he had begun.” (*WLQ* 57:209).

Even as Elihu was speaking Job could hear the rumbling of thunder (37:2). Heavy masses of clouds began to darken the sky. Some have taken this as an extended metaphor but there’s no good reason not to take

the words literally. Elihu calls this to Job's attention. The approaching storm announced that the Lord was approaching. He had something to say, and when he speaks, let all the earth keep silence before him.

You see, the message which the book of Job has for the suffering Christian, as well as for him who ministers to the suffering Christian, is not complete with the four speeches of Elihu. God had something additional to say about this in his two addresses to Job, and we will want to hear them.

Part Four

When we began this study of the book of Job several weeks ago, we heard God give Job a high commendation. He declared Job to be, first of all, "complete," an all-around believer, a man whose life backed up what his lips professed, a child joined to his heavenly Father in heart and life. God also declared Job to be "upright," genuine, not a hypocrite. In the proceedings we've observed in the last weeks Job had vindicated God's evaluation of him. He had not buckled under the fury of Satan's attacks or under the provocation of his friends. His confidence in his Savior-God had bent but not broken. Job had been vindicated against Satan's slander.

But the matter could not rest here. Something else needed to be said to Job besides that which the three friends and Elihu had said. God now supplied that missing component. What was that?

Think back to what Job had said in his last speech. In 30:20ff he had said:

"I cry out to you, O God, but you do not answer;
I stand up, but you merely look at me.
You turn on me ruthlessly;
with the might of your hand you attack me.
You snatch me up and drive me before the wind;
You toss me about in the storm.
I know you will bring me down to death ..." (30:20-23)

"Oh, that I had someone to hear me!
I sign now my defense—let the Almighty answer me;
let my accuser put his indictment in writing." (31:35)

Job protested with what he thought was his dying breath against the cruel wrong that was being done to him. His words show that the inner turmoil he was experiencing had robbed him of inner peace, of that calm contentment in his God which he had felt before the nightmare of suffering had entered his life." These trials had affected his relationship to his Maker, and that was a matter of concern to God. And so God spoke to Job—not only once, but twice, and in a most impressive way.

You remember that God once appeared to ancient Israel in thick clouds, accompanied by the crashing of thunder and lightning. That was at Mt. Sinai, and anybody standing around the mountain certainly got the message: God means business with what he has to say to his people.

We see something similar in the section of the Scripture we'll be looking at this afternoon. After Job had uttered his last words of protest and angry accusation, God realized that he now had to speak. Something of earth-shaking importance—for Job and for us—needed to be said, and God said it. A thunderstorm in which the Lord had veiled his majesty was approaching, and now out of the midst of the storm came a voice addressed to Job. Accompanied by the crashing of thunder and lightning and tempest, God spoke. He spoke twice. Listen to what he had to say.

"Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge?" (38:2). Who is this who clouds my design, who disgraces my wisdom by talking about things of which he is ignorant? Job had foolishly demanded: "I desire to speak to the Almighty and to argue my case with God" (13:3). "Stop frightening me

with your terrors. Then summon me, and I will answer, or let me speak, and you reply,” he had said to God (13:22). In his bitterness of soul, Job had said this about God: “If only I knew where to find him.... I would state my case before him and fill my mouth with arguments. I would find out what he would answer me. Would he oppose me with great power? No, he would not press charges against me.... and I would be delivered forever from my judge” (23:3-7).

To this the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth replied: “Who is this who disgraces my wisdom, obscuring my purpose when I carry out my world government? What is the ability which qualifies you to act as a censor of things divine?”

“Brace yourself like a man;
I will question you,
and you shall answer me” (38:3)

And then follows God’s first discourse—two whole chapters’ worth of questions, a discourse which we’ll want to examine more closely, a discourse which closes with the pointed question which must have pricked Job’s heart:

“Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him?
Let him who accuses God answer him!” (40:2)

“Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation?
Tell me if you understand.
Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know!” (38:4)

“Job, with your kindergarten competence and your wide nursery experience you are ill equipped to advise the sovereign Lord of the universe how to run his world. And yet this is what you have undertaken to do!”

“On what were (earth’s) footings set,
or who laid its cornerstone —
while the morning stars sang together,
and all the angels shouted for joy?” (38:6f)

God extols his own wisdom and at the same time exposes Job’s ignorance. “Those of my creatures who were present at the creation shouted for joy when they saw what I had done. You have seen fit to second-guess me, even to accuse me and to make demands of me. Now answer some more questions!

“Who shut up the sea behind doors
when it burst forth from the womb ...
When I fixed limits for it ...
When I said, ‘This far you may come and no farther;
here is where your proud waves halt’?” (38:8-11)

God names just a few of the many secrets of the universe without exposing the secret. Some of these secrets concern his *creation* (e.g., “Where were you when I laid earth’s foundation?”). Some of the secrets God names concern his *preservation*:

“Have you ever given orders to the morning,

or shown the dawn its place?” (38:12)

In other words: “How about your taking care of just one sunrise, Job?”

“Have you entered the storehouses of the snow?
What is the way to the place where the lightning is dispersed,
or the place where the east winds are scattered over the earth?” (22ff)

“Does the rain have a father?...
From whose womb comes the ice?” (28f)

“Can you raise your voice to the clouds
and cover yourself with a flood of water?
Do you send the lightning bolts on their way?
Do they report to you, ‘Here we are?’” (34f)

There are some delightful artistic touches in the Lord’s discussion. Even though paying special notice to these is not our main assignment this afternoon, perhaps we ought to spare a few minutes for that, if only to remind ourselves again that when the Lord revealed his sacred secrets to us in the Bible he used beautiful language, language that appeals to the senses and to the emotions, language that is warm with blood.

Attention has already been called to the interesting sidelight on creation in 38:7. We had not known that the angels of God sang for sheer joy when they viewed God’s completed creation. Or look at 38:19-21 for a moment. Imagine that you’re Job, and you have been criticizing God for the way he’s running his world in general, and the way he’s been messing up your life in particular. Can you guess what effect God’s delicate irony must have had:

“What is the way to the abode of light? (Where does the light come from, Job?)
and where does the darkness reside?
Do you know the paths to their dwellings?
Surely you know, for you were already born!
You have lived so many years!”

Metaphors seem to tumble from the Lord’s lips as he presses his point with this lowly creature who’s been lipping off to the Creator, this clay pot who has been asking the heavenly Potter: “Why did you make me like this?” (Ro 9:21). Look at the description of the dawn in vv. 13-14. It’s described as taking the earth by its edges and shaking the wicked out of it, robbing the wicked of their working time. As darkness turns to day, according to verse 14, “the earth takes shape like clay under a seal, its features gradually becoming apparent.

Had you ever thought of the hail as God’s weapon in time of war? Verse 23 reminds us that God has on more than one occasion used it for that purpose, to punish the Egyptians, e.g., and to assist Joshua in conquering the Promised Land of Canaan.

God’s question in 38:37f touches the very heart of God’s first discourse with Job:

“Who has the wisdom to count the clouds
and to tip over the water jars in the heavens” (how’s that for a metaphor?)
“when the dust becomes hard
and the clods of earth stick together?”

“Job, you can’t begin to understand how I put the universe together and how I keep it running. I understand that, Job. I not only have an exact knowledge of every facet of my creation, but I have a sincere solicitude for it as well. And you, Job, dare to pit your opinion against mine?”

In chapter 39 God continues to contrast his wisdom with Job’s ignorance by pointing to his providential care for animals and birds he has created.

“Do you know when the mountain goats give birth?
Do you count the months till they bear?” (39:1f)
“Who let the wild donkey go free?
Who untied his ropes?” (39:5)

In other words, why is the wild donkey wild, Job?

The picture of the warhorse (vv. 19-25) is unique in the Scripture because of the insight it gives us into the nature of this noble beast. God describes the warhorse as pawing the earth before the battle, unable to stand still when the trumpet sounds the attack. “He laughs at fear, afraid of nothing. He is filled with a frenzy of excitement when the quiver rattles against his side, along with the flashing spear and lance. He catches the scent of the battle from afar.” The Creator of that splendid animal, as well as of the soaring hawk and the eagle, knows all about them. Still more. Their Creator displays not only an exact knowledge of each detail of his far-flung creation but a solicitude for it as well—for the thirsty desert land, where no one lives, and even for the desert flower that grows in the crack of a rock. God knows there are lion cubs waiting to be fed. He hears the young ravens that cry to him for food. He sees the mountain goats giving birth, relieved that their labor pains are finally at an end. He is aware of the ostrich that lays her eggs in the warm sand. And Job didn’t think God knew enough or cared enough to direct his affairs properly!

Here, then, is the message of God’s first discourse to Job: *“I am wise; you know nothing. Who are you to want to contend with me?”*

God concluded his first discourse to Job with the words:

“Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him?
Let him who accuses God answer him!” (40:2)

Listen to Job’s answer:

“I am unworthy—how can I reply to you?
I put my hand over my mouth.
I spoke once, but I have no answer —
twice, but I will say no more.”

Job’s impatient utterings under the pressure of his suffering were traceable to his inadequate picture of God. Now that he saw God as he really is, Job was ashamed that he could ever have spoken as he did.

Do you sense the irony? Job had repeatedly asked for the chance to argue his case with God. Now that he had a chance to speak, he had nothing to say. He was through talking.

But God wasn’t. The theme of God’s second discourse is sounded clearly at the outset, 40:9: “Do you have an arm like God’s?” There’s a shift in emphasis here, from God’s omniscience to his omnipotence. God said in effect: “Job, you have often criticized the way I rule the world. You have contended that I use my power arbitrarily. Are you prepared to take over the job of governing the world in my place?”

“Adorn yourself with glory and splendor,
and clothe yourself in honor and majesty.

Unleash the fury of your wrath,
 look at every proud man and bring him low,
 look at every proud man and humble him,
 crush the wicked where they stand.
 Bury them all in the dust together;
 shroud their faces in the grave.
 Then I myself will admit to you
 that your own right hand can save you” (40:10-14)

“Job, use all your resources of personality and will and eliminate all injustice in the world, so that law and order might prevail. Humble the proud man, crush the wicked, and then you might suggest to God how he should use his power. The very suggestion is preposterous.

In the remainder of the second discourse, the Lord uses a different method to show Job his frailty and to reprimand his arrogant presumption. God mentioned two of his creatures by name (*behemoth* in 40:15 and *leviathan* in 41:1), and asks: “Job, what is *your* strength in comparison with that of other creatures I have made?”

The Hebrew vocable transliterated behemoth (a *hapaxlegomenon*, incidentally) is a plural form of a word meaning “animal,” sometimes “cattle;” it is thought that the plural form is akin to a superlative. In that case, the meaning would be something like “the brute beast par excellence.” Although the beast may be hard to identify (cf. NIV footnote: “possibly the hippopotamus or the elephant”), yet it is clearly a land animal, in contrast to leviathan, who lives in the sea. OT scholars have debated whether the two animals named here are to be thought of as natural animals or as mythological monsters. To be sure, Semitic mythology does name the two beasts. The Lord’s description of behemoth as an animal “which I made” certainly points to the former. The Creator who designed this beast is well aware of his brute power:

“... the sinews of his thighs are close-knit.” (I confess I’ve never paid close attention to the thighs of a hippopotamus; not so with the Creator—he knows his creation well).
 “His bones are tubes of bronze,
 his limbs are like rods of iron” (40:17f)

God’s description of this awesome monster concludes with the words:

“Can anyone capture him by the eyes,
 or trap him and pierce his nose?” (40:24).

The point God is making is clear: “Job, what is your strength in comparison with that of other creatures I have made?”

As a second illustration of this truth God cites the example of leviathan, almost surely the crocodile (cf his scaly hide, 41:15-17; his terrible teeth, 41:14; his ability to swim rapidly, 41:30-32). Again, God’s questions embarrass Job:

“Can you pull in the leviathan with a fishhook ... ?
 Can you make a pet of him like a bird,
 or put him on a leash for your girls?
 If you lay a hand on him
 you will remember the struggle and never do it again!
 Who then is able to stand against me?” (41:1-10)

In passing we want again to note the vivid pictures with which the Creator describes this magnificent, yet awesome creature:

“His undersides are like jagged potsherds,
 leaving a trail in the mud like a threshing sledge.
 He makes the depths churn like a boiling caldron
 and stirs up the sea like a pot of ointment.
 Behind him he leaves a glistening wake;
 one would think the deep had white hair.
 Nothing on earth is his equal —
 a creature without fear” (41:30-33).

God’s point is clear and convincing. Job, who had criticized God’s use of power, is led to realize how ridiculous his judgment in the matter is. He has undertaken to advise the Creator when he cannot even master his fellow creatures. “Job, you’d think twice before messing around with leviathan. How much more ought you hesitate to insult the majesty of him who created man and beast?”

The message of God’s second discourse is briefly: “Job, I can do everything; you can do nothing. Who are you to want to contend with me?”

What would you say was the purpose of God’s two discourses to Job in the overall scheme of the book of Job? When God said to Job, “I will question you, and you shall answer me” (38:3), would you say God was giving Job what Job had asked for—a chance to speak, to defend himself (13:3, 22; 23:3-9)? Did God now give Job his day in court?

It’s essential to understanding the book of Job that we see God did no such thing. God is not in the habit of submitting to trial. He is the sovereign Lord of all, accountable to no one but himself. And if some misguided, frail creature of dust, and feeble as frail, does not approve of his dealings, God does not hasten to defend himself. God does not recognize our right to judge him and his ways.

Well, if God’s two discourses were not a theodicy, not a defense of himself, then what purpose did they serve? Prof. Pieper gives us a fourfold description of God’s discourses. As has just been pointed out, they were, first of all, a *rejection of Job’s claims to justice from God*. For God to have yielded to Job’s arrogant demand would have been putting himself on the same level with Job.

In the second place, God’s discourses were a *revelation of God’s wisdom in the work of creation*. Job had questioned the wisdom of God’s world rule. God’s many questions directed at Job showed both God’s vast knowledge of his creation, as well as his loving concern for it.

In the third place, God’s discourses were a *reprimand of Job’s arrogance*. Job had abused his privileged role as a child in the Lord’s family. He had tried to act like a big boy—big enough and smart enough to talk to his Father and, worse yet, to accuse his Father, to question his justice and his kindness. To this God responded:

“Would you discredit my justice?
 Would you condemn me to justify yourself?” (40:8)

Is this humiliation more of the same sort of treatment Job had earlier received from his three friends? Oh, no. This was not holding up a man to be a laughingstock, to destroy him. This was the affectionate rebuke of a loving Father to his beloved child, with the sole purpose of restoring him to health. This was strong medicine, but wholesome medicine.

And finally, in their effect God’s discourses were a *moral annihilation of him who blasphemed against the majesty of God*. Far from meeting Job’s demands, God is the one who makes the demands, and what he demanded of Job was absolute submission. Job had asked God to repay him for his piety. Perhaps you remember his words:

“God has wronged me....
 Though I cry, ‘I’ve been wronged!’ I get no response;
 though I call for help, there is no justice.
 He has blocked my way so I cannot pass;
 he has shrouded my paths in darkness.
 He tears me down on every side till I am gone;
 he uproots my hope like a tree.” (19:6-10).

“I cry out to you, O God, but you do not answer;
 I stand up but you merely look at me.
 You turn on me ruthlessly;
 with the might of your hand you attack me.
 You snatch me up and drive me before the wind;
 you toss me about in the storm.
 I know you will bring me down to death ...
 Surely no one lays a hand on a broken man
 when he cries for help in his distress.
 Have I not wept for those in trouble?
 Has not my soul grieved for the poor?
 Yet when I hoped for good, evil came;
 when I looked for light, then came darkness” (30:20-26).

To that God responded: “Who has a claim against me that I must pay?” (41:11). Job amounts to nothing. What is he after all but dust plus the breath of God, and God has the right to treat him as he has. God reaffirms this in his two discourses.

In these two discourses to Job God’s questions tumbled over each other, submerging and silencing Job. Job did not get what he asked (a chance to stand up in court and bring charges against the Almighty), but he got something better. For one thing, he got a better picture of himself: “I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” He got a reminder not only of his sinfulness, but also of his littleness. He learned that humility is the only moral attitude before God.

Job got a deeper and more spiritual view of the nature of sin. Perhaps, like many today, Job had had an atomistic conception of sin—doing naughty things. He now saw sin as the attitude of rebelling against God, the action of a creature designed to live under God trying to stand alongside God and disagreeing with him.

Job got still more. He got the Savior’s own reaffirmation of his status as God’s dear child. You will recall that in the Prologue God had called Job “my servant.” In the Epilogue God twice returns to that noble title (42:8). Job’s loud protestations of his own innocence, his impertinent questions, and his angry accusations of God now became a prayer for his friends. In the heat of his suffering Job had said: “When he has tested me, I will come forth as gold” (23:10). Well, he lived to see the fulfillment of that prediction. Satan had hoped that Job’s trials would drive him away from his Savior. And they would have, too, had the faithful Savior-God not bent them to serve his good purpose—in Job’s words, to refine and purify his faith.

The apostle James mentions one final inward and spiritual benefit that accrued to Job as a result of his trial by fire when he states in the fifth chapter of his epistle:

“Be patient, brothers, and stand firm, because the Lord’s coming is near.... You have heard of Job’s perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.” (5:7ff)

Job had learned not only the theory of how to overcome temptation, but he learned it the hard way—by actual experience. This is not to say that Job now understood exactly why God had done what he had, but Job had learned not to question, not to ask God to give an account. His Savior’s warm embrace was all the assurance he needed of that Savior’s constant concern for him. “My ears had heard of you,” the repentant Job said to God, “But now my eyes have seen you” (42:5), i.e., my eyes have seen you reconciled and in peace.

The book of Job closes by listing some of the visible evidences the Lord gave Job of his loving concern. The forgiven sinner was permitted to pray for his friends, and the Lord accepted his prayer.

“The Lord blessed the latter part of Job’s life more than the former (42:12). The Lord had taken away from Job; he now returned to him more than he had formerly owned. The number of head of livestock God restored to Job was exactly twice the number he had formerly owned. Best of all, God gave Job seven sons and three daughters, to replace the children he had lost.

The Mosaic law made a man’s daughters eligible to inherit property only if they had no brothers. Job let his daughters become property owners in their own right.

A final blessing God gave Job was the blessing of a long life. At peace with God and with himself, Job died, old and full of years.

Part Five

The Book of Job has been given to us by God for a number of reasons. Its primary purpose is to speak to the individual child of God, to Joe or Jane Christian, so that especially in time of affliction or suffering, he/she may know what to think about the way God is handling the situation.

This afternoon we want to view the book of Job from a much more restricted perspective. We want to ask more than just the question: “What help does the book offer me when I’m suffering?” Instead, this final lecture will address itself to the question: “What are the guidelines the book of Job offers the pastor to help others face suffering? What help does the book offer him when he counsels Christians who are having a difficult time of it?” It hardly needs to be said that the insights that we have gained from our study of the book of Job need to be shared also with Christians who are not undergoing suffering. All of us have learned from pastoral experience that the information that the book of Job supplies about how God rules his world is not generally understood by Christian people. Again I want to state my indebtedness to Prof. Pieper for the outline which will guide our discussion this afternoon.

What are the prerequisites for pastoral counseling? According to the book of Job, there are three: certain knowledge specifically, *knowledge* of the great principles that form the basis of God’s world rule; then *love* for the afflicted. A final prerequisite is pastoral *skill*.

To be truly helpful to a suffering Christian, the pastor will need, first of all, *to know* the great principles according to which God rules his world. There are three, represented in turn by the three friends, by Elihu, and by God himself.

What facet of God’s world rule did the friends emphasize in their discourses with Job? They emphasized God’s punitive justice. The one doctrine of the Scripture that the three friends understood very well is that God rewards a man according to his works. You remember some of their statements to Job:

“Consider now: Who, being innocent, has ever perished?

Where were the upright ever destroyed?

As I have observed, those who plow evil
and those who sow trouble reap it.” (4:7f)

That was Eliphaz speaking. Bildad likewise emphasized that punitive or retributive justice is the basis of God’s world rule when he told Job:

“Does God pervert justice?
 Does the Almighty pervert what is right?
 When your children sinned against him,
 he gave them over to the penalty of their sin.
 But if you will look to God
 and plead with the Almighty,
 if you are pure and upright,
 even now he will rouse himself on your behalf
 and restore you to your rightful place.” (8:3-6)

“God does not reject a blameless man
 or strengthen the hands of evildoers.” (8-20)

Zophar, the third of the friends, harped on the same note when he told Job:

“God surely recognizes deceitful men;
 and when he sees evil, does he not take note?
 Yet if you devote your heart to him ...
 If you put away the sin that is in your hand
 and allow no evil to dwell in your tent,
 then you will lift up your face without shame;
 you will stand firm and without fear ...
 Life will be brighter ... “ (11:11-17)

This retributive justice of God is surely one factor that God takes into account as he rules his world. What was wrong, then, when the friends emphasized this? It was this, that the friends pictured God’s justice as absolute. And it was here that Job had his difficulty with the theology of his friends. Job certainly knew that God is a God who rewards the good and punishes the evil, but Job denied that God’s punitive justice is absolute. Job responded to his friends: “All right, then; if God’s punitive justice is absolute,

“Why do the wicked live on,
 growing old and increasing in power?
 Their homes are safe and free from fear;
 the rod of God is not upon them ...
 They spend their years in prosperity
 and go down to the grave in peace.
 Yet they say to God, Leave us alone!
 We have no desire to learn your ways.
 Who is the Almighty, that we should serve him?” (21:7-15)

“The evil man is spared from the day of calamity,
 he is delivered from the day of wrath.
 Who repays him for what he has done?...
 So how can you console me with your nonsense?” (21:30-34)

Job was of course right in contesting the absolute sovereignty of God’s punitive justice. Job was dead wrong, though, in drawing the conclusion that since the wicked often go unpunished God must be arbitrary and unjust in his world rule.

Here, then, is part of the knowledge the pastor standing at a bedside or counseling with a troubled Christian will need to have: the God who runs this world is a just God. That's the message of God's law, and the law of God knows no mercy. The account of the flood and of the firestorm that destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah show that God means it when he says: "Cursed is the man who does not uphold the words of this law by carrying them out" (Dt 2-7:26).

Unfortunately the friends of Job stopped here. The Christian pastor and counselor dare not. We know that God's retributive justice is not the only principle of his world rule. As we study the record of God's dealings with sinners, we note that from the earliest days of world history God's justice has been *coupled with his infinite mercy*, his patience, his faithfulness. Cain, the first murderer, did not receive God's rigorous retaliation for his evil deed. In Genesis 6 we're told that God saw the wickedness of the world, saw that those early inhabitants of our planet were completely given over to sin, that they were nothing but flesh—and that he then proceeded to postpone the judgment of the flood for 120 years. And then look at what God did after the flood. He actually promised to hold his judgment in abeyance by promising Noah: "Never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done" (Ge 8:21).

Here was Elihu's emphasis, and a valuable one it is, indeed. A second principle of God's world rule is his *saving love*. Elihu emphasized this in opposition to the friends, who ignored it, and in opposition to Job, who was unable to recognize it in the dark night of his grief. You have already stood at a sickbed where a suffering Christian had lost sight of the blessed fact that God's mercy is also a determining principle of his world rule. Perhaps with tears in his eyes the Christian asked you: "Pastor, what have I done that God should punish me like this?" Perhaps that day you abandoned the Bible text on which you had planned to speak to that person and decided instead to base your devotion on the account in John 9 of the man born blind. You remember Jesus' answer to the disciples' question: "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" His answer: "Neither one. This happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life" (Jn 9:3). God's saving mercy, as well as his retributive justice, is a principle according to which God rules the world.

But, having said that, we have not solved all the problems that still remain for the observer of God's world rule. The thoughtful student of the Old Testament will often wonder: "Why did God spare Cain but kill Korah?" The student of church history may wonder: "Why have the enemies of Christ's church had such an easy time of it, and the faithful handful such a difficult time for so much of history?"

Here the book of Job emphasizes a third fact about God's world rule. In strict harmony with his justice and his mercy, God rules the world according to *his incomprehensible majesty*. This was the particular emphasis of God's two speeches on chapters 38-41. Job was aware of God's sovereign majesty, but foolishly wanted it explained to him. He had asked God: "Tell me what charges you have against me" (10:2). "Why have you made me your target? Why do you not pardon my offenses and forgive my sins?" (7:20f). And do you remember what God answered? "Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him?" (40:2). "Who are you to contend with me? Be still, and know that I am God." "(God) does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: 'What have you done?'" (Da 4:35). God reserves for himself the right to let the ungodly prosper and to plague the God-fearing. He owes nobody an explanation when he chooses to act in retributive justice or in loving mercy in his world rule.

This hiddenness of God, as you can well imagine, is not a popular doctrine; it goes down hard. Like Job, we like to know. We often insist on dragging God out of his hiddenness, forgetting that such insistence is an attack on his majesty. (That also happens to be the point where all false doctrine originates, as Prof. John Schaller points out in a *WLQ* article entitled "The Hidden God", Vol. 71, pp 185ff). It is important to testify to the God who has revealed himself; it is important to remember also that when God has chosen not to reveal himself, we must permit him to remain hidden.

These three attributes of God—justice, grace, sovereignty—operate not in isolation but in concert in God's rule. If I were perfect instead of sinful, there would be no sickness, no grief, no trouble, no Judgment of God in my life. But because of the perfect life and the innocent death of Jesus Christ "there is now no

condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Ro 8:1). This means that God’s grace has taken what would ordinarily have been punishment and retribution for my sin and transformed it into blessing, into a wholesome discipline that will benefit me in time and eternity.

Ordinarily there isn’t much theology we could or would want to learn from Albert Einstein, and yet there is one statement of his that is worth remembering: “God may be mysterious, but he’s not malicious.” The suffering child of God in your congregation may not understand why he’s being asked to spend long days and longer nights on a bed of pain, and you may not understand it, either, but you do assure the suffering Christian that the God who sent his own Son into death for us is not malicious. God wants you to bring that tortured child of his the message of his love.

But that message of love is to be brought to the suffering Christian not only with words. We learn from the book of Job that it’s one thing to speak of God’s love only with words; it’s quite another thing to bring compassionate love to the afflicted. And yet this compassionate love is a prerequisite, the second prerequisite for ministering to the afflicted.

Job felt the need for love, and felt it keenly. “A despairing man should have the devotion of his friends,” he complained (6:14). It’s noteworthy that in his suffering Job did not find a single soul who came to him with compassion and reached out to him with sympathetic love. The three friends wept, but that seems to have been no more than the customary Oriental expression of sorrow. The moment they began to speak they turned on him with what Job describes as lovelessness and injustice. Job’s wife, his nearest and dearest, turned on him and ridiculed his patient suffering. Bitter toward God because of what she had lost, and frantic at the prospect of losing her sole support, she lost all compassion with the man who was carrying a heavier load than she was. Even Elihu, who knew so much about God’s loving purpose, seems to have given little evidence of love, of real sympathy for Job in his pitiful plight. Elihu seemed to be less concerned about helping Job carry his burden than he was about showing that he understood things better than anyone else. It has been noted that Job did not even reply to Elihu. He had previously cried out in anguish: “Have pity on me, my friends, have pity, for the hand of God has struck me,” but he said not a thing when Elihu spoke. God did not find anything to criticize in Elihu’s four discourses, as he had in the discourses of the friends, but neither did God find anything to praise.

Every person, even those sound in mind and body, needs to feel loved and wanted. This need for love is accentuated when physical or emotional suffering enters a person’s life. When love is withheld from such a person, the results can be absolutely devastating. Perhaps this is a pitfall that threatens the veteran pastor more than it does the rookie. The experienced pastor knows all the right things to say; he has said them at a hundred other sickbeds. There’ll be the temptation for him, especially if he’s a busy man, to *speak* of God’s love to the suffering without himself *bringing* the suffering person the compassionate love of which he speaks. Genuine love for the sufferer is an essential part of the equipment needed to minister to the afflicted.

The love that God wants to see in us, the kind of love he wants to plant in our hearts, is a love that cannot close its heart to someone’s misfortune. Surely the parable of the Good Samaritan has taught us that our neighbor is anyone who needs the sharing of our love. The unfortunate person has a claim, a valid claim, on our love. Isn’t it true, however, that we tend to restrict the evidences of our love pretty largely to the members of our congregation? Showing sympathy to an unbeliever, perhaps to a lodge member or to an excommunicated person, say at a time of bereavement, isn’t “worth the trouble,” is it? “It isn’t in my call,” we say. How different that attitude is from the attitude Christ demonstrated. He could look at the city of Jerusalem, with its multiplied thousands hardened in unbelief, and weep over it. Doesn’t living in the same city or the same neighborhood with a person who has suffered tragedy obligate us to extend our sympathy, to hold out the helping hand of love to the burdenbearer? Prof. Pieper comments: “It is truly an offense if an unfortunate worldling can justly say that he gets more sympathy from the unchurched than he does from church members or from the doctor than from the Lutheran pastor” (57:207).

Many of you will remember that about two years ago the police chief of Mequon lost his life in a gun battle which followed the kidnapping of a child. Chief Buntrock was a neighbor of the seminary; he lived about a block away from the south entrance to the seminary grounds. The man was Catholic; to my best knowledge

the seminary never had any person-to-person dealings with him. What would you have expected the seminary to do at the time of his death? Aren't you glad the seminary sent his widow a letter of condolence? Our membership in Christ's family obligates us to reach out in love to people who need the sharing of our love, whether they share membership in Christ's family or not.

It's obvious that we have a special love debt to brothers and sisters of the household of faith. And yet how often we repeat Elihu's mistake—imagining that we're called primarily to speak words of comfort and instruction correctly. We tell ourselves: "I mustn't become emotionally involved with this parishioner, because I'll lose my objectivity. After all, I mustn't become unconventional! I mustn't blur the distinction between sheep and shepherd." Now surely there's truth in each of those statements. But if I use them as arguments to defend my withholding heartfelt compassion, genuine love from a person who for the moment is having a tougher time of it in life than I am, then those statements become alibis, and such talk is a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.

The terminal cancer patient whom we're visiting is eager to note the visitor's impression of him. What a disappointment if he senses that we're afraid, that we fail to grip his hand warmly, that we seem to shrink back from becoming involved in his suffering, in sharing his despair. Do we dare to do love's unconventional bidding? A hospital patient has a right to assume that those who visit him—especially his pastor—have come out of personal concern for him. If a pastor gives the impression, however, that he has come from a sense of duty and that he must hurry because he has another deadline to meet, the patient will sense that, and that pastor's usefulness has been diminished.

Several weeks ago, at the close of one of these institutes, one of you mentioned an application of this truth, that with his permission, I would like to share with you. He mentioned the case of a man who together with his wife had been lifelong members of a Lutheran congregation. They had participated actively in the life of the congregation, in Bible classes, choir, he on the Church Council. Together with other couples from the congregation, they'd been active socially: bowling, dinner invitations back and forth—that sort of thing. Their children had married and left the parental home. Then God called the wife to his side. For the next months the widower was first puzzled, and then hurt, that none of his friends got in touch with him. He would sit at home of an evening, looking at the phone thinking: "Why don't you ring?" Twenty months later he had still received no indication (no dinner invitation, e.g.) from people he regarded as Christian friends. The man confessed privately what a blow, what a shock it was to receive that kind of silent treatment. Brothers, isn't this an area of sanctification regarding which we ought not to remain silent? Ought we not do what lies within our power to sensitize the consciences of Christians whom we serve? St. Paul urged the Thessalonians: "Encourage the timid!" (Unfortunately KJV translates that: "Comfort the feebleminded.") A Christian who has just lost a beloved wife or husband is for the moment walking less steadily, and needs—not the silent treatment, but—the special sharing of compassionate love, the love of concerned brothers and sisters.

Prof. Pieper calls love, along with true knowledge of the counsel of God, "the principal quality a pastor must have to carry out his pastoral office effectively, the alpha and omega of pastoral counseling." Obviously, this genuine compassion, this unselfish love is not something we can manufacture for ourselves. It is the child of faith. I have no love to give unless I first receive the grace that a loving and forgiving Father daily holds out to me. Compassionate love is not a flower that grows in our garden. We can be compassionate only by letting the compassion of Christ fill us and spill over from us to the person who needs the sharing of our love. We can love our needy fellowman only because Jesus has done that before us and for us, only because he lives in us and does his gracious loving through us.

The book of Job points to one final prerequisite for ministering to the afflicted, and that is a certain skill, a *pastoral skill* in serving those of God's saints who are suffering.

Absolutely basic is the understanding that God is active in this particular chapter of the sufferer's life history. This awareness is basic to counseling with a suffering Christian. Each of the persons who spoke to Job took for granted that God was dealing with Job, and I suppose that ordinarily among Christians this is something that can be taken for granted. And yet I have the feeling that, perhaps on the occasion of the pastor's

first visit to a sick or suffering Christian, it might not be all that bad an idea to mention, if only in passing, that God has had a hand in the goings-on, that this situation has overtones that are not only physical but spiritual as well. Even Christians who ought to know better have been heard to attribute an illness to “the law of averages,” to the law of nature that “you’ve got to take the bitter with the sweet,” and that “what will be will be.”

Before a pastor can know what words to speak in order to alleviate the need of the sufferer, he’s got to find out what the specific needs are. This calls for the pastoral skill of diagnosis, a skill absolutely essential for proper counseling. The words of the friends earned the rebuke of God because they completely misread the patient’s spiritual condition. Everything the friends said to Job was predicated on the supposition that Job was a *man being punished* by God for secret sin and, besides that, a *hardened sinner* who refused to bow under God’s judgment. Job’s anguished outbursts they misread as blasphemy against God.

To avoid making that kind of mistake, the pastor will want in the opening conversation to seek to ascertain what the spiritual condition of the patient is, to learn what impression God’s present dealing with him has had on him. Is he perplexed at what is happening, or perhaps angry and rebellious? Is he self-righteous, or indifferent and callous? Is she afraid and unsure, perhaps even crushed by what has happened or by what she faces? If because of the condition of the patient such diagnosis is impossible, love demands that we put the best construction on the situation. Unlike Job’s three friends, who assumed the worst, we will assume that the sufferer is a believing child of God and that his present problem is the Savior’s loving chastisement, rather than assuming that he is a stubborn sinner whom God is punishing.

But what if the afflicted person says things a Christian ought not say? What if he/she makes statements that sound self-righteous? All of us have surely made visits on chronically ill people who regularly gave us a steady diet of complaining? Is that compatible with faith, the essence of which is trust? Or what if your patient responds to you with an angry outburst? I recall with some chagrin visiting an elderly member of our congregation years ago, a man with advanced arteriosclerosis, at what we used to call the county insane asylum. It was visiting day, and as I entered the visitor’s room I saw it was crowded with more than a hundred people. The attendant ushered in the man I wanted to visit, and when he saw me he unleashed a string of profanity that had heads turning all over that room like the people on the E.F. Hutton TV commercial. That man called me everything but a child of God. Here, if ever, the skill is needed by the red-faced pastor to diagnose properly, to distinguish between the blasphemies of an ungodly man and the words, though blasphemous in our ears, which are spoken in weakness, and are pressed out of a tortured Christian by the intensity of his suffering. “What do your arguments prove?” Job asked his friends. “Do you mean to correct what I say, and treat the words of a despairing man as wind?” (6:25f). Suffering Christians have weaknesses, just as Christians do who are not suffering, and to respond harshly to the rash words of a sick man or a troubled woman does not seem to be evidence of pastoral skill. Certainly intemperate or self-righteous outbursts are not to be condoned, but they can be rejected kindly, without judging hearts and motives.

Another skill which the book of Job commends to the Christian pastor is the skill of *recognizing the kinds of blessing* God may seek to bring the Christian through his suffering. The conscientious pastor will seek to become more adept at answering the question asked by a suffering Christian: “Pastor, what possible good can come out of this?” The book of Job suggests several blessings that may come to a Christian through bitter suffering.

The first blessing affliction can bring us is a wholesome reminder of our littleness, our creatureliness, our frailty, and sinful frailty at that. “What strength do I have?” Job asked at one point in the proceedings. “Do I have the strength of stone? Is my flesh bronze? Do I have any power to help myself?” (6:11-13). C.S. Lewis has made the interesting comment: “You must understand the statement ‘God sends pain to try us, to test us’ in the right sense. God has not been trying to experiment on our faith or love in order to find out their quality; he knew it already. It was I who didn’t. He always knew that the temple we build is a house of cards. His only way of making me realize the fact was to knock it down.”

Job’s affliction brought him the blessing that the psalmist prayed for when he wrote:

“Show me, O Lord, my life’s end
and the number of my days;
let me know how fleeting is my life.” (39:4)

The humbling reminder to a Christian in a hospital that he can’t even stand up, can’t even go to the bathroom alone, can have a salutary effect on a person.

This realization led Paul to say: “I will boast about my weakness, so that Christ’s power may rest on me” (2 Co 12:9). If my lack of strength leads me to lean harder on the Savior, who’s to say that the illness which robbed me of my strength has been a horrible mistake? “When I am weak, then I am strong,” St. Paul said (2 Co 12:10).

The realization that he is flesh born of flesh can have a second salutary result for a Christian under affliction. Does a person who is nothing but clay plus the breath of God have a right to criticize God, or a right to make demands of him? Why, he doesn’t owe us a nickel! God’s two discourses at the close of the book of Job certainly reminded Job that he was, after all, a creature, and that the only proper posture of a creature before God is humility.

Still another blessing of affliction to which the book of Job points is that God may use it to purify our faith in him, to deepen our trust in him. Job understood that this was part of God’s good plan for him in his affliction. In the dark night of his misery Job said of God:

“He knows the way that I take;
When he has tested me, I will come forth as gold.” (23:10)

There are impurities in the faith of each of us that the Lord wants to remove from our faith, and he may choose to use the fires of affliction in his refining process. Our self-trust, our indifference to the will of God, our fascination with our own ability, our preoccupation with things material, with trivia that don’t really amount to much in the light of eternity—this is all slag that the heavenly Refiner may seek to remove in the fire. Hear C.S. Lewis again:

“The problem of reconciling human suffering with the existence of a God who loves is insoluble only so long as we attach a trivial meaning to the word ‘love,’ and look on things as if man were the center of things. Man is not the center. God does not exist for the sake of man. Man does not exist for his own sake.... To ask that God’s love should be content with us as we are is to ask that God should cease to be God. Because he is what he is, his love must, in the nature of things, be impeded and repelled by certain stains in our present character, and because he already loves us he must labor to make us lovable.... What we would here and now call our ‘happiness’ is not the end God chiefly has in view; but when we are such as he can love without impediment, we shall in fact be happy.”

Affliction may be God’s way of helping us to look away from the distractions and to focus our attention on him who has said: “I will never leave you or forsake you.” Job’s suffering led him to say, albeit with eyes clouded by tears: “Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him” (13:15). Our particular blessing in suffering may be that suddenly our ears are alert and receptive to the voice that has been calling:

“Fear not, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name; you are mine.
When you pass through the waters,
I will be with you; ...
When you walk through the fire,

you will not be burned....
 For I am the Lord your God ... your Savior.” (Isa 43:1-3)

God has not made a world in which ease and security and happiness are the highest attainments, but rather a world in which the characters of men and women are shaped by conflict and hardship, and perhaps even defeat. Life as God has planned it is not to be a nursery school for coddling perpetual infants, but a school for adult education.

Our God has invited us:

“Call upon me in the day of trouble;
 I will deliver you, and you will honor me” (Ps 50:15).

Can affliction really offer us an opportunity to glorify God? God is honored if in tribulation we suffer patiently, if in bereavement we can thank him, as Job did, for what he gave us and let us enjoy for so many years. God is honored if in affliction we cling to him as our only hope, and say with Jacob: “I will not let you go unless you bless me,” or with Kate Luther: “*Ich bleib’ an meinen Herrn Jesum hangen wie die Klette am Kleide.*”

Obviously, the skilled pastor will resist the temptation of wanting to play God in determining the precise blessing God may wish to bring to a sorely afflicted Christian through his suffering. The book of Job mentions several of these; the New Testament mentions others. The pastor may wish to do no more than to answer the question why?” with a number of suggestions. But the book of Job does teach more clearly than any other Bible book God’s design in the suffering of his children. For that reason it deserves our study.

Preaching Texts from the Book of Job

1:13-22	Thanksgiving; funeral
5:17-26	God’s good purpose in affliction (also 23: 10; 33:13-30)
14:1-5	End-Time sermon on death
19:22-27	Easter 1 or 2
28:12-28	Christian Education Sunday; school graduation
37:1-13	“Earth, hear your Maker’s voice!”
38:1-11	“Be still, and know that I am God!”

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