Lesson 95
Job's Friends

Story Elements

- **Text**: Job 2:11-37:24
- **Setting**: circa 3000 B.C. in the land of Uz (northern Arabia)
- **Main Characters**: God, Job, Eliphaz, Bildad, & Zophar
- **Plot**: Job's friends grieve with him and then offer their perspectives on why he is suffering.

- **Key word**(s): _____ appears 37 times throughout the book - Job and his friends have heated discussions about the fate of the wicked versus the righteous while trying to make sense of Job's suffering.
- **Climax**: *Job 31:35 Oh that one would hear me! Behold, my desire is, that the Almighty would answer me, And that mine adversary had written a book.*

Friends Mourn

1. (2:11-12) We are introduced to Job's three friends: Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite.
   a. As Job's friends, they felt compelled *to come to mourn with him and to* _____ *him*.

APPLICATION➔ By visiting those in affliction, we will improve "our own graces; for many a good lesson is to be learned from the troubles of others; we may look upon them and receive instruction, and be made wise and serious."[1] (cf. Eccl. 7:2)

   b. (2:13) After they had rent their clothes, wept aloud, and sprinkled dust on their heads, Job's friends *sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great*.

APPLICATION➔ When consoling the bereaved, sometimes one's _____ is more comforting than one's words. "Nothing is more natural or common than profound silence when we go to the house of mourning. 'It is the lesser cares only that speak; the greater ones find not language.'"[2]

Job Laments

2. (3:1-26) Though Job did not curse God, yet he did curse the day he was born. In chapter 3, Job…
   a. (vv 1-10) lamented his _____ and wished that he had never been conceived,
   b. (vv 11-19) romanticized _____ and wondered why he couldn't have died in infancy,
   c. (vv 20-26) and longed for death and questioned why life is given to those who are _____.

APPLICATION➔ In chapters 1-2, Job did not *sin with his lips* (2:10), but now Job reminds us that when we suffer extremely, we _____ extensively – all the good blessings of his life now meant nothing that they were gone – "the lean kine have eaten up the fat ones, and he is filled with thoughts of the evil only."[3] Great suffering, like the lean kine in Pharaoh's dream (Gen. 41:20), eat up the fat kine of gratitude and blind our eyes to the good we have enjoyed.

Friends Debate

3. The following 34 chapters contain the lengthy debate that Job has with his three friends. The conversation

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[1] Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 660.
[2] Albert Barnes, *Notes on the Old Testament: Job*, vol. 1 (London: Blackie & Son, 1847), 122.
[3] Henry, 660.

revolves around two important factors:

  a. Job's friends assume that since God is just, the wicked _____ and the good are _____. Therefore, they accuse Job of secret sins and plead with him to repent.

  b. Job, on the other hand, defends his integrity. He is offended that his friends would question his innocence, yet Job is not afraid to question God's _____.

APPLICATION➔ Job's friends are wise and God-fearing men, but their false assumptions mean we must carefully navigate between their uplifting waves of godly wisdom and their dangerous rocks of faulty application. John Calvin warned of the speeches of Job's friends: "the matters which are set down here are true in themselves, notwithstanding that they be misapplied to the person of Job."[4]

4. (4:1-5:27) Eliphaz is the first to speak to Job.

  a. He insists that God only punishes the wicked, calls upon Job to repent, and encourages him that God will restore him in the end. ***Job 5:17*** *Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: Therefore despise not thou the _____ of the Almighty*.

  b. (6:1-7:21) Job responds to Eliphaz by wishing that God would kill him and expressing his feebleness. ***Job 6:12*** *Is my strength the strength of _____? Or is my flesh of brass?*

5. (8:1-22) Bildad is the next to offer his perspective.

  a. Like Eliphaz, Bildad maintains that God is just, *Doth God pervert judgment? Or doth the Almighty pervert justice?* (8:3) He even boldly says that Job's children must've been sinners since they died so ignominiously (cf. 8:4). He also encourages Job that after repentance will come restoration (cf. 8:6, 7)

  b. (Job 9:1-10:22) Job answers Bildad by confessing that God is infinitely wise and mighty (cf. 9:1-4). But Job regresses into his soul-weariness and vents his frustration with God. ***Job 10:2*** *I will say unto God, Do not _____ me; Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me*.

6. (11:1-20) Zophar finally speaks up.

  a. He repeats the sentiments of the other two and adds, *Know therefore that God exacteth of thee less than thine _____ deserveth, 11:6.*

  b. (12:1-14:22) Job rebukes his friends for their self-righteous attitude, *No doubt but ye are the people, And wisdom shall die with you. But I have understanding as well as you; I am not _____ to you: Yea, who knoweth not such things as these, 12:2-3.*

APPLICATION➔ Thus the conversation continues. The friends accuse Job of hypocrisy, and Job defends his integrity. All agree that God is infinitely just and wise, but Job often wishes that he could talk with God, to hear why God is mad at him, and to defend himself before the Almighty. Job draw his words to an end by pleading that God answer him and tell him his fault, *Oh that one would hear me! Behold, my desire is, that the Almighty would _____ me, And that mine adversary had written a book. 31:35*

<div align="center">TO BE CONTINUED</div>

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_____

Answer Key: Key word(s): wicked • 1. a. comfort; ➔ presence • 2. a. existence; b. death; c. hopeless; ➔ forget • 3. suffer, blessed; b. justice • 4. a. chastening; b. stones • 5. b. condemn • 6. a. iniquity; b. inferior; ➔ answer

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[4] John Calvin, *Sermons of Master John Calvin upon the Book of Job* (Carlisle: Banner of Truth Trust, 1993) 195.