

Job Chapters 29-31 – John Karmelich

1. In this lesson, we actually finish all the debate dialogue. Job finishes his last speech. The debate actually ended in the last few chapters. These three chapters are about Job reflecting on his life. One thing that always puzzled me about Job, is why does God wait so long to chime in on this debate? I figured it out as I studied these chapters. I think Job realized how he failed to realize the success he had in life prior to "all this" was God ordained. These chapters are humbling for Job as you can sense it's all sinking in that God was behind all of this. The other thing one senses as we read through Job's final speech is what hurt him the most was God "not being there". It's as if he'd accepted the loss of his wealth, the death of his children and the pain to his body, but the lack of a presence of God to comfort him through all of this is what hurt him the most.
 - a) That leads perfectly to my title: Job recalls the good years (Chapter 29), the bad years (30) and Job's conclusion about his life (Chapter 31). That's the essence of these three chapters.
2. OK then, give us the "why should we care" lecture as we know it's killing you right now! Because times will come in our own Christian walk where we don't feel like God is there and we feel like our prayers are "bouncing off the ceiling". We start thinking, "Maybe I am guilty of some big sin, and that's why I don't sense God's presence right now or maybe I'm not trying hard enough to be pleasing to God and that's why everything is going wrong right now!" Another thought is maybe I'm not doing what God wants me to do so that's why I'm not getting what I want.
 - a) I'm tempted to break into "Let it go" (From Disney's frozen), but I'll resist the temptation. I just realize that sometimes we have to go with the situation, no matter where it leads. One of the great lessons I've learned on happiness is literally to have "No expectations in life". I believe one should try as hard as one could to accomplish whatever goals we believe that we can do, but the results are always (big emphasis on always) God's business. God gave us a set of rules to live by. Not living by them is all about our ego thinking, we don't need His rules here, we can do it our way. Job's got some of that in Chapter 29. It reads a little like a "Hal-le-lu-ME" speech as Job lists his accomplishments. Yes, he lived as God desired but he's realizing he also gave himself the credit. It is definitely, the humbling reminder of how God wants us to live under the realization that all things to happen to us are only because He allowed it. Yes He gives us the gifts to accomplish things. Yes we have do the leg work, but one of the greatest lessons to learn in life is that happiness requires us to let go of the expectations. (My thanks to Dennis Prager for the "No expectations" lecture).
 - b) All of that leads perfectly to Chapter 30. Here Job recalls how humbling this whole "Satan took it all away" speech as he recalls how difficult all of this has been. Yes, it's meant as an obvious contradiction to Chapter 29. It's a reminder to us that God can take it all away at any time and He gets the credit for whatever blessings we do get in life.
 - c) Finally, Job gives a 40-verse conclusion in Chapter 31. Come on, after all these chapters, it is not possible for Job to be brief! It's a realization speech that Job must accept his lot after all of this. He realizes God doesn't owe him an explanation despite all of his efforts to live as God desires. Much of the chapter is Job listing ways he lived as God desired. Job isn't to be thought of as a perfect person. I'm positive he had faults just like you and me. What is an impressive thing to consider is how hard he tried to live a life pleasing to God once he did accept His existence and His control over his life.
 - d) If you don't know this is not the end of the book, just Job's sermons. From here a new guy is going to speak and then "God's had enough of the lot of them" and chimes in to end it.
3. OK then, time for another quick "why should we care" lecture. It's easy for us to read about Job's life and think, "Good for him, however I'm not that good. I mess up all the time." Welcome to the club! That's why salvation is not based on trying harder, but based on accepting God's complete payment for our sins and then letting His spirit guide us to live as He desires. Yes, we're going to mess up. Yes, we'll never be perfect. God wants to use us just as we are, for His glory!

- a) Therefore, as we go through these final three chapters, don't think "Good for Job, or too bad for him" or "I'll never be that good". Think that God wants to use me, as messed up as I am to use what time I've got left to live for His glory. Then comes the classic, "now what" question. That's where I get into my favorite lecture on "what do we enjoy doing and how can we use that for His glory?" Yes "the trash still has to go out" so to speak. Still it is His desire for us to live for Him and use our lives for His glory. I'm willing to bet Job suffered more than any man in history and he could still praise God in spite of that. If he could do that, then we should and could use our time to do what He desires of us and be grateful for what we have. As I also like to say, "If you don't know what to do next, ask Him."
 - b) OK, enough lecturing for one introduction. Let's get through Job's final speech.
4. Chapter 29, Verse 1: Job continued his discourse: ² "How I long for the months gone by, for the days when God watched over me, ³ when his lamp shone upon my head and by his light I walked through darkness!
- a) Let's start by remembering where we left off. We're in the middle of Job's seven chapter speech that ends the great debate that is most of this book. The good news is the chapters that make up this lesson, are in a sense not a part of the debate. I'm positive Job's finished dealing with his three friends and is now just contemplating his life to date. The essence of the situation is since no one figured out why he's suffering, Job reflects by himself and a conclusion is coming that he must simply accept his fate without one.
 - b) Job starts that reflection by discussing what his life was like before all that happened. That is what Chapter 29 is all about. It's not here to make us an expert on Job's life before all of the bad stuff happened. It's to help us think about the good and bad of our own lives as to realize there is a God behind the scenes "pulling the strings" whether we realize it or not.
 - c) OK then, onto the verse themselves. The first thing we realize that whatever happened to Job wasn't "yesterday". It's not like Satan "wiped out" Job yesterday and today his friends show up to debate him. It's been at the least several months since it began as that's what's implied in Verse 2. The related idea is Job's had time to think about life before and during all of "this" to get to where he's at today.
 - d) What's implied at the end of Verse 2, is what Job misses the most is the sense of having God talk to us. Let me explain that. It doesn't mean that Christians get "messages" from Him 24/7. It doesn't mean He gives us direct instructions like "Go this way, now turn left to go where I want you to know". One of the mottos I like is "God gave us a brain and He expects us to use it". I'll also add that I don't believe we have to strain to hear God's voice. I hold the simple view that "God is God" and if He's got something to say to us, He will. I don't have to be in a certain place or certain mood to hear Him speak to Me. Again, He's God, so if He's got something to say, He will. Getting back to Job's point, it's the sense that we are living as God desires. There is a peace that comes with living that way. That's what Job is missing, the wonderful sense of peace of knowing He's pleasing to God. As I stated in the introduction, sometimes God "goes silent" on us as to test us to see whether or not we'll be trusting Him through the good and bad of it all.
 - e) What if I've never felt that peace? The first question is, are you trusting Jesus in the sense that He's in charge of every aspect of your life? Having God's peace is all about total and complete surrender of our will to His. Then we do "what's logical" given that. I know that when we think that way, God starts to guide our lives in ways we can't imagine. We see it best in hindsight as we watch how our lives have changed since we became a believer.
 - f) Anyway, Job misses all of that. Since Satan did his worst, the sense that God's guiding us has disappeared from Job's life. Those feelings come to us as well. When they do, it's just a matter of trusting that God's still there and it's a time of testing. It's amazing to consider some of the most powerful and influential Christians of our time have gone through such periods and have dealt with their own depression despite what success they have in their ministry work. I'm just saying if it happens to them, it can hit any of us as believers.

5. Verse 4: Oh, for the days when I was in my prime, when God's intimate friendship blessed my house,⁵ when the Almighty was still with me and my children were around me,⁶ when my path was drenched with cream and the rock poured out for me streams of olive oil.
- a) Now we get into the heart of the Chapter 29, The "I miss the good old days, Hal-le-lu-ME speech" that Job gives through the chapter. He misses God's having an intimate friendship with him and he misses having his ten (grown) children around him. Verse 6 is a colorful way to say he had lots of wealth and life was good back then.
 - b) One can sense that Job was really feeling lonely here. Let's face it, his three friends weren't exactly, "Let's make Job feel better" type of people. He misses the sense that God's guiding his life. He misses the company of his children and misses having "stuff". Let me discuss the topic of loneliness since Job brought it up. We could lose a loved one or just be a long distance away from them and experience loneliness. It can happen through divorce or by an unexpected death. A classic expression goes, "If God is all that Adam needed, why did God create Eve?" It was more than producing children, it was about the need for a special someone (or someone's) in our lives to connect to. My point here is we can all feel a sense of loneliness even when we have loved one's around us. We can just be missing a person we desire to be close to.
 - i) OK, enough describing the problem. I've met a lot of lonely people lately. What I desire is to give them all a hug and tell them that God loves them and so do I. It's the sense that we all get lonely and sitting home feeling sorry for ourselves won't solve the problem. The great advantage of our world today is we can easily meet new people on line or find common interests with people to connect to. My point is to end loneliness requires action on our part. No relationship will be perfect. It is necessary to take the first step to go connect with people.
 - ii) That leads me back to Job. He's feeling lonely because he misses communicating with God and even talking to his children. It's even tougher for him, because he's in horrid health so he can't mingle. That's why he's in effect "singing the blues" of how horrid his life is right now. When we're at rock bottom like Job, the best thing we can do is surrender our life and time to God and say, "OK, You are in charge of my life, I don't know what to do next. I've watched God over and over again come through and help people change when they totally surrender their lives to Him.
6. Verse 7: "When I went to the gate of the city and took my seat in the public square,⁸ the young men saw me and stepped aside and the old men rose to their feet;⁹ the chief men refrained from speaking and covered their mouths with their hands;¹⁰ the voices of the nobles were hushed, and their tongues stuck to the roof of their mouths.
- a) Job continues his "Good old days" speech. He remembers how his ego was fed by being a key figure in his society. "Young men got out of the way and old men rose to their feet" as it says in Verse 8. Job recalls that when he spoke, everybody else hushed up. I admit that has to appeal to anyone's ego as being "On the top of the world". Whether one desires to be rich, or famous, this would be the moment where one realizes one has made it!
 - i) What one learns in life is even if one achieves all that, it's not enough. God created us with a desire for a relationship with Him. One can have all of that and still feel empty on the inside. I've seen it all my life. That's why we all have that need to be close to God through it all. Even if we got that, we still need to connect with others as that's what drives us as humans.
 - b) Anyway, picture Job, lonely, sitting in pain and thinking "I miss the good old days when I was an important person on top of my world". That's what Job's thinking here.
7. Verse 11: Whoever heard me spoke well of me, and those who saw me commended me,¹² because I rescued the poor who cried for help, and the fatherless who had none to assist him.
- a) Job's saying in his prime, he wasn't just a "big mouth" who everyone listened to because he was wealthy. He also used his financial success to help others in need.

- b) Another classic saying is, "Give a man a fish, and he'll be hungry the next day. Teach him how to fish and you've solved the problem." I really try to keep that thought in mind as I hear of people in need. Sometimes a handout's needed, but I also try to think in terms of how can I really help someone. I think that's the attitude God's looking for us believers as we go through life. It's about how can we make a difference for Him. It's how do we look at a situation and ask, "how can I make a difference"? Sometimes it's just a willingness to listen to others. Sometimes it involves "teaching how to fish".
 - c) The point as it relates to Job is he wasn't just a "hoarder" of wealth. He used his success to go make a difference for the less fortunate. I'm sure he didn't just give to everyone he met as that doesn't solve problems. He actually worked to help the less fortunate.
 - d) Keep in mind that Job's feeling lonely right now and wishes his life was like it used to be.
8. Verse 13: The man who was dying blessed me; I made the widow's heart sing.
- a) Job continues his "Hal-le-lu-ME" speech. He's recalling times where others "sang praises to Job" for the good he's done. I get the impression this was the type of man Job was. He was a great witness for God even as a wealthy person, because he didn't just sit at home as to count the money. He helped others. There's a famous story of an English queen who claimed she was saved by the letter "m" as in "many". First Corinthians 1:26 stats that not many wealthy people make it to heaven. Anyway the queen loved the "m" in many. That also fits Job here because he knew how to use his wealth for God's glory.
9. Verse 14: I put on righteousness as my clothing; justice was my robe and my turban.
- a) This is an "I always tried to do the right thing" type of speech. The positive aspect is Job is realizing that even when he had it all, he was a good person. The humbling part is when it is all taken away, that's when we realize God gave us that gift to be that way in the first place. That's what this whole speech is all about. Ok, let's continue.
10. Verse 15: I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. ¹⁶ I was a father to the needy; I took up the case of the stranger.
- a) I doubt Job had any "Jesus powers" of special miracles. He's simply recalling the fact that he liked to help the less fortunate any way he could. Being a good witness for Jesus is all about how we act. We don't need Job's wealth to be this way. It's all about putting other's needs as priority to our own. That's how God wants us to act as believers.
11. Verse 17: I broke the fangs of the wicked and snatched the victims from their teeth.
- a) Job didn't just do "good for the humble", but actually worked to help those who lived life without God's guidance. Again, I'm reminded of the expression that we're to love what it is God loves and hate what He hates. What He hates is acts of evil. Obviously, the issue is not to take the law into our own hands. It's about not turning our back in situations when we can help. I think that's what Job is talking about here.
12. Verse 18: "I thought, 'I will die in my own house, my days as numerous as the grains of sand. ¹⁹ My roots will reach to the water, and the dew will lie all night on my branches. ²⁰ My glory will remain fresh in me, the bow ever new in my hand.'
- a) If you know your Gospel stories fairly well, you can't help reading these verses and recall the story of a wealthy man who bragged, "I'm set for the rest of my life. Time to kick back and enjoy what I've got saved up." Jesus responded to that story by saying in effect, that night he died and was now accountable to God. (Luke 12:19-20.) Both Jesus' parable here as well as Job's verses here are a reminder that the most important thing we own is time. If we're willing to give that time back to God, He promises to bless it far greater than if we just use it to accumulate stuff for ourselves.
 - b) Don't get me wrong. I'm not claiming Job was like the man that Jesus described. Job had a lot of great qualities as he used his wealth to make a difference in the world around him. He's just recalling that "His life was good" and thought he had so much wealth, he would die that way. If nothing else, it's a reminder how precious life is, and we should never for grant it that what we have today will last the rest of our lives.

13. Verse 21: "Men listened to me expectantly, waiting in silence for my counsel. ²² After I had spoken, they spoke no more; my words fell gently on their ears. ²³ They waited for me as for showers and drank in my words as the spring rain.
- a) Job's getting close to wrapping up his "Hal-le-lu-ME" speech. (I promise, that is the last time I'll use that joke in this lesson. It's getting old now.) I don't know if Job's speaking accurately about every time he spoke, or he's just recalling life during his successful days when people thought, "This guy's got it all, let's be quiet and listen to his advice." I know a lot of people see "billionaires" or Hollywood stars that way. They be quiet thinking the person they're listening to has it all. Job had the equivalent of that type of status when he was in his prime and had all that great wealth. That's the essence of these verses.
 - b) Yes it's a reminder of who we should really seek for wisdom. It's also a reminder God can take it all away as Job experienced here. OK then, two more verses of this.
14. Verse 24: When I smiled at them, they scarcely believed it; the light of my face was precious to them. ²⁵ I chose the way for them and sat as their chief; I dwelt as a king among his troops; I was like one who comforts mourners.
- a) Ok, I'm all out of clichés to use here to describe Job in his glory days. Let me ask, why did Job go through all of this? Was it the pain he was in and trying to comfort himself to think of the "good old days"? Was it the lack of comfort his three friends provided (who we will discover are still listening to this? Was it to tell the friends "I really was a good man, and I have no idea why God took it all away from me" type of speech. We don't read Job's mind to know his motivation. What I suspect is this whole exercise was a humbling experience as Job now contemplates his horrid current state and how far he's fallen.
 - b) I suspect what Job missed the most was a sense of closeness to God. However, I've beaten that point to death, so I won't go down that "rabbit hole" again. What God wants us to get out of all of this is the sense that whatever blessings we do have in life, come from Him. It is also the reminder that God can take away from us as easily as we got whatever it is we got in life. OK, enough of the "positive past", time for the "horrible present". Chapter 30:
15. Chapter 30, Verse 1: "But now they mock me, men younger than I, whose fathers I would have disdained to put with my sheep dogs.
- a) The first thing to catch here is that Job didn't get struck down "yesterday". Satan's damage to Job didn't start, 24 hours ago and then the great debate began. It appears that after all of the horrid things that Job suffered, he went into town maybe to get help or relief. That is why we're going to read of Job suffering at the hands of others through this chapter.
 - b) I'm reminded of a story of a financially successful person I knew who lost it all. The good news is he bounced back completely, but not after going through bankruptcy. He said the hardest part was how all his friends and acquaintances turned their backs on him as if the act of bankruptcy is contagious. The hardest part of losing everything financially was the treatment he received from people around them. My point is Job will describe how he did go through this himself through part of this chapter. Speaking of which:
 - c) In this verse Job's describing people he considered so irreparable that Job implies here he would never have hired them even to watch some of his animals. Now their children are mocking Job in his condition. I can just hear them saying, "You wouldn't hire us, well it's time you got a taste of your own medicine!" My simple point is Job suffered much more than just the great debate of this book because of his loss of everything. He was rejected by others around him.
16. Verse 2: Of what use was the strength of their hands to me, since their vigor had gone from them? ³ Haggard from want and hunger, they roamed the parched land in desolate wastelands at night. ⁴ In the brush they gathered salt herbs, and their food was the root of the broom tree.
- a) Job's going to go on a rant about the "worthless types" until Verse 9. The short version is a person who lives a life ignoring God and simply living for pleasure, are in effect a waste of human life. Job's describing their fate and why he rejects them.

- b) In the last chapter Job described how he'd help those who are suffering and hurting. Here he's complaining about the "worthless". My point is Job didn't just give away what he had to everyone in town. Job had the wisdom to try to help those who were suffering and not those who were simply wasting their lives away with frivolous pursuits.
 - c) Now notice Job's not describing them in present tense, but future tense. Job's old enough to know the fate of people who never help others and don't fear their eternal fate. That is what Job's describing in these verses. Job's not describing wealthy men here. He's talking about the "low life's" of society who don't stand out from the crowd trying to help others, but are only interested in themselves. Yes Job's being colorful, but the point is obvious as one reads through this section. Speaking of which, let's continue:
17. Verse 5: They were banished from their fellow men, shouted at as if they were thieves. ⁶ They were forced to live in the dry stream beds, among the rocks and in holes in the ground. ⁷ They brayed among the bushes and huddled in the undergrowth. ⁸ A base and nameless brood, they were driven out of the land.
- a) Let's pause to remember why Job's going on and on about these people. When he had lots of wealth, he'd never give such people the time of day. Now that his life turned horrid, it is Job who is looked down by them. These are not "inheritance kids" wasting their wealth. It is describing people who have literally wasted their lives away doing nothing anyone is going to remember. Job's lived long enough to see these types come and go. I doubt Job's describing any particular person. I think he's seeing the "scum of the world" at the end of their lives and the results of turning from how they lived. Another common term for such a group is the "criminal class". Anyway, the text is pretty blunt about them here.
18. Verse 9: "And now their sons mock me in song; I have become a byword among them. ¹⁰ They detest me and keep their distance; they do not hesitate to spit in my face. ¹¹ Now that God has unstrung my bow and afflicted me, they throw off restraint in my presence.
- a) Here's another reason why Job's going on and on about these people. When he had lots of wealth, he'd never give such people the time of day. Now that his life turned horrid, Job is the one who's looked down by them. I can just hear the chants of "Well, look who's fallen from the mighty!" Now Job's being treated even lower than they are living.
 - b) The point here is Job suffered a lot of shame after he lost it all. I can just picture him after he lost it all wandering into town, looking for people he had helped before seeing if there was someone who could help him. Instead, all he got was more shame. In other words, it is more than the loss of stuff family and healthy, he also suffered shame for his fate. If you have any doubt the devil can't do his worse when we're down, here's the proof.
 - c) I'm reminded of the old joke, "Just when you think it can't get any worse, it always does". It definitely applies to Job right here. OK, I've beaten that point to death, let's move on.
19. Verse 12: On my right the tribe attacks; they lay snares for my feet, they build their siege ramps against me. ¹³ They break up my road; they succeed in destroying me-- without anyone's helping them. ¹⁴ They advance as through a gaping breach; amid the ruins they come rolling in.
- a) Here Job is colorfully comparing the way the locals treat him after he'd lost everything to the weapons used in warfare, and successfully at that. I doubt it was literal war. It's more of a sense that everyone was treating him so badly, it felt like this.
 - b) Stop and ask, what would you do if you hit "rock bottom"? You lost all you have. People are treating you like you're worthless. If your Job, you go live by yourself. The only thing Job got was the endless debate of his friends. In hindsight, I don't know which is worse.
 - i) For those who are like this, there are wonderful charities like the Salvation Army that helps people at rock bottom. The key of course starts with turning our lives to God for guidance and then being grateful for whatever help we can get.
 - ii) I'd also argue that we as Christians have a duty to help who we can. It's not about giving away all we have, but helping the less fortunate is a good witness for Jesus.
 - iii) Meanwhile, let's trudge our way through Job's misery here.

20. Verse 15: Terrors overwhelm me; my dignity is driven away as by the wind, my safety vanishes like a cloud. ¹⁶ "And now my life ebbs away; days of suffering grip me. ¹⁷ Night pierces my bones; my gnawing pains never rest.
- a) Now we move from emotional pain to physical pain. Personally I don't think either is worse to live with. Job has it all in this book. By the way, many Jewish scholars argue that Job is fiction because they refuse to believe anyone could suffer that much. My answer is we're not there, so we take the story as it is. Anyway, Job's describing living with horrid pain as in physical pain.
 - b) OK, while we're in the neighborhood, let's discuss horrid pain. I've known a few people who've had to suffer that horribly. Some from cancer, some from car accidents and some from a physical disability. I can't explain why some have to suffer so horribly. Yes, there's drugs and therapy, but some people simply have to live with it. Why would a good God allow it? The answer is to glorify Him through the suffering. Above that, I can't explain it. It's simply part of the curse of living in a fallen world. For those who can't get better, faith is necessary to believe that eternity is a whole lot longer than this life.
 - c) Meanwhile, let's read how Job handled it:
21. Verse 18: In his great power God becomes like clothing to me; he binds me like the neck of my garment. ¹⁹ He throws me into the mud, and I am reduced to dust and ashes. ²⁰ "I cry out to you, O God, but you do not answer; I stand up, but you merely look at me.
- a) Job's the kind of person who always wanted to stay close to God. In a sense Job's blaming God for his fate here. Job is in the sense that he believes God is the ultimate authority of what happens to us in life. We're back to the question if why does God allow tragedies to occur in life? Job's pondering that as he's sitting there suffering in pain. What bothers Job more than anything else is a lack of any explanation for why this is happening. Little does Job realize he's about to get far more than what he bargained for, as God "chimes in" soon to say in effect, "Hey Job, who are you to question Me". In the meantime, Job's pondering why God doesn't answer him when he's suffering horribly.
 - b) That leads us back to the great question of why does God allow horrible suffering. No one can explain it. All we can do is be a good witness for God through whatever we're dealing with in life. It's more than just "toughing it out". The whole gamut of emotions are given in the bible as people dealt with just about every situation possible. We can ponder why it is we're going through whatever we're dealing with and why God isn't responding in a way we want Him to respond. We must always come to the point of realizing He is God and we are not. It's ok for us to ask why, but He's not required to answer us.
 - c) That's what Job's feeling here. A sense that the God he's trusted all his life, refuses to give an answer for what Job's going through. Yes Job's going to get a big answer coming up. It is a matter for us to realize that God allows what He allows and we have to make the best of it in the meantime. For example when Job says God throws him in the mud and Job is reduced to dust and ashes, Job's not being literal. It's Job's way of asking, "Hey God why are you allowing all of this occur?"
 - d) OK, we're now about two thirds the way through the "complaining" chapter, hang tight.
22. Verse 21: You turn on me ruthlessly; with the might of your hand you attack me. ²² You snatch me up and drive me before the wind; you toss me about in the storm. ²³ I know you will bring me down to death, to the place appointed for all the living.
- a) If one communicates regularly with God (i.e., sincerely prays regularly and desires God to guide our lives), it has to be horribly painful for someone like Job who was blessed in a lot of ways such as wealth and a large family to lose it all and now sit in horrid health. A positive through all of this complaining is God still "won the bet" as Job never sins in all of this. Yes he complains endlessly about his situation and even blames God for allowing it to occur, but we don't read of Job ever saying, "To hell with you God, I'm not going to be a witness for You anymore". Instead, he's simply accepting the cards he's dealt with here.

- b) Let me address those who've actually cursed God out to a point where they say in effect, I want nothing to do with God anymore. The only "too late" is after we die. Jesus effectively said the only unforgivable sin is a lifetime denial that He's God. My point is whatever it is we've done in life, God's willing to forgive us if we turn our lives over to Him. There's no sin so great that God says, "To hell with you, I don't care about you anymore!" He always is willing to listen to a repentant heart. The problem is none of us know who's saved and who isn't so all we can do is try to be a witness to all people!
 - c) Anyway, with that statement said, the last few verses is Job accepting his fate as if to say, "OK God I get it. I'm being punished for some reason that I'm not entitled to know. Yes, I am going to my grave in this condition. Help me to accept Your will here. Help me with all my misery to still be a good witness for You." In effect, that's what God wanted of Job and that what He wants of you and me. Let's face it, there may be laws on God's books that we may disagree with. We may think the bible's wrong on issue "x or y". What we're forgetting is He's God and we're not. As one pastor put it, if God says I'm required to go stand on my head an hour a day, who am I to argue with Him? Anyway, Job's reached a point of total surrender here. Yes he's still complaining about his fate, as that's tough not to focus upon when one's in a lot of pain. The good news is Job's accepted it and he's still trying to be a good witness for God in spite of it all. OK then, let's continue.
23. Verse 24: "Surely no one lays a hand on a broken man when he cries for help in his distress. ²⁵ Have I not wept for those in trouble? Has not my soul grieved for the poor? ²⁶ Yet when I hoped for good, evil came; when I looked for light, then came darkness.
- a) Job recalls how he's helped other people who are suffering. It's grieved Job to see others suffer. Job's pondering, why aren't others having the same attitude toward him? When Job's three friends came to comfort him, none of them ever made an effort to physically help Job. They just said in effect, "Confess your sins". I keep thinking of the phrase, "With friends like that, who needs enemies?"
 - b) Job's having his "poor, poor pitiful me" moment again. He's contemplating how he's been a big help to others and no one is returning the favor? Considering that many people in a society want to help others, why is Job looked down upon? I suspect one reason is God is allowing all this to occur for Job to contemplate why this is occurring. I suspect that's the reason why no one is actually helping Job through all of this. We can only speculate with an issue like this. All we have is the facts and the great fact in front of us is Job's suffering horribly and no one is helping him through it all.
24. Verse 27: The churning inside me never stops; days of suffering confront me. ²⁸ I go about blackened, but not by the sun; I stand up in the assembly and cry for help. ²⁹ I have become a brother of jackals, a companion of owls. ³⁰ My skin grows black and peels; my body burns with fever. ³¹ My harp is tuned to mourning, and my flute to the sound of wailing.
- a) The hard part about Job's physical suffering is it never ends. It never gets any easier. It is nothing one can get used to and accept. I suspect hell is like that too. One can think that after awhile, one gets used to the pain of hell and it gets easier. If Job's suffering is a sign of what true hell is like, I suspect we get a flavor of it here.
 - b) In these verses Job's focusing on his physical pain. He's aware of other animals that stay awake all night and he can relate to them as it's too painful to sleep. Yes Job blames God for ultimately allowing all of this to happen. What pains Job the most is a lack of a reason for all of this and why the God Job serves isn't giving him an explanation.
 - c) I suspect most of us have gone through hard times where we wish it were over. We don't get why God's allowing us to deal with horrid things. We feel like no one's had it as bad as we do at the moment. We wallow in self-pity thinking no one can relate to my pain. It is a matter of realizing that despite whatever we're going through, God's still there, He is still guiding us and yes, He wants us to get past the "poor poor pitiful me" moment as to trust Him to guide our lives through it all.

- d) The good news is we made to the end of the "Job's wallowing in pain speech" chapter. A final chapter awaits for Job to finish his closing arguments. We've made it this far, so let's get through the last chapter of admittedly a tough lesson to face on how we should face a tough time in our lives. OK, let's continue:
25. Chapter 31, Verse 1: "I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl.
- a) At this point Job's now recalling the commitment he's made to "do the right thing" in life no matter what. As an example, he's recalling the fact that as a married man, he has never committed the sin of adultery.
- b) Let me deviate for a second to discuss lust. I've heard many a lecture on this. It's not a sin to notice that someone is good looking. The sin is to keep desiring it. The way I view it is to admire someone's physical beauty is not the sin. To lust after it, is the sin. I remember teaching young men on this lecture. When one is tempted, I'd argue the best thing to do is to start praying for that person. It's hard to lust after someone if one is praying for them! I am not claiming to be perfect, but getting one's focus on God gets one's desire off of lust!
- c) Earlier in the lesson I quoted the expression, "If God is all that Adam needed, why did He God create Eve?" A point there is God doesn't desire that each of us live "One billion solo efforts for Him." God doesn't desire we each live alone and only focus on Him. It is not a sin to see the beauty of something and ignore it. The sin is to keep desiring what does not belong to us. In short, "the second glance is the danger". All of us have our "lower nature" we must fight. The secret to fighting it is to focus on Him. The point is He gives us all the power we need to combat the desire to sin and that includes lust.
- d) With that said, Job's "tooting his horn" here that he wins that battle by keeping his focus on God when it comes to lust. OK, then Verse 2:
26. Verse 2: For what is man's lot from God above, his heritage from the Almighty on high? ³ Is it not ruin for the wicked, disaster for those who do wrong? ⁴ Does he not see my ways and count my every step?
- a) Here Job is "thinking out loud" about the fact he believes God exists and God's will judge us based on how we live. It's the reminder that despite all his suffering, Job realizes he's still going to be judged by God which is why he tries his best to avoid sin.
- b) Let me tackle the tough question here: How are Christians judged? Let's begin by saying that Jesus paid the price for every sin we ever will commit, so it's not an "eternal fate" type of judgment. I hold the view that Christians are still judged, with the key question being what have we done with our faith in God? Eternal rewards exist based on the question of what did we do with our salvation? What about babies who die or those who saved at the last second? I let a perfect God sort that out. My studies are designed for people who are already Christians and "now what". Part of that "now what" is the realization we'll still be judged by God. Not for eternal damnation, but on the important question of what did we do with the free gift of salvation God gave us? OK, now that I've poured out the guilt, we can get back to Job. (Yes, you're supposed to laugh at that!)
27. Verse 5: "If I have walked in falsehood or my foot has hurried after deceit--⁶ let God weigh me in honest scales and he will know that I am blameless--⁷ if my steps have turned from the path, if my heart has been led by my eyes, or if my hands have been defiled,⁸ then may others eat what I have sown, and may my crops be uprooted.
- a) Now that Job has stated the fact that God judges people, Job returns to contemplating his own life as if to say, "I've never committed a horrid sin that way". Remember that was the main complaint by Job's three friends that there must be something horrid to confess"
- b) Job's saying that if he is guilty of some horrid sin, may I suffer for it, and may others eat of what I produce as I don't deserve the "fruits of my labor" if I did that.
- c) To state the obvious, life doesn't always work that way. Job knows that. He's making the point that he's tried all of his life to do the right thing. Did he make mistakes? Of course, he is human. The point is he's always tried to be a good witness for God.

- d) I can just hear some of you thinking, "I'm not that good, what's going to be my reward for living as I have?" First, we can't change our past, only learn from it". God doesn't demand perfection. He desires obedience. He wants us to use the gifts we have and do what we'll enjoy doing to make a difference for Him. Our heavenly rewards aren't based on an exact number of people we save or how many we helped grow closer to Jesus. Our rewards are only based on using the gifts God's given us to make a difference for Him. OK, enough guilt on that thought. Let's move on.
28. Verse 9: "If my heart has been enticed by a woman, or if I have lurked at my neighbor's door,¹⁰ then may my wife grind another man's grain, and may other men sleep with her.¹¹ For that would have been shameful, a sin to be judged.¹² It is a fire that burns to Destruction; it would have uprooted my harvest.
- a) OK we're back to lust here. Job's three friends are still there, so it is a natural subject to bring up to a bunch of guys talking! Job's comment here is essentially, if I was guilty of committing adultery or even trying to, may the fair punishment be for me to lose my wife for that sin. His simple point is marriage is a commitment. If we break that commitment, we deserve to be punished for it.
- b) I recall many years ago a pastor preaching, "The way God often punishes adulterers is to make them live with the person they cheated with". (Chuck Smith) It's a colorful way of saying we get what we deserve in life. It's a similar point to what's Job describing here.
- c) The reason Job's getting into this is he's giving an obvious example of the way God might judge us for how we live. Verse 12 is discussing the eternal danger of lust with hell. Job's harvest is referring to his family life he's built up (before Satan took it away). The point is Job turned from that desire for lust for the "harvest" of a wonderful life with his family!
29. Verse 13: "If I have denied justice to my menservants and maidservants when they had a grievance against me,¹⁴ what will I do when God confronts me? What will I answer when called to account?¹⁵ Did not he who made me in the womb make them? Did not the same one form us both within our mothers?
- a) Job continues his "what did I do to deserve all of this punishment. I suspect that's why he is listing how he's been a good witness for God all his life. That's what this chapter is.
- b) In these verses Job remembers when he had servants. If any of them had a complaint that Job wasn't being fair to them, he heard their grievance. Grant it, all employees think their boss isn't paying them enough, but wages are agreed to. The issue is more about fairness as servants. Job argues in effect that his servants are humans too and accountable to God, which is why Job wanted to be fair in business dealings.
- c) As someone who's hired a lot of people in my life, I hope I never did anything that would be considered offensive. This is one of those sections that hits home to anyone in business.
- d) Again, if we've messed up in this area, apologize if one can, ask God for forgiveness. Then we must accept the fact we are forgiven and move on.
- e) Ok then, onto the next topic.
30. Verse 16: "If I have denied the desires of the poor or let the eyes of the widow grow weary,¹⁷ if I have kept my bread to myself, not sharing it with the fatherless--¹⁸ but from my youth I reared him as would a father, and from my birth I guided the widow--¹⁹ if I have seen anyone perishing for lack of clothing, or a needy man without a garment,²⁰ and his heart did not bless me for warming him with the fleece from my sheep,²¹ if I have raised my hand against the fatherless, knowing that I had influence in court,²² then let my arm fall from the shoulder, let it be broken off at the joint.
- a) These are a lot of verses, but the essentially all make one point: Helping the less fortunate in life. Job's making his final defense by arguing that he never failed to help the poor or if a person was suffering in some way, he did what he could to help. Then he places a curse on himself if he ever did mess up that way. Again, this is a reminder to us to help those who can't help themselves. It's another way to be a good witness for Jesus.

- b) A few thoughts here while I'm in the neighborhood. About 50 years ago, a great mistake made by the American Roman Catholic church was they got away from bible study as to emphasize good works. While it's commendable, a lot of people including myself went to the "Protestant side" to grow closer to God through His word. Yes, they realize it now and have worked to change that. My point here is living the Christian life requires both doing good works and drawing close to God. To share a motto of mine, "Never be so busy doing the king's business that you don't make time for the king!" My point is we should all do what we can to be a good witness for Jesus, but not at the price of ignoring Him as to not spend time in His Word!
 - c) Like the last set of verses, it's really easy to think, "I'll never be that good. Nobody's asking us to be perfect. The issue is always being a good witness for Jesus. Do I mess up? Yes I am human and don't give to those who ask in every situation.
 - d) Let me also talk about a chapter back when Job was talking about ungodly people who he wouldn't give the "time of day too" before he had his downfall. How do you mix all that with what Job's saying here? A part of it is helping the less fortunate in life. Part of it is a sense of discernment when to help and when not too. I doubt Job gave away all he had. I just see him as regularly thinking about how to be a good witness for God as he lived out his life. Remember Job's given this speech as if to defend his life by saying, I'm not guilty of anything that deserves all this punishment. Speaking of punishment, 18 more verses!
31. Verse 23: For I dreaded destruction from God, and for fear of his splendor I could not do such things. ²⁴ "If I have put my trust in gold or said to pure gold, 'You are my security,' ²⁵ if I have rejoiced over my great wealth, the fortune my hands had gained, ²⁶ if I have regarded the sun in its radiance or the moon moving in splendor, ²⁷ so that my heart was secretly enticed and my hand offered them a kiss of homage, ²⁸ then these also would be sins to be judged, for I would have been unfaithful to God on high.
- a) Well, now we know where Paul learned to write in run on sentences. (Yes I am joking). What Job fears is eternal damnation from God. It's what motivated him to always try to do the right thing in life. That's what Verse 23 is all about. Then Job gives examples of things he could never trust in. Remember that Job was a wealthy man. He's saying that even when he had all of that, it didn't matter as much as his relationship with God. You might recall from Chapter 1 (Verse 20) when Satan took away Job's wealth, his response was, "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away" (to use "King James Speak").
 - b) In a sense, Job's describing possible sins he's avoided in life. Remember most of this book is Job's three friends accusing him of unconfessed sin. Job is making his final defense by saying in a sense, "Here's what I'm not guilty of doing!"
 - c) If Job's dialogue is making you feel guilty for not doing enough, welcome to the club! We can never work hard enough to please God. My guilt-ridden question here is are we using our lives to make a difference for Him? I've read of Christians on their deathbed, nervous that they didn't work hard enough for Jesus and fear they'll lose rewards. If I could talk to people in that situation, I'd say they've lived out their lives as a witness for Jesus, so trust what God's called them to do, and be at ease that doing "one more thing" won't affect the rewards they'll receive. OK, off the soapbox. Let's get through the chapter!
32. Verse 29: "If I have rejoiced at my enemy's misfortune or gloated over the trouble that came to him-- ³⁰ I have not allowed my mouth to sin by invoking a curse against his life-- ³¹ if the men of my household have never said, 'Who has not had his fill of Job's meat?'-- ³² but no stranger had to spend the night in the street, for my door was always open to the traveler-- ³³ if I have concealed my sin as men do, by hiding my guilt in my heart³⁴ because I so feared the crowd and so dreaded the contempt of the clans that I kept silent and would not go outside
- a) Here we get Job "racking his brain" trying to think of any way he might have sinned. It is a good exercise to do when things go wrong. Before we simply accept hard times as fate, it's a good thing to take inventory every now and then to see if we've messed up.

- b) Verse 29 describes gloating over the fate of one's enemies. That doesn't seem like much of a sin. It is in the sense that God wants us to care about all people. Other's misfortunes is a reality of life. Remember Job's talking about his enemies here, so I can assume it refers to people who don't care about God. It shows Job cares more about their eternal fate and not just to what happens to them in life.
 - c) Then Job contemplates his staff if they ever complained they didn't have enough food. It's a simple example of caring about the people we work with. I've met bosses who say they don't care what people do in their off time as long as the job gets done. While that is true, it is also important as much as possible to care about the welfare of other workers because their overall well-being will affect how they work. No it's not a matter of spoiling them. It is a simple matter of caring for others around us. That's common sense advice.
 - d) Job contemplates if he ever failed to help a traveling stranger. Again, we're witnessing Job racking his brain trying to think of any sin that caused all of this.
 - e) Finally, Job ponders if he ever kept some sin a secret as to not let others around him know what it is he's been up to. You can see Job's thorough inventory checklist here.
 - f) Let's be honest, if we suffered one tenth as much as Job, I'm positive we'd rack our brains as well, trying to think of some explanation.
 - g) All of that leads perfectly to Verse 35:
33. Verse 35: ("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. ³⁶ Surely I would wear it on my shoulder, I would put it on like a crown. ³⁷ I would give him an account of my every step; like a prince I would approach him.)--
- a) Remember what Job wants more than anything else, an explanation! Let's face it, when we are suffering, we want to know why! It's infuriating to no end to have to suffer without a reason as to why! That's why Job took inventory. That's why he's dying for God to say to him, "Ok, here's the deal here!" The weight of not knowing why we're going through what we're dealing with can be overwhelming at times.
 - b) God's going to respond in a few chapters with a "Who are you to question Me" speech. In the meantime, Job needed to get all of this out of his system! What we have to remember is God allows what God allows. He's in charge and we're not. We are not entitled to that explanation. We simply must accept what's in front of us, make the best decisions we can and try to be a good witness for Jesus as Job has been doing probably all of his life.
 - c) Anyway, Job's saying he wishes God would explanation this. That's the essence here.
34. Verse 38: "if my land cries out against me and all its furrows are wet with tears, ³⁹ if I have devoured its yield without payment or broken the spirit of its tenants, ⁴⁰ then let briers come up instead of wheat and weeds instead of barley."
- a) Job's final defense argument is one more, "If I did this bad thing, may I suffer accordingly for it" type of statement. Again, Job's simply racking his brain trying to think of anything he did that could have offended God.
 - b) Keep in mind Job's three friends are still there. They've been accusing him over and over again of not confessing some grievous sin. That's one reason why Job goes on and on for a whole chapter contemplating what horrible sin he's committed. Job is also saying over and over again, "If I did this or that, I deserve to be punished for it." That's the essence of most of this chapter. The good news is we made it to the end with one short line left"
35. Verse 40b: The words of Job are ended.
- a) Let's pause and think what that means. We've now studied nine dialogue rounds between Job and his three friends. They've all had enough. No one has solved the riddle of why it is Job has had to suffer. There is no great sin Job has committed. All we've solved through the debate is what Job hasn't done and that Job's three friends are wrong. The suffering is still part of his life and Job has to learn to live with it and accept it. The good news is Job refused to sin, so in that sense God won the bet with Satan that was in Chapters 1 and 2.

36. OK, what do we take out of this long debate? That God doesn't owe us an explanation for why it is we must go through what we go through in life. That it is our job to be a good witness for Him as we accept whatever it is we have to face in life. I'll discuss how we be that witness as I close it in prayer. Thanks for reading all of this. We've still got about a quarter of the book left. The last part of the book is my favorite as I enjoy reading what God Himself has to say in response. First, we have to deal with a new book character, who'll I'll discuss in the next lesson. Now it's time to wrap up the lesson for this week. Let's pray:
37. Heavenly Father, we don't know why you chose us to be Your witnesses to the world. We simply thank You for that privilege and we know that our reward is to be in Your presence forever. May we not waste the opportunities You give us to be a witness for You. Help us through Your spirit to guide us to do what it is You call us to do in life. Help us to be a good witness for You through any and all hardships we must face in life as that witness. Guide us for Your glory, Amen.