Job 16-17

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Date: 22 July 2026

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[0:00] Amen. Job 16 and 17. As Job has responded to his three friends in 12, 13, and 14,! and we find Eliphaz coming back with a response in chapter 15.

The bait gets heated the further along we go.
There will be three cycles of back and forth between Job and his friends, at least three cycles among two of them. The last cycle, only two of his friends respond.
But here the accusations are getting harsher against Job, the assault, if you will. Eliphaz opened up with a little bit of sympathy, a little bit of concern.
Now, after hearing Job's response to his friends, and then Job responding in its entirety, and even the manner in which he spoke to the Almighty, Eliphaz takes a much harsher approach in the 15th chapter and really begins to heap accusation upon Job.
[1:13] We've said this over and over again, but it's very beneficial for us to be mindful of it, that Job is experiencing something that is unique among mankind at this time. Job is experiencing matters which mankind was not familiar with, that is, unjust suffering, unjust by the standards of retribution.

There was no known sin in his life, no fault, no cause for all of the tragedy that had befallen him, nothing in which he could repent of, for he did not know it.
He did not confess perfection, but he confessed righteousness. That's a big difference. He did not say, I am perfect. He even cried out to the Almighty, Make known to me my sin that I may repent.
But rather, he is suffering as one who is condemned, and he is being condemned by his friends. It is really the suffering of the righteous that we see in Job, and we're familiar with it because we read in the New Testament that we will suffer for righteousness' sake, and we will suffer for the name of Christ.
And we understand that this world is not our end game. But these are truths that are revealed to us after Job's experiences.
[2:30] Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians, the very first chapter of 2 Corinthians, in chapter 1, starting in verse 3 and running down to about verse 5, Paul praises God, the Father of all mercies and the God of all comfort, for the comfort which he has been given in the midst of his suffering.

And Paul says that that comfort which came to him through the Father came to him for the purpose, and it's very telling, that Paul says so that we may comfort anyone that is suffering through any circumstance.
And what Paul declares there is the comfort that I have experienced in the midst of my suffering has been the preparation of God so that I may extend comfort to those around me.
Though their circumstances and situations may be different, I can comfort them. Someone described Paul as being a man of conviction, and since he was a man of conviction, he was unchanging, he was steadfast, he was immovable.
The truth was always the truth. He would hand you over to Satan for the destruction of your flesh. And we say, well, how? You know, that doesn't seem to be very comforting. But because he was a man of conviction, he was also a man of love.
[3:45] That he loved you enough to tell you the truth. He loved you enough to be steadfast. He loved you enough to be honest. And he knew the standard, and he wouldn't lessen the standard out of love.

Because love that lessens the standard is not love at all. It's really just fear. It's fear of other people's opinion, and fear of other people's judgment, and fear of other people's feelings.
So he had conviction, unwavering conviction. But he had love. And it says in 2 Corinthians, so that he could comfort any in the midst of their sufferings.

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You say, what does it have to do with Job? Well, what Job responds here to Eliphaz is really what we title, the truths that we find forged in the fire of suffering.
There are some things, some matters, that are forged in our life, in the midst of our suffering, that will give us the ability to minister to others, that will give us the ability to speak into others' lives something that would be beneficial, rather than something that is understandable.
[4:57] What Job fails to get, what he fails to see from his friends, what he fails to receive, will be ingrained within him, so that at the end, when the Father says, when the Lord God Almighty says, Job, pray for your friends, so that they may be restored, Job does not wag his finger and thumb his nose at them and say, I'm not praying for them.

They were helpless, useless counselors for me. They were no good to me. They were of no benefit. But rather, he intercedes for them, so that they may be restored. He has compassion and mercy upon them, for he has walked through the fire.
So what matters are really forged in the fire of suffering, and we see it here, starting in verse 16. It says, Then Job answered, I have heard many such things. Sorry, comforters, are you all?
Is there no limit to windy words, or what plagues you that you answer? I, too, could speak like you. If I were in your place, I could compose words against you and shake my head at you.
I could strengthen you with my mouth, and the solace of my lips could lessen your pain. If I speak, my pain is not lessened. If I hold back, what has left me? But now he has exhausted me.
[6:12] You have laid waste all my company. You have shriveled me up. It has become a witness, and my leanness rises up against me. It testifies to my face. His anger has torn me and hunted me down.

He has gnashed at me with his teeth. My adversary glares at me. They have gaped at me with their mouth. They have slapped me on the cheek with contempt. They have masked themselves against me.
God hands me over to Rufians and tosses me into the hands of the wicked. I was at ease, but he shattered me, and he grasped me by the neck and shaken me to pieces.
He has also set me up as his target. His arrows surround me. Without mercy, he splits my kidneys open. He pours out my gall on the ground. He breaks through me with breach after breach.
He runs at me like a warrior. I have sewed sackcloth over my skin and thrust my horn into the dust. My face is flushed from weeping, and deep darkness is on my eyelids, although there is no violence in my hands, and my prayer is pure.
[7:15] O earth, do not cover my blood, and let there be no resting place for my cry. Even now, behold, my witness is in heaven, and my advocate is on high.

My friends are my scoffers. My eye weeps to God. O that a man might plead with God as a man with his neighbor. For when a few years are past, I shall go the way of no return.
My spirit is broken. My days are extinguished. The grave is ready for me. Surely mockers are with me, and my eye gazes on their provocation.
Lay down now a pledge for me with yourself. Who is there that will be my guarantor? For you have kept their heart from understanding. Therefore you will not exalt them.
He who informs against friends for his share of the spoil, the eyes of his children also will languish. But he has made me a byword of the people, and I am one at whom men spit.
[8:14] My eye also has grown dim because of grief, and all my members are as a shadow. The upright will be appalled at this, and the innocent will stir up himself against the godless.

Nevertheless, the righteous will hold to his way, and he who has clean hands will grow stronger and stronger. But come again, all of you now, for I do not find a wise man among you.
My days are past. My plans are torn apart, even the wishes of my heart. They make night into day, saying the light is near in the presence of darkness. If I look for Sheol as my home, I make my bed in the darkness.
If I call to the pit, you are my father. To the worm, my mother and my sister, where now is my hope? And who regards my hope? Will it go down with me to Sheol?
Shall we together go down into the dust? Job comes, and he speaks out of the disparity of his soul.
[9:16] One thing that is a great testimony throughout the book of Job is that God is gracious and patient with us, even in our mournings and our groanings.

Job says things, assuredly, by the time we get to the end of the book, that he wishes he would not have said. He says things that were maybe haste because of the pain and the misery in which he

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was suffering.
He has doubts that he is wrestling with, and as we have seen, God is able to handle those doubts, for God does not come and bring condemnation to him, but rather God comes and brings assurance to him.
And the assurance is not, Job, all this is going to be okay. The assurance is, Job, I'm bigger than this. And he learns these matters, and he is elevated in his relationship with the Almighty, even in the midst of it, but there are some matters that will have great benefit to him with the people around him, as it is forged in this fire of suffering.
The first matter in which we see is the comfort that we have referenced in 2 Corinthians, but it is the comfort that is found only in the midst of pain.
[10:30] Job cries out to his friends, and he says, you are sorry comforters. I mean, these are the men who gathered together when they heard of Job's suffering and his misery, and when they heard of all that he was going through, and they came together for the purpose of consoling Job.

And we have to admit, or we have to at least confess, that they must have been dear friends. It is implied in the wording that they all three traveled from different directions, and they had a place of union where they came together, and after coming together, then they traveled to the presence of where Job was at, and they sat before Job, but they were so appalled by what they saw, it did not match what they had heard.
They had heard Job had went through some difficult times, but by the time they see him, all of his children are dead, all of his livestock is gone, all of his riches and wealth is taken away from him. And his own wife is telling him to curse God and die.
His skin has boils upon it. His skin is blackened and oozing, and he's been scraping it with shards of pottery. He is suffering miserably, and they are appalled at what they see, and they sat silent for seven days.
And in their mind, they're forming an opinion, much like each and every one of us would. And Job speaks first, and if you remember when Job speaks first in his misery, Job says, I just wish I would die.
[11:57] He does not curse God, he does not deny God, but he longs and begs for God to kill him. He still understands, in the midst of all this, that God is the giver and the sustainer and the taker of life.

He has resolved to give God to that ability, and not to take matters into his own hands. But yet what we find, that he has a longing to depart, and this begins to cause a quandary in the mind of his friends, that no longer are they comforters, now they are accusers.
And what started out as a time of consoling very quickly turns into a time of condemnation. Rather than seeing Job, they see the effects of the suffering on Job.
They don't see the man Job, but rather they see what is going on to the man, and they come to the conclusion, the only way this happens is if you have done horribly wrong.
Because in their worldview, and in their mind frame, that is the only logical conclusion. That God is the giver of good, and God is the giver of judgment, and God gives good to the righteous, and judgment to the wicked.
[13:17] This is what they've seen, this is what they've been told all of their life. And so now they begin to speak. But notice the repetition of what they are saying.

Job says, I have heard all of these things. I know all of these things. I could say all of these things to you if you were suffering. So be careful here. Because they are giving comfort and advice on what they have heard.
Not what they have experienced. The wise men have told me, those who've gone before have said, the ancients of the days have said, the fathers have passed down.
They are speaking from a learned theology, not a lived theology.
We can teach and preach what we learn, but we minister out of what we've lived.
[14:23] There are great truths that we can declare from the word of God because we have learned them accurately, and we have learned them theologically and doctrinally, and we can have our doctrine right.

But what we live gives us the basis for ministry. And this is exactly what Paul is saying in 2 Corinthians.

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This is why each one of our circumstances are unique, and this is why when Jesus says, greater works than I have done, you will do. Have you ever thought about that, the promise that Jesus gives his disciples, that if I go to the Father, the Spirit will come to you, and greater works than I have done, you will do.
Not greater in scope, or not greater in measure. So we won't do something greater. We're not going to bring the dead to life and walk on the sea and turn the water into wine, but greater in scope and measure.
Jesus confined himself, limited himself to a physical location of a very small geographical region of the world. But he dispersed his people through their life circumstances, through their living, through their relationship, and now they minister to varying people of various backgrounds and in different situations because the life becomes the ministry tool of the individual.
[15:45] And this is why as a pastor, I understand that my responsibility is not to do the work of the ministry, but to equip the saints to do the work of the ministry because your life ministers in ways that my life never could.

And what Job is saying is, all you are doing, you are sorry comforters because you're just telling me information. And I can find that information anywhere else.
This is why discipleship and ministry is relational. It is not just the passing along of information, but it is the living together of life. The dinner table is so important around the meal because it is living life with one another.
Jesus called them to live life beside him. He taught the multitudes, but he ministered to the small. The multitudes heard his teaching and went home.
But those who did life with him and learned by experience, those are the ones he equipped. And those are the ones that can comfort him. We are mindful of this, that sometimes in the midst of the suffering, in the midst of all of the trials and tribulations, what is being built into us is the ability to extend comfort to those that we will come into contact with later.
[17:02] It is the unique ability to relate to someone else. So rather than seeing our trials and tribulations as something to pass through and get over, may we see them as an opportunity God is giving us to minister in the future.

Because Job said, I could say what you're saying, but if you found yourself in this circumstance, notice what he says. I would strengthen you with my mouth. And the solace of my lips could lessen your pain.
What Job is saying is, he said, I have known a long time all the truths you're telling me, but because of what I have lived, if you're going through it, I could strengthen you and I could comfort you because I know things aren't always what they seem.
Things aren't always what appears on the surface because I have lived it. So in the fire of suffering, we learn to comfort.
It is in the fire of suffering that also we have forged within us our conviction. Job goes into a grand discourse starting in verse 6 and going all the way down to verse 17.
[18:24] This speaks of his suffering and it is a very pointed discourse of his suffering. And in his suffering, he speaks as if it is as God is his adversary.

Don't miss this. It is as God is gnashing at him with his teeth and has shaking him to pieces. God has set a target on his back and everybody is shooting arrows at it.
And it's implied, it seems to be implied from this discourse that Job is saying that God is opposing me. God is against me. He's turned all my friends against me. And I can't get away from that.
But then there's this real strong shift because in the midst of that, that doubting, that wrestling, by the way, we form our convictions through wrestling with our doubts. Right?
We don't form convictions if nobody ever challenges us. I learned this not too long ago. If all you surround yourself with is people that agree with you and think just like you and always tell you the same things you think, then you're never going to form a conviction.
[19:26] Put people around you that are going to challenge you, people that are going to push you, people that are going to think differently than you, people that even have different interpretations of scripture than you want so that you are forced to know what you believe and believe what you know.

Read hard things. Be around hard people. And do it so that you can form convictions and not always be an absorber of other people's opinions.

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And Job is wrestling here and everybody's telling him what looks right. But then he says there in verse 18, O earth, do not cover my blood and let there be no resting place for my cry.
So what he's saying is when I die, may the blood of my body cry out like Abel's blood. But then there's this very next verse that is so amazing.
Amazing. By the way, he has no concept of Christ. He's speaking of the Lord God Almighty.
[20:27] We read this and we know who the advocate is. Right? We understand it. But in this writing, Job, really the concept, even the Christophanies, the theophanies, the appearances, the physical appearances of Christ, they are after Job.

Right? They're later on. And so he's just wrestling and he's just said, God, you're my, you're pursuing me, you're grabbing a hold of me. But then he says, even now, this is a conviction.
Even now, even when it seems as if God is my enemy, even when it seems as if he set a target on my back, even when all the world tells me I'm wrong, even now, behold, my witness is in heaven.
And my advocate is on high. So what is he saying here? What conviction does he have? Even though it seems as if God is pursuing him, even though the world tells him he's done everything wrong, he has the conviction that there will be a day where he will be vindicated by the testimony of the Almighty.
Because he knows that God is just and right and true. Now, we have to be careful. As I was thinking through this verse, we say, well, we have an advocate on high, right?
[22:00] We have an advocate on high. Jesus is our advocate. He's at the right hand of the Father constantly interceding for us. There's a temptation here, though, to love our advocate and be terrified of the one he's advocating with.

But we do not ever want to so divide the Trinity. So our advocate is God in the flesh. So the God who advocates for us, so let's get a little deep, let's make our minds stretch just a little bit.
Who is Christ? He's God in the flesh. But the Father loves us as much as the advocate intercedes for us. Okay? He is our advocate and our witness on high.
It's not like Jesus is trying to convince the Father to let us in. He's not saying, Father, they're okay, they didn't mean to do it because we have this tendency, and I say we because I used to have this tendency to think that, man, Jesus loves me.
the Almighty just wants to judge me. And Jesus, if it wasn't for Jesus, then the Almighty wouldn't have me there and we're dividing the Trinity in a way in which we ought not do. Last night, I was sitting around with a group of young men and we looked at this and it says in 2 Peter, not 2 Peter, it says in the book of James or 2 Peter on the church, so it says in the book of James chapter 2, I believe it was, verse 18, that by his good will or by his will he brought us forth.
[23:19] that the Father wanted to bring us to himself and he did it through Christ. And as Job says, we have a witness in heaven and it's the fullness of the Trinity.

And they're not wrestling with one another like, I don't know, should we let them in or not? No, the fullness of the Trinity is our witness. It is our advocate standing before the holy standard that they themselves set.
Yes, it's been met. It is full. It is complete. It is done. And this is the conviction that Job has that even though the world would tell me God is against me and even though admittedly Job says at times I feel like he's against me, even now my witness is in heaven and my advocate is on high.
That's conviction. And it's conviction because it's not based upon anything he's experiencing. He is still suffering. He is still miserable and he's going to go back to complaining in just a moment. Right?
Convictions don't take away the pain. Convictions don't take away, they just bring an anchor in the midst of it. And that conviction is forged here. It's forged in this fire.
[24:38] The third one is conclusion. It is this reality that this life is not yet. It's a conclusion. He says, my friends are my scoffers, my eye weeps to God.

Oh, that a man might plead with God as a man with his neighbor. But when a few years are past, I shall go the way of no return. My spirit is broken. My days are extinguished.
The grave is ready for me. And he comes to this reality. I'm about to die. And we think, man, that's somber.
And it is. But it's true that this world is not it. He cries out. He has a very limited understanding of eternity.
He speaks of Sheol and where then is my hope? We know that we have a hope that passes beyond us and our hope is at the right hand of the Father and Jesus is our living hope. We understand that.

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He does not have that revelation yet.
[25:38] And he's crying out, but he's come to this conclusion that this life is going to end really quickly. Now, we know God's going to give him length of days and he's going to bless him with it, but in the midst of this, he's coming to this reality he's wrestling with that it's going to someday be over.

It was Barnes who made a note that, and I shared it last night with those men, but I'll share it with you too. Barnes said that there will be a day when every one of our plans will be interrupted by death.
And in doing that, Barnes said, you know, how many sermon preparations are interrupted because the pastor died, or how many homes, or how many buildings, how many jobs, how many things are interrupted, but he made this statement I thought was really good, and I shared it last night, and it's worth sharing it again, but make sure the plans that you are taking part of are worth the interruption. That when God interrupts you, the next step is just a continuation of what you've already been doing. That if you're laboring for the kingdom here, in whatever occupation or calling or abilities you have, then when that is interrupted by death, the next step is a promotion rather than a complete job change.
Live in such a manner that our lives come to the conclusion, someday God will interrupt my plans. My wife and I make a lot of decisions sometimes when we make them based upon that.
[27:13] I read this years ago, and I've actually done this before. There was a pastor that didn't make any major decisions without sitting in a cemetery. I had a deacons meeting in the past, a church I pastored for.

I took all the deacons to a cemetery and said, does what we're voting on matter here? It's a pretty good principle, right? Does it matter here?
They didn't like it. It was kind of weird to them. They thought it was uncomfortable and whatever. I have people at times tell me, say, you don't want to do that, Billy Joe, you don't want to do that? They begin to think, say, people that know me but they don't really know me, and I say, listen, I've sat in too many funeral homes and preached too many funeral sermons for you to tell me that this matters.
That's probably not the thing I want to be doing when my plans are interrupted. And that's not poor planning, that's just coming to the conclusion that this life is not eternal, but the one to come is.
[28:19] And where do we forge that at? In the midst of suffering, in the midst of pain, in the midst of discord, right? And it brings us to our last one, and that is this consideration.

It's this verse, it's kind of tucked right here, and it's a truth to be considered. As he continues on, and he speaks of the certainty of death, and he speaks how people are mocking him, and they're coming to him, and he does that following the reality that I'm going to die now, he said, even my body testifies against me, he said, I'm losing weight, my face is taut, I just, I don't look, I don't look like I'm a dead man walking, you know, he says, I don't look good, I get it, and all the people are mocking me, and ridiculing me, and scoffing at me, and I understand this, and he makes this statement, it's just really, really amazing in light of it, and it's in verse 9 of the 17th chapter, it says, nevertheless, nevertheless, no matter what, people are mocking me, the righteous are going to come and look at me, and go, wow, look at this man, look at everything he's done, he says, nevertheless, the righteous will hold to his way.
And he who has clean hands will grow stronger and stronger. Now, it's almost like Job is falling back into retribution theology here, that if I do right, everything will be good, but he's not, he's declaring a truth that will be declared throughout scripture, and this is the first time historically that we find it declared anywhere in scripture.
We refer to it today as the perseverance of the saints. that the righteous, in the end, do not fail. That God is faithful.
It's a truth to consider. That it may look like we're failing, it may look like it's miserable, it may look like it's going to end terribly, but the truth says, nevertheless, the righteous will hold to his way, and he who has clean hands will grow stronger and stronger.
[30:23] It goes beyond, in our teaching, it goes beyond, as it declares in the book of Psalms, and I know I've said it over and over again, I despaired when I looked at the wicked and I saw their fat bellies and their full mouths and they were eating all the time, and I looked at my own life, and he says, until I considered their end.

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Until I considered their end. Then in the end, the wicked, though they may appear strong and fat and all this other throughout life, in the end, they're not.
It is the perseverance of God's people that God is faithful. It is a truth to be considered in the midst of suffering, it is a truth to be considered in the midst of trials, and it is something that Christ reminds us of over and over again.
It is the hope that Paul held on to in the midst of all of his suffering for Christ and bearing in his body the brand marks of the Savior. That God is faithful. That the world may look at us as if we're losing the battle, but the righteous hold their course.
And he who has clean hands, by the way, who has clean hands but the ones whom the Lord God Almighty has washed and purged. and has cried out to the Father and has been forgiven. And he who has clean hands grows stronger and stronger, maybe not visibly so or even physically so, but on that day, will be stronger and stronger as we're called into his presence.
[31:57] It is a consideration to be made in the midst of the fire of suffering. And it is the very thing that Job holds on to, even though his friends continuously come back and tell him how weak and miserable his life is.

So may we take those truths that are forged in that fire and may we use it, as Paul says in 2nd Corinthians, to comfort those we come into contact with in any situation.
because we know what it's like to be in the midst of the fire. And we find it in Job 16 and 17. Thank you, brother.
Okay.
Okay. Does everyone have a copy of the prayer list? I think they're back there on the back. Thank you.

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