

“Between Sunday thoughts and the Fourth Week of Reading”

Yesterday I was on the phone with a seasoned Baptist pastor who is disappointed with his “people’s devotion to autonomy, rights and self-rule,” and the “rebellion” in their hearts.

The idea of autonomy in a Baptist church began as a good thing, where the local church could make teaching and polity decisions for themselves. However, like so many other things, we humans do not tend to do balance well, so we head for the extremes.

Just like that seasoned pastor, I have witnessed the same tendencies through the years, where we don’t stop at just a balanced idea of an autonomous church, we want full authority for ourselves personally in all areas. We don’t want to answer to anyone. We get more hung up on attaining our comforts than in meeting the needs of others (Galatians 5:24). We get more hung up on our entitlements and rights than in serving and caring for others (Mark 10:45). We get more hung up with ourselves than in being a true disciple of Christ ready to die to self (Luke 9:23).

This week’s readings pertain to consistency, and we could ask ourselves; How consistent does my faith and lifestyle look if I say I imitate Christ who cared for others, when I am actually consumed with self?

“between Sundays”

Pastor Mike Fast

Devotional and Reading Plan for 2022, Week Four

Week 4 — January 22nd – 28th, Job 12-34

The theme for this week has to do with consistency. There are a variety of topics, but consistency is an indicator of success within each area. For instance: Are we consistent in how we interpret the Word of God? Are we displaying consistency in our life, as it pertains to godly character, as we go through an intense trial?

January 22nd

Job 12-14. “Tested Truth”

Job was a righteous man whom God permitted to endure an awful time of testing, pain and hurt. Job struggles with some of his own thoughts as well as some imprudent thoughts from his friends, yet as he reasons through these thoughts (which we are privileged to read) we see that he often makes some very insightful observations.

In today’s reading passage he makes statements such as: “The life of every living thing is in God’s hand, and the breath of all humanity” (12:10), “Oh, how I long to speak directly to the Almighty. I want to argue my case with God himself” (13:3), “How frail is humanity! How short is life, and how full of trouble!” (14:1).

Job is learning the value of experience. I could quote to others all the correct spiritual answers without going through a single test, but after the testing comes, those answers take on a different perspective.

What good is a test in our life? It can produce a deeper conviction of truth. It can get us out of a stagnant phase in life. It gives our answers a valid dimension.

January 23rd

Job 15-18. "Is It Proud or Appropriate?"

Three of Job's friends show up after his intense time of suffering. For seven days and nights they sit silent with him. Their time of silently grieving with their friend is a beautiful and powerful example of concern. But then they begin to talk, they reason and try to explain why this could be happening. Their conclusion is that the blame falls on Job.

Today's passage points out an interesting trait (or perhaps flaw) in human character. Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar were older than Job's father (15:10). They were not just peers, but men who believed they held the right answers. They all take a turn discussing their theory with Job. Then, starting at chapter 15 they each take a second turn. In chapter 22 they start the third round. In each instance they are not stating new ideas, but stating their original ideas more forcefully.

Job gives them a fitting reply, "I have heard all of this before. What miserable comforters you are!" (16:1). Remember, the wise use few words, and the comforter does not use the opportunity to prove a point.

January 24th

Job 19-21. "Job's Pillar of Hope"

At this point Job has no idea what had transpired in respect to God and Satan's discussion about allowing the testing of "righteous Job." Although he feels as though God's hand is against him (which truly was not the case), he clearly believed God was fully on his side.

Job's trust in God remained faithful. Job is a pillar of hope for us as we go through life and life's experiences. God was obviously the pillar of hope for Job.

"I know that my Redeemer lives" (19:25). Job verbally states his faith in One who can save him. He proclaims that this One is alive. He proclaims God is concerned with him, and is his.

Job goes on to declare not just the eternal nature of God, but the eternal aspect of man's existence (vv. 25-27). Job makes statements about the resurrection of man long before the idea was introduced in many of the more popular portions of Scripture.

The impression Job had of God and His abilities shaped his faith. Nothing was impossible for his Redeemer.

January 25th

Job 22-25. "Is It Fair?"

God "gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt. 5:45).

Eliphaz, for the third time, tells Job his suffering is because of his wickedness. Job answers Eliphaz with a philosophical observation when he asks Eliphaz why the wicked are not always being punished. He says they can steal and harm without penalty.

However, as he continues, he also notes that death consumes them, people forget them, and true assurance eludes them.

We are often guilty of the same kind of thinking as Eliphaz, that punishment must be as a result of wrong actions. Yet, this side of judgment, that is not always true of the saved or the unsaved. God's thoughts and methods are nothing like ours (Isa. 55:8,9). He is patient and is not bound to our time schedule. God is fully aware of everything and everyone (Job 25:23), and His judgment will be fair and certain.

Graciously remember that Christ died for all—the just and the unjust (1 Pet. 3:18).

January 26th
Job 26-29. "Where to Find Wisdom"

Mankind can achieve great things. Does that make him wise? Do years of schooling and academic degrees make a man wise? If a man is worth millions of dollars does that make him wise?

The answer to all of these questions is no. True wisdom is found in one realization, and Job and many other Bible writers give the same answer. It is found in the "fear of the LORD" (28:28).

Fearing the LORD is the understanding of who God is. We recognize His power as we call Him Creator and Judge. We gratefully respect Him as we identify Him as our Heavenly Father and seek to worship, please Him, and turn from evil.

True wisdom makes things so clear. There are days I hear the world claim some act of wisdom that to me does not seem like even common sense. Perhaps that is what the Apostle Paul meant when he stated that God has made the world's philosophers, scholars, and brilliant debaters all look foolish and has shown their wisdom to be useless nonsense (1 Cor. 1:20). Job had discovered that fact as well.

January 27th
Job 30-31. "Trials"

It is supposed to be; "It's always darkest just before the dawn", but my aunt, who has been through an amazing number of trials in her life, has said, "It's always darkest just before it goes totally black." Job stated nearly the exact thing, "I waited for the light, but darkness fell" (30:26).

Job defines trials for us in chapter 30. A trial is not some mild irritation, but rather an intense painful event. He defines his trial with words like; anguish, gloom, persecution, humiliation, desolation, affliction, and darkness.

We can float through a mild irritation and come out unproven. However, nothing tests our faith as effectively or honestly as an intense trial. A true trial will test our love, faith, obedience, endurance, patience, and much more. We will come face-to-face with what we really believe about God. What do we really believe about His purpose and power? We will see first-hand how we react. Are we critical and callous? We will see every aspect of our character become truly tested.

May we use even our trials as a means to glorify God as He shapes our life.

January 28th
Job 32-34. "Consistency"

Job's three friends were absolutely convinced that he had some hidden fault which would explain why he had to suffer. Job affirms his innocence in chapter 31, which incidentally, I would challenge you to read that chapter with the intent of asking how you would measure up. I imagine very few could honestly claim what Job could.

Yet after Job and his three friends are done throwing their theories around, Elihu take his turn. The young Elihu notes how Job is becoming a bit arrogant in some of his replies and justifications. Elihu questions the "wisdom" of Job's friends, and yet Elihu has a theory or two of his own that may not be entirely on target. Elihu still connects Job's testing to sin (34:11), but Elihu does make some wonderful statements about God's providence and justice.

There is a great lesson here for us. Each man's speech contained much truth, but every now and then a false assumption came to the surface. The fact is; 100% of our assumptions had better be consistent with the Word of God.