

**International Sunday School Lesson**  
**Study Notes**  
**October 19, 2014**

**Lesson Text: Job 24:1, 9-12, 19-25; Psalm 55:16**  
**Lesson Title: Hope Complains**

**Introduction**

The psalmist David once asked, “*How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me*” (Psalm 13:1). Sometimes it seems as if God has forgotten us and is ignoring our prayers. Sometimes it seems as if God will never come to our aid or deal with our oppressors. No one in the Bible knew those feelings better than Job.

In Job 24-27, the cycle of speeches from Job’s friends and Job’s answers continue. As Job 24 opens, Job is giving his seventh answer to his friends. His seventh answer actually began in Job 23:1. One of Job’s friends, Eliphaz, had laid before Job the miserable condition of the wicked, possibly hoping to frighten Job into repentance. What Eliphaz said was true. Wicked men do suffer because of sin. However, Eliphaz’s words were built upon the premise that Job had sinned and that he was now a wicked man.

Eliphaz had also told Job “*Acquaint thyself with him*” (Job 22:21) meaning Job should “get familiar again” with God. Eliphaz assumed that Job had forgotten that God punished the wicked. As a result of Eliphaz’ advice, Job proceeds to show that the wicked are not always dealt with in the manner in which Eliphaz and his friends claimed. You just can’t say that when someone sins they are immediately punished or that everything is as simple and straightforward as Job’s friends declare them to be. To conclude that Job is wicked and that what he is suffering is a result because of his sin is just not accurate.

The effect Eliphaz’s words had upon Job put him in greater defensive mode. It caused him to question God as to why he was suffering and those who were clearly wicked and living in sin were untouched. The heart of our lesson text focuses on a selective list of wicked men and a description of their wickedness.

**Job’s Question about Justice (Job 24:1)**

Verse 1

“Why, seeing times are not hidden from the Almighty, do they that know him not see his days?”

“Why, seeing times are not hidden from the Almighty” is referring to times of judgment. The word “hidden” means “to cover over, to be stored up.” Job wants

to know why the “Almighty” God, or all-powerful God, doesn’t just set a time for judgment and be done with. “Do they that know him not see his days?” With those words Job is asking, “What can’t those who know the Lord know when those days of judgment will come?” It seemed God was taking so long to respond to Job’s request for understanding, so he asks, “Why.” Job believed that God knew the appointed times for everything including judgment, but he struggled with the fact that God did not let man in on His calendar!

All of us need to remember that we are still walking by faith. There are times we just don’t have the answers to the questions we have. In fact, sometimes we don’t even have the right question!

*Question: Would you like to see God’s “To Do List?” Think seriously about that before you answer!*

### **Job’s Consideration of the Wicked (Job 24:9-11)**

#### Verse 9

“They pluck the fatherless from the breast, and take a pledge of the poor.”

“They” is a reference to the wicked. Job says the wicked “pluck” or “strip away” an un-weaned child from his mother’s breast to possibly sell the child into slavery. Job is accusing the wicked of taking advantage of infants and orphans, separating them from the security of life. The actions of the wicked in this case would certainly jeopardize the child’s life.

“And take a pledge of the poor” implies that the wicked accepts a “pledge” or uses the child as collateral for a financial loan. It is hard to believe that men are so wicked that they would take a child from its mother’s breast as collateral on a loan! What is even more shocking is that this was practiced in the days of Nehemiah. Nehemiah was angered when he discovered that Jews were taking the children of their fellow Jews to collect debts (Nehemiah 5:2-6).

Human nature is the same today as it was in the days of Job and Nehemiah. Just because we can swipe our finger across a screen and access information or communicate to the world doesn’t mean we are better people. If Eliphaz wants to talk to Job about wickedness and sin, then Job will tell him about the wicked.

#### Verse 10-11

“They cause him to go naked without clothing, and they take away the sheaf from the hungry; Which make oil within their walls, and tread their winepresses, and suffer thirst.”

“They” in this verse is a reference to the deplorable condition of the oppressed. The wicked have always treated the poor and oppressed with disdain. A wicked man will “cause” a poor man “to go naked without clothing.” This implication is that if a man owed money the one who loaned him the money would take the clothes off his back as payment or collateral.

“And take away the sheaf from the hungry” means the poor indebted man is required to reap and bind “the sheaf” or grain and take it to his oppressor, while he himself is hungry. In other words, the one being oppressed carries food to his oppressor without being allowed to eat. Such is the wicked that Job is considering.

“Which make oil within their walls, and tread their winepresses, and suffer thirst.” The oppressors are wealthy. Olive “oil” is a symbol of wealth and financial success. “Winepresses” symbolize prosperity and success. The words “and suffer thirst” seem to indicate that while the oppressed are gathering fruit for the wealthy and actually working in the winepress making juice, they “suffer thirst” because they are not allowed to drink. Such is the wicked that Job is considering.

### **Job’s Accusation about God (Job 24:12)**

#### Verse 12

“Men groan from out of the city, and the soul of the wounded crieth out: yet God layeth not folly to them.”

It is not only out in the vineyards and the barns that oppression takes place. Job says, “Men groan from out of the city.” In the country the wicked take advantage of the hungry and the poor. In the city the wicked “wound” the “soul” and men “cry out.” “Wounded” refers to those who have been “pierced and polluted.” Job says those who have been “wounded” cry out for God’s help and it seems no help comes.

This is a stinging accusation from Job. He is suggesting that wounded people are crying out to God and He’s not hearing. As far as Job can tell, God is doing nothing! That’s what Job meant when he said, “Yet God layeth not folly to them.” “Them” is the wicked.” “Layeth not folly” means God doesn’t regard or respond to their foolishness. Human courts prosecuted offenders for most of these social crimes Job has listed. So, in essence, Job was saying “If human courts punish the wicked, then why doesn't God?”

*Question: Do you ever feel like the world is flying apart and God is acting like nothing is wrong? So did Job. And Malachi expresses those same sentiments when he writes, “And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work*

*wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered” (Malachi 3:15).*

### **Job’s Conclusion about the Wicked (Job 24:19-25)**

#### Verse 19

“Drought and heat consume the snow waters: so doth the grave those which have sinned.”

After painfully considering the characteristics of the wicked and the seeming indifference of God to them, Job know acknowledges the ultimate fate of the wicked. *“Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished: but the see of the righteous shall be delivered” (Proverbs 11:21).*

Job compares the work of “the grave” or death on the wicked to the work of “drought” or “heat” on “snow.” Obviously, “drought” and “heat” consumes “snow.” When “drought” and “heat” are present “snow” disappears. As sure as snow melts under the heat the wicked will disappear in the grave.

#### Verse 20

“The womb shall forget him; the worm shall feed sweetly on him; he shall be no more remembered; and wickedness shall be broken as a tree.”

“Him” and “he” in this verse refers to the wicked that has died. “Wickedness” is also a reference to the wicked in general. Job tells us the grave does not treat the wicked kindly. The “womb” or the mother that gave birth to the wicked will “forget him.” “He shall be no more remembered.” How sobering are these words. It is almost unthinkable that a mother would forget the child she brought into the world. The prophet Isaiah ask, *“Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee” (Isaiah 49:15).*

Our world has hall of fames, memory lanes, buildings, monuments, streets, and cities named after wicked people. One day they will all sink into forgottenness! The Proverb writer says, *“The memory of the just is blessed: but the name of the wicked shall rot” (Proverbs 10:7).*

“The worm shall feed sweetly on him” speaks of the decay that awaits those in the grave. “And wickedness shall be broken as a tree” suggests irreparable ruin. Just like a strong wind suddenly snaps off a tree at its roots, so wickedness, in the person of a wicked individual will perish in a moment. The prophet Isaiah wrote, *“The LORD hath broken the staff of the wicked, and the sceptre of the rulers” (Isaiah 14:5).*

## Verse 21

“He evil entreateth the barren that beareth not: and doeth not good to the widow.”

“He,” the wicked also mistreats women in two areas. First, the wicked mistreats “the barren” and she “that beareth not” refers to a woman who has been divorced by her husband because she was incapable of bearing a child, more specifically a male child. She was considered to be one of the most vulnerable and pitiful of social outcasts. Second, the wicked “doeth not good to the widow.” A “widow” was a woman who because of death was now without a husband. In biblical times that meant she had no inherent rights. Old Testament law required every citizen to protect and help the “widow.” But the “wicked” knew how to exploit women.

Jesus said, *“Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts; Which devour widows' houses, and for a shew make long prayers: the same shall receive greater damnation”* (Luke 20:46-47).

## Verse 22-25

“He draweth also the mighty with his power: he riseth up, and no man is sure of life. Though it be given him to be in safety, whereon he resteth; yet his eyes are upon their ways. They are exalted for a little while, but are gone and brought low; they are taken out of the way as all other, and cut off as the tops of the ears of corn. And if it be not so now, who will make me a liar, and make my speech nothing worth?”

It is difficult to know who is the subject of these verses. “He” most likely is a reference to God although other opinions are certainly possible. This seems to be the case because “He” is compared to “their ways” which refers to the wicked. Also, “He” is most likely a reference to God because just as Job began this chapter talking about God, he concludes that the “Almighty” (verse 1) has everything under control.

“He draweth also the mighty with his power” means God prolongs the life of the wicked. They are the “mighty.” He lets them live as long as He sees fit. “He riseth up...” is speaking about the wicked man being at the point of death or destruction and then to everyone’s surprise he is delivered from danger and recovers. “And no man is sure of life” means God raises up the wicked who has no assurance of life or despairs of the very life he is living.

“Though it be given him to be in safety” or though the wicked might feel safe, “His eyes are upon their ways.” God is watching the wicked. That God’s eyes are on someone emphasizes that God has his attention on the situation.

The wicked are “exalted for a little while,” but then they are “gone and brought low.” The wicked may be successful for a while, but it won’t last forever. They will be “cut off as the tops of the ears of corn.” “Cut off” is often used to describe the effect of judgment (Genesis 9:11; Leviticus 19:8; Psalm 37:9). Job said, “They will be cut down like grain in the field.”

As Job concludes his response to Eliphaz, he asks this rhetorical question, “And if it be not so now, who will make me a liar, and make my speech nothing worth?” Job is asking, “If what I’ve said is not true, who can prove me to be a liar?” The answer is no one. “Job has proved by examples that the righteous are often oppressed; that the wicked often triumph over the just, that the impious are always wretched even in the midst of their greatest prosperity; and he defies his friends to show one flaw in his argument, or an error in his illustration of it; and that existing facts are farther proofs of what he has advanced.” (Adam Clarke's Commentary.)

### **The Psalmist’s Decision in Light of the Wicked (Psalm 55:16)**

The authorship of Psalm 55 is attributed to David. It is believed he wrote these words when his son Absalom began his rebellion against David. These were the beginning of difficult days for David as he was about to face some of the most painful and trying days of his life.

When David wrote Psalm 55 he was living in reality. There was no denying that he needed the Lord’s help. David knew there was no quick fix to his family problems and no immediate solution was available. May the words of this single verse and the resolve in David’s heart be an encouragement to you today in your life.

#### Verse 16

“As for me, I will call upon God; and the LORD shall save me.”

Like Job, David couldn’t speak for his friends, his enemies, or even members of his family. But “as for me,” David decided he would “call upon God.” Literally, David decided to talk to God about the situation between him and his son, Absalom. David was also certain that “the LORD shall save me.” David used the name “LORD,” the covenant name for God. He believed “Jehovah” would “save” him. The word “save” in the Old Testament is translated “deliver, help, avenge, rescue, defend, and is translated five times as preserved.”

Commenting on this verse, Doctor John Phillips writes, "David had confidence in the righteous character of God." It is a great thing to have confidence in God when you are facing life as was Job and David.

### **Conclusion**

All of us wonder at times if God will ever deal with the wicked. The truth is the Almighty has and will deal with the wicked. God is neither absent from human affairs, nor does He fail to intervene. There are often hours in which it seems as though God is doing nothing. If you are thinking that way ask the Lord to help you trust and Him. Ask Him to renew your confidence in His character.

Although Job was innocent, his friends all accused him of sin. In the end, God proved it was they who were guilty. God know you today better than anyone. And in the end, forever and always, God will do what is right! Trust Him!

Amen.