

Job 24
August 9, 2026

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: If God is all-powerful and all-knowing, why doesn't he stop the people who are stealing from the poor and oppressing the vulnerable? [Let people engage]

Transition: I bet all of us have witnessed real wrongdoing that goes unpunished. Perhaps you've seen a coworker take credit for someone else's work, or a landlord exploit vulnerable tenants, or a powerful person manipulate someone without resources to fight back. These actions defraud the needy of their property, peace, and protection, denying basic human rights and dignity to those who are powerless—the orphan, the widow, and the poor.

In today's study, Job moves from affirming God's knowledge and power to questioning why God doesn't establish a courtroom where people could urge him to use that knowledge and power to correct injustices.¹ This question cuts directly to the heart of what troubles Job—not abstract theology, but concrete suffering he witnesses daily. Even though behaviors like these were condemned by virtually all cultures, Job complains that God does not step in to charge the perpetrators with wrongdoing. Let's read the text and see what we can learn.

BOOK:

24 “Why does the Almighty not set times for judgment?

Why must those who know him look in vain for such days?

² Men move boundary stones;
they pasture flocks they have stolen.

³ They drive away the orphan's donkey
and take the widow's ox in pledge.

⁴ They thrust the needy from the path
and force all the poor of the land into hiding.

⁵ Like wild donkeys in the desert,
the poor go about their labor of foraging food;
the wasteland provides food for their children.

⁶ They gather fodder in the fields
and glean in the vineyards of the wicked.

⁷ Lacking clothes, they spend the night naked;
they have nothing to cover themselves in the cold.

⁸ They are drenched by mountain rains
and hug the rocks for lack of shelter.

⁹ The fatherless child is snatched from the breast;
the infant of the poor is seized for a debt.

¹⁰ Lacking clothes, they go about naked;
they carry the sheaves, but still go hungry.

¹¹ They crush olives among the terraces (or between millstones);
they tread the winepresses, yet suffer thirst.

¹² The groans of the dying rise from the city,
and the souls of the wounded cry out for help.
But God charges no one with wrongdoing.

¹³ “There are those who rebel against the light,
who do not know its ways
or stay in its paths.

¹⁴ When daylight is gone, the murderer rises up
and kills the poor and needy;
in the night he steals forth like a thief.

¹⁵ The eye of the adulterer watches for dusk;
he thinks, ‘No eye will see me,’
and he keeps his face concealed.

¹⁶ In the dark, men break into houses,
but by day they shut themselves in;
they want nothing to do with the light.

¹⁷ For all of them, deep darkness is their morning;
they make friends with the terrors of darkness (or the shadow of death).

¹⁸ “Yet they are foam on the surface of the water;
their portion of the land is cursed,
so that no one goes to the vineyards.

¹⁹ As heat and drought snatch away the melted snow,
so the grave (Sheol) snatches away those who have sinned.

²⁰ The womb forgets them,
the worm feasts on them;
evil men are no longer remembered
but are broken like a tree.

²¹ They prey on the barren and childless woman,
and to the widow show no kindness.

²² But God drags away the mighty by his power;
though they become established, they have no assurance of life.

²³ He may let them rest in a feeling of security,
but his eyes are on their ways.

²⁴ For a little while they are exalted, and then they are gone;
they are brought low and gathered up like all others;
they are cut off like heads of grain.

²⁵ “If this is not so, who can prove me false
and reduce my words to nothing?”

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What stood out to you? What questions do you have? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you learn about man? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you learn about God or Jesus or the Holy Spirit? [Let people engage]

Q: What is your takeaway? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

Recognize That Witnessing Injustice Is a Legitimate Complaint Before God

Job complains that God permits evil people to exploit the weak through theft, property seizure, and economic manipulation—allowing the arrogant to prosper while the honest are ground into poverty.¹ Economic hardship can devastate believers for years or a lifetime, preventing them from reaching their potential, scapegoating them professionally, or trapping them under corrupt systems that perpetuate poverty and oppression.¹ [Job 24](#) validates your anger at witnessing such injustice. You need not pretend the world is fair or spiritualize away real exploitation. Instead, bring your observations of systemic wickedness before God honestly, as Job does.

Trust God's Control Even When Justice Seems Delayed

Though crime and injustice pervade the world, this does not mean God has abandoned his throne; the book teaches that God remains trustworthy even when circumstances appear chaotic and his goodness seems questionable.² Job acknowledges that God can and will judge the wicked—it simply appears delayed.³ This application demands that you maintain confidence in God's eventual justice while simultaneously acknowledging that you cannot predict when or how he will act.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W.W. (1996). *Be Patient*. (pp. 96-99) Victor Books

“God perplexes me” (Job 24:1–25). This entire chapter focuses on the seeming injustices that God permits in this world. Job opens his speech by asking in effect, “Why doesn’t God have specific days to hold court? Then I could attend and tell Him what I think of the way He is running the world!”

Job starts with *injustices in the country* (vv. 1–11), and then moves to *crimes in the city* (vv. 12–17). He closes his speech with *a curse on the wicked* (vv. 18–25). If God won’t judge them, Job will!

(1) Injustices in the country (vv. 1–11). For the most part, no walls or fences separated the farm lands; each family had its plot, and people respected the landmarks (“boundary stones,” NIV; see Deut. 19:14; Prov. 22:28; 23:10). God promised to curse those who moved the landmarks and stole property (Deut. 27:17), but wicked men did it just the same.

But they didn’t stop there. They not only claimed the land, but also the animals that grazed on the land! They took flocks and donkeys and oxen from widows and orphans and left them in poverty. Job 24:5–11 gives one of the most graphic pictures of the plight of the poor found anywhere in the Bible. See them foraging for food like wild animals in the desert (vv. 5–6), freezing because they have no clothing (v. 7), drenched by the rain because they have no houses to live in (v. 8), weeping because their children have been snatched from their arms until they pay their debts (v. 9), and forced to work for the rich and yet not allowed to eat any of the food that they harvest (vv. 10–11). Even the oxen are permitted to eat the grain that they thresh! (Deut. 25:4)

“Now,” says Job to his friends, “if God judges the wicked, why hasn’t He judged those who have treated the poor so unjustly and inhumanely?”

(2) Crimes in the city (vv. 12–17). Job begins with *murders* (vv. 12–14); he hears the groans of the wounded and sees the death of the innocent. On the average, 60 Americans are murdered every day, a total of nearly 22,000 people annually. That’s like wiping out an entire city about the size of Fairbanks, Alaska; or El Cerrito, California; or Augusta, Maine. Some of these murderers are never identified, arrested, or convicted; and Job says, “But God charges no one with wrongdoing” (v. 12, NIV). Job had never murdered anybody, yet his friends said he was under the judgment of God!

In verse 15, Job mentions *sexual sins*, which are certainly rampant in some parts of our cities. The adulterer and the rapist wait for the darkness before they sneak out to satisfy their desires. Also waiting for the darkness is *the thief*, who breaks into houses (vv. 16–17). “There is crime in the city,” said Job, “and God seems to be doing nothing about it.”

(3) A curse on the wicked (vv. 18–25). This passage may be seen as a *description*, telling what will happen to the wicked (KJV, NIV, NASB); or it may be interpreted as a *denunciation*, a curse on the wicked (NKJV). I think it refers to Job’s personal curse on the wicked, who seem to escape judgment.

Job's malediction can be summarized like this: "May the wicked vanish like foam on the water or snow that melts in the heat of the sun (vv. 18–19). May they be forgotten by everyone, even their own mothers, as they rot in the grave (v. 20). May their wives be barren and give them no heirs (v. 21). May their sense of security and success vanish quickly as they are brought low, mowed down like wheat in the harvest" (vv. 22–24).

"Now," says Job to his three critics, "if what I've said is not true, prove me wrong!" (v. 25) But they never did.

Job is to be commended for seeing somebody else's troubles besides his own and for expressing a holy anger against sin and injustice. Too often, personal suffering can make us selfish and even blind us to the needs of others, but Job was concerned that God help others who were hurting. His three friends were treating the problem of suffering in far too abstract a fashion, and Job tried to get them to see *hurting people* and not just philosophical problems. Jesus had the same problem with the Jewish lawyer who wanted to discuss "neighborliness," but not discover who his neighbor was and then try to help him (Luke 10:25–37).

Injustices in society cause a good deal of pain in people's lives, and we should certainly do all we can to uphold the law and promote justice. But those who make the laws and those who enforce them are only human and can't deal with everything perfectly. One of these days, the Lord Jesus Christ will return, judge the wicked, and establish His righteous kingdom. Till He comes, we will have to accept the reality of evil in this world and keep praying, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20).

Zuck, R. B. (1985). *Job*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 747-748) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books

d. Job's concern over God's indifference (24:1–17)

(1) God's indifference toward judging overt sinners (24:1–12).

24:1–8. If God would post on a universal bulletin board His schedule for judging, people would be less frustrated over His seeming lackadaisical attitude toward sin. People steal land (by moving **boundary stones** to take in part of a neighbor's field) and **flocks**, orphans' and widows' animals (a patent reply to Eliphaz's charge that Job mistreated the needy, 22:9), and **force ... the poor** off the road so they cannot even beg. So the victimized hide for fear and wander about **in the desert**, gleaning what little they can in **fields** and **vineyards**, while going about unclothed (cf. 24:10), **cold**, and wet.

24:9–12. Oppressors even yanked young babies from their widowed mothers to pay off debts. Again Job said **the poor** were unclothed and **hungry**, and were forced to **carry the sheaves** of grain from the fields, to **crush olives** (**among the terraces** may mean between the rows of olive trees), and **tread grapes in the winepresses** while thirsty. Even in cities, people were **wounded** and **dying ... but God** seemed oblivious to it all. This disturbed Job because he was suffering for no specific **wrongdoing**, while others, who sinned openly and deliberately, went off scot-free.

(2) God's indifference toward judging secret sinners.

24:13–17. Murderers, burglars, and adulterers work at **night**, thinking their crimes will go undetected. They refuse to operate in **the light** (cf. John 3:19–20); they love the **deep darkness** (*šalmāwet*; cf. comments on Job 3:5, “deep shadow.” God seems to be apathetic toward them too.

e. Job's certainty over the wicked's eventual punishment (24:18–25)

These verses seem to contradict what Job had just said (vv. 1–17), for here he stated that God *does* punish the wicked. Therefore some scholars assign these words (vv. 18–24) to Zophar, others to Bildad, and still others to Job in quotation marks as if he were quoting one of the three in order to rebut them (v. 25). However, these could just as well be Job's words, in which he affirmed his confidence that though the wicked live on and get away with sin, *eventually* they are punished. This would oppose Zophar's view that the wicked die young (20:5) and would confirm Job's previously stated position that “the wicked live on” (21:7). Job's position was that *both* the righteous and the wicked *suffer* and *both* prosper. This differs drastically from the insistence of the three disputers that only the wicked suffer and only the righteous prosper.

24:18–25. Oppressors, Job argued, are unstable like **foam on ... water**. Their **land is** under a curse and therefore unproductive (**so that no one goes to the vineyards** to glean grapes; cf. Lev. 19:9–10; 23:22). When they die, even their mothers (their wombs) forget them, worms eat their bodies (cf. Job 17:14; 21:26), and they **are broken like a tree**. People who mistreat widows (cf. 24:3) will be judged by **God in His power**. Such sinners may **become** settled, but God is fully aware (cf. 34:21) of their **feeling of security**.

Though they are in high positions for some time, God eventually debases them and they join **others** in the grave. Once prosperous, like **heads of full-grown grain** of barley or wheat, **they are cut off** just as sheaves are cut. They are not destroyed immediately, as the three maintained, but eventually. Why they should even prosper at all, while nonchalantly going about their sins, was Job's enigma. But he remained unmoved in his viewpoint, for it fit the facts, whereas the opinion of his colleagues did not.

1. Theology of Work Project, [Genesis through Revelation](#), ed. William Messenger, Theology of Work Bible Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2014–2016), [2:113–114](#).
2. Greg W. Parsons, [“Guidelines for Understanding and Proclaiming the Book of Job,”](#) *Bibliotheca Sacra* (1994), 409.
3. Richard D. Patterson, [“Job,”](#) in *CSB Study Bible: Notes*, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), [794](#).

The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (Job24). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.