

Lesson #5: Job's 1st Cycle's Response

Last Sunday, response of the three friends:

- Conventional Wisdom: Job's suffering was that of the discipline of righteous
- Cause of discipline: his children had sinned
- Advice: Job not to forsake blamelessness and act like fool or one who forgets God in his response. Repent and former days will be restored.

Chapter 6

Then Job replied:

Vv. 1-3: Depth of sufferings

² "If only my **anguish** could be weighed
and all my **misery** be placed on the scales!

³ It would **surely outweigh** the sand of the seas—**no wonder** my words have been impetuous.

v.4: God did it to me

⁴ The arrows of the Almighty are in me,
my spirit drinks in their poison;
God's terrors are marshaled against me.

vv. 5-7: Friends no help (I)

⁵ **Does a wild donkey bray when it has grass,**
or an ox bellow when it has fodder?

⁶ Is tasteless food eaten without salt,
or is there flavor in the white of an egg?

⁷ I refuse to touch it;
such food makes me ill.

vv. 8-10: Reiterate wish to die for a reason:

⁸ "Oh, that I might have my request,
that God would grant what I hope for,

⁹ that God would be willing to crush me,
to let loose his hand and cut off my life!

¹⁰ Then I would still have this **consolation**—
my joy in unrelenting pain—
that I had not denied the words of the Holy One.

vv. 11-13: cannot hang in there anymore!

¹¹ "What strength do I have, that I should still hope?

What prospects, that I should be patient?

¹² Do I have the strength of stone?
Is my flesh bronze?

¹³ Do I have any power to help myself,
now that success has been driven from me?



Acknowledges own words are rash: but couldn't help it

Sufferings: too weighty!

- Do you understand what I am going through?

- Focus on my sufferings

o Not my words!

Who is responsible?:

- God did it to me? Not just like arrows, but poisoned! Concept of God's permission absent in former times!

Analogies: too mild for his sufferings; but rather a mockery to friends' words:

i.e. friends' words no comfort like grass for wild donkey (he's like wild donkey) or food for oxen!

Saltless food and eye white: You make me sick! (Can we blame him?)

Reiterates desire to die, but...

He'd rather die!

- Asking God to take his life

Not unlike Elijah? (1 Kings 19)

- Similar: in relief from suffering/pain

- Dissimilar: Elijah's of pride, Job's of not wanting to "deny words of the Holy one" – he knew his limitation!

Kahlil Gibran's Prayer

"Let me rather starve

And let my heart parch with thirst

And let me die and perish

Ere I stretch my hand

To a cup You did not fill

Or a bowl You did not bless"

Success: perhaps, better translated as victory or wisdom = strength sapped; hope gone!

No strength, no hope, no patience!

vv. 14-23: Friends no help (II)

¹⁴“A despairing man should have the devotion of his friends,
Even though he forsakes the fear of the Almighty.

¹⁵ But my brothers are as undependable as intermittent streams,

as the streams that overflow

¹⁶ when darkened by thawing ice
and swollen with melting snow,

¹⁷ but that stop flowing in the dry season,
and in the heat vanish from their channels.

¹⁸ Caravans turn aside from their routes;
they go off into the wasteland and perish.

¹⁹ The caravans of Tema look for water,
the traveling merchants of Sheba look in hope.

²⁰ They are distressed, because they had been confident;
they arrive there, only to be disappointed.

²¹ Now you too have proved to be of no help;
you see something dreadful and are afraid.

²² Have I ever said, ‘Give something on my behalf,

pay a ransom for me from your wealth,

²³ deliver me from the hand of the enemy,
rescue me from the clutches of the ruthless’?

vv. 24-30: Rebuke friends’ Attitude

²⁴“Teach me, and I will be quiet;
show me where I have been wrong.

²⁵ How painful are honest words!
But what do your arguments prove?

²⁶ Do you mean to correct what I say,
and treat my desperate words as wind?

²⁷ You would even cast lots for the fatherless
and barter away your friend.

²⁸“But now be so kind as to look at me.
Would I lie to your face?

²⁹ Relent (or try again), do not be unjust;
reconsider (try again) for my integrity is at stake (or still stands)

³⁰ Is there any wickedness on my lips?
Can my mouth not discern malice?

What a Friend!

On what should we base our friendship?
(Including that of our children?)

Love & friendship should be unconditional!

Quality of true friendship: Dependable!

Likens Eliphaz to undependable streams in the desert:

Intermittent At best: fair-weathered friends!

- *Winter: blackened or frozen*

- *Spring: Melts like torrent (flood)*

- *Summer: dry out-what’d our friends say?*

A slight at Eliphaz, the Temanite!

Vivid image of caravans

- *That changed routes (changed fortune for Job*

- *Of Tema and Sheba—mocking Eliphaz*

- *(Job) Looking for water in distress*

- *Confident in finding water (glad friends came)*

- *Only to be disappointed*

Friends: offered nothing of practical help!

Why? Eliphaz was frightened by what he saw! Never came across such sufferings!

- *Frightened & not knowing what to do is normal—we tend to run away*

- *But friends thought they needed to and could do something!*

- *Never asked for help—financial help, pay ransom to get cattle back or avenge the nomads (which friends could have tried!)*

Instead:

Asking Eliphaz to address the following instead:

- *If you really want to teach me*

o *Show me my wrongs, no speculation!*

o *Honest to yourself, not enough*

o *It hurts, especially when it is wrong!*

- *All you seek: is to correct my words*

o *But it is = barter away your friend, so*

▪ *Take a good and honest look at me!*

▪ *Who am I? You know me well--Would I lie: so try again*

- *My integrity & righteousness still intact*

- *My lips still can discern right from wrong*

(Teaching friends how not to counsel!)

Chapter 7

vv. 1-5 Asking "How Long?"

Do not mortals have hard service on earth?

Are not their days like those of hired laborers?

² Like a slave longing for the evening shadows,

or a hired laborer waiting to be paid,

³ so I have been allotted months of futility, and nights of misery have been assigned to me.

⁴ When I lie down I think, 'How long before I get up?'

The night drags on, and I toss and turn until dawn.

⁵ My body is clothed with worms and scabs, my skin is broken and festering.

vv. 6-11 Death is near, but that's it?

⁶ "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle,

and they come to an end without hope.

⁷ Remember, O God, that my life is but a breath;

my eyes will never see happiness again.

⁸ The eye that now sees me will see me no longer;

you will look for me, but I will be no more.

⁹ As a cloud vanishes and is gone,

so one who goes down to the grave does not return.

¹⁰ He will never come to his house again; his place will know him no more.

vv. 11-21 Direct Complaint to God

11 "**Therefore** I will not keep silent,

I will speak out in the anguish of my spirit,

I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.

12 Am I the sea, or the monster of the deep, that you put me under guard?

13 When I think my bed will comfort me and my couch will ease my complaint,

14 even then you frighten me with dreams and terrify me with visions,

15 so that I prefer strangling and death, rather than this body of mine.

16 I despise my life; I would not live forever. Let me alone; my days have no meaning

Liken himself to slaves and hard-laborer

Life is tough, especially for them

- *The hired labor: working hard for pay day!*

- *Slave: no wage, but could at least stop when evening comes!*

Job in suffering identifies with both, yet

- *Like hired labor, receives no reward!*

- *Like slave: when evening finally comes, finds not rest!*

o *Nights prove to be worse than days*

▪ *Feels so long*

▪ *Only toss and turn*

Worst: body...skin...such pain lasted for months (v.3)—How long will it last further? (Can you blame him for asking?)

Job thought he would die soon—as he saw his body weaken and condition deteriorate!

- *Swifter than a weaver's shuttle: up & down, back & forth—short, unceasing cycles—can't get out of it (i.e. pain)*

His dilemma:

While desire and end to pain (only way out is death—but yet bemoans death!)

- *Life like a breath*

- *See no happiness again*

- *People's eyes: Will see him no more*

o *Look for him, not there*

o *Like a cloud*

▪ *Once in grave—No return*

So what Job? Well, he is just human!

Job refuses to accept "That's It?"

- V.11 is a powerful triplet!

- Emphasizing anguish and bitterness

- Should he not or could he not keep silent? Speaking to God (obviously)

- Monster under guard—too harsh!

- Night rest: even the odd times he was able to sleep

- Only to be terrified by nightmares!

So: Rather be strangled and die!

- *Rather than in this painful body!*

- *Life: no more meaning as is! Leave me alone. God (i.e. stop doing this to me!)*

Leave Me Alone!

¹⁷“What is mankind that you make so much of them,

that you give them so much attention,

¹⁸ that you examine them every morning *and test them every moment?*

¹⁹ Will you never look away from me, *or let me alone even for an instant?*

²⁰ If I have sinned, what have I done to you, *you who see everything we do?*

Why have you made me your target?

Have I become a burden to you?^[c]

²¹ Why do you not pardon my offenses *and forgive my sins?*

For I will soon lie down in the dust; *you will search for me, but I will be no more.*”

Reference:

Psalm 8:4

“What is mankind that you are mindful of them, *human beings that you care for them.*”

Psalm 139: 1-5

“You have searched me, LORD, *and you know me.*

² You know when I sit and when I rise; *you perceive my thoughts from afar.*

³ You discern my going out and my lying down;

you are familiar with all my ways.

⁴ Before a word is on my tongue *you, LORD, know it completely.*

⁵ You hem me in behind and before, *and you lay your hand upon me.*”

God, leave me alone

Just the opposite of Psalm 8

○ *Which talks about God’s care and the honor He gives to men*

○ *Here: Examine and test*

○ *Every morning every moment! (more like Psalm 139, God’s hemming hand is heavy!)*

- **If I have sinned!**

- *Eliphaz has done a number on him*

- *He begins to doubt if what happened is somehow connected to his sins!*

○ *Your target*

○ *A burden*

▪ *Why not pardon and forgive*

Problem

- *Not that God will not pardon and forgive*

- *To think God punishes him while He is not*

○ *A misrepresentation of God’s character*

○ ***A guilt that is unnecessary***
▪ *destroys body, soul and spirit!*

Chapter 9

Then Job replied: (After Bildad charged his children with sin & defended God's justice)

Vv. 1-13: God & His Ways

2 "Indeed, I know that this is true.

But how can mere mortals prove their innocence before God?

3 Though they wished to dispute with him,
they could not answer him one time out of a thousand.

4 His wisdom is profound, his power is vast.
Who has resisted him and come out unscathed?

5 He moves mountains without their knowing it
and overturns them in his anger.

6 He shakes the earth from its place
and makes its pillars tremble.

7 He speaks to the sun and it does not shine;
he seals off the light of the stars.

8 He alone stretches out the heavens
and treads on the waves of the sea.

9 He is the Maker of the Bear and Orion,
the Pleiades and the constellations of the south.

10 He performs wonders that cannot be fathomed,
miracles that cannot be counted.

11 When he passes me, I cannot see him;
when he goes by, I cannot perceive him.

12 If he snatches away, who can stop him?
Who can say to him, 'What are you doing?'

13 God does not restrain his anger;
even the cohorts of Rahab cowered at his feet.

No one can prove his innocence before God, because God is

- most wise and
- most powerful

His wisdom (vv. 3-4)

- Who can dispute God?
- Worse: He is also powerful!

His power (vv. 5-10)—most eloquent poem about God and His ways:

-*Terrifying as powerful earthquakes:*

- Move mountain in anger
- Shakes pillars of earth

-*Creator and Controller of the heavens*

o The sun and stars: terrible darkness descends

o He expands the heavens?

o He walks on waves (true of Jesus!)

o He makes all the constellations

-All in all:

o He performs wonders and countless miracles

The Unseen God:

Paul sums up God with these words

"God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see" (1 Timothy 6: 15-16)

- Evan Rahab—the ancient mythical monster is no match

As a result: I'd better not touch Him or oppose Him."

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vv. 14-19: No legal recourse:

14 “How then can I dispute with him?

How can I find words to argue with him?

15 Though I were **innocent**, I could not answer him;

I could only plead with my Judge for mercy.

16 Even if I summoned him and he responded,

I do not believe he would give me a hearing.

17 He would crush me with a storm
and multiply my wounds for no reason.

18 He would not let me catch my breath
but would overwhelm me with misery.

19 If it is a matter of strength, he is mighty!

And if it is a matter of justice, who can challenge him?

vv. 20-31: Unequal/unfair status

20 Even if I were **innocent**, my mouth would condemn me;

if I were blameless, it would pronounce me guilty.

21 “Although I am **blameless**,

I have no concern for myself;

I despise my own life.

22 It is all the same; that is why I say,

‘He destroys both the blameless and the wicked.’

23 When a scourge brings sudden death,
he mocks the despair of the innocent.

24 When a land falls into the hands of the wicked,

he blindfolds its judges.

If it is not he, then who is it?

Job resorts to legal terms for recourse

- because he insists he is truly innocent (4 times in vv. 14ff)

But knows it is futile, why?

- Because the Judge is God Himself

And the **key verse is v. 19**

19 If it is a matter of strength,

He is mighty!

*And if it is a matter of justice,
who can challenge Him?*

Therefore, if Job launches a legal challenge

- Would only invite more sufferings!
And miseries

The Problem is: God is both the Accuser and the Judge

- He has already accused me of wrongs
- My words of defense would only add to my “wrongs” though have no idea what “wrongs” I have done!

As a result:

- No point trying to prove innocence
- What’s the use to bring before Him
 - o Innocent or not
 - o I am guilty and are destroyed
 - o Not unlike the wicked
 - o In that sense, the innocent & wicked are really alike

Key problem with Job’s struggle is in v. 24

“If it is not He (God), who is it?”

- We have the privilege of knowing from chs. 1&2, Job did not
- No concept of God’s permission!
- So, honestly: If it is not He—no other explanations!

Vv. 25-35: Resigns to his fate, unless...

25 “My days are swifter than a runner;
they fly away without a glimpse of joy.
26 They skim past like boats of papyrus,
like eagles swooping down on their prey.
27 If I say, ‘I will forget my complaint,
I will change my expression, and smile,’
28 I still dread all my sufferings,
for I know you will not hold me innocent.
29 Since I am already found guilty,
why should I struggle in vain?
30 Even if I washed myself with soap
and my hands with cleansing powder,
31 you would plunge me into a slime pit
so that even my clothes would detest me.

32 “He is not a mere mortal like me that I
might answer him,
that we might confront each other in court.
33 If only there were someone to mediate
(or arbitrate) between us,
*someone to bring us together (or lay his
hand upon us both),*
34 someone to remove God’s rod from me,
*so that his terror would frighten me no
more.*
35 Then I would speak up without fear of
him,
but as it now stands with me, I cannot.

Chapter 10

This is Job’s direct prayer to God—not an argument or explanation to friends

- But him baring is naked soul to God
- Pouring out his heart to God

So, let’s read and hear beyond his words, not using a theological approach—just hear him out!

Vv. 23-31

Repeats his deteriorating conditions—death is knocking at his doors—using images of

- A courier delivering message (the river)
- And eagles swooping down their prey

Mocking friends’ rebuke

- Can I fake his feelings & smile?
- sufferings would only continue!

As God plays both Accuser and Judge

- Already found guilty
- Nothing I can do to prove innocence
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[Note: in this section, if “He” refers to God, and “You” refers to his friend, Bildad, representing all three friends:

- o *What happened already found him guilty (in the eyes of friends)*
- o *You friends will make sure I am guilty!*]

—but likely “You” also refers to God!

v. 32-35—while no contest—unless...

However, it might be different if he has an “Advocate” or “Mediator”

- o That can represent him to bring God and him together (to approach God)
 - o To remove God’s wrath
 - o To be able to speak without fear
- But where is He?

As it is: not a chance—no point at all!

[How prophetic:

- God does provide an Advocate in Jesus Christ (Job 16:19; 1 Tim 2:5; 1 John 2:1)
- Throne of Judgment becomes Throne of Grace (Hebrews 4: 15-16)]

Chapter 10

10 “I loathe my very life;

therefore I will give free rein to my complaint

and speak out in the bitterness of my soul.

2 I say to God: Do not declare me guilty,

but tell me what charges you have against me.

3 Does it please you to oppress me,

to spurn the work of your hands, while you smile on the plans of the wicked?

4 Do you have eyes of flesh?

Do you see as a mortal sees?

5 Are your days like those of a mortal

or your years like those of a strong man,

6 that you must search out my faults

and probe after my sin—

7 though you know that I am not guilty

and that no one can rescue me from your hand?

8 “Your hands shaped me and made me.

Will you now turn and destroy me?

9 Remember that you molded me like clay.

Will you now turn me to dust again?

10 Did you not pour me out like milk

and curdle me like cheese,

11 clothe me with skin and flesh

and knit me together with bones and sinews?

12 You gave me life and showed me

kindness,

and in your providence watched over my spirit.

13 “But this is what you concealed in your heart,

and I know that this was in your mind:

14 If I sinned, you would be watching me

and would not let my offense go unpunished.

15 If I am guilty—woe to me!

Even if I am innocent, I cannot lift my head,

for I am full of shame

and drowned in my affliction.

Unbridled complaint because of bitterness

Can you blame him: thinking God is the one doing it to him—because no one can besides

- He now asks for specific charges (which friends cannot either)

Several rhetorical questions, the answers to which are obviously, “no”

Q.1: oppress your handiwork (not just external, but internal): versus “smile” on the wicked—he knows who he is—has been the work of God!

Q.2: mortal see only the external, and will take long probing to know one’s inner condition

Q.3: years like mortal: can’t wait till inner condition manifests?

Recall created by God in kindness

- Shaped and made only for destruction?

- Molded like clay – so turn to dust?

- Non more than that:

- “embryo forming itself from the sperma is like milk which is curdle and beaten into shape” (K&D, 335)

- Put on skin and flesh

- Knit with bones and sinew (i.e. thought, design, purpose and life—kindness and watch over!

Sarcastic remark of “Hidden agenda”

- You created me to punish me

- And if I do sin: woe to me

- And if I have not (he insists he has not)

No difference:

o Using afflictions to shame me

?

16 If I hold my head high, you stalk me like a lion

and again display your awesome power against me.

17 You bring new witnesses against me
*and increase your anger toward me;
your forces come against me wave upon wave.*

18 “Why then did you bring me out of the womb?

I wish I had died before any eye saw me.

19 If only I had never come into being,
or had been carried straight from the womb to the grave!

20 Are not my few days almost over?
Turn away from me so I can have a moment’s joy

21 before I go to the place of no return,
to the land of gloom and utter darkness,

22 to the land of deepest night,
*of utter darkness and disorder,
where even the light is like darkness.”*

o If I resist: stalk me like lion (power)
o And bring new witnesses against me (the three friends and more)

o Anger like wave upon wave!

I.e. a Creator with an obsession to punish?

- does it reflect the thinking of some of the agnostics

The Same Refrain:

- Why not die still-born etc.

But expresses despair

- Thinking he won’t last long

- And pleads for a brief moment of relief before death

o i.e. let the pain go away

- but express fear of death

o land of gloom and darkness

o not rest and peace (3;13;17)

o why the difference?

- Also direct opposite of David (Ps. 139:12)