

Job 6:1-13

Turning to God When Our World Turns Upside-Down

¹ Then Job answered and said:

² “Oh that my vexation were weighed,
and all my calamity laid in the balances!

³ For then it would be heavier than the sand of the sea;
therefore my words have been rash.

⁴ For the arrows of the Almighty are in me;
my spirit drinks their poison;
the terrors of God are arrayed against me.

⁵ Does the wild donkey bray when he has grass,
or the ox low over his fodder?

⁶ Can that which is tasteless be eaten without salt,
or is there any taste in the juice of the mallow?

⁷ My appetite refuses to touch them;
they are as food that is loathsome to me.

⁸ “Oh that I might have my request,
and that God would fulfill my hope,

⁹ that it would please God to crush me,
that he would let loose his hand and cut me off!

¹⁰ This would be my comfort;
I would even exult in pain unsparing,
for I have not denied the words of the Holy One.

¹¹ What is my strength, that I should wait?
And what is my end, that I should be patient?

¹² Is my strength the strength of stones, or is my flesh bronze?

¹³ Have I any help in me,
when resource is driven from me?” – Job 6:1-13 ESV

As might be expected, Eliphaz’s words provided little or no comfort to Job. His response to his friend’s lengthy lecture came in the form of a defense. Job was in deep pain, physically, emotionally, and psychologically. As he weighed out his unexpected losses, he found the burden of them too great to bear. Even all his long-held beliefs about God were coming under attack as he tried to make sense of all that had happened. Job admitted that his earlier words had been rash and impulsive, but he was having a difficult time understanding why God had suddenly turned His back on him.

*“For the Almighty has struck me down with his arrows.
Their poison infects my spirit.
God’s terrors are lined up against me.” – Job 6:4 NLT*

He reluctantly agreed with Eliphaz's assessment that God was behind his pain and suffering, but he refused to acknowledge any guilt or confess any sin. As far as Job could tell, his losses were arbitrary and undeserved. This led him to defend his right to complain. Like a donkey in need of food, Job was "braying" for relief. His words were nothing more than an expression of his pain and suffering. It was only natural for a man who had lost everything to cry out and demand that someone relieve his agony.

From Job's perspective, other people seem to have the right to complain about the smallest discomforts or disappointments, but he gets chastised for expressing his dissatisfaction with the deaths of his ten adult children, the loss of his entire fortune, and the failure of his own health. He was a beaten-down man and defended his right to vocalize his frustrations and questions. And Job wanted Eliphaz to see things from his perspective.

As far as Job could tell, he was under attack by God Almighty and he couldn't fathom why. He had been given ample time to assess his circumstances and search his brain to discover what sin he might have committed to deserve the wrath of God. But instead of a list of sins to confess, Job had derived comfort in his own integrity. Despite all that had happened, Job had not turned his back on God. He was confused but remained faithful.

*"At least I can take comfort in this:
Despite the pain,
I have not denied the words of the Holy One." – Job 6:10 NLT*

While Job had not lost His belief in God, he had lost his will to live. He was no longer able to see the light at the end of the proverbial tunnel. There was no silver lining on the dark cloud that overshadowed his life. Job couldn't imagine a future without his children or a day when his joy might return. As far as he could tell, his financial losses were too great to overcome, and his health showed no signs of improvement.

In his depressed state, all that Job could think about was death, and he begged God to put him out of his misery.

*"Oh, that I might have my request,
that God would grant my desire.
I wish he would crush me.
I wish he would reach out his hand and kill me." – Job 6:8-9 NLT*

Even in this, Job revealed his belief in the goodness of God. He still believed that God, as the sovereign Lord over all things, was ultimately responsible for man's fate. Job instinctively knew that his life was in God's hands and so he appealed to God's mercy and begged that his unfortunate life be brought to a quick and painless end. And these do not appear to be empty words spoken in the heat of the moment. Job is serious and sincere. His words reflect his abject sense of despair and utter resignation.

*"I don't have the strength to endure.
I have nothing to live for.
Do I have the strength of a stone?
Is my body made of bronze?
No, I am utterly helpless,
without any chance of success."* – Job 6:11-13 NLT

It would be easy to assume that Job is expressing his words to Eliphaz. Through the use of hyperbole, he was exaggerating the extent of his pain and defending his innocence against the unjust accusations of his so-called friend. But Job's words come across more like a prayer to God than a defense of his own innocence. Even though he refers to God in the third person, he demonstrates a belief that God can hear every word he says. He doesn't shake his fist in the face of God and demand recompense or restoration. He simply expresses his desire for the pain to end and he calls on God to be gracious and grant his desire.

These are the words of a man in deep despair. Not only is he suffering from the pain of loss but he is also having to wrestle with his confused and conflicted understanding of God. He had spent his entire life walking with God, so much so that God deemed him to be "a blameless and upright man" (Job 1:8 ESV). He was a man of integrity and faithfulness. All throughout his life, Job displayed a healthy fear of God and a strong aversion to evil. And yet, here he was suffering unparalleled pain and having to grapple with its cause and meaning.

Even Job's wife had struggled to find any semblance of hope in his meteoric fall from grace, so she encouraged him to give up his ill-fated quest for godliness and end it all.

"Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die." – Job 2:9 ESV

But Job refused to take his wife's ungodly counsel. He was not willing to give up on God or his desire to live in a way that was pleasing to God. Job wanted to die, but not enough that he would ever curse His God. Instead, he pleaded with God to take his life. He placed his faith in the faithfulness of God and pleaded for mercy in the form of relief from his pain and suffering. It was all the hope he had left. But even that small glimmer of hope in the midst of the overwhelming darkness of life revealed that Job still believed in God. He couldn't explain his suffering. He was at a loss as to why his life had taken such a dark turn, but he never stopped believing in the sovereignty of God. He knew his life was in God's hands and so he turned to the giver of life to request a reprieve from the pain of life.

But while Job waited for God to respond, he took the opportunity to address Eliphaz. He was unwilling to sit back and take his friend's verbal assault without defending himself. Assumptions had been made. Accusations had been leveled. Now, it was Job's turn to set the record straight. He was hurting but Job still had a lot of fight in him, and Eliphaz was about to get a much-needed lecture on bed-side manners and counseling etiquette.

Job 9:1-2

The Folly of a Faulty View of God

¹ Then Job answered and said:

² *"Truly I know that it is so:*

But how can a man be in the right before God?

³ *If one wished to contend with him,*

one could not answer him once in a thousand times.

⁴ *He is wise in heart and mighty in strength*

—who has hardened himself against him, and succeeded?—

⁵ *he who removes mountains, and they know it not,*

when he overturns them in his anger,

⁶ *who shakes the earth out of its place,*

and its pillars tremble;

⁷ *who commands the sun, and it does not rise;*

who seals up the stars;

⁸ *who alone stretched out the heavens*

and trampled the waves of the sea;

⁹ *who made the Bear and Orion,*

the Pleiades and the chambers of the south;

¹⁰ *who does great things beyond searching out,*

and marvelous things beyond number.

¹¹ *Behold, he passes by me, and I see him not;*

he moves on, but I do not perceive him.

¹² *Behold, he snatches away; who can turn him back?*

Who will say to him, 'What are you doing?'" — Job 9:1-12 ESV

Job was convinced of his own innocence, but he wasn't quite sure how to state his case before God Almighty. Bildad had brought up the topic of God's justice and Job took no issue with his friend's assessment. His only point of contention was with Bildad's insistence that he "seek God and plead with the Almighty for mercy" (Job 8:5 ESV). That all sounded well and good but how was a mere man to come before the God of the universe and hope to stand a chance of declaring his own innocence? Despite his strong belief in his innocence, Job asked, "...how can a person be declared innocent in God's sight?" (Job 9:2 NLT).

Eliphaz had boldly proclaimed, "If I were you, I would go to God and present my case to him" (Job 5:8 NLT). But Job insists that Eliphaz's confident assertion is easier said than done.

"Yes, I know all this is true in principle.

But how can a person be declared innocent in God's sight?

If someone wanted to take God to court,

would it be possible to answer him even once in a thousand times?

For God is so wise and so mighty.

Who has ever challenged him successfully?” – Job 9:2-4 NLT

Job found it easy to confront and contradict his two friends, but to hope to stand before God and demand a fair trial was something he couldn't fathom. He was more than confident debating Eliphaz and Bildad; after all, they were only human and were hampered by their unenlightened, earth-bound perspectives. But God is all-wise and all-knowing. As the sovereign God of the universe, He "is wise in heart and mighty in strength" (Job 9:4 ESV). How was Job supposed to come before God and hope to stand any chance of arguing his case with any success? He pessimistically concedes, "Who has ever challenged him successfully?" (Job 9:4 NLT).

In this doleful response to the counsel of his friends, Job reveals the extent of his reverence and awe for God. He displays a strong understanding of God's sovereignty but it is tinged with a hint of resignation. For Job, God was a distant and disembodied deity who was to be feared. There is no sense of intimacy or personal friendship expressed in Job's description of God. In his mind, God was the "unmoved mover," a phrase coined by the Greek philosopher, Aristotle. He wrote, "...there must be an immortal, unchanging being, ultimately responsible for all wholeness and orderliness in the sensible world" (Sach, Job. "Aristotle: Metaphysics". Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy.).

Job's concept of God was that of an invisible, all-powerful deity who created the universe and was fully capable of doing with it whatever He wanted to do.

"Without warning, he moves the mountains,

overturning them in his anger.

He shakes the earth from its place,

and its foundations tremble.

If he commands it, the sun won't rise

and the stars won't shine." – Job 9:5-7 NLT

Job was awed by God's power but not comforted by God's presence in his life. He could not conceive of this great God giving him the time of day or listening to his pleas of innocence. Job couldn't fathom why the One who hung the stars in the heavens and maintained the order of the entire universe would ever bother to care about someone as insignificant and unimportant as him.

Job's humility is to be admired but it reveals a woeful understanding of the nature of God. His concept of God, while accurate, is incomplete. He has no idea just how much God loves and cares for him. Like his two friends, Job is blind to what is going on in the unseen realms. He is oblivious to the conversation that God had with Satan, in which the Almighty declared His pleasure with him.

“Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?” – Job 1:8 ESV

“Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil? He still holds fast his integrity, although you incited me against him to destroy him without reason.” – Job 2:3 ESV

Job seems to believe that his all-powerful God has no time for or interest in him. This “unmoved mover” is too busy caring for the universe to take note of some insignificant human living in the land of Uz. Job admits that God “does great things too marvelous to understand” (Job 9:10 ESV), but he concludes that God is too busy to deal with his petty problems or listen to his pleas for assistance.

Job displays an all-too-familiar concept of God that is shared by far too many believers today. This idea of a great God in the sky who has no time or interest in the billions of helpless, hopeless earth-bound creatures scurrying across the planet is alive and well today – even among professing believers. We may pray to this God, but we don’t actually believe He hears or will answer. We give lip service to His grace and goodness but live as if He is too distant or disinterested in what is going on in our lives to do anything about it. He may help others but He probably won’t help us. He keeps the lights of the universe on but He’s too busy to do anything about the darkness enveloping our lives. This pessimistic perception of God is all too prevalent in today’s world and fully embraced by many who would declare themselves to be faithful God followers.

And these very same people would wholeheartedly agree with the gloomy perception of Job.

*“...when he comes near, I cannot see him.
When he moves by, I do not see him go.
If he snatches someone in death, who can stop him?
Who dares to ask, ‘What are you doing?’” – Job 9:11-12 NLT*

But this one-dimensional view of God is unbiblical, inaccurate, and unhelpful. It paints a distorted view of God that is unmerited and diminishes His glory. The Scriptures paint a starkly different image of God.

*The Lord hears his people when they call to him for help.
He rescues them from all their troubles.
The Lord is close to the brokenhearted;
he rescues those whose spirits are crushed.*

*The righteous person faces many troubles,
but the Lord comes to the rescue each time. – Psalm 34:17-19 NLT*

*The Lord is righteous in everything he does;
 he is filled with kindness.
 The Lord is close to all who call on him,
 yes, to all who call on him in truth.
 He grants the desires of those who fear him;
 he hears their cries for help and rescues them.
 The Lord protects all those who love him... – Psalm 145:17-20 NLT*

*God is our refuge and strength,
 always ready to help in times of trouble.
 So we will not fear when earthquakes come
 and the mountains crumble into the sea.
 Let the oceans roar and foam.
 Let the mountains tremble as the waters surge! – Psalm 46:1-3 NLT*

Job didn't have access to these truths. He had no Bible to open up and read about the goodness of God, so his entire understanding of God was based on his own experience. He was confined to judging God based on circumstantial evidence. In looking at his life, Job could remember a day when he was blessed by God. He had enjoyed good health, financial success, and the joy of a happy home life. His God was good and so was his life. But then, in a moment's time, all that changed. He lost everything. The blessings were replaced with curses that were unbearable and inexplicable. He couldn't understand what was going on but was firm in his belief that he had done nothing to deserve such a fate.

In hopeless resignation and spurred on by the unhelpful counsel of his two friends, Job began to draw unhealthy conclusions about God that would do more harm than good. He could only conceive of God as a righteous and unapproachable judge who had no patience or time to hear the petty complaints of a mere human. Job wanted to defend himself and testify to his own innocence but didn't believe he would get a fair hearing. His faulty view of God left him in a state of resentment and frustration because he couldn't imagine the "unmoved mover" being moved by his plight or persuaded by his pleas of innocence. And his growing resignation will result in an ever-increasing sense of despair that, left unchecked, will turn into disdain and doubt.

Job 9:13-24

When Questioning God Becomes Playing God

¹³ *"God will not turn back his anger;
beneath him bowed the helpers of Rahab.*

¹⁴ *How then can I answer him,
choosing my words with him?*

¹⁵ *Though I am in the right, I cannot answer him;
I must appeal for mercy to my accuser.*

¹⁶ *If I summoned him and he answered me,
I would not believe that he was listening to my voice.*

¹⁷ *For he crushes me with a tempest
and multiplies my wounds without cause;*

¹⁸ *he will not let me get my breath,
but fills me with bitterness.*

¹⁹ *If it is a contest of strength, behold, he is mighty!
If it is a matter of justice, who can summon him?*

²⁰ *Though I am in the right, my own mouth would condemn me;
though I am blameless, he would prove me perverse.*

²¹ *I am blameless; I regard not myself;
I loathe my life.*

²² *It is all one; therefore I say,
'He destroys both the blameless and the wicked.'*

²³ *When disaster brings sudden death,
he mocks at the calamity of the innocent.*

²⁴ *The earth is given into the hand of the wicked;
he covers the faces of its judges—
if it is not he, who then is it?"* – Job 9:13-24 ESV

Job clings tenaciously to his claim of innocence but knows that he will have a difficult time proving it in the divine court of law. He is faced with the formidable task of having to present his case before the Judge of the universe and, as far as he can see, his prospects of success are small. Taking the advice of Bildad, Job inquired of bygone ages and considered what the fathers searched out (Job 8:8). He took a look at history and came to the conclusion that God doesn't always side with the righteous. His ways are not always predictable.

Job makes mention of Rahab, likely a reference to Leviathan, a mythic creature (Job 26:12) that the Jews associated with the sea. Rahab is most often used in Scripture as a reference to the sea and God's power over it. The God who can control the oceans of the earth cannot be defeated by the rhetoric of mortal men. Job mournfully concludes, "...who am I, that I should try to answer God or even reason with him?" (Job 9:14 NLT).

The oceans bend to the will of God. The creatures of the earth must do His bidding. Nothing and no one can stand before Almighty God, so what hope does Job have of successfully stating his case and receiving justice? Even if he is right, he will be powerless before God. His words of self-defense will prove meaningless, leaving him with no other option than to plead for God's mercy.

From Job's perspective, God was the cause of all his troubles, and this conclusion led him to see no hope in arguing his case. As far as Job could see, God had made up His mind and He would not be swayed by some mortal's pathetic pleas of innocence.

*"For he attacks me with a storm
and repeatedly wounds me without cause.
He will not let me catch my breath,
but fills me instead with bitter sorrows.
If it's a question of strength, he's the strong one.
If it's a matter of justice, who dares to summon him to court?" – Job 9:17-19 NLT*

At this point in his life, Job's conception of God had become marred by his circumstances. He saw God as the divine bully in the sky who was using His superior power to taunt a weaker and undeserving victim. Job's theology had become warped by the recent events of his life. He was viewing God through eyes clouded by tears and a mind heavy with grief. Nothing made sense. God appeared to be uncaring, even callous. Job had reached the conclusion that the justice of God had less to do with righteousness and rightness than it did with His overwhelming power. Job had divorced God's justice from His goodness. In his grief, Job had decided that the only difference between God and mortal men was His undiminished sovereignty and unaccountability. God answered to no one.

Because Job understood God to be just and right, it didn't matter what he said. He could claim his innocence, but it would do no good. Job could state his case but God would ultimately win any war of words and the divine verdict would be binding and non-negotiable. This pessimistic and defeatist mentality led Job to conclude, "Innocent or wicked, it is all the same to God. That's why I say, 'He destroys both the blameless and the wicked'" (Job 9:22 NLT).

But Job was wrong. His conclusions, though heartfelt and sincere, were inaccurate. His understanding of God was flawed, having been heavily influenced by his circumstances. The Scriptures paint a starkly different image of God.

This God—his way is perfect; the word of the LORD proves true; he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him. – Psalm 18:30 ESV

He is the Rock; his deeds are perfect. Everything he does is just and fair. He is a faithful God who does no wrong; how just and upright he is! – Deuteronomy 32:4 NLT

*"God's way is perfect.
 All the Lord's promises prove true.
 He is a shield for all who look to him for protection.
 For who is God except the Lord?
 Who but our God is a solid rock?" – 2 Samuel 22:31-32 NLT*

For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless. – Psalm 84:11 NIV

This last verse is particularly pertinent because it reminds us of God's previous assessment of Job. The Lord had declared His servant to be "a blameless and upright man" (Job 1:8 ESV). He viewed Job as faithful and a man of integrity. But God had allowed Satan to test Job's allegiance. The Almighty permitted the enemy to take away all that was near and dear to Job, except his life. Satan had conjectured that Job would turn his back on God if all the blessings of life were removed. And, in a way, it almost seems as if Satan was right.

Job still acknowledges the presence and power of God. He has refrained from following his wife's advice to curse God and die. But Job does not come across as a man who has a healthy relationship with His Creator. He doesn't seem to view the ways of God as perfect and favorable. He doesn't refer to God as his rock, sun, or shield. And while he readily admits that God is just, Job doesn't describe Him as faithful or fair. In fact, Job's assessment of God is anything but favorable or optimistic.

*"When a plague sweeps through,
 he laughs at the death of the innocent.
 The whole earth is in the hands of the wicked,
 and God blinds the eyes of the judges.
 If he's not the one who does it, who is?" – Job 9:23-24 NLT*

What makes this statement so significant is that it comes from the same lips that earlier declared, "Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?" (Job 2:10 ESV). Job no longer appears willing to "receive evil" from the hand of God. He has had enough and demands that his innocence be acknowledged, and his suffering come to an end. In a way, Job reveals that he knows what is best and is determined to get his way, and the only thing standing in his way is God. Whether he realizes it or not, Job has decided to play god and, in doing so, he has declared war on Yahweh. He has decided that Yahweh is unfair and ultimately, unjust in His dealings with men. Without realizing it, Job has succumbed to the same tactic that Satan used to deceive Eve in the garden. He has bought into the enemy's tempting offer of autonomy.

"...your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil." – Genesis 3:5 NLT

Job's eyes had been "opened" by the lies of Satan and he believed that he knew what was best for himself. He decided that he was right and God was wrong. Without actually saying it, Job declared that his way would be better than God's way. His brand of justice would be superior to that of God. His definition of right and wrong was the only one to consider and his preferred outcome was the only one he would accept. But Job had a lot to learn about the justice of God, and he would soon discover that his desperate desire to play god would not improve his circumstances. The solution to his problem was not the removal of all the problems from his life. What he needed most was a healthy understanding of the character of God.

Job 9:25-35

The Stark Contrast of Two Suffering Saints

²⁵ *"My days are swifter than a runner;
they flee away; they see no good.*
²⁶ *They go by like skiffs of reed,
like an eagle swooping on the prey.*
²⁷ *If I say, 'I will forget my complaint,
I will put off my sad face, and be of good cheer,'*
²⁸ *I become afraid of all my suffering,
for I know you will not hold me innocent.*
²⁹ *I shall be condemned;
why then do I labor in vain?*
³⁰ *If I wash myself with snow
and cleanse my hands with lye,*
³¹ *yet you will plunge me into a pit,
and my own clothes will abhor me.*
³² *For he is not a man, as I am, that I might answer him,
that we should come to trial together.*
³³ *There is no arbiter between us,
who might lay his hand on us both.*
³⁴ *Let him take his rod away from me,
and let not dread of him terrify me.*
³⁵ *Then I would speak without fear of him,
for I am not so in myself."* – Job 9:25-35 ESV

Job has reached the end of his rope. His persistent pain and sorrow have left him in a hopeless state with no sign of relief in sight. He can't imagine a brighter tomorrow or any hope of a reversal of his misfortunes. The days come and go, "swifter than a runner" (Job 9:25 ESV), and leave Job in an increasingly more depressed and defeated state. To make matters worse, Job has determined that God is behind it all, and he believes there is nothing he can do about it.

*"If I decided to forget my complaints,
to put away my sad face and be cheerful,
I would still dread all the pain,
for I know you will not find me innocent, O God.
Whatever happens, I will be found guilty."* – Job 9:27-29 NLT

Even if Job could force himself to put on a happy face, he doesn't believe his lot in life will change. A forced smile won't change anything unless God is willing to pronounce him innocent, and Job doesn't think that is going to happen. For whatever reason, Job has convinced himself that God is against him. His unresolved circumstances have forced him to conclude that the Creator of the universe has it in for him, and Job feels ill-equipped to defend himself before

such an august and powerful judge. The die has been cast, the verdict has been determined, and there is nothing Job can do to alter the pre-ordained outcome of an omnipotent God. But is he right, or is there a chance that Job has misjudged the Judge of the universe?

Job pessimistically states, “Whatever happens, I will be found guilty. So what’s the use of trying?” (Job 9:29 NLT). Even if he could find someone to mediate his case before God, Job doesn’t believe the outcome will be any different. He can try to clean up his act, improve his disposition, and put on a happy face, but he honestly believes that God will not relent or renounce His guilty verdict.

Job’s sorrowful state and gloomy outlook are not unique to him. There are countless others who have reached similar conclusions when faced with comparable circumstances. It was King David who wrote:

*My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?
Why are you so far away when I groan for help?
Every day I call to you, my God, but you do not answer.
Every night I lift my voice, but I find no relief. – Psalm 22:1-2 NLT*

In a similar fashion, Heman the Ezrahite declared his dissatisfaction with God.

*O Lord, God of my salvation,
I cry out to you by day.
I come to you at night.
Now hear my prayer;
listen to my cry.
For my life is full of troubles,
and death draws near.
I am as good as dead,
like a strong man with no strength left.
They have left me among the dead,
and I lie like a corpse in a grave.
I am forgotten,
cut off from your care.
You have thrown me into the lowest pit,
into the darkest depths.
Your anger weighs me down;
with wave after wave you have engulfed me. – Psalm 88:1-7 NLT*

Heman went on to accuse God of driving away all his friends, placing him in an inescapable trap, and repeatedly rejecting him. He found himself in a place of utter darkness and despair and could not understand why God would not respond to his cries for mercy and help. At no point in Heman’s psalm does he acknowledge the goodness and grace of God. But King David is different.

David's grief is just as palpable and his despair is unrelenting and virtually unresolvable. Yet, he manages to catch glimpses of the goodness of God amid all the sorrow and pain. He is able to look back on his life and remember the many times that God had poured out His undeserved blessings.

*Yet you brought me safely from my mother's womb
and led me to trust you at my mother's breast.
I was thrust into your arms at my birth.
You have been my God from the moment I was born. – Psalm 22:9-10 NLT*

David understood his birth to be a gift from God. He had been raised by a godly mother who introduced him to Yahweh at an early age and, for that, David was grateful. His pain was real and his sense of despair and desperation was great, but David remained persistent in his belief that God would hear and deliver him.

*O Lord, do not stay far away!
You are my strength; come quickly to my aid!
Save me from the sword;
spare my precious life from these dogs.
Snatch me from the lion's jaws
and from the horns of these wild oxen. – Psalm 22:19-21 NLT*

David doesn't declare his innocence or accuse God of injustice. He simply appeals to God's mercy and grace, and he promises to praise God among the assembly when deliverance inevitably comes.

*I will praise you in the great assembly.
I will fulfill my vows in the presence of those who worship you. – Psalm 22:25 NLT*

Though David's suffering was no less intense than that of Job and Heman, his outlook on God was markedly different. His pain was just as real and his despair was just as intense, but he remained hopeful. He maintained His trust in the goodness of God. Even with all that was going on in his life, he was able to speak in optimistic and hopeful terms regarding God.

*Praise the Lord, all you who fear him!
Honor him, all you descendants of Jacob!
Show him reverence, all you descendants of Israel!
For he has not ignored or belittled the suffering of the needy.
He has not turned his back on them,
but has listened to their cries for help. – Psalm 22:23-24 NLT*

David was down but not defeated. He was suffering but was still willing to find solace in the goodness of God. He was able to maintain a hint of optimism in the midst of all the sorrow because he believed that God would ultimately deliver him. He maintained a strong belief in

the faithfulness of God, so he would continue to cry out and wait for God's deliverance. David had full assurance that God hears the cries of His children and responds, and it was that belief in God's goodness that prompted David to write: "His righteous acts will be told to those not yet born. They will hear about everything he has done" (Psalm 22:31 NLT).

Job will end up saying something that gives the impression of faith but it is actually a declaration of resignation.

God might kill me, but I have no other hope.

I am going to argue my case with him. – Job 13:15 NLT

For Job, God was a last resort. He firmly believed that God might strike him dead, but he was willing to take that risk in order to defend his innocence. There is a stark difference between the theology of Job and that of David. One viewed God as his only source of hope and his ultimate executioner. The other viewed God as honorable, worthy of worship, and the ultimate source of his deliverance. David was down but not out. He was in despair but had not lost his faith in God. He cried out to God for help and promised to shout His praises when deliverance came.

Job 10:1-22**Light in the Darkness**

- ¹ *"I loathe my life;
I will give free utterance to my complaint;
I will speak in the bitterness of my soul.*
- ² *I will say to God, Do not condemn me;
let me know why you contend against me.*
- ³ *Does it seem good to you to oppress,
to despise the work of your hands
and favor the designs of the wicked?*
- ⁴ *Have you eyes of flesh?
Do you see as man sees?*
- ⁵ *Are your days as the days of man,
or your years as a man's years,*
- ⁶ *that you seek out my iniquity
and search for my sin,*
- ⁷ *although you know that I am not guilty,
and there is none to deliver out of your hand?*
- ⁸ *Your hands fashioned and made me,
and now you have destroyed me altogether.*
- ⁹ *Remember that you have made me like clay;
and will you return me to the dust?*
- ¹⁰ *Did you not pour me out like milk
and curdle me like cheese?*
- ¹¹ *You clothed me with skin and flesh,
and knit me together with bones and sinews.*
- ¹² *You have granted me life and steadfast love,
and your care has preserved my spirit.*
- ¹³ *Yet these things you hid in your heart;
I know that this was your purpose.*
- ¹⁴ *If I sin, you watch me
and do not acquit me of my iniquity.*
- ¹⁵ *If I am guilty, woe to me!
If I am in the right, I cannot lift up my head,
for I am filled with disgrace
and look on my affliction.*
- ¹⁶ *And were my head lifted up, you would hunt me like a lion
and again work wonders against me.*
- ¹⁷ *You renew your witnesses against me
and increase your vexation toward me;
you bring fresh troops against me.*

¹⁸ *“Why did you bring me out from the womb?
Would that I had died before any eye had seen me
¹⁹and were as though I had not been,
carried from the womb to the grave.
²⁰Are not my days few?
Then cease, and leave me alone, that I may find a little cheer
²¹before I go—and I shall not return—
to the land of darkness and deep shadow,
²²the land of gloom like thick darkness,
like deep shadow without any order,
where light is as thick darkness.”* – Job 10:1-22 ESV

Job continues his diatribe against God, refusing to hold back his resentment for the way the Almighty has treated him. From his perspective, he has nothing to fear from being brutally honest with God. His life can't get much worse and if God has determined him to be guilty, there is little he can do about it. So, Job pulls out all the stops and levels a barrage of complaints against the One whom he has determined to be responsible for his unfortunate and undeserved circumstances.

Embittered by his unbearable suffering and loss, Job lashes out at God and demands that He explain Himself.

*“Don’t simply condemn me—
tell me the charge you are bringing against me.
What do you gain by oppressing me?”* – Job 10:2-3 NLT

Job was convinced that God was responsible for his circumstances but wanted to know what he had done to deserve such treatment. He felt that God owed him an explanation for all that had transpired and was not going to shut up until God spoke up.

In his pain and confusion, Job couldn't resist the temptation to accuse God of injustice. As a child of God, he felt that he was being treated unfairly. After all, he could look around and see the ungodly getting away with all kinds of wickedness as if God had turned a blind eye. Yet, he seemed to believe that his status as a son of God was supposed to provide him with some kind of immunity from suffering and pain.

The recent events in Job's life had been totally unexpected. He had no way of understanding the severity of the losses he had endured. None of it fit into the paradigm he held of God and his understanding of human existence. As a follower of Yahweh, Job believed himself to be on the winning side. He understood himself to be the work of God's own hands and destined for blessings in this life – as long as he remained faithful. His theology led him to believe that God owed him the good life for having led a godly life, and his entire focus was fixated on the time between the womb and the tomb.

Job knew that he had a birth date and fully expected that he had a rapidly approaching death date. But he had a difficult time conceiving of anything beyond that point. In all his rantings and ravings, Job displays no concept of an afterlife. His words reveal a belief that everything that happens to a man must take place between the two bookends of birth and death. There is nothing before or after.

*"I have only a few days left, so leave me alone,
that I may have a moment of comfort
before I leave—never to return—
for the land of darkness and utter gloom.
It is a land as dark as midnight,
a land of gloom and confusion,
where even the light is dark as midnight."* – Job 10:20-22 NLT

And that gloomy perspective led Job to regret that he was ever born. His ontology was based on a faulty understanding of how the world works. Because he lived in a temporal state, he couldn't fathom a concept like eternity. He saw nothing existing beyond the grave, simply describing it as a land of darkness, gloom, and doom. So, if the rest of his earthly life was going to be filled with nothing but trouble, he decided that death would be better than living. Non-existence would be preferable to the existential crisis in which he found himself.

Job couldn't help but state the obvious: God was responsible for his very existence, and it looked like God was intent on bringing his life to an untimely and ignominious end.

*"You formed me with your hands; you made me,
yet now you completely destroy me.
⁹Remember that you made me from dust—
will you turn me back to dust so soon?"* – Job 10:8-9 NLT

Once again, Job displays a dramatically different understanding of God than that of David. Both men understood the reality of suffering and wrestled with God's involvement in it. But David viewed his birth as a blessing and not a curse.

*You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body
and knit me together in my mother's womb.
Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex!
Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I know it.
You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion,
as I was woven together in the dark of the womb.
You saw me before I was born.
Every day of my life was recorded in your book.
Every moment was laid out
before a single day had passed.* – Psalm 139:13-16 NLT

David saw the hand of God in every aspect of his life, including those less-than-pleasant moments when God's love seemed distant and difficult to comprehend. David was surrounded by wicked people who were out to take his life. He was suffering abuse and undergoing difficult circumstances, but he was able to say, "How precious are your thoughts about me, O God. They cannot be numbered! I can't even count them; they outnumber the grains of sand!" (Psalm 139:18-19 NLT).

What a contrast to the woe-is-me mentality of Job. This man, when faced with difficult life circumstances, was willing to admit that God had given him life but was quick to accuse God of having it out for him.

*"You gave me life and showed me your unfailing love.
My life was preserved by your care.*

*"Yet your real motive—
your true intent—
was to watch me, and if I sinned,
you would not forgive my guilt." – Job 10:12-14 NLT*

Sadly, Job's view of God was anything but optimistic. Unlike David, he didn't perceive God as having precious thoughts about him. Rather than counting God's many blessings, Job was busy taking inventory of all his losses – and he was far from happy with the results.

*"...I am filled with shame and misery.
And if I hold my head high, you hunt me like a lion
and display your awesome power against me.
Again and again you witness against me.
You pour out your growing anger on me
and bring fresh armies against me." – Job 10:15-17 NLT*

Job had come to fear rather than revere God. He viewed God as his enemy, not his advocate. When Job looked at the future, he saw nothing but gloom. He felt completely abandoned by God and destined to a dark and dismal fate. But when faced with the inevitable difficulties of life, David reached a far different conclusion

*I can never escape from your Spirit!
I can never get away from your presence!
If I go up to heaven, you are there;
if I go down to the grave, you are there.
If I ride the wings of the morning,
if I dwell by the farthest oceans,
even there your hand will guide me,
and your strength will support me.
I could ask the darkness to hide me*

*and the light around me to become night—
but even in darkness I cannot hide from you.
To you the night shines as bright as day.
Darkness and light are the same to you. – Psalm 139:7-12 NLT*

As the apostle John wrote, “God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all” (1 John 1:5 NLT). He is not the author of light, but the eliminator of it. His light shines in the darkness. David understood that darkness was an inevitable part of living in a fallen world. He was well aware of the fact that life would have its highs and lows. But he was fully confident in God’s presence and providential care. His God was with him in the good times and the bad times. David refused to allow his circumstances to determine his concept of God. But Job still had much to learn about life and the love of God.

Job 12:1-25**Consider the Source**

¹ *Then Job answered and said:*

² *"No doubt you are the people,
and wisdom will die with you.*

³ *But I have understanding as well as you;
I am not inferior to you.
Who does not know such things as these?*

⁴ *I am a laughingstock to my friends;
I, who called to God and he answered me,
a just and blameless man, am a laughingstock.*

⁵ *In the thought of one who is at ease there is contempt for misfortune;
it is ready for those whose feet slip.*

⁶ *The tents of robbers are at peace,
and those who provoke God are secure,
who bring their god in their hand.*

⁷ *"But ask the beasts, and they will teach you;
the birds of the heavens, and they will tell you;*

⁸ *or the bushes of the earth, and they will teach you;
and the fish of the sea will declare to you.*

⁹ *Who among all these does not know
that the hand of the Lord has done this?*

¹⁰ *In his hand is the life of every living thing
and the breath of all mankind.*

¹¹ *Does not the ear test words
as the palate tastes food?*

¹² *Wisdom is with the aged,
and understanding in length of days.*

¹³ *"With God are wisdom and might;
he has counsel and understanding.*

¹⁴ *If he tears down, none can rebuild;
if he shuts a man in, none can open.*

¹⁵ *If he withholds the waters, they dry up;
if he sends them out, they overwhelm the land.*

¹⁶ *With him are strength and sound wisdom;
the deceived and the deceiver are his.*

¹⁷ *He leads counselors away stripped,
and judges he makes fools.*

¹⁸ *He looses the bonds of kings*

and binds a waistcloth on their hips.
¹⁹ *He leads priests away stripped*
and overthrows the mighty.
²⁰ *He deprives of speech those who are trusted*
and takes away the discernment of the elders.
²¹ *He pours contempt on princes*
and loosens the belt of the strong.
²² *He uncovers the deeps out of darkness*
and brings deep darkness to light.
²³ *He makes nations great, and he destroys them;*
he enlarges nations, and leads them away.
²⁴ *He takes away understanding from the chiefs of the people of the earth*
and makes them wander in a trackless waste.
²⁵ *They grope in the dark without light,*
and he makes them stagger like a drunken man.” – Job 12:1-25 ESV

Job has just had to listen to a third “friend” share his unsympathetic assessment of his circumstances, and he can’t keep from responding. He probably knew his friends meant well, but he was in no mood to listen to more of these arm-chair quarterbacks as they pontificated about his plight.

For Job, the idea that God was somehow responsible for his condition was a no-brainer. Whether or not God was behind his difficult circumstances was not the issue. He firmly believed that God was in control and so, ultimately, God was responsible. God could have prevented the disasters and the disease that had impacted Job’s life, but He had chosen not to. Job fully understood the power and might of God. He knew that God was providentially in control over the affairs of all men – rich and poor, strong and weak, righteous and unrighteous. Job’s belief in the sovereignty of God was unshakeable.

“True wisdom and real power belong to God; from him we learn how to live, and also what to live for. If he tears something down, it's down for good; if he locks people up, they're locked up for good. If he holds back the rain, there's a drought; if he lets it loose, there's a flood. Strength and success belong to God; both deceived and deceiver must answer to him.” – Job 12:13-15 MSG

So, Job knew that God alone could provide the answer as to why he was suffering, and he was fully convinced that it had nothing to do with his sin. Yet Job’s friends had reached a different conclusion. They kept blaming his condition on his sinfulness but couldn't tell him exactly what he had done to deserve such harsh judgment from God.

Job was convinced of his own innocence, and he was certain that God would have to agree. Which means there had to be another reason for his suffering. All he wanted was the chance to ask God face-to-face. So, he pushed back hard on Zophar’s counsel and sarcastically questioned his friends’ over-confident assertions regarding his guilt.

*"You people really know everything, don't you?
And when you die, wisdom will die with you!
Well, I know a few things myself—
and you're no better than I am.
Who doesn't know these things you've been saying?"* – Job 12:2-3 NLT

He wasn't going to argue with their thoughts concerning God's omnipotence and omniscience. It was their cocky assurance regarding his guilt that drove him crazy. They were actually mocking him for attempting to demand an explanation from God. From their perspective, God owed him nothing and he was wasting his breath and his time pleading for God to come to his defense. That day was never going to come. But that didn't keep Job from declaring his frustration with God's apparent disinterest in his plight. He saw the wicked receiving better treatment from God, while he was kept in the dark and denied a response to his pleas for acquittal and restoration.

*"...robbers are left in peace,
and those who provoke God live in safety—
though God keeps them in his power."* – Job 12:6 NLT

All he was asking for was a fair shake. Even the animals, birds, and fish enjoyed were the unwitting and undeserving beneficiaries of God's grace, so why was he denied the right to a response and the hope of a fair trial?

*"...the life of every living thing is in his hand,
and the breath of every human being."* – Job 12:10 NLT

As far as he could tell, the rest of nature seemed to get a fair shake from the Creator, while he was left to suffer in insufferable silence. Job was hoping for vindication, but was willing to settle for a little justification from God for his plight. Job didn't think his friends were stupid, but he also didn't think they had a monopoly on wisdom. That was the purview of God.

*"Wisdom belongs to the aged,
and understanding to the old.*

*"But true wisdom and power are found in God;
counsel and understanding are his."* – Job 12:12-13 NLT

His friends could continue to regale him with all their earthly wit and wisdom but he wouldn't be satisfied until he heard directly from the source of all wisdom: God Almighty. Compared to God, every other counselor is nothing but a hapless fool spouting man-made platitudes and helpless homilies.

*"Yes, strength and wisdom are his;
deceivers and deceived are both in his power.*

*He leads counselors away, stripped of good judgment;
wise judges become fools.” – Job 12:16-17 NLT*

From Job’s perspective, listening to his three friends was a royal waste of time because they were clueless as to what was really going on. They couldn’t provide any real insight into his circumstances because their point of view was hampered by their earth-bound perspectives. And Job warned them that God would ultimately expose them as frauds rather than faithful friends.

*“He silences the trusted adviser
and removes the insight of the elders.” – Job 12:20 NLT*

When exposed to the penetrating light of God’s wisdom, their wonderful words of advice would wither like weeds in the hot midday sun. Job truly believed that he would one day be vindicated by God and his friends would learn just how wrong they had been.

*“He strips kings of understanding
and leaves them wandering in a pathless wasteland.
They grope in the darkness without a light.
He makes them stagger like drunkards.” – Job 12:24-25 NLT*

But Job maintained his confidence in the goodness of God, and expressed his firm belief that God’s light would eventually shine on his life again and make sense of all the madness.

*“He uncovers mysteries hidden in darkness;
he brings light to the deepest gloom.” – Job 12:22 NLT*

But in the meantime, Job maintained his right to state his case before the Judge of the universe. All he was asking for was a fair trial. He was willing to accept whatever sentence God might mete out, but what he couldn’t take was God’s continued silence.

Job 13:1-28**The Unparalleled Patience of God**

- ¹ *"Behold, my eye has seen all this,
my ear has heard and understood it.*
- ² *What you know, I also know;
I am not inferior to you.*
- ³ *But I would speak to the Almighty,
and I desire to argue my case with God.*
- ⁴ *As for you, you whitewash with lies;
worthless physicians are you all.*
- ⁵ *Oh that you would keep silent,
and it would be your wisdom!*
- ⁶ *Hear now my argument
and listen to the pleadings of my lips.*
- ⁷ *Will you speak falsely for God
and speak deceitfully for him?*
- ⁸ *Will you show partiality toward him?
Will you plead the case for God?*
- ⁹ *Will it be well with you when he searches you out?
Or can you deceive him, as one deceives a man?*
- ¹⁰ *He will surely rebuke you
if in secret you show partiality.*
- ¹¹ *Will not his majesty terrify you,
and the dread of him fall upon you?*
- ¹² *Your maxims are proverbs of ashes;
your defenses are defenses of clay.*
- ¹³ *"Let me have silence, and I will speak,
and let come on me what may.*
- ¹⁴ *Why should I take my flesh in my teeth
and put my life in my hand?*
- ¹⁵ *Though he slay me, I will hope in him;
yet I will argue my ways to his face.*
- ¹⁶ *This will be my salvation,
that the godless shall not come before him.*
- ¹⁷ *Keep listening to my words,
and let my declaration be in your ears.*
- ¹⁸ *Behold, I have prepared my case;
I know that I shall be in the right.*
- ¹⁹ *Who is there who will contend with me?
For then I would be silent and die.*
- ²⁰ *Only grant me two things,*

then I will not hide myself from your face:
²¹ *withdraw your hand far from me,
 and let not dread of you terrify me.*
²² *Then call, and I will answer;
 or let me speak, and you reply to me.*
²³ *How many are my iniquities and my sins?
 Make me know my transgression and my sin.*
²⁴ *Why do you hide your face
 and count me as your enemy?*
²⁵ *Will you frighten a driven leaf
 and pursue dry chaff?*
²⁶ *For you write bitter things against me
 and make me inherit the iniquities of my youth.*
²⁷ *You put my feet in the stocks
 and watch all my paths;
 you set a limit for the soles of my feet.*
²⁸ *Man wastes away like a rotten thing,
 like a garment that is moth-eaten.” – Job 13:1-28 ESV*

Job is just getting started. Warming to his topic, Job lets Zophar know that his impassioned speech provided no new information. His friend had produced no new details or insights into his circumstances that would persuade Job to change his mind. And he was more insistent than ever about demanding answers from God.

He tells his friends, "I'm taking my case straight to God Almighty; I've had it with you – I'm going directly to God" (Job 13:3 MSG). He is done listening to them and he tells them so.

"You graffiti my life with lies. You're a bunch of pompous quacks! I wish you'd shut your mouths – silence is your only claim to wisdom." – Job 13:4-5 MSG

Job wants to go directly to the source of his only hope and help – God Himself. His friends, with their poor bedside manners, have been more hurtful than helpful. Job knows they can't answer his questions or solve his problem. So he turns to God and asks, "O God, grant me these two things, and then I will be able to face you. Remove your heavy hand from me, and don't terrify me with your awesome presence." (Job 13:20-21 NLT).

I love Job's brutal honesty. He doesn't hide his request with fancy "thees" and "thous." He doesn't mask his frustration with flowery prose or pious-sounding prayer speech. He just tells God exactly what's on his heart. He asks for relief and answers.

What a reminder that we have a God who is big enough to handle our toughest questions. He can handle the honest and heartfelt expression of our frustration. In fact, I believe God would rather have us be honest with Him than watch us cover up our fears and frustrations with religious-sounding platitudes that we don't believe or understand.

In the middle of a trial in which things are going severely wrong and your frustration is mounting, I don't think God wants to hear you say, "Oh, Mighty God, maker of all things and ruler over all mankind, thank you for putting me through all this pain and suffering. Thank you for all the hurt and the heartache! You are a good God!"

God knows our hearts. He knows what we are thinking, and He wants us to share with Him what is on our hearts. He can handle our honesty, but He can't stand our poor attempts at false faithfulness. If we can give God a heartfelt, "I trust You!," so be it. But we often express words to God that we don't feel or believe. Job was telling God exactly what he was feeling. And tough times tend to make us more honest. During trials, it is harder to keep up the fake veneer of faithfulness. Job's faith was being tested and he was looking for answers, for proof. So, he turned to God.

Psalms 119 could have been written by Job. It is full of honest expressions of fear, frustration, doubt, and disenchantment. But the writer of Psalms 119 knew he could turn to God and openly express his feelings.

*I have chosen to be faithful;
I have determined to live by your regulations.
I cling to your laws.
Lord, don't let me be put to shame!
I will pursue your commands,
for you expand my understanding.*

*Teach me your decrees, O Lord;
I will keep them to the end. – Psalms 119:30-33 NLT*

Job's world had been rocked. His entire belief system was in shambles because everything he thought he knew about God had been turned upside down. And his friends were proving to be unreliable sources of comfort or wise counsel. They were painting blurry and indecipherable images of God that only intensified Job's confusion and pain. He had become so disenchanted with their input that he pleaded with them to cease and desist.

*"Be silent now and leave me alone.
Let me speak, and I will face the consequences.
Why should I put myself in mortal danger
and take my life in my own hands?
God might kill me, but I have no other hope.
I am going to argue my case with him." – Job 14:13-15 NLT*

To put it bluntly, Job wanted his friends to shut up and God to show up. He was more than willing to take his chances with God, and he would even risk having God expose whatever sin he had committed.

*“Tell me, what have I done wrong?
Show me my rebellion and my sin.” – Job 13:23 NLT*

In essence, Job is demanding a court date with God. He wanted the opportunity to defend himself before the only one who had the power to convict or acquit him. From Job’s point of view, God had no grounds for punishing him. He believed himself to be innocent and unworthy of all the judgments he had received. Something was wrong. A mistake had been made. And he couldn’t help but ask, “Why do you turn away from me? Why do you treat me as your enemy?” (Job 13:24 NLT).

As far as Job could tell, the only indictments God could level against him were from the past. He even seems to accuse God of cherry-picking from his past and dredging up old transgressions that had long ago been forgiven and forgotten.

*“You write bitter accusations against me
and bring up all the sins of my youth.” – Job 13:26 NLT*

In a way, Job was complaining that he had been declared guilty by God and was being forced to prove his own innocence. But he was frustrated about the lack of access to the courtroom of God. There had been plenty of witnesses called by the prosecution, but Job was still waiting for his opportunity to stand before the Judge of the universe and defend himself.

Job was calling on God, but his words were rife with bold accusations and unsubstantiated assumptions. He had come to the right source, but he was doing so in a less-than-righteous manner. But as time will reveal, God was more than willing to let Job vent his frustration and level his charges. The Almighty was not intimidated by Job’s harsh words or easily offended by his brutal honesty. God understood that Job’s caustic comments were flowing from the deep well of his grief and confusion. And, for the time being, God was willing to allow Job the freedom to speak bluntly and rather disrespectfully. Job’s words didn’t shock God and the accusatory manner of this down-and-out servant didn’t bring down the wrath of God. God knew Job needed to vent and He was willing to wait Job had said all he had to say.

In time, Job would learn the invaluable lesson found in the following psalm of David.

*The Lord is compassionate and merciful,
slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love.
He will not constantly accuse us,
nor remain angry forever.
He does not punish us for all our sins;
he does not deal harshly with us, as we deserve.
For his unfailing love toward those who fear him
is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth. – Psalm 103:8-11 NLT*

Job 14:1-22**The Hope of the Resurrection**

¹ *"Man who is born of a woman
is few of days and full of trouble.*

² *He comes out like a flower and withers;
he flees like a shadow and continues not.*

³ *And do you open your eyes on such a one
and bring me into judgment with you?*

⁴ *Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?
There is not one.*

⁵ *Since his days are determined,
and the number of his months is with you,
and you have appointed his limits that he cannot pass,*

⁶ *look away from him and leave him alone,
that he may enjoy, like a hired hand, his day.*

⁷ *"For there is hope for a tree,
if it be cut down, that it will sprout again,
and that its shoots will not cease.*

⁸ *Though its root grow old in the earth,
and its stump die in the soil,*

⁹ *yet at the scent of water it will bud
and put out branches like a young plant.*

¹⁰ *But a man dies and is laid low;
man breathes his last, and where is he?*

¹¹ *As waters fail from a lake
and a river wastes away and dries up,*

¹² *so a man lies down and rises not again;
till the heavens are no more he will not awake
or be roused out of his sleep.*

¹³ *Oh that you would hide me in Sheol,
that you would conceal me until your wrath be past,
that you would appoint me a set time, and remember me!*

¹⁴ *If a man dies, shall he live again?
All the days of my service I would wait,
till my renewal should come.*

¹⁵ *You would call, and I would answer you;
you would long for the work of your hands.*

¹⁶ *For then you would number my steps;
you would not keep watch over my sin;*

¹⁷ *my transgression would be sealed up in a bag,
and you would cover over my iniquity.*

¹⁸ *"But the mountain falls and crumbles away,
and the rock is removed from its place;
¹⁹ the waters wear away the stones;
the torrents wash away the soil of the earth;
so you destroy the hope of man.
²⁰ You prevail forever against him, and he passes;
you change his countenance, and send him away.
²¹ His sons come to honor, and he does not know it;
they are brought low, and he perceives it not.
²² He feels only the pain of his own body,
and he mourns only for himself."* – Job 14:1-22 ESV

Job has reached the far-from-optimistic conclusion that life is short and then you die. Through the pain-clouded lens of his own life, he has determined that the time span from birth to death is a relatively short one and the period in between is filled with troubles of all kinds. But his dour assessment does not provide an accurate reflection of his own life. Up until recently, he had enjoyed a trouble-free existence, complete with wealth, good health, and a vibrant family life. He had been a respected member of the community and was considered "the greatest of all the people of the east" (Job 1:3 ESV). But then tragedy struck. In a series of bizarre disasters, Job endured the loss of his fortune, the deaths of his ten children, and the failure of his health. And the sheer emotional weight of these unexpected and unexplained losses led Job to reach his inaccurate but very heartfelt conclusion.

Because of all that had happened in his life, Job was having a difficult time remembering the "good old days." His memory was clouded by his pain. His ability to recall the many years of blessing had been greatly diminished by the severity of his most recent losses. He was living in the moment and evaluating the success of his entire life through tear-stained eyes and a broken heart. We may judge his view as myopic and self-centered but his words were coming from a place of pain. That is what led him to be so brutally blunt with God.

*"You have decided the length of our lives.
You know how many months we will live,
and we are not given a minute longer.
So leave us alone and let us rest!
We are like hired hands, so let us finish our work in peace."* – Job 14:5-6 NLT

His unabashed honesty with God makes us uncomfortable. We can't imagine getting away with that kind of in-your-face approach to God. Yet, there have probably been times when we have thought what Job dared to say. On those occasions, we felt the desire to shake our fists in the face of God and declare our dissatisfaction with His handling of our lives. But lacking the boldness of Job, we just kept our thoughts to ourselves and weathered the storm.

But Job wasn't willing to back down or shut up. He felt like he had been backed into a corner and was being falsely attacked by his friends. His integrity was under assault. Not only had he

lost everything near and dear to him, but he was being systematically robbed of his reputation. Still reeling from his most recent losses, Job was having to sit back and listen as his name was dragged through the mud by his supposed friends. And it was all too much for him to bear. That's what drove him to take his case to God. That's what emboldened him to say things that make us gasp in shock.

*"I wish you would hide me in the grave
and forget me there until your anger has passed.
But mark your calendar to think of me again!" – Job 14:13 NLT*

Job was asking God to kill him. He would rather die than continue to endure the sorrow and suffering that marked his earthly existence. He saw no light at the end of the tunnel. There was no silver lining to the dark cloud that had settled over his life. He had lost all hope and was desperately pleading with God to intervene; to do something, anything to relieve his pain. Even death would be preferable to more despair.

In his monologue, Job reveals a rather embryonic and as-yet-incomplete understanding of the afterlife. He seems to believe in a life after death but is not quite sure what it entails. His mention of Sheol is a reference to the grave. He knows his life will end in death but is not certain of what will happen next. He hints at a belief in some kind of resurrection or release from Sheol or the grave.

*"Can the dead live again?
If so, this would give me hope through all my years of struggle,
and I would eagerly await the release of death." – Job 14:14 NLT*

If he could be certain of life after death, he would have reason to hope. But for Job, death was like a door that opened into an unknown realm. He didn't know what was beyond the threshold of death, so all he could do was focus his attention on this life. And from his vantage point, the future was far from bright.

Job wanted to believe in a resurrection from the dead. The concept was comforting and encouraging.

*"You would call and I would answer,
and you would yearn for me, your handiwork.
For then you would guard my steps,
instead of watching for my sins.
My sins would be sealed in a pouch,
and you would cover my guilt." – Job 14:15-17 NLT*

He envisioned God calling him from the grave and restoring him to life. He imagined his past sins being forgiven and forgotten by God as he began his new resurrected life in the presence of

God. But then his pessimism kicks back in and he reverts to his old tried-and-true, dark-and-gloomy view of life.

*"But instead, as mountains fall and crumble
and as rocks fall from a cliff,
as water wears away the stones
and floods wash away the soil,
so you destroy people's hope." – Job 14:18-19 NLT*

Job couldn't bring himself to see past the present. His world was relegated to the here and now, which kept him from believing in any kind of hereafter. With his myopic outlook on life, he couldn't imagine a better tomorrow or the possibility of a blessed eternal state.

This poor man had reached rock bottom. He was depressed, distressed, disappointed, and totally devoid of all hope. His final statement in this morbid monologue reflects the depth of his despair.

*"You always overpower them, and they pass from the scene.
You disfigure them in death and send them away.
They never know if their children grow up in honor
or sink to insignificance.
They suffer painfully;
their life is full of trouble." – Job 14:20-22 NLT*

As far as Job could tell, death was a dead end. He had no assurance of a future resurrection, so he assumed the worst. For Job, death was a black hole from which he would lose all touch with this world. From his gloomy perspective, Job assumes that the dead can't look back and see what happens to their loved ones. From their vantage point in Sheol, the dead don't have access to this world. They can't watch their grandchildren grow up. They don't have the hope of looking back and seeing their loved ones carry on after their deaths. This sullen outlook about the future led Job to view his current circumstances with even greater despair.

Job saw the grave as his only escape from the pain of this life but, at the same time, it filled him with fear because he didn't know what lay beyond death's door. Job didn't know what the apostle Paul knew. He wasn't privy to the hope of eternal life through Jesus Christ. He was living on the other side of the cross. But as New Testament believers, we can find hope, assurance, and peace in the words that Paul penned.

But let me reveal to you a wonderful secret. We will not all die, but we will all be transformed! It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we who are living will also be transformed. For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies.

Then, when our dying bodies have been transformed into bodies that will never die, this Scripture will be fulfilled:

*“Death is swallowed up in victory.
O death, where is your victory?
O death, where is your sting?”*

For sin is the sting that results in death, and the law gives sin its power. But thank God! He gives us victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ. – 1 Corinthians 15:51-57 NLT

Job 16:1-22**Our Almighty Advocate**

¹ *Then Job answered and said:*

² *"I have heard many such things;
miserable comforters are you all.*

³ *Shall windy words have an end?
Or what provokes you that you answer?*

⁴ *I also could speak as you do,
if you were in my place;
I could join words together against you
and shake my head at you.*

⁵ *I could strengthen you with my mouth,
and the solace of my lips would assuage your pain.*

⁶ *"If I speak, my pain is not assuaged,
and if I forbear, how much of it leaves me?*

⁷ *Surely now God has worn me out;
he has made desolate all my company.*

⁸ *And he has shriveled me up,
which is a witness against me,
and my leanness has risen up against me;
it testifies to my face.*

⁹ *He has torn me in his wrath and hated me;
he has gnashed his teeth at me;
my adversary sharpens his eyes against me.*

¹⁰ *Men have gaped at me with their mouth;
they have struck me insolently on the cheek;
they mass themselves together against me.*

¹¹ *God gives me up to the ungodly
and casts me into the hands of the wicked.*

¹² *I was at ease, and he broke me apart;
he seized me by the neck and dashed me to pieces;
he set me up as his target;*

¹³ *his archers surround me.
He slashes open my kidneys and does not spare;
he pours out my gall on the ground.*

¹⁴ *He breaks me with breach upon breach;
he runs upon me like a warrior.*

¹⁵ *I have sewed sackcloth upon my skin
and have laid my strength in the dust.*

¹⁶ *My face is red with weeping,*

*and on my eyelids is deep darkness,
¹⁷ although there is no violence in my hands,
 and my prayer is pure.*

*¹⁸ "O earth, cover not my blood,
 and let my cry find no resting place.*

*¹⁹ Even now, behold, my witness is in heaven,
 and he who testifies for me is on high.*

*²⁰ My friends scorn me;
 my eye pours out tears to God,*

*²¹ that he would argue the case of a man with God,
 as a son of man does with his neighbor.*

*²² For when a few years have come
 I shall go the way from which I shall not return." – Job 16:1-22 ESV*

There was a lot that Job didn't know in the middle of all that was going on in his life. He didn't know why he was suffering. He didn't know why his friends were attacking him and accusing him of sins he had not committed. He didn't know why all of his children had to die. He didn't know what was going to happen to him. But he DID know one thing for sure: The answers to all of his questions and the solution to all of his problems were in heaven. He knew that he needed to direct his cries to God and not men. While men can and should provide comfort and support, they can't solve life's problems. Only God can do that.

This realization led Job to castigate his friends for their wordy and worthless diatribes.

*"What miserable comforters you are!
 Won't you ever stop blowing hot air?
 What makes you keep on talking?" – Job 16:2-3 NLT*

He was fed up with having to listen to their pompous pontifications and pious-sounding platitudes. Their words were unhelpful and uninspiring. In fact, Job states that if their roles were reversed, he could just as easily play the role of adversary rather than advocate.

*"I could say the same things if you were in my place.
 I could spout off criticism and shake my head at you." – Job 16:4 NLT*

But he wouldn't.

*"...if it were me, I would encourage you.
 I would try to take away your grief." – Job 16:5 NLT*

Job has no desire for revenge. He simply asks that his friends back off and stop their incessant efforts to tear him down. He needs comfort, not criticism. He longs for encouragement, not more incrimination. But their verbal assault continues, no matter what he does. If he defends

himself against their accusations, it only adds fuel to the fire. They view his cries of innocence as proof of guilt. And if he chooses to say nothing, they still come to the same conclusion. His silence condemns him.

So, Job calls on God to be his witness. He may not understand why he is suffering, but he knows he is innocent and, in the end, only God can testify to that fact. Job can't prove he is blameless but God can, and Job is counting on it. In fact, he pleads that God would act as his mediator as well as his judge. He asks God to perform both roles because there is no one else he can count on.

*"Even now my witness is in heaven.
My advocate is there on high.
My friends scorn me,
but I pour out my tears to God."* – Job 16:19-20 NLT

His friends think he is guilty. They would be lousy witnesses, let alone good mediators. So Job is left with God as his sole source of comfort and support. Which is right where Job needed to be.

His anger with God is visible and visceral. His world has been rocked and his belief in God's sovereignty left him with no other logical conclusion than that God was behind it all.

*"O God, you have ground me down
and devastated my family.
As if to prove I have sinned, you've reduced me to skin and bones.
My gaunt flesh testifies against me."* – Job 16:7-8 NLT

*"I was living quietly until he shattered me.
He took me by the neck and broke me in pieces."* – Job 16:12 NLT

*"Again and again he smashes against me,
charging at me like a warrior."* – Job 16:14 NLT

Job graphically describes his abject physical state. His health has diminished, leaving him emaciated and gaunt. His emotional well-being has suffered greatly, leaving him in a constant state of mourning.

*"My eyes are red with weeping;
dark shadows circle my eyes."* – Job 16:16 NLT

But despite all his pain and suffering, and his belief that God was behind it all, he still sees God as his only source of help and hope.

*"Even now my witness is in heaven.
My advocate is there on high."* – Job 16:19 NLT

Job was blaming God for all his difficulties, but he was also counting on God for deliverance. And the second half of that equation is essential. God wants us to lean on Him and nothing else. He wants us to rely on Him and no one else. He can handle our criticism and our casting of blame. But, when all is said and done, He wants us to turn to Him for help.

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart;
do not depend on your own understanding.
Seek his will in all you do,
and he will show you which path to take. – Proverbs 3:5-6 NLT*

Amid all his problems, Job was still reaching out to God. He hadn't given up or made the fateful decision to run away from God. And that is exactly what God would desire His children to do. As the old hymn so eloquently states:

*In seasons of distress and grief,
My soul has often found relief,
And oft escaped the tempter's snare,
By thy return, sweet hour of prayer!*

Job was calling out to God. It's interesting to note that, in spite of Job's uncertainty, he describes a relationship with God that each of us as believers enjoy. Because of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, He is able to stand before God the Father as the One who perfectly fulfilled all the requirements of the Law. Jesus lived a sinless life, so He was able to act as the sinless sacrifice in our place and pay the penalty that sin required. He died in our place, and the result is that we have eternal life. Now Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father acting as our advocate and mediator.

For there is only one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and people. He is the man Christ Jesus. – 1 Timothy 2:5 NLT

We have exactly what Job was asking and longing for – an advocate and representative who stands before God, speaks on our behalf, and defends our righteousness. Because of what Jesus has done, when God looks at us He no longer sees our sins; He sees us covered with the blood of His Son. Therefore, we are righteous in His eyes. And even when we do sin, Jesus acts as our advocate, reminding God the Father that the price for that sin has already been paid. This is the great news that the apostle John shared with the believers in his day.

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. – 1 John 2:1 NASB

Job inherently knew that God was the one to turn to in a time of need. He knew that God could be trusted to judge impartially and fairly. He understood that God was the only one who would be a reliable witness on his behalf. Yes, Job was struggling with doubt and despair. He was questioning everything. But he knew that, in the end, he could count on God.

How much more so should we? We have Jesus Christ as our advocate. He is our faithful representative, standing before God the Father and acting on our behalf, pleading our case before the throne of God. That is where we need to turn. That is who we need to trust.

For Christ has entered into heaven itself to appear now before God as our Advocate. –
Hebrews 9:24 NLT

We can come right into God's throne room with confidence because we are well represented by Jesus our advocate. He has earned the right to represent us before God because He served as our sin substitute. And because of what Jesus has done, we are able to stand before God as sinless and holy.

When things take a turn for the worse in my life, I do not have to stand before God in fear, wondering if He is punishing me for some sin I have committed. My sins have all been paid for. The punishment for all my transgressions – past, present, and future – has already been meted out and His judgment has already been satisfied. We need to keep reminding ourselves that we can turn to God and trust Him to act favorably or propitiously on our behalf. He loves us because we are His children.

Job 17:1-16**A One-Dimensional View of God**

- ¹ *"My spirit is broken; my days are extinct;
the graveyard is ready for me.*
- ² *Surely there are mockers about me,
and my eye dwells on their provocation.*
- ³ *"Lay down a pledge for me with you;
who is there who will put up security for me?*
- ⁴ *Since you have closed their hearts to understanding,
therefore you will not let them triumph.*
- ⁵ *He who informs against his friends to get a share of their property—
the eyes of his children will fail.*
- ⁶ *"He has made me a byword of the peoples,
and I am one before whom men spit.*
- ⁷ *My eye has grown dim from vexation,
and all my members are like a shadow.*
- ⁸ *The upright are appalled at this,
and the innocent stirs himself up against the godless.*
- ⁹ *Yet the righteous holds to his way,
and he who has clean hands grows stronger and stronger.*
- ¹⁰ *But you, come on again, all of you,
and I shall not find a wise man among you.*
- ¹¹ *My days are past; my plans are broken off,
the desires of my heart.*
- ¹² *They make night into day:
'The light,' they say, 'is near to the darkness.'*
- ¹³ *If I hope for Sheol as my house,
if I make my bed in darkness,*
- ¹⁴ *if I say to the pit, 'You are my father,'
and to the worm, 'My mother,' or 'My sister,'*
- ¹⁵ *where then is my hope?
Who will see my hope?*
- ¹⁶ *Will it go down to the bars of Sheol?
Shall we descend together into the dust?" – Job 17:1-16 ESV*

In this section of Job's speech, he inadvertently shifts from talking to God directly to addressing Him in the third person. It is as if he is addressing two different audiences at once. One moment, he seems to be speaking directly to God:

*"You must defend my innocence, O God,
since no one else will stand up for me." – Job 17:3 NLT*

In the next breath, he addresses an unseen audience to whom he vents his frustration about Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar.

*"God has made a mockery of me among the people;
they spit in my face." – Job 17:6 NLT*

Then he suddenly directs his attention back to his three accusers.

*"As for all of you, come back with a better argument,
though I still won't find a wise man among you." – Job 17:10 NLT*

It's almost as if Job sees himself on trial in a courtroom. He is standing before God, who serves as the judge, his three friends make up the prosecution, and his neighbors act as a jury of his peers. Job finds himself on the witness stand, responding to the accusations of his guilt, and attempting to sway the judge and jury of his innocence.

In his hopeless and impoverished state, Job pleads with God to put up the money for his bond.

*"Lay down a pledge for me with you;
who is there who will put up security for me?" – Job 17:3 ESV*

In the legal system of that day, each litigant was required to post a bond that would help cover the expense of the trial. At the end of the trial, the losing party would forfeit whatever collateral they had pledged. But Job was destitute and had lost all his worldly possessions, so he had no cash or collateral on hand. Job's unusual request for a pledge from "the judge" was his way of letting God know that he felt like he was on trial. There was no literal courtroom with a jury and a judge sitting on a dais. But from Job's perspective, his entire life had turned into a courtroom drama with himself as the defendant and God acting as his judge.

What complicated matters for Job was that the judge was also the cause of all his troubles. Since Job believed in the sovereignty of God, he could reach no other conclusion than that the Almighty was the moving force behind all that had happened in his life. At no time does Job blame Satan or anyone else for his problems. He inherently knows that God is the ruler over all the universe and nothing happens without His consent or causation.

So, in this "trial" of his life, Job finds himself in a rather awkward position, having to defend himself against his "assailant" who also serves as his judge. And, in a way, Job must also rely on God to act as his defense attorney because he has no one else to whom he can turn or trust. This rather unconventional trial causes Job to make statements that seem contradictory and confusing.

While he expresses anger with the unwarranted attacks of his friends, Job holds God responsible.

*"You have closed their minds to understanding,
but do not let them triumph.
They betray their friends for their own advantage..." – Job 17:5 NLT*

Yet, he wants the judge to punish his friends for their actions.

"... so let their children faint with hunger." – Job 17:5 b NLT

Job couldn't help but hold God accountable. After all, he believed His all-powerful God to be in control of all things at all times. So, he reasoned that his difficulties could have no explanation other than God. And his undeserved and inexplicable troubles were having a negative impact on those around him.

*"God has made a mockery of me among the people;
they spit in my face.
My eyes are swollen with weeping,
and I am but a shadow of my former self.
The virtuous are horrified when they see me.
The innocent rise up against the ungodly." – Job 17:6-8 NLT*

Those who once looked up to Job as an icon of integrity and virtue now cross to the other side of the street when they see him. They avoid him like the plague. Those who once revered Job for his righteousness are now horrified by his apparent wickedness and join the mob that assails him as ungodly. He has become a social pariah and an outcast in his own community. He has no family, home, or friends. He is alone and desperate for someone to come to his aid and defense, so he calls on his God.

*"My days are over.
My hopes have disappeared.
My heart's desires are broken." – Job 17:11 NLT*

These are the cries of a broken man. He is not using hyperbole or overexaggerated rhetoric to intensify his suffering. He is not shedding crocodile tears or putting on a performance to gain the sympathy of the judge and jury. Job is at the end of his emotional tether, crying out for someone to step in and deliver him from the never-ending nightmare that has become his life.

What frustrates Job is how his friends use their words to twist reality. Their clever speeches paint a false picture of what is really going on.

*"These men say that night is day;
they claim that the darkness is light." – Job 17:12 NLT*

Their statements contradict the truth. In a sense, Job accuses them of lying in order to state their case against him. Their words, cleverly spoken, are nothing but fabrications and half-truths that portray Job as a wicked man who fully deserves all that is happening. But Job knows that they are wrong. Yet, the only hope he has left is death. The only way he sees this nightmare ending is with the termination of his life.

*“If I hope for Sheol as my house,
if I make my bed in darkness,
if I say to the pit, ‘You are my father,’
and to the worm, ‘My mother,’ or ‘My sister,’
where then is my hope?” – Job 17:13-15 ESV*

But in his heart, he knows that death will not bring deliverance. The loss of his life will not restore his reputation, bring back his dead children, or renew the joy he once had. With no clear idea of what lay beyond the grave, Job could not imagine death as the preferred solution to his problem. That is what led him to take his case to God.

He is pleading with God to come up with another plan. He asks the judge to pronounce a verdict that will vindicate him and restore him – in this life. Job doesn’t want to die, but if the future holds more suffering, he sees it as his only way out. However, he believed that God had the power and authority to step in and change the course of his life. If God had caused it all, He could also bring it to an end.

But Job had a one-dimensional view of God. He had somehow reached the conclusion that a good God gives nothing but good gifts to his good children. If Job was convinced of his own righteousness, then he believed himself to be deserving of God’s goodness. In a sense, he had turned God into a cosmic slot machine, a kind of divine genie in the sky who doles out good things to His good children. But this seems to contradict what Job stated back in chapter two.

“Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?” Job 2:10 ESV

Yet, time has a way of altering our perspective. The longer Job had to dwell on and in his misery, the more uncertain he became about his earlier statement. He had been willing to accept the evil as long as it was immediately followed up by a proportionate amount of good. But when more trouble came his way and the floodgates of God’s goodness didn’t open up as expected, Job began to have second thoughts. He began to question the goodness of God. Things hadn’t turned out as he anticipated, and his one-dimensional view of God was leaving him conflicted and confused. Where were his rewards? When was God going to show up and pour out all His blessings again? But Job had much to learn about God and his own unworthiness.

Job 19:1-29**My Redeemer Lives**

¹ Then Job answered and said:

² *"How long will you torment me
and break me in pieces with words?*

³ *These ten times you have cast reproach upon me;
are you not ashamed to wrong me?*

⁴ *And even if it be true that I have erred,
my error remains with myself.*

⁵ *If indeed you magnify yourselves against me
and make my disgrace an argument against me,*

⁶ *know then that God has put me in the wrong
and closed his net about me.*

⁷ *Behold, I cry out, 'Violence!' but I am not answered;
I call for help, but there is no justice.*

⁸ *He has walled up my way, so that I cannot pass,
and he has set darkness upon my paths.*

⁹ *He has stripped from me my glory
and taken the crown from my head.*

¹⁰ *He breaks me down on every side, and I am gone,
and my hope has he pulled up like a tree.*

¹¹ *He has kindled his wrath against me
and counts me as his adversary.*

¹² *His troops come on together;
they have cast up their siege ramp against me
and encamp around my tent.*

¹³ *"He has put my brothers far from me,
and those who knew me are wholly estranged from me.*

¹⁴ *My relatives have failed me,
my close friends have forgotten me.*

¹⁵ *The guests in my house and my maidservants count me as a stranger;
I have become a foreigner in their eyes.*

¹⁶ *I call to my servant, but he gives me no answer;
I must plead with him with my mouth for mercy.*

¹⁷ *My breath is strange to my wife,
and I am a stench to the children of my own mother.*

¹⁸ *Even young children despise me;
when I rise they talk against me.*

¹⁹ *All my intimate friends abhor me,
and those whom I loved have turned against me.*

²⁰ *My bones stick to my skin and to my flesh,
and I have escaped by the skin of my teeth.*
²¹ *Have mercy on me, have mercy on me, O you my friends,
for the hand of God has touched me!*
²² *Why do you, like God, pursue me?
Why are you not satisfied with my flesh?*

²³ *“Oh that my words were written!
Oh that they were inscribed in a book!*
²⁴ *Oh that with an iron pen and lead
they were engraved in the rock forever!*
²⁵ *For I know that my Redeemer lives,
and at the last he will stand upon the earth.*
²⁶ *And after my skin has been thus destroyed,
yet in my flesh I shall see God,
²⁷ whom I shall see for myself,
and my eyes shall behold, and not another.
My heart faints within me!*
²⁸ *If you say, ‘How we will pursue him!’
and, ‘The root of the matter is found in him,’
²⁹ be afraid of the sword,
for wrath brings the punishment of the sword,
that you may know there is a judgment.” – Job 19:1-29 ESV*

Job’s response to Bildad echoes his earlier speeches and continues to reflect his unwillingness to concede defeat or confess his innocence. He is worn out and begs his friends to show him some mercy to balance out their relentless attacks.

*“How long will you torture me?
How long will you try to crush me with your words?
You have already insulted me ten times.
You should be ashamed of treating me so badly.” – Job 19:2-3 NLT*

Their better-than-thou approach to counseling has left Job feeling beaten down rather than lifted up. Their constant displays of moral superiority and self-righteous certainty have done more damage than good.

*“Even if I have sinned,
that is my concern, not yours.
You think you’re better than I am,
using my humiliation as evidence of my sin.” – Job 19:4-5 NLT*

And Job reminds them once again that his real adversary is God. He is the one behind all his pain and misery.

*"God has blocked my way so I cannot move.
 He has plunged my path into darkness.
 He has stripped me of my honor
 and removed the crown from my head.
 He has demolished me on every side, and I am finished."* – Job 19:8-10 NLT

In the midst of all his pain, abandoned by family and friends, Job begs Bildad, Zophar, and Eliphaz to show him a bit of compassion.

*"Have mercy on me, my friends, have mercy,
 for the hand of God has struck me.
 Must you also persecute me, like God does?
 Haven't you chewed me up enough?"* – Job 19:21-22 NLT

Then suddenly, as if a light switch was turned on in a darkened room, Job makes this incredibly optimistic statement.

*"But as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives,
 and he will stand upon the earth at last.
 And after my body has decayed,
 yet in my body I will see God!"* – Job 19:25-26 NLT

Job is suffering inexplicably and unexpectedly. He is being relentlessly attacked and accused by his friends for his apparent wickedness. Yet, he is somehow able to cry out, "I know that my Redeemer lives!"

What is he saying? At the least, he is expressing belief in a God who will one day vindicate him and prove him to be innocent. He holds out hope that his sufferings are not the result of sin and are not some form of divine punishment for wrongs done. Job knows that he will be redeemed in the end. He may die, but he will stand before the Lord with a new body and be innocent of any wrongdoing.

The word Job uses for "Redeemer" is *גֹּאֵל* (*ga'al*, "to redeem, protect, vindicate"). Listen to what the Net Bible study notes have to say about this rich word:

"The word is well-known in the OT because of its identification as the kinsman-redeemer (see the Book of Ruth). This is the near kinsman who will pay off one's debts, defend the family, avenge a killing, marry the widow of the deceased. The word 'redeemer' evokes the wrong connotation for people familiar with the NT alone; a translation of 'Vindicator' would capture the idea more. The concept might include the description of the mediator already introduced in Job 16:19, but surely here Job is thinking of God as his vindicator. The interesting point to be stressed here is that Job has said clearly that he sees no vindication in this life, that he is going to die. But he knows he will be vindicated, and even though he will die, his vindicator lives. The

dilemma remains though: his distress lay in God's hiding his face from him, and his vindication lay only in beholding God in peace."

In the face of the unrelenting onslaught of his friends' accusations, Job is anxious for someone to vindicate him (to clear, as from an accusation, imputation, suspicion, or the like: to vindicate someone's honor). He longs to have someone stand up for him and he knows that the only one who can and will do so is God Himself.

His friends seem unwilling to show him mercy, so Job is left with God alone as his future source of hope and restoration. He has resigned himself with his pending death but he believes that he will stand before God one day with a new body and a clean record.

"I will see him for myself.

Yes, I will see him with my own eyes.

I am overwhelmed at the thought!" – Job 19:27 NLT

Job was able to face death because he placed his hope in the reality of eternity. In his desperate situation, his only recourse was to trust in a God who would one day redeem him and restore him. As bad as his life was, Job could face it only because of his belief in God and his hope in an eternal destiny.

So what about us? How do we face the trials and tests of life? Where do we focus our attention? Yes, Job was fully aware of his suffering. He was not living some Pollyanna dream where he refused to face reality. He was in pain. He was hurting. But he kept going back to the only thing he could trust – God.

There was a lot he didn't understand about God and his own circumstances, but he did know that God was just, righteous, and merciful. He also held on to his fragile belief that there was more to life than the here and now. He had to keep believing that there was a future life ahead of him and it was there that his vindication would be complete. His honor would be restored. Even his body would be renewed. It was that belief that kept Job going in the face of extreme difficulty. And we have the same hope.

We have a Redeemer who will one day vindicate us. He will welcome us into His presence as righteous and completely sinless. We will have restored bodies and hearts that are free from sin. And in the last part of Job's statement, I think we get a glimpse of the future reality of Christ's triumphant return to earth as the conquering Messiah. "But as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and that **he will stand upon the earth at last**" (Job 19:25 NLT).

There is a day coming when Jesus Christ will return to earth, not to suffer and die, but to rule, restore, and reign. That is our hope. That is our future. That is why we can cry out along with Job, "I know my Redeemer lives!"

He will set all things right. He will vindicate and avenge His own. And we will be revealed to be what we have always claimed to be: God's children.

Job 20:20-29**Applying Divine Doctrine Without Divine Authorization**

- ²⁰ *“Because he knew no contentment in his belly,
he will not let anything in which he delights escape him.*
- ²¹ *There was nothing left after he had eaten;
therefore his prosperity will not endure.*
- ²² *In the fullness of his sufficiency he will be in distress;
the hand of everyone in misery will come against him.*
- ²³ *To fill his belly to the full,
God will send his burning anger against him
and rain it upon him into his body.*
- ²⁴ *He will flee from an iron weapon;
a bronze arrow will strike him through.*
- ²⁵ *It is drawn forth and comes out of his body;
the glittering point comes out of his gallbladder;
terrors come upon him.*
- ²⁶ *Utter darkness is laid up for his treasures;
a fire not fanned will devour him;
what is left in his tent will be consumed.*
- ²⁷ *The heavens will reveal his iniquity,
and the earth will rise up against him.*
- ²⁸ *The possessions of his house will be carried away,
dragged off in the day of God's wrath.*
- ²⁹ *This is the wicked man's portion from God,
the heritage decreed for him by God.” – Job 20:20-29 ESV*

The longer Zophar talks, the darker his rhetoric becomes. He is on a roll and believes he has Job on the ropes. According to Zophar, not only is Job wicked and ungodly, but he is greedy and a glutton whose voracious appetite for evil will destroy him. It is somewhat shocking to remember that this man was supposed to be Job's friend and had shown up in Uz with the intent of providing comfort and support. But when Job refused to accept the dark and condemning assessment of his situation from his three “comforters,” they turned on him. His defiant resistance to their calls for confession and repentance was met with resentment and incredulity. Zophar and his companions couldn't believe their ears. How could this miserable wretch of a man dare to contradict their words of wisdom?

In his frustration with Job, Zophar resorts to blame and belittlement. He compares Job to a self-indulgent glutton who can't control his appetite and ends up eating himself out of house and home.

*“Nothing is left after they finish gorging themselves.
Therefore, their prosperity will not endure.” – Job 20:21 NLT*

To Zophar, Job is nothing more than a money-hungry, thrill-seeking, materialistic, and hedonistic fool who has reaped the results of his out-of-control lifestyle. His assessment of Job sounds similar to Paul's description of the "enemies of the cross" who had infiltrated the church in Philippi.

They are headed for destruction. Their god is their appetite, they brag about shameful things, and they think only about this life here on earth. – Philippians 3:19 NLT

But the problem with Zophar's less-than-flattering assessment of Job is that it directly contradicts what God had to say about His faithful servant.

"Have you noticed my servant Job? He is the finest man in all the earth. He is blameless—a man of complete integrity. He fears God and stays away from evil." – Job 1:8 NLT

It seems obvious that Zophar had not sought or received insight from God on Job's situation. He was simply making judgments based on external circumstances and his personal opinion. He is right in stressing God's hatred for sin and the inevitable judgment that awaits those who refuse to repent. But his quick-to-judge mentality had placed him in a precarious position, where he found himself falsely accusing the Lord's anointed and spouting accusations and opinions that were anything but godly.

But in his over-confident zeal, Zophar charged full steam ahead, barraging his poor victim with further insults disguised as insights. He even resorts to praying for Job's eventual destruction by God.

*"May God give them a bellyful of trouble.
May God rain down his anger upon them."* – Job 20:23 NLT

Of course, he's kind enough not to address Job by name but his intentions are clear, and the not-so-subtle message didn't escape Job. It would have been difficult to miss what Zophar was inferring by his graphic depiction of an arrow piercing human flesh and dripping with blood.

*"When they try to escape an iron weapon,
a bronze-tipped arrow will pierce them.
The arrow is pulled from their back,
and the arrowhead glistens with blood."* – Job 20:24-25 NLT

According to Zophar, the archer is God and the victim is Job. God, the righteous warrior, has rained down his anger on the wicked and well-deserving Job. There was nowhere Job could run from God's wrath. He could continue to deny his guilt but God would eventually expose him for what he really was: a guilty and unrepentant sinner.

But again, Zophar is attempting to apply truth based on false assumptions. While much of what he says is accurate, he has mistakenly misapplied the doctrine concerning God's judgment. There is nothing wrong with his portrayal of God as a vengeful judge who metes out wrath on the wicked. The Scriptures fully support Zophar's understanding of divine judgment upon those who perpetrate evil.

*For the wicked will be destroyed,
but those who trust in the Lord will possess the land.*

*Soon the wicked will disappear.
Though you look for them, they will be gone. – Psalm 37:9-10 NLT*

*The wicked plot against the godly;
they snarl at them in defiance.
But the Lord just laughs,
for he sees their day of judgment coming. – Psalm 37:12-13 NLT*

*Though the wicked sprout like weeds
and evildoers flourish,
they will be destroyed forever. – Psalm 92:7 NLT*

The problem was how Zophar had assumed the worst when it came to Job's predicament. He wrongly assessed Job's fall as evidence of wickedness and proof of God's displeasure. From what he could gather, Job had screwed up and God had rained down His righteous anger in just retribution.

But he was wrong.

Zophar didn't have all the facts, so he ended up making wrong assumptions and drawing faulty conclusions. He spoke with self-assumed certainty and an over-confident assurance in his own assessment of the facts.

But he was wrong; categorically and catastrophically wrong.

Yet, he got one thing right. He boldly claimed, "The heavens will reveal their guilt, and the earth will testify against them" (Job 20:27 NLT). That one statement drips with truth and reflects the reality that only God knows the hearts of men and only He is authorized to stand in judgment as to their guilt or innocence.

The one thing Zophar, Bildad, and Eliphaz got consistently right was their call to repentance. All men are required to come to God, confessing their sins and repenting of their open rebellion against His righteous rule and reign. But where these three men got off the rails was in their assumption of Job's wickedness and their assertion that all of Job's pain and suffering was the handiwork of God.

“Was Zophar correct in his assessment of the wicked person’s fate? He was correct in saying that God judges sin, but he was wrong in claiming that God’s judgment always takes place during our earthly lifetime. He was also inaccurate in saying that Job was the type of person he described.” – Dr. Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Job*

Zophar was right when he stated, “This is the reward that God gives the wicked. It is the inheritance decreed by God” (Job 20:29 NLT), but he was wrong in applying it to Job. The doctrines of God are righteous, just, and true, but they must be wielded carefully and judiciously. They should never be used as hammers to beat down the defenseless or to win a war of words with an opponent.

Paul told his young protégé, Timothy, “Be a good worker, one who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly explains the word of truth. Avoid worthless, foolish talk that only leads to more godless behavior” (2 Timothy 2:15-16 NLT). Knowing doctrine is not enough; you also have to know when and how to apply it. Paul also told Timothy that an overseer or leader in the church “must be able to teach” (1 Timothy 3:2 NLT). That phrase carries the idea that a godly leader must be equipped “to teach God’s Word with skill.”

Verses quoted out of context, doctrines used as weapons, and godly truths misappropriated and misapplied are all to be avoided like the plague. Zophar was a veritable fountain of doctrine but he had used it to deluge Job and leave him drowning in despair. If only Zophar had understood that God’s Word, rightly divided, was fully capable of exposing and excising sin. It alone can reveal the condition of the heart and bring about either conviction or comfort. As the author of Hebrews so eloquently put it, “...the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires” (Hebrews 4:12 NLT).

But before you dare to speak on behalf of God, it pays to have heard from God. These men had chosen to address Job’s circumstances as self-appointed spokesmen for God. but they had failed to seek the will of God. Their arrogant appropriation of divine doctrine without divine authorization placed them in dangerous company. Without knowing it, they had become false prophets guilty of propagating false messages from God, and this is not something God takes lightly.

*“I have not sent these prophets,
yet they run around claiming to speak for me.
I have given them no message,
yet they go on prophesying.
If they had stood before me and listened to me,
they would have spoken my words,
and they would have turned my people
from their evil ways and deeds.” – Jeremiah 23:21-22 NLT*

Job 21:1-16

Life Doesn't Always Make Sense

¹ Then Job answered and said:

- ² *"Keep listening to my words,
and let this be your comfort.*
- ³ *Bear with me, and I will speak,
and after I have spoken, mock on.*
- ⁴ *As for me, is my complaint against man?
Why should I not be impatient?*
- ⁵ *Look at me and be appalled,
and lay your hand over your mouth.*
- ⁶ *When I remember, I am dismayed,
and shuddering seizes my flesh.*
- ⁷ *Why do the wicked live,
reach old age, and grow mighty in power?*
- ⁸ *Their offspring are established in their presence,
and their descendants before their eyes.*
- ⁹ *Their houses are safe from fear,
and no rod of God is upon them.*
- ¹⁰ *Their bull breeds without fail;
their cow calves and does not miscarry.*
- ¹¹ *They send out their little boys like a flock,
and their children dance.*
- ¹² *They sing to the tambourine and the lyre
and rejoice to the sound of the pipe.*
- ¹³ *They spend their days in prosperity,
and in peace they go down to Sheol.*
- ¹⁴ *They say to God, 'Depart from us!
We do not desire the knowledge of your ways.*
- ¹⁵ *What is the Almighty, that we should serve him?
And what profit do we get if we pray to him?'*
- ¹⁶ *Behold, is not their prosperity in their hand?
The counsel of the wicked is far from me."* – Job 21:1-16 ESV

Job's friends have a theology of consequences. Their arguments are based on their belief that Job's circumstances are the obvious result of his sinful behavior. He is suffering the consequences of pursuing wickedness. They take a look at the recent events of his life and conclude that God must be punishing him.

All of their speeches are based on this assumption and, the truth is, we can easily find ourselves doing the same thing. When we see someone suffering, we can easily jump to the conclusion

that they've done something wrong and are being punished by God in some way. Many of us have the same you-reap-what-you-sow mentality as Eliphaz, Zophar, and Bildad. It creeps into our thinking and influences our views on life. For instance, if something negative happens in our day, we can quickly find ourselves asking the question, "What did I do wrong?"

We can easily assume that we are suffering the consequences of some past action or thought. God must be punishing us for something we've done. And, if we're not careful, we can just as easily view the sufferings or trials of others in the same simplistic way.

But Job points out a very logical argument against this sin-has-consequences theology. He asks his accusers to take a look at the world around them and explain why it is that most wicked people don't ever suffer the way he has. In fact, they seem to thrive.

*"Why do the wicked prosper,
growing old and powerful?
They live to see their children grow up and settle down,
and they enjoy their grandchildren.
Their homes are safe from every fear,
and God does not punish them." – Job 21:7-9 NLT*

Great question, Job.

Life is not as black and white as it sometimes appears. Not everything fits into a neat and clean cause-and-effect paradigm.

Job points out that they tend to grow old and rich, and their kids grow up to enjoy the wealth they leave behind. From all appearances, there doesn't seem to be any punishment from God on their lives. These very same people openly dismiss God and deny any need for his help or his forgiveness. They mockingly portray God as useless and totally unnecessary because they view their success or failure as completely up to them alone. Job argues that these wicked individuals don't suffer, despite their dishonoring treatment of the Almighty.

"Go away. We want no part of you and your ways. Who is the Almighty, and why should we obey him? What good will it do us to pray?" – Job 21:14-15 NLT

Job points out that these people show no fear or respect for God, but they don't seem to suffer for it. The truth is that they actually prosper, and "they think their prosperity is of their own doing" (Job 21:16 NLT).

And Job is not alone in his outlook on the wicked. The prophet Jeremiah also voiced his confusion over the seeming success of those who dishonor God.

*Lord, you always give me justice
when I bring a case before you.*

*So let me bring you this complaint:
 Why are the wicked so prosperous?
 Why are evil people so happy?
 You have planted them,
 and they have taken root and prospered.
 Your name is on their lips,
 but you are far from their hearts. – Jeremiah 12:1-2 NLT*

The prophet Malachi had to address the growing consternation of the people of God who were questioning whether it was worth it to remain faithful. From their perspective, it seemed that the wicked were better off.

"You have said, 'What's the use of serving God? What have we gained by obeying his commands or by trying to show the Lord of Heaven's Armies that we are sorry for our sins? From now on we will call the arrogant blessed. For those who do evil get rich, and those who dare God to punish them suffer no harm.'" – Malachi 3:14-15 NLT

An honest and objective look at the world would seem to indicate that the wicked don't always suffer for their actions. Good doesn't always win out over evil. The righteous don't always come out on top. After all, Jesus Christ Himself died at the hands of wicked and unrighteous men. Most, if not all, of the disciples suffered martyrdom. History tends to validate Job's conclusion.

This beleaguered man understood that life was not always easily explainable. We don't know why some suffer and others do not. We can't explain why a massive earthquake strikes one nation and not another. Sure, science can provide geological explanations, but no one can fully comprehend the moral implications of such devastating natural disasters.

We don't know why one person suffers from cancer while another doesn't. We don't know why one couple loses their child in a car accident while another couple is allowed to watch their child grow up and live a long life. The fact is, there are things we do not know. There are mysteries to life that we can't explain.

That is where faith comes in. That is where trust in a holy, mighty, all-knowing God comes in. Rather than turning to our conclusions, we must turn to Him. Even God Himself reminds us, "My thoughts are completely different from yours," says the LORD. "And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9 NLT).

When it comes to the egocentric ramblings of self-made men who claim that their prosperity is their own doing, Job simply states, "I will have nothing to do with that kind of thinking" (Job 21:16 NLT). He refuses to take credit for his success but he also refuses to take ownership for his seeming failure. Just because things have not turned out the way he had envisioned, that

doesn't mean he is wicked and reaping the righteous judgment of God. Job refused to draw that pessimistic conclusion.

What he needed and greatly desired was for his friends to comfort and console him in his time of need. He didn't need correction or caustic comments concerning his guilt. He could have used the heart-warming words of

*Don't worry about the wicked
or envy those who do wrong.
For like grass, they soon fade away.
Like spring flowers, they soon wither.*

*Trust in the Lord and do good.
Then you will live safely in the land and prosper.
Take delight in the Lord,
and he will give you your heart's desires. – Psalm 37:1-4 NLT*

These words were written by a man who had experienced his fair share of suffering and sorrow. He had spent years running for his life, attempting to escape the bounty that King Saul had placed on his head. He had been anointed by the prophet of God to become the next king of Israel and yet he was forced to live like a fugitive and was treated like a convicted felon. Yet, he was able to pen the following words.

*Be still in the presence of the Lord,
and wait patiently for him to act.
Don't worry about evil people who prosper
or fret about their wicked schemes. – Psalm 37:7 NLT*

Life can be difficult to understand because things don't always turn out the way we expect. Even the psalmist, Asaph, expressed his confusion and frustration with the incongruities of living in a fallen and sin-damaged world.

*Truly God is good to Israel,
to those whose hearts are pure.
But as for me, I almost lost my footing.
My feet were slipping, and I was almost gone.
For I envied the proud
when I saw them prosper despite their wickedness.
They seem to live such painless lives;
their bodies are so healthy and strong.
They don't have troubles like other people;
they're not plagued with problems like everyone else. – Psalm 73:1-5 NLT*

But Asaph came to his senses and recognized the futility of his faulty thinking.

*Then I realized that my heart was bitter,
 and I was all torn up inside.
 I was so foolish and ignorant—
 I must have seemed like a senseless animal to you.
 Yet I still belong to you;
 you hold my right hand.
 You guide me with your counsel,
 leading me to a glorious destiny.
 Whom have I in heaven but you?
 I desire you more than anything on earth.
 My health may fail, and my spirit may grow weak,
 but God remains the strength of my heart;
 he is mine forever. – Psalm 73:21-26 NLT*

Job was not there yet. He had not reached the same conclusion as Asaph, but that time would come. He would eventually understand and appreciate the ways of God. But in the moment of his distress what he really needed was friends who would stand beside him and not gloat over him. He could have used a few encouraging words from a David or an Asaph. But he was stuck with Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar.

The question we must ask ourselves is what kind of friends are we? Do we reach conclusions about the suffering of others based on conjecture and solely on our examination of the consequences? Are we too quick to question the wickedness of others or to doubt the goodness of God? May the following prayer reflect the desire of our hearts as we live our lives in this fallen and sometimes confusing world.

Father, forgive me for reaching conclusions about You that are based solely on conjecture and poor conclusions based on consequences and nothing more. You are inexplicable and Your ways are always unquestionably right and good. Help me to look for You in any and all circumstances of life. Help me to see the good You are bringing about in my life and the lives of others – despite what I may see. Your ways are not my ways. Your plans are beyond my knowledge and understanding, but they are always right and true. Thank You for that reminder and assurance. Amen.