

Job Is Tested (chapters 1-2)

The Character of Job (1:1-5)

Job is described in the very first verse of the book (and verse 8) as “perfect” (KJV) or “blameless” (NKJV) and “upright,” which means he was ‘pious’ and ‘pleasing to God.’ Job’s life was not characterized by riotous living, but consistently by godliness. He “feared God” or exhibited pronounced reverence toward Jehovah. Job “shunned evil” (NKJV) or literally **‘turned evil off’ in his life**. Though he was not sinlessly perfect, he tried to be. Consequently, God was well pleased with him. No one living today is sinlessly perfect either (Romans 3:10, 23), and yet, Jesus Christ becomes in actuality the Savior of all those today who obey Him (Hebrews 5:9).

From verse 5, we see that Job eagerly and frequently interceded with God on behalf of his children through the patriarchal worship of animal sacrifices. In this, we see his reverence for Almighty God. Job was of “impeccable character” and his devout manner of life and worship was “habitual” (Halley 35). We, today, would do well to imitate Job in these ways!

Job was a morally mature child of God. He exhibited integrity and sincerity in all of his life as one who made no distinction regarding his conduct and profession between occasions of worship or piety and the balance of his life. Job was “without moral blemish” (*Bible Knowledge*). Reminiscent of Ephesians 5:11 for the Christian, Job was “positively devout” and “negatively opposed to sin” (*Pulpit Commentary*). Job possessed a reputation both with God and man that was far above his peers; we Christians, likewise, need to emulate this quality we view in Job. He was a mortal man as we, too, are humans; therefore, it is not too much for us to duplicate in us such a reputation with our fellow human beings and with God.

Verses 2-3 note the unsurpassed wealth that Job possessed (which was discussed in the “Introduction”). Despite temptations to commit sin associated with material affluence (Matthew 19:24;

1 Timothy 6:10, 17), in Job (as with Abraham) one sees “that prosperity and piety are not necessarily mutually exclusive” (Jackson 20). Particularly among Christians in the western world, we need to tread carefully because our riches generally contrast with the poverty experienced by most people on the planet; we must be careful lest our blessings become a curse to us.

The Heavenly Conference #1 (1:6-12)

The misfortunes of Job are prefaced with celestial beings or angels (cf. Job 1:6; 38:7) assembling in the presence of Almighty God in heaven. Satan, too, presents himself, but as “an adversary or an accuser in a court of justice” (*Barnes’ Notes*). The loyal angels were there to give accounts of their ministries (Hebrews 1:14) like ambassadors reporting home respecting their ambassadorships. The Devil, though, reported that he had been traversing the whole earth, which reminds us of the apostle Peter’s warning, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8 NKJV).

At this point, God introduced Job as an admirable specimen of righteousness, as if to counter charges leveled against humanity by Satan. Certainly throughout history, there have been ample examples of wickedness among mankind that would appear to substantiate any accusations by the Devil. Satan responded that Job only served God out of self-interest because of the abundant blessings showered upon him by God; in other words, God bought Job’s fidelity. The Accuser’s complaint was two-fold—against God and Job. The implication is that either God is not worthy to be served or that no mortal is genuinely loyal to God, but may demonstrate faithfulness to God only because of and to what extent he may receive divinely given benefits.

The Devil did not decry the righteous **behavior** of Job, which Job’s three primary critics unsuccessfully attempted to do over and over again. Instead, Satan cited Job’s **motivation** for his righteous behavior as being impure and blameworthy.

Why did God accept Satan’s experiment about Job? “This scenario was not “...a matter of God giving in to Satan as much as... God proving the love of his servant [Job]” (Cox 197). “For

the benefit of man, Jehovah accepts the challenge. He will allow Job to be severely tried in order to demonstrate that there is such a thing as noncovetous righteousness” (Jackson 21). Subsequently, God permits Satan to test Job as long as he does not touch the man Job himself.

The Misfortunes of Job—Round #1 (1:13-19)

Swiftly, Job plummeted from a pinnacle of health and happiness to the depths of poverty and sorrow; Satan coupled the severity of the tragedies with the rapidity of their occurrences in a focused attempt to break Job’s allegiance to Jehovah. “In a series of four rapid-fire blows, Job receives the message that: (a) He is financially bankrupt; a series of marauding raids and natural disasters have wiped him out. He is reduced to the level of a pauper. ... (b) His children—all ten—are killed...” (Jackson 21).

Beginning with verse 13, each calamity was preceded by normal and routine activities. Hence, each catastrophe occurred suddenly and without notice (cf. Matthew 24:36-44). The Sabeans (verse 15) and Chaldeans (verse 17) were both marauding tribes at that juncture in Patriarchal history before the eventual development respectively into the nations of Sheba (Yemen) and Babylon (part of Iraq). The Sabeans were a large band of robbers who overwhelmed their targets, whereas the Chaldeans were more warlike and organized accordingly into “three bands.”

Verse 16 describes deadly lightning falling from the sky upon the sheep and the servants. Verse 19 appears to define tornado-like winds that leveled the building in which Job’s children were gathered. “Of these calamities, two were from the hands of evil men – the Sabeans (v. 15), and the Chaldeans (v. 17); two were from the forces of nature – fire of God from heaven (v. 16), and a great wind from the wilderness (v. 19)” (Hailey 38). Within the parameters set by God, Satan had access to evildoers and the natural world to afflict Job.

Job Reacts (1:20-22)

Doubtlessly, Job reacted to complete devastation in his life in a way that we hope would be characteristic of us were we to suffer similar things, and yet, we have no way of knowing just how we

would respond unless we, too, endured the same pains. God’s trust was well placed in Job as he tore his robe and shaved his head as symbol of his great sorrow, and then humbly yielded himself to the Sovereign of the universe who is ultimately in charge of all that is. “Job has justified the Lord’s confidence in him and Satan’s blows have, in fact, backfired. There is such a thing as true devotion without a pricetag attached!” (Jackson 22).

Severe hardships drove Job toward God—to worship Him—rather than away from God. This by itself proved that Job was not tied to God by material prosperity and good times. Clarke portrays Job’s attitude thusly: “Seeing I have lost my temporal goods, and all my domestic comforts, may God alone be all my portion!” Compare Job 1:21 with Ecclesiastes 5:15 and 1 Timothy 6:7.

“Job had listened with shocked silence to the reports of the first three messengers; but now upon hearing the report of the death of his sons and daughters, he demonstrated in dignified action the deeply felt emotions of his heart” (Hailey 38).

Job neither sinned nor foolishly accused God of wrongdoing (verse 22). “He did not give way to any action, passion, or expression, offensive to his Maker” (Clarke). “In all these threatening circumstances, Job did not sin, either mentally or by some overt act like charging God...” (Strauss 13). “Instead of cursing God, as Satan said Job would do, Job blessed the Lord!” (Wiersbe). “It is truly remarkable that Job followed adversity with adoration, woe with worship. Unlike so many people, he did not give in to bitterness; he refused to blame God...” (*Bible Knowledge*). Instead, “...he faced his calamities with all the dignity of one who commits himself unto Him that judgeth righteously. ...Job acknowledged his faith in God’s overall providence...” (Hailey 40).

The Heavenly Conference #2 (2:1-6)

“The Lord repeated His estimate of Job’s character, adding both a commendation of Job and a condemnation of Satan” (Hailey 41). However, in the second appearance of Satan before God in the Book of Job, “...Satan claims that the test has not been severe enough” (Jackson 22). He contended that a man would surrender all of his possessions if necessary in order to spare his life. On that

basis, the Devil surmised that Job remained faithful to God, but that he would renounce God if his body were tormented.

“The motives of Jehovah and Satan were poles apart. God’s purpose in permitting Satan to test Job was to save him through a perfected faith; whereas, Satan’s purpose was to destroy him through a defeated faith” (Hailey 42).

The Misfortunes of Job—Round #2 (2:7-10)

It is difficult to diagnose Job’s ailments from afar and across thousands of years.

Whatever it was, it appears to have been incurable and characterized by: boils (2:7), itching (2:8), drastic change of appearance (2:12), difficulty eating (3:24), mental depression (3:25), worms and running sores (7:5), shortness of breath (9:18), darkness of eyes (16:16), odorous breath (19:17), loss of weight (19:20), corroding bones and gnawing pain (30:17), blackened skin and fever (30:30). (Jackson 22)

Job’s misery was total: financially insolvent, intense bereavement and broken health. If that were not enough, Job lost the moral support of his wife, too (verse 9). “Job was exceedingly afflicted, and apparently dying through sore disease; yet his soul was filled with gratitude to God” (Clarke). Like Job’s wife, few living today, doubtless, could profess understanding Job’s staying the course in his allegiance to God.

On one hand, Job’s wife appears to be of lesser spiritual stature than her husband. She may remind one of the poor counsel Adam received from his wife Eve. Jackson noted that “...it is vital for the faithful child of God to marry a companion who is spiritually compatible” (23).

However, she also had suffered most of the hardships that had come to her husband—losing all of one’s wealth in one day and the loss of all of the ten children whom she carried, gave birth and nursed. Finally, she observed her husband in great physical pain for which there was no foreseeable relief or cure. Evidently, she thought that death would relieve Job of the mental and physical

pains, and though her husband persevered, her faith had broken. Satan may have correctly predicted the outcome of Mrs. Job's faith and preserved her life so she could be used as an additional tool to torment Job. "Job's response expressed a pained disappointment; surely he had every right to expect better things of his wife!" (Hailey 44).

Whereas Satan accused Job of possessing a self-serving, simulated righteousness, he was mistaken about Job. Yet, Mrs. Job apparently undergirded her faith and righteousness with material prosperity and good times. Therefore, when poverty replaced prosperity and the worst of times substituted for good times, her faith faltered. Whose righteous and faith do we emulate today—Job's or that of Mrs. Job? Job, though, retained his faith in the providence of God, despite not understanding its workings on his behalf (Romans 8:28). "In all this Job did not sin with his lips" (Job 2:10b).

This scene closes with poor Job sitting in a refuse heap scraping his wounded and itching body with broken pieces of pottery (verse 8). Job's purported friends find him under those circumstances.

The Friends of Job (2:11-13)

Purportedly, Job's three friends had agreed to go to Job for the purpose of comforting him. Initially, they appear as dear friends who were heartbroken and sympathetic to Job. They wept at the sight of him; they tore their robes as had Job as a cultural demonstration of sorrow or troubling; they humbled or abased themselves by putting dust on their heads (cf. Joshua 7:6; Lamentations 2:10); and they silently communed seven days with Job in the desolate place to which he had resorted—voluntarily or perhaps involuntarily. So far, so good!

Strauss suggests that the "seven days and seven nights" that the friends sat in silence was customary of mourning for the dead (22); see Genesis 50:10. Job was all but dead, and there was every reason to believe that he was dying; Job would not take his own life, but he had resigned himself to the inevitable end of his diseases.

Sometimes there are no words that if expressed can adequately comfort ones in great distress of mind or body (and great distress of body leads to equal distress of mind). Just being there with the hurting itself is an uplift for the wounded in body or spirit that words fail to bring forth. “Silence is often the deepest comfort” (Strauss 21).

Hailey, though, given the later harsh expression of condemnation by these “three friends” suggests that the silence was anything but comforting. Rather, the silence itself was the first wave of condemnation expressed toward Job for his assumed sins for which it was also assumed that God was severely punishing Job (44-45).

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: “For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.” Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:31-39 NKJV)

Job's Controversy with His Three Friends (chapters 3-31)

“Except for 3:1-2, the entire section from 3:1—31:40 is in poetic form. This is important for understanding the text, as poetry is parallel in literary form, which means that each line is not necessarily a new thought” (Strauss 25). “...3:1ff is in the form of Hebrew poetry—a parallelism where each statement is repeated with slightly varying language employed” (Jackson 27). “Here the poetic part of the book begins...” (Clarke).

Job Despised the Day of His Birth (3:1-10)

Job was “...the prisoner of calamities for which he had no explanation. ...Job’s speech breaks the silence between him and his friends. ...Why should one be born if his lot is to be such as he now experiences? ...He met his affliction with a curse upon the day of his birth. Why should he have been born for such calamities?” (Hailey 47). In great suffering, like Jeremiah years later (Jeremiah 20:14-18), Job rued the day of his birth since his life had descended into extreme mental anxiety and physical suffering, for which he could find no relief for either. “...[H]e wished that he had never been born!” (Jackson 27). “Had he not been born, then trouble would have been hid (sic) from his eyes” (Hailey 49). For Job’s part, the day on the calendar that corresponded to the day of his birth could just be skipped. “Let there always be a blank there...” (*Barnes’ Notes*). “He wanted his birthday to be wiped from the calendar” (*Bible Knowledge*). More than most people, Job had no interest in his birthday being remembered. Regarding the calendar Job, hence, began to “vent the agonies of his soul” (Clarke).

“Though both Job and Jeremiah wished that they had not been born, neither ever for a moment considers the possibility of suicide” (Jackson 29). Why is that? In spite of intense suffering, these great men retained their faith and knowledge of the existence of a Creator God, before whom one day they would appear—to face God as Judge. “Job cursed his birthday, but not his God” (*Jamieson, Fausset and Brown*).

Job Wished that He Had Died at Birth (3:11-19)

“If the day of his conception cannot be blotted out, Job, in view of his acute condition, wishes for the next best thing—that he had been born dead” (Jackson 29). Four times in two verses (3:11-12), Job asked “why” he had not died at birth—been stillborn. Why had he not been the object of a miscarriage? Why, he asked, was I nursed rather than allowed to perish as an unwanted child? That death, Job, reasoned would have been preferable to the agonizing pain and suffering he was experiencing, and which surely would lead to his death. “Such inquiries question the wisdom and purpose of God” (Hailey 50). Who are we as mortals to call into question the providence of Almighty God?

Like non-Christians and unthinking Christians today, Job’s view of death as a release from earthly woes fails to consider the immortality of souls, the Hadean realm and the eternal habitations after Judgment of heaven or hell. It is common even today to hear a Christian incorrectly presume aloud that a suffering non-Christian upon death is free from the agonies that he or she may have been experiencing—for which there may be no earthly relief. If unprepared to meet God, worse torment awaits from which there will never be any release.

“In a descending scale, Job began with the great, ‘kings and counselors,’ and proceeded to the low, ‘prisoners’ and ‘servants’” (Hailey 51). At least from a purely human and earthly perspective, Job concludes that the small and the great as well as the stillborn would rest alike in death—immune from all the troubles of life. “Death is the great leveler of all; in it there is no distinction. From Job’s point of view, death was a deliverer from the harshness and suffering of this life. ...in it there are no classes” (Hailey 52).

Understandably, Job had a decidedly negative and one-sided view of life when he uttered these speeches. There is more to life than the *downside*, and Job had experienced the grandest highlights of life previously. Pain and suffering has a way of crowding out of one’s life even the memory of better times that preceded the bad times. “Job’s present misery blots out all the happy memories of the good years” (Strauss 30). He needed to be more balanced in his assessment of the human condition, and so do we. Of course, that

is easier said than implemented in one's life, especially in the face of severe misery. Maybe we who are enjoying the good days can help our fellows who are experiencing the bad days to navigate them more easily (Romans 12:15).

Job Desired to Die in the Face of Relentless Suffering (3:20-26)

“Earlier, Satan had charged that the man of Uz served God selfishly because the Lord had ‘made a hedge’ of blessings about him. Now, with the same term, Job complains that God has *hedged him in with suffering!* This is the first indication that the patriarch now *blames God* for his anguish. With his lips, he has sinned” (Jackson 31). For being hedged in, compare Lamentations 3:7 and 9.

Hailey (53) concurs with a note by Jackson above that though Job earnestly desired to die, by which he supposed was the only way he could obtain freedom from pain and suffering, but he did not entertain suicide as his solution. “Bewilderment intensifies because he cannot see a way out” (Strauss 32).

Clarke summarized these verses with Job's underlying question, “Why is life granted to him who is incapable of enjoying it...?”

Whose pain and anguish are so great that they would regard it as a privilege to die. Much as people dread death, and much as they have occasion to dread what is beyond, yet there is no doubt that this often occurs. Pain becomes so intense, and suffering is so protracted, that they would regard it as a privilege to be permitted to die. Yet that sorrow “must” be intense which prompts to this wish, and usually must be long continued. In ordinary cases such is the love of life, and such the dread of death and of what is beyond, that people are willing to bear all that human nature can endure rather than meet death... (*Barnes' Notes*)

Especially preachers who visit the sick in their beds, as well as family members who tend to their loved ones to the point of death, are well-acquainted with the final sentiments of the dying. Not

infrequently, one of the fading souls will say or intimate something to the effect, “No more!” or “Enough!”

From our vantage with the completed Word of God in our hands, perhaps overestimating our invulnerability (1 Corinthians 10:12), it is too easy to be under sympathetic to Job’s utterances in favor of death and of blaming God. ‘We cannot see through Job’s eyes’ since we have not experienced the tragedies in life that afflicted him mercilessly (Hailey 53). We need to empathize with the downtrodden to the point of helping to lift their earthly burdens when we can (Matthew 25:31-46; Galatians 6:10).

Job considered the fact that his former good life was not shielded from calamity. All of us, if we think about it, are aware that none of us are immune from sickness, accident or tragedies. Therefore, we must steel ourselves against those possibilities in case some unfortunate circumstances afflict us. Then, perhaps, we will more easily arise to the occasion in a godly manner. Christians need to guard their tongues and their actions in inconvenient situations of life. ***Trouble will come!*** Yet, we must look to the heavenly hereafter and make preparations thereto. “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18 NKJV). In the case of Job, “there has been no intermission of sorrows” (*Jamieson, Fausset and Brown*).

The Bible evidences by its very content, especially regarding its characters that God praises therein, that it is divine in origin, rather than of human origin. “The truthfulness of the inspired volume appears in its so faithfully recording the blemishes, as well as the graces...” (*Jamieson, Fausset and Brown*). Writing his own biography, no man would announce to the world his follies and sins, but instead, he would mention merely the highlights and admirable achievements in his life. God is the biographer of famous and infamous Bible characters whose names and deeds appear in the pages of inspiration.

The First Cycle of Speeches (4:1-14:22)*

The reoccurring speeches between Job and his so-called friends can be very wearisome and repetitious. Later, the exchanges between Elihu and Job are not much less exhausting. The arguments resemble debates that fail to convince anyone contrary to his stated position. In that vein, they are useless and futile attempts at persuasion. The disputes remind me of the bantering back and forth between opposing opinions on so-called television news talk shows, which personally I detest and avoid. Of course, these cycles of speeches, though not themselves inspired, appear in the Book of Job by inspiration of the Holy Spirit; therefore, they must have a purpose that we need to ferret out for our understanding (Romans 15:4). Yet, we will not treat in these notes the study of the Book of Job on a verse by verse basis. Instead, we will make observations from segments of Scripture in Job. Please read the Book of Job in addition to or alongside of considering these notes.

The speeches of the three friends and Job are not altogether a debate, though there are elements of such in numerous places. Nor are they essentially speeches of one man's answering the speech of the preceding speaker, though this occurs at times. In some instances the speaker directs his speech to Job, and vice versa; in others a speaker will direct his attention to a point of controversy. There are times when the speaker will be talking about God; however, at times Job is talking to God, and at other times he is talking to himself. (Hailey 55)

Largely, the three friends had a theological position that apparently they came to assert, and they dogmatically maintained that doctrinal stance throughout their speeches. Namely, they believed that God is responsible for **all** punishment or chastisement. God **only** punishes and **always** disciplines evildoers with physical adversities in life. God **never** punishes, chastises or

* Generally, the subtitles and subsequent groupings of passages herein follow those noted by Wayne Jackson.

brings about physical hardship upon faithful children of God. The retribution of God **always** manifests itself toward humanity in physical persecution, leading up to death, for the wicked and affluence for the righteous. “The friends see material reward as the blessing for serving God...” (Hailey 55).

Therefore, in view of the tragedies that befell Job, the three friends were confident that Job was a terrible sinner. Their reasoning was (1) God does not persecute the righteous; (2) God persecuted Job with the loss of all of his possessions, the death of his ten children and the loss of his health. (3) Therefore, Job was a dreadful sinner, guilty of grievous sins. According to that way of thinking, Job had brought all of these heartbreaking misfortunes upon himself. Sure of their theology, the friends saw it as their mission to convict Job of his sins and bring him to repentance. The three counselors were equally confident that upon Job’s repentance that God would restore wealth and health to Job. Satan, the three friends and Job also believed this flawed theology. Job, though, was experiencing a live and a painful refutation of that way of thinking, because he knew that any sins for which he may have been guilty were not commensurate with the degree of his suffering.

To say the least, Job’s friends were misguided. They erred in thinking that **only God** is directly responsible for human afflictions, calamities and persecutions. Further, they blundered by imagining that **God only** punishes evildoers and that **God always** brings about physical hardship upon sinners. The friends were shortsighted to think that **God would never** chastise a faithful man (or woman). In addition, they were incorrect to assert that God always recompenses sinfulness and rewards faithfulness with material prosperity. Almost always, all-encompassing words like “all,” “only,” “always” and “never” do not apply beyond a contextual application that is far short of being “all,” “only,” “always” and “never.”

The friends were simply wrong theologically about God’s activity overall and specifically about the reaction of God toward sinners and saints. They were wrong also for applying general truths specifically to Job when they did not pertain to him and his situation. Too, the friends erroneously perceived of the benefits of

serving God and the downside to disobeying God relating exclusively to the material world in which we live; little or no consideration appears to have occurred to them that there are spiritual ramifications for obeying as well as for disobeying God.

Despite their shortcomings, the three friends arrayed their cases before and against Job, doubtless with sincere and good, but misguided, intentions. Whereas Job had been a master counselor of others, his friends took it upon themselves now to be his counselors.

Eliphaz Speaks (4:1-5:27)

Evidently, Eliphaz was the oldest of the three friends, and hence, he was afforded the opportunity to reply first to Job. This regard for one's senior persists in at least some Asian cultures today. "Eliphaz [was] speaking from his own observation. ... But not all suffering or calamities are the consequence of one's own sins..." (Hailey 58). Then, Eliphaz resorted to subjectivity when he introduced a dream that he purportedly had experienced. Though God sometimes communicated with prophets historically by dreams, (1) without miraculous validation, (2) being of the nature of prophecy and fulfillment or (3) conflicting with known divine instruction, they were not to be regarded as originating with God. "But was this statement a direct revelation from God? Probably not; the whole experience doesn't seem to fit God's pattern for revealing truth. For one thing, it lacks the authority of 'The word of the Lord came to me saying' or 'Thus says the Lord'" (*Bible Exposition*).

Summarized, "Eliphaz had stated his view that suffering is punishment for sin or wrong-doing (4:6-11); punishment looks back to the past. He now [5:17-27] introduces suffering as a means of hastening, educating or instructing, which is intended to correct the individual's life" (Hailey 67). "Eliphaz said Job's problems were disciplinary: God was correcting him, so Job should welcome His discipline, **not despise** it" (*Bible Knowledge*). While the principles are valid and supported by teachings in the Old Testament (Proverbs 11:18; Hosea 8:7) and in the New Testament (Galatians 6:7-8; James 1:2-3; Hebrews 12:5-13), too, in this case,

they did not apply correctly to Job in his particular set of circumstances. This was an instance of making a misapplication of truths.

Adam Clarke portrays Eliphaz as advising "...Job to be patient and submissive, with a promise of all secular prosperity, and a happy death in a mature and comfortable old age, v. 17-27." Eliphaz supposed that any prosperity that an evil man or his family enjoys would be short lived and cut short by God's wrath. That, he thought, must have been demonstrated in Job before and after his misery. Eliphaz essentially told Job what he would do were he in Job's place—quit complaining and appeal to God if he were innocent (Clarke). This Job did over and over throughout the book, but he went too far in accusations that he made against God and in the undesirable qualities that Job attributed to God. We like Job must patiently accept chastisement from God (Job 5:17; Proverbs 3:11-12; Hebrews 12:5-13) or even endure suffering or persecution from evil men (2 Timothy 1:12; 2 Timothy 3:12; 1 Peter 3:14; 4:12-16).

Eliphaz did not believe that Job was innocent. Based on his theology, the miserable specimen of humanity exhibited in the broken down Job was evidence enough of his seriously flawed and sinful life. Eliphaz and his friends assumed that it were an axiomatic truth that suffering is **always** the result of sin in one's life. They appealed to the collective, human wisdom from antiquity before them to substantiate their charges against Job. "Eliphaz's authority for his theory was what he himself had seen in his lifetime... Inherent in this authority base, however, is a flaw: his observations, though undoubtedly extensive, were not universal. Bildad's authority was history... supposedly a broader base than the observations of one man" (*Bible Knowledge*). "The problem with arguing from observation is that our observations are severely limited. Furthermore, we can't see the human heart as God can and determine who is righteous in His sight" (*Bible Exposition*).

Job Replies to Eliphaz (6:1-7:21)

"With friends like that, who needs enemies?" is a familiar expression to us, and it certainly applied to Job's friends with

whom he was engaging in a form of polemics. We call these sort—*fair-weather friends*. Job realized that at that juncture, Eliphaz represented not only himself but also the other two friends. “Job’s friends, so called, supported each other in their attempts to blacken the character of this worthy man; and their hand became the heavier, because they supposed the hand of God was upon him” (Clarke). Whereas Job might have expected his friends to have been comparable to an oasis for a thirsty caravan in the desert, they rather proved to be more like the dangerous disappoint of that caravan in the desert finding instead the water source dried up completely. Job also compared the assault against him by his *friends* to the ungodly assault some would make against defenseless orphans.

Job proceeds to state that their conduct in this had been greatly aggravated by the fact that they had come voluntarily. He had not asked them to come. He had desired no gift; no favor. He had not applied to them in any way or form for help. They had come of their own accord, and when they came they uttered only the language of severity and reproach. If he had asked them to aid him, the case would have been different. That would have given them some excuse for interposing in the case. (*Barnes* ’)

Due to their errant theology, Job’s friends directly and indirectly accused him of sins. Job objected and called upon them to enumerate the sins for which God was punishing him. Job was willing to admit his human imperfections, but it would have been sinful of itself to admit to sins of which he was not guilty, as his friends were trying to compel him to do. Any earlier hope that Job may have entertained that his friends my comfort and uplift him was surely crushed by their unceasing dialogue against him.

Then, Job proceeded to complain **about** God. Job was perfectly willing to repent before God (if he just knew what God’s accusation against him was), and he wondered why God would not forgive him—and subsequently relieve him of his painful suffering. Job felt as though there were a target on his back, at which God was shooting poison arrows. Job justified his

complaints, based on cause and effect, with the illustration that animals don't complain when they are well fed, but rather when they are hungry. There were genuine reasons underlying Job's grumbling. *Pulpit Commentary* portrays Job as claiming the **right** to complain.

"Job complained that God's opposition to him was out of proportion to his importance..." (Hailey 82). Job (as well as contemporary mankind, too) failed to fully appreciate the seriousness of sins. He imagined that some sins were less repulsive to God than other sins, and therefore, some sins merited less adverse reaction from God than other sins. However, *generally speaking*, God views all sins alike, any of which will result in spiritual death (Romans 6:23). Liars and murders, for instance, have the same divine condemnation awaiting them (Revelation 21:8). It is true, though, that God hates some sins more than others, which are referred to as "abominations" (Deuteronomy 7:25; Proverbs 6:16). Relegating sins to categories of "venial" and "mortal" as Catholics do, or supposing there are insignificant sins (e.g., "little white lies"), is doctrinally incorrect. Furthermore, God does not necessarily or always punish sin with physical consequences, but assuredly He will punish souls spiritually for sins of which they remain guilty as they appear in eternity for final Judgment (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Finally, once more Job longs to die to obtain release from the desperate, seemingly irreversible and unrelenting circumstances into which he had fallen. "Job's view of life was gloomy indeed, and our's (sic) would be as well were it not for the greater light of the gospel revelation" (Jackson 37). "...[T]here is a limit to what he [Job] can endure...he felt that he had reached it now" (Hailey 74). After all, by now Job had been suffering variously for "months" (Job 7:3). Poor Job had "no intermission to his sorrows" (*Barnes*) day or night. He found no hour of day or night in which he found any relief from intense bodily pain and discomfort, aside from the agony of mind over the losses he suffered and his confusion about his spiritual relationship with God. Job viewed it all as hopelessness from which did not expect to escape in this life. Since man is appointed to die (Ecclesiastes 3:2; 9:5; Hebrews 9:27), Job vindicated his expressed will to die as apparently his

time to pass away—and relieve him of his great suffering. Yet, Job patiently waited on the Lord God regarding the day of his death (*Jamieson, Fausset and Brown*) rather than opting for suicide. Wasting away physically especially, Job saw that death could not have been far away; his conditional was terminal.

Job’s references to death in 7:8-10 do not refer to whether he perceived of an eventual resurrection or not. Job merely discussed death from the material perspective of one going to the grave will not resurrect to resume the ordinary affairs of life (e.g., living in his house again), and eventually even one’s family will remember the dead less and less as time goes on. Students of God’s Word always need to guard against two things in particular: (1) reading something into the text that is not there, and (2) viewing a contextual narrative armed with biblical information now that was not available to the Bible character whose words and actions are under consideration. For instance, we living today have in the New Testament an abundance of information that our counterparts in the Old Testament simply did not have and could not have known.

Job’s aggravation had reached a pinnacle of pain—physically, emotionally and spiritually. All of his children were dead—ten funerals—at the same time! All of his possessions were gone! His wife was no longer supportive but hurtful. His friends tormented him. His body was racked with excruciating pain without end. If and when he did fall asleep, he was buffeted severely with nightmares! In the same predicament, we like Job would say, “I can’t take it anymore!” Doubtlessly, many of us would have reached our breaking point far before Job did.

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