

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

Bildad Speaks (8:1-22)

Bildad and the other two “friends” displayed in their perception of compensation and retribution, uprightness and wickedness, the very accusation that Satan had made initially against Job. Satan erred respecting Job; the principle character of this Old Testament Bible book **did not** serve God in order to receive earthly wealth. “Bildad and the other friends can see only material prosperity as the reward for righteousness and service to God. ...they developed no comprehension of a service out of love and joy in God’s fellowship or an appreciation of His grace and spiritual intimacy” (Hailey 86). What has changed between then and now? Mankind generally, as well as Christians, too, still commonly operates under the misguided philosophy of the so-called “health and wealth gospel,” otherwise named “prosperity theology,” “prosperity gospel” or “gospel of success” (*Wikipedia*). Though “obedience to the faith” (Romans 1:5; 16:26) is absolutely crucial to one’s salvation (Hebrews 5:9; 2 Thessalonians 1:8; 1 Peter 4:17), the **reason** or **motivation** leading one to comply with God’s Word is also critically important (Romans 6:17). Reader, presuming that you obey God, “**Why** do you comply with biblical instruction?”

By way of illustration, a driver who obeys the speed limit laws posted along the highways may be motivated do so merely because he or she wants to avoid a traffic fine. Or, such a driver may also have respect for law to the extent that he also wants to avoid being a lawbreaker. Regarding one’s vehicular conduct, the reason for complying with the law matters little. The outcome for not speeding is not being penalized with stinging monetary punishment. Obeying God, though, requires internal and external compliance, comparable to acceptable worship involving “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). An added benefit of **true conversion** is that after we get right on the inside or spiritually, it is less difficult to do things correctly outwardly. After we give ourselves wholly to God on His terms as the Macedonians did (Acts 8:1-5), everything else is comparatively easy!

As we would say today, Bildad was “brutal” in his treatment of Job. He conveyed to the patriarch that his children must have been evil and great sinners, who suffered sudden, violent deaths as just recompense by God. He followed a popular line of thought—blame the victim! “Bildad assumes this absolutely; Eliphaz had only hinted at it (Job 10:4). Both presume to know what could be known only to the Searcher of hearts” (*Pulpit Commentary*). “It must have pained Job deeply when Bildad said that Job’s children had died because they had sinned (Job 8:4). Bildad probably thought he was encouraging Job: ‘Perhaps they were not killed because of *your* sins but because of their own sins. They can’t change anything now, but you can; so don’t wait too long!’” (*Bible Exposition*).

Bildad believed that righteous people are immune from suffering! He mistakenly applied his notion of “cause and effect... based on insufficient evidence” (Jackson 39) to Job respecting his losses and physical suffering plus the death of Job’s children. No wonder the Holy Spirit caused James to pen, “Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who

are you to judge another?” (James 4:11-12). We can and must be fruit inspectors (Matthew 7:16-20); there are aspects of righteousness and wickedness that are open and observable. However, not even faithful Christians have the ability to pass judgment on the unseen things, and we do not have responsibility to assign anyone to either eternal destination, even if they are vile sinners. (Preachers beware! We cannot really preach anyone into heaven or hell.)

“If Job had *not* sinned, then his suffering would mean that God had perverted His ways. ...Obviously, then, Job had sinned” (*Bible Knowledge*), Bildad reasoned. “Anyone who has **sinned against** God suffers the consequences, Bildad said. Job’s children illustrated that fact. They died because they sinned, and now Job was dying because he sinned. Why else would Job be suffering? Bildad and his cohorts were blinded to other purposes in suffering besides retribution. Surely this cruel, heartless remark hurt Job deeply. After all, he had offered sacrifices to cover his children’s sins (1:5)” (*Bible Knowledge*).

Bildad viewed Job and his family as hypocrites, outwardly appearing holy, but evidently secretly very wicked. Some translations substitute “godless man” in place of “hypocrite.” In either case, Bildad charged Job with being “...one who only carries the mask of godliness, to serve secular purposes, who wishes to be taken for a religionist...” (Clarke). Does anyone do that today for personal gain in business relationships, politics, social standing, etc.? Each child of God needs to inspect his mask, if he or she has one. Why do we do what we do religiously?

Bildad resorted to the wisdom of the ancients who had gone before for the basis of his theological position and accusations against Job. Bildad relied on principles assembled from the observations of uninspired men who had lived in the past. Some of those, at least, would have included men who had lived for hundreds of years as was characteristic in early Patriarchy. Uninspired truisms, combined with the human inability to be omniscient, made for poor evidence or court of opinion by which to pass judgment on Job.

“Bildad was trying to win Job back from the evil into which he had fallen” (Hailey 90). Yet, one needs to moderate his approach, realizing that the Word of God is harsh enough toward sinners, and we do not need to aggravate the situation by presenting its message in a severe manner. Instead, we must ‘speak the truth in love’ (Ephesians 4:15). When it may be necessary to essentially tell someone that the Bible indicates that their present conduct will lead them to a devil’s hell, he or she needs to know that just thinking about the possible the loss of his or her soul breaks our hearts—because we truly care for them. Unnecessarily deriding someone will cause that one to recoil from even the truth so that it is highly unlikely that repentance will be forthcoming. After we tell someone that we hold him in esteem comparable to pond scum, he will not hear anything else we say, even from the Bible. Presentation is important!

The last verse of Bildad’s present speech must have seemed somewhat prophetic once Job received the restoration of apparent good favor with God and after he regained prosperity. Bildad and the other two friends became the object of God’s castigation, and Job became their redeemer.

Job Responds to Bildad (9:1-10:22)

Job was confused and frustrated. From his vantage point, there was no solution to the dilemma in which he found himself—a righteous man—“blameless and upright” (Job 1:1) by God’s own estimation—experiencing maximum, extensive and prolonged suffering. Why do the righteous suffer? Like his friends and many people since that time including our contemporaries, Job attributed his suffering to the mighty hand of God. Revised, the question on Job’s mind was, “Why does God cause the righteous to suffer?” The mistake that he and his friends made was the

assumption that God Himself was **directly and only** responsible for Job's misfortunes—or anyone else's suffering.

Job and his friends agreed regarding the nature of omnipotent, holy God, but they disagreed about the justice of God respecting his treatment of the wicked and the godly on earth. Whereas the friends unswervingly maintained that God was correct in punishing Job for grievous sins—the only explanation consistent with their theology, Job relentlessly affirmed that God punished him despite his godliness. Job's friends viewed the suffering of Job as **proof** of their religious ideology, and Job viewed his suffering as **proof** of his contention that God acted harshly toward unrighteous and righteous souls alike. Job concluded, "It makes no difference whether a man be righteous or wicked. God treats [afflicts] them substantially alike... It means that he [God] seems to be inattentive to them; he suffers the righteous and the wicked to be swept away together as if he were regardless of character." (*Barnes' Notes*).

Recognizing the omnipotence of God, Job could only long hopelessly for a mediator to reconcile himself to God. The patriarch did not believe that he could obtain justice in a judicial proceeding against God—though he was in the right. "He knows that *he* is an upright man, and yet, the Lord has tormented him; how, therefore, could *anyone* expect a fair deal from Him?" (Jackson 39). Of course, everyone living today can have a Mediator between lowly man and Almighty God. Christians have a Defense Lawyer or Advocate—Jesus Christ, who can operate successfully in a celestial court (1 John 2:1). Christians have a Mediator who can fairly represent the interests of God and the interests of mankind (1 Timothy 2:5).

"Job's problem now is trying to understand why God, who is so great and mighty and who does marvelous things, would use His power to destroy one so small as himself" (Hailey 93). Job supposed and realized more fully later that mortal man has no leverage to subpoena God to appear in a court of justice, besides the futility of arguing a case against God. "I cannot contend with him as with one of my fellows in a court of justice" (Clarke). How could the creation prevail in a controversy against the Creator? How can a mere man triumph in a dispute with Him Who made all that exists and by the same power causes it to continue (Colossians 1:16-17; Hebrews 1:3)? Such is impossible!

Thinking out loud, Job surmised that "it could not be with God a matter of personal gratification to inflict pain..." (*Barnes' Notes*). Why, then, Job was puzzled, was God persecuting Him—especially, without apprising him of how he had offended God. Job knew what the rules were for life and religion, because God had communicated His will to the patriarchs, and Job diligently tried to comply. Sin is the transgression of the law of God (1 John 3:4 KJV), and where no law has been given, there can be no sin (Romans 4:15). Therefore, Job was at a loss to know why God hated him, or so he thought. Job knew that he was as righteous as a mere mortal could be in his acknowledgement and compliance with the revealed will of God; why, then, was God punishing him? Surely, God had not made Job just for the purpose of tormenting and destroying him, Job concluded. There must be a reason. "He does not perceive the divine motive and purpose of his suffering..." (*Keil & Delitzsch*).

Jackson said of Job, "His eyes were blinded by anguish" (39). Job charged, "God destroys the good and the evil indiscriminately" (Jackson 40), so that in his mind, "there is no apparent advantage in being good over being bad" (Jackson 41). "He accused God of rank injustice" (Hailey 97). Under the hopelessness of Job's apparently incurable, pain tortured body and tormented mind, he again turned to hoping for death to relieve him of the matter—irreversible, desperation. "I have no respite in my afflictions; I suffer continually in my body, and my mind is incessantly harassed" (Clarke).

“...Job has not turned away from God; but he is struggling with his faith” (Jackson 41). Certainly, we can sympathize and many also can empathize with Job’s suffering in mind and in body.

It is worthy of notice that Job acknowledged that humans do not own anything absolutely, but everything belongs to God (Psalm 50:10-12). Therefore, man has no standing to protest to God if He were to require it of us. Job realized this respecting his possessions as well as his children. “God has a right to remove any thing which we possess. Our friends, property, health, and lives, are his gift, and he has a right to them all. When he takes them away, he is but taking that which is his own, and which has been lent to us for a little time, and which he has a right to remove when it seems good to him” (*Barnes’ Notes*).

Note from Job 10:1 that Job recognized the distinction between the soul or spiritual side of man and the life of the body. From the earliest of times, the children of God have realized the **dual nature** of mankind. Humanity knew God and received communication or revelation from Him, but most people turned from God (Romans 1:18-32). People are still turning from God, many of whom deny the dual nature of humanity.

Zophar Speaks Up (11:1-20)

Zophar’s speech was simply more of the same and meaner than the vocalizations of the other “friends.” “The spirit of Zophar is dogmatic, cold, heartless and unfair in its accusations” (Hailey 109). Locked on and unshakable respecting their fallacious theology, any protest by Job that he was not guilty of grievous sin deeply aggravated the three friends, leading them to amplify the intensity of their attacks on the patriarch. “Reproof is often an urgent duty. It is the hardest act of friendship, for whilst there are but few men who do not at times merit reprehension, there are fewer still who will graciously receive, or even patiently endure a reproving word...” (*Biblical Illustrator*). Especially, then, the manner of reprove is as important as the reproof if there is to be any hope of success in recovering a sin-infected soul (James 5:19-20). Job’s friends were ferocious and harmed their good intentions.

Like his companions, Zophar assumed Job’s guilt based on his suffering, called upon Job to repent and presumed that the reward for penitence on Job’s part would be material prosperity. “Job did not have a ‘commercial faith’ that made bargains with God” (*Bible Exposition Commentary*), but Zophar and the other two friends seemed to only visualize that kind of material relationship with God.

Neither Zophar nor his partners in miserable comfort correctly detected the cause of Job’s suffering or accurately grasped the spiritual rather than the physical aspect of divine punishment and reward. **There may be** a physical facet to divine punishment and reward, but definitely **there is** a spiritual side to the same. While the friends were privy to the many of the attributes of God and amply defined repentance, they were ill positioned to make valid applications, particularly when it came to Job.

The severity of Zophar’s tone and approach is apparent in verse 3 where he accused Job of being a liar. In truth, Zophar sometimes put words into Job’s mouth (i.e., attributed to him words or meanings that he had not expressed), and then he scolded Job for them. Verse 6 adds nothing beyond insult to Job’s injury by stating that God had not persecuted him nearly enough for his sinfulness. There is no compassion or friendship evident whatsoever, but only the noise of hollow, self-sanctified, misguided pious persecution. Zophar and the other two friends appear to be unsympathetic toward Job; that should never be said of a child of God.

Job Chapter 11 concludes the first cycle of speeches. “These first speeches by Job’s compatriots offered no comfort. Though their generalities about God’s goodness, justice, and wisdom were true, their cruel charge for Job to repent of some hidden sin missed the mark. They failed to see that God sometimes has other reasons for human suffering” (*Bible Knowledge*).

Job Responds Again (12:1-14:22)

Hailey summarizes preceding chapters that narrated the exchanges between Job and his so-called “friends,” and then, he introduces Job’s next goal.

The three friends have spoken. They have presented their view that Job’s suffering is divine punishment for sins. They based their contention on dreams or visions (Eliphaz, 4:12-21), the tradition of the ancients (Bildad, 8:8-10), and dogmatic assumptions (Zophar, 11:4-6). Job challenged them to present factual evidence for their claims against him, which they failed to do. He sought to bring God to trial in the matter of his suffering without cause, but God did not respond. Job now turns from his effort to indict God to arraighing the three friends. (115)

It is difficult to approach a man effectively with counsel when he to whom one goes knows everything that the one coming to him knows. For instance, preachers or elders are often at a loss to reproach a fellow preacher or elder with applicable Scripture to a preacher’s or an elder’s sins. After all, the sinner on those occasions knows everything that could be said from God’s Word about that, and probably has had occasion to state the same to other sinners in former times. The friends of Job had nothing new to tell Job of which he was not already aware respecting the understanding of the wise. Job’s friends failed to recognize that fact, which offended Job. This led Job to respond in 12:2 with sarcasm. Clarke paraphrased Job’s words: “Doubtless ye are the wisest men in the world; all wisdom is concentrated in you, and when ye die, there will no more be found on the face of the earth!” Clarke further observed, “This is a strong irony. ...All your boasted wisdom consists only in strings of proverbs which are in every person’s mouth, and are no proof of wisdom and experience in them that use them.” How true!

Job jeered their alleged wisdom. He sarcastically responded to Zophar’s snidely calling him a stupid donkey (11:12) by saying that they thought they were so smart that when they would **die** all wisdom would be gone! Though Job was in pain, he could still think. He was **not inferior** to them (a point he repeated in 13:2); in fact what they said about God was only common knowledge. (*Bible Knowledge*)

Instead of patiently collecting and collating facts from the opened page of human history, and deducing therefrom conclusions as to the principle or principles of the Divine government, Job’s friends first invented a theory, and then looked about for musty proverbs to support it. They were not philosophers or theologians at all, but simply theorists, inventors of sophisms, stitchers together of falsehoods, and fabricators of vanities (ver. 4), who had endeavoured to construct a theodicy by mingling together a little bit of fact and a large amount of fancy, or by patching together a handful of ancient platitudes. (*Pulpit Commentary*)

Rather than exhibiting genuine wisdom, Job’s friends regurgitated the quaint sayings that were well known from generations now past. Job was of the opinion that those “friends” would have better demonstrated wisdom through silence. “Wisdom rests in the heart of him who has

understanding, But what is in the heart of fools is made known” (Proverbs 14:33). “A fool vents all his feelings, But a wise man holds them back” (Proverbs 29:11). A contemporary homespun proverb says, “It’s better to be silent and have people think you’re clueless or stupid, rather than to speak and confirm it!”

The patriarch did not disagree with sound principles and valid caricatures of God, but he did protest the application made by the “friends” against him. The problem of Job’s friends with its misapplication persists today among Christians, too. We need to be careful not to presume a degree of presumptuous omniscience in areas where all of the facts are not clearly evident. Of course, we need make absolutely sure that our theology is grounded in divine revelation, which the friends of Job did not do.

When a man or a woman knowledgeable of God’s Word consistently ratifies true doctrine while insisting upon his or her innocence, particularly where only omniscience could validate or invalidate the claim, there should arise in the minds of the faithful a measure of doubt. Things are not always as advertised by the critics, and things are not always as they may appear. Who hasn’t personally experienced this scenario even in a little way?

Job’s fair-weather friends showed him no respect, but instead, they along with the general populace derided poor Job. One of the paramount failures of “the friends” was that “they could not see suffering through the eyes of a sufferer” (Hailey 116). Bad theology, misapplication of truisms and lack of sympathy severely undercut the badge of friendship those empty counselors purported to exercise toward Job. Not all *friends* are created equally! “Wealth makes many friends, But the poor is separated from his friend” (Proverbs 19:4). “A man who has friends must himself be friendly, But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother” (Proverbs 18:24). “All the brothers of the poor hate him; How much more do his friends go far from him!” He may pursue them with words, yet they abandon him” (Proverbs 19:7).

Axioms are truths that generally apply, though they may not always apply in every situation. For instance, the concept of *cause and effect* is a self-evident truth, similar in sentiment to the biblical statements: “Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6). “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life” (Galatians 6:7-8). The “three friends,” like some Christians today, affirmed that there were no exceptions, whereas “Job saw himself as an exception...” (Hailey 124). In the case of Job, who was right? As a consequence, Job “...had lost confidence in his friends but not in God” (Hailey 126).

Interestingly, both Zophar and Job desired God to answer. The former thought that God would wise up Job respecting true wisdom, and Job essentially wanted his day in court before God. While both of them were later disappointed when God finally did speak, the friends were more surprised at what God had to say than was Job, ultimately.

Feeling a permeating sense of hopelessness, Job turned to ponder the brevity of life, after which death follows. Job 14:1-2 (cf. James 4:14) probably graces nearly every funeral sermon because it so picturesquely illustrates how little time compared to eternity humans experience on earth. Therefore, due to the brevity of life, as well as its fragility, especially each child of God needs to live the Gospel and infect others with it while there is yet time (Ecclesiastes 9:10; John 9:4). As the apostle to the Gentiles wrote, we must redeem or ransom back time past ill-used while we still can (Ephesians 5:16; Colossians 4:5). We need to prepare **now** to meet God (Amos 4:12).

Finally, Job longed for rest from the burdens of this life. A righteous death does provide temporary rest (Luke 16:19-31) as a precursor to the eternal rest into which we long to go

(Hebrews 4:9-11). Job was on an emotional rollercoaster of despair, a glimmer of hope and more despair.

The Second Cycle of Speeches (15:1-21:34)

Eliphaz Begins this Series of Discourses (15:1-35)

“In this second round of debate between Job and his friends, the antagonism intensifies; sparks fly! ...Since Job will not confess his sins, Eliphaz will fill in the blanks for him!” (Jackson 47). Eliphaz and his cohorts were confident “that uncommon calamities were proof of uncommon guilt” (*Barnes*). “Instead of showing the kind friendly, and forbearing attitude displayed in his first speech, he [Eliphaz] now manifested a harsh and severe mood toward Job” (Hailey 139). Indirect accusations formerly hurled at Job were now replaced with hostile missiles of stinging denunciation. We might say that the *so-called friends* had become decidedly nasty in their treatment of their *supposed friend*.

Not only were the friends misguided on so many planes in their attacks on Job, attitudes toward their friend greatly deteriorated, too. If the friends had been correct in their assessment of Job’s predicament—that it was solely the result of Job’s impenitence, they still nullified their efforts to restore Job by badmouthing him. The three friends lost their influence for good with Job by berating him. A lesson for us today would be that though we ought to stand firm in the defense of the Gospel (Philippians 1:17), and we need to be proactive in attempting to rescue fallen brethren (James 5:19-20), we need to stick with the known facts and avoid disparaging the character and motives of the person. We must be careful not to tread in an area that would require of us omniscience (1 Corinthians 2:11), and certainly, though we ought to be fruit inspectors (Matthew 7:16-20), we are not permitted to pass final judgment on anyone (James 4:11-12).

After we have essentially told someone that we hold them in esteem a little less than pond scum, nothing else that comes forth from our mouths will carry any credibility with one we are purportedly trying to help spiritually. Eliphaz, wrote Homer Hailey, used “sarcasm” and exhibited “a condescending spirit” (141-142). Amusingly but appropriately, the *Bible Exposition Commentary* observed: “...Eliphaz turned on the sarcasm, another proof that he has **run out of something intelligent to say**” (emphasis added). That simply will not do in interpersonal relationships, especially between children of God, and especially if the genuine hope is to restore a fallen child of God.

The former speech and this sermon of Eliphaz complement each other. He resorted to the backdrop of human experience and essentially equated that subjectivity with the wisdom of God. Eliphaz perceived of himself and the other two antagonists as messengers of God, howbeit, they were not armed with a message from God.

In his first speech, Eliphaz had described the blessings of the godly man (5:17-26); but now he describes the sufferings of the ungodly man. Eliphaz was careful to remind Job that these were not his ideas alone, but that the ancients all agreed with him. If Job rejected what Eliphaz said, he was turning his back on the wisdom of their fathers. Eliphaz was a man who found great strength in tradition...” (*Bible Exposition*)

The misguided theology of the three friends had not changed; only the intensity of their brash treatment of Job was ratcheted up a few more notches.

In this second round of the friends' speeches we meet with no new thoughts whatever; only "in the second circle of the dispute everything is more fiery than in the first" (Oetinger): the only new thing is the harsher and more decided tone of their maintenance of the doctrine of punishment, with which they confront Job. They cannot go beyond the narrow limits of their dogma of retribution... (*Keil & Delitzsch*).

The problem with Eliphaz's statement about the judgment of the wicked is that it is not always true in this life. Many wicked people go through life apparently happy and successful, while many godly people experience suffering and seeming failure. It is true that ultimately the wicked suffer and the godly are blessed; but, meanwhile, it often looks like the situation is reversed (Ps 73; Jer 12:1-4). Furthermore, God gives sunshine to the evil and the good and sends rain on the just and the unjust (Matt 5:45). He is long-suffering toward sinners (2 Peter 3:9) and waits for His goodness to lead them to repentance (Rom 2:4; Luke 15:17-19). (*Bible Exposition*)

Despite his detractors and the efforts of Satan to destroy him, Job had a Protector. Adam Clarke made this wonderful observation.

Poor Job! what a fight of affliction had he to contend with! His body wasted and tortured with sore disease, his mind harassed by Satan; and his heart wrung with the unkindness, and false accusations of his friends. No wonder he was greatly agitated, often distracted, and sometimes even thrown off his guard. However, all his enemies were chained; and beyond that chain they could not go. God was his unseen Protector, and did not suffer his faithful servant to be greatly moved. (Job 15:35)

Job Responds for the Fourth Time (16:1-17:16)

"Job's friends still had not identified with his situation; they did not feel his agony or understand his perplexity" (*Bible Exposition*). **Same old, same old!** Job designated the words of Eliphaz as merely repetitions of what the friends had been spouting against him all along. Job made counter accusations toward his critics respecting their disposition to accuse him falsely. The *Bible Knowledge Commentary* boldly remarked of Eliphaz: "This **friend-turned-enemy** hoped to force Job to repent of his terrible ways" (Job 15:21-26 emphasis added). The three detractors had become the reverse of what friendship would require by simple definition—"my mockers-my friends" (*Jamieson, Fausset and Brown*).

Though Job acknowledged the general validity that one reaps what he sows (Galatians 6:7), he presented himself as an exception to that principle. We, likewise, need to handle aright the Word of God (2 Timothy 2:15 ASV) and refrain from applying even biblical axioms as though no exceptions are possible (Proverbs 22:6).

We don't want to be "miserable comforters," definitely an earned designation that Job attributed to his *friends*. The effect of Job's "comforters" was only "to deepen his distress" (*Barnes*). "Eliphaz became Job's prosecutor, not his consoler" (*Bible Knowledge*). His speeches and those of the other two accomplices 'wounded instead of soothed' the poor patriarch (*Keil & Delitzsch*).

Job proclaimed that had his friends been in his position instead of him that he actually would have been a comforter to them. We, too, should lift the burdens of the downtrodden rather than adding to their misery.

After giving little notice to Eliphaz's most recent rant, Job returned to complaining to God about God's mistreatment of him. "...Job severely charged God with being his enemy... He tore him as a predatory animal would seize its prey..." (Hailey 151). In 16:14, Job compared the onslaught of God against him to the siege of a metropolis whereupon one defensive wall after another is breached until the city falls. Job failed to understand why God was treating him so severely, particularly since Job had humbled himself by donning sackcloth and putting dust upon his head, he cried without ceasing. His pleas to God were sincere and pitiable.

Job did not expect to survive, but he was certain that he was about to die without exoneration. He resigned himself to vindication after his passing. Job was completely enveloped in hopelessness and tormented unrelentingly by his supposed friends, beyond the painful memories of his family losses to death, his abject poverty and his ever-present physical traumas. Accusatory toward God on one hand, Job resigned himself to God Himself for the pardon of a righteous man. Like the blood of Abel that cried from the ground (Genesis 4:10; cf. Ezekiel 24:8), Job contended that his innocent blood would continue to cry for justice even after death. Fortunately for Christians, we have a divine defense attorney.

The Christian believer has this heavenly Advocate in Jesus Christ (1 John 2:1-2). As our interceding High Priest, Christ gives us the conquering grace we need when we are tempted and tested (Heb 2:17-18; 4:14-16). If we fail, then He is our Advocate to forgive us and restore us when we confess our sins to Him (1 John 1:5-2:2). (*Bible Exposition*)

Amidst Job's confusion about the relationship of his ordeal to God, Job both accused God of mistreating him, **and** Job also looked to God as the only One to whom he could turn for vindication. Job could not harmonize these two approaches to God, and so he simply launched forward helplessly anyway with unbreakable allegiance to his God.

Therefore, in the very God who appears to him to be a blood-thirsty enemy in pursuit of him, Job nevertheless hopes to find a witness of his innocence: He will acknowledge his blood, like that of Abel, to be the blood of an innocent man. It is an inward irresistible demand made by his faith which here brings together two opposite principles—principles which the understanding cannot unite—with bewildering boldness. Job believes that God will even finally avenge the blood which His wrath has shed, as blood that has been innocently shed. (*Keil & Delitzsch*)

In the meantime, Job had become a byword and an object of physical and physiological abuse. "My afflictions and calamities have become a subject of general conversation, so that my poverty and affliction are proverbial" (Clarke). Certainly, Job imagines, at least the torment of his physical body as well as the verbal and mental battery he endured would soon be arrested by reason of his inevitable, shortly to occur death. Until then, though, he appeared to be nothing but skin and bones—a skeleton over which was stretched a thin, sorely blemished sheet of skin. ***He surely thought that he had one foot in the grave already!***

Job imagined that righteous people would be amazed that godly persons might be permitted to suffer as intensely as he had suffered. Job and we today still ponder the question of why bad things happen to good people. The suffering of Job proves that the theory which supposes that

God only and always punishes bad people, and that good people will always enjoy material prosperity, good health and happiness is not so. God may chastise His children, but suffering may result from other sources besides God. For instance, one may suffer as the consequence of someone else's sins (e.g., drunk driver, robber, murderer, natural disasters, and disease).

Once Job was proven to be righteous, even if it occurred after his death, then other righteous souls could take courage when they, too, experienced unexplained turmoil and difficulty in life. "The pious shall take fresh courage to persevere from the example of suffering Job. The image is from a warrior acquiring new courage in action (Isa 40:30-31; Phil 1:14)" (*Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown*). Herein, we have the reason for which the Book of Job was written and included in the sacred canon of Holy Scriptures (Romans 15:4). "Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy" (James 5:11 KJV).

Job could come to no other conclusion given his present status than that his goals and purposes that he desired to transpire throughout his life would not come to pass. Anyone without purpose in his or her life, or whose aspirations have been crushed beyond resurgence, despairs greatly. If only one can imagine a legacy continuing after him, then he can more calmly and resolutely accept his passing away.

Job perceived that he was 'rejected by his fellow men as well as by God' (*Keil & Delitzsch*), and therefore, there was no one else to whom he could appeal. How dejected and lonely he was!

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