

## JOB

### LESSON 5

- I.** Job's lamentation belongs with other psalms of grief, including Jeremiah 20:14-18 and Lamentations 3:1-18, and all are gathered up into the cry of Jesus (Matt. 27:46) as the true cries of lost humanity trying to find its God.
- A.** Job curses his birth. 1-10.
- 1.** Job views his conception as a disappointment and his birth as a disaster. V. 3.
  - 2.** Job wishes that God had not thought of that particular day, or at least that it had remained in darkness. V. 4.
    - a)** When we read such language we begin to squirm with uneasiness, if not with distaste and contempt.
    - b)** It is not just Job's friends who judge him.
    - c)** As soon as things get bad he takes to whining and cursing and crying in his cup.
    - d)** Is he really any different from any one of us, except that he gave speech to his thoughts?
    - e)** If we deny our dark side and repress it, then can we ever really be ready for those times when believing in God is like being awake during open heart surgery?
      - (1)** When there is stabbing pain, trust cries out.
      - (2)** It is only mistrust, fear, and suspicion that keep quiet.
  - 3.** It had not remained in darkness, but now let darkness claim it. V. 5.
  - 4.** Let the night be claimed by the same darkness. V. 6.

5. Would that the joy accompanying birth had never been heard. V. 7.
6. Later translations of verse 8 seem better. There is a connection between the destructive forces held in check by God's power in creation and Job's desire that his birthday be claimed once more by chaos.
7. v. 9 – Just as Job wishes that the sun had never risen on the day of his birth and never set on the night of his conception, he now wishes that the stars of its dawn be dark. The full verse describes three phases of daybreak. 9a – last failing of the stars of the night; 9b – the word light refers to the sun, whose rising is to be forestalled by prohibiting even the pre-dawn twilight, vividly called the “eyelashes of Shahar.”<sup>1</sup>
8. V. 10 completes the cursing of Job's birthday. Job wishes that the doors of his mothers womb had never opened by labor. The result would have been that he would never have seen the trouble that he has experienced; the wearisomeness of life would have been avoided.

**B. Job longs for death. 11-19.**

1. At this point Job changes from cursing to questioning. 11-12.
  - a) There is a progression of thought.
  - b) He wishes that he had not been conceived; if conceived, that he had died in the womb; if born, that he had died at once; but since he had grown, that he might die soon.
2. 13 – If Job had died by whatever means he would have been better off; not because death offers compensations or joys, but because it ends life's miseries.

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<sup>1</sup> Shahar is a Canaanite god, the god of the dawn. Its use here is purely poetic and contains no suggestion of polytheism.

- a) Job does not hope that death will rectify the injustice of his undeserved sufferings; only that it end them.
  - b) It is only in a negative sense that the trepidation and turmoil of life ends and the inequalities of life become irrelevant. (14-19).
  - c) While Job does not speak of the heaven of bliss or the hell of torment, there is never a suggestion that death means extinction.
  - d) In fact, Job provides a long list of the inhabitants of Sheol, ranging from those who were great in the eyes of men (kings, etc., v. 14) to those who had accomplished nothing (the stillborn, v. 16).
  - e) He envies them because nothing happens in the grave.
- 3. v. 14 – the social inequalities are evened up in the grave. (Summed up on v. 19.) Kings build desolate (now) places (they do not build ruins).
  - 4. v. 15 – Princes may have had opulent homes, gold and silver, but they are of no value in Sheol.
  - 5. v. 16 – the stillborn are no different from the kings and princes.
  - 6. v. 17 – the wicked live in a state of emotional disturbance that ends for them at death; the weary are weary no more.
  - 7. v. 18 – the prisoners who find rest are captives in forced labor.
  - 8. v. 19 – summarizes it all. The trend of the entire passage is that all social distinctions disappear in Sheol.
- C. Job deplores life. (20-23). (So far Job has found life intolerable (1-10) and death desirable (11-19). Now he strikes deeper into the problem by asking why any of this should happen.**

1. V. 20 – Why should the result of God’s good gift of life be that those who have it wish to be rid of it? Why is life given at all, since it results only in exhaustion and disillusionment?
  - a) By this stage it should be evident that an entirely new trial has now overtaken Job – depression, deep mental and spiritual trauma.
  - b) Proverbs 18:14 – A man’s spirit sustains him in sickness, but a crushed spirit who can bear?
  - c) Note that nowhere in this book is Job’s depression viewed by the Lord as being Job’s fault.
    - (1) If anything, it is part and parcel of what is going on – one more of the Devil’s assaults upon his faith.
    - (2) In fact, it appears from the book that depression in a believer is one of the things the Lord is most ready and eager to forgive, if it requires forgiveness at all.
    - (3) Do not hope and despair go together?
      - (a) Is it not the despairing who are truly hopeful?
      - (b) Everything goes wrong and we feel that, if things do not get better, we shall die.
      - (c) Do we not despair because in our hearts we know there is a better way, and we shall not rest until we find it.
    - (4) Only a person who hopes with all his heart, and whose soul therefore cried out day and night to the living God for help, can live with spiritual famine.

2. V. 21 – They long for death. Suicide is never considered as a means of attaining death. Death must also be God’s gift, and for Job, this now has become the only evidence of his goodness.
3. v. 22 – vigorously describes the exultation of those who find the grave.
4. v. 23 – Repeats the thought of v. 20. The words are bitter. They echo what Satan said in 1:10. Satan found God’s hedge as protection; Job describes it as a restriction; he feels trapped.
  - a) Sometimes the safest place to be is in the storm if being there is in the will of God.
  - b) To be surrounded by God’s hedge does not mean to be protected from all evil and the shocks of life. Sometimes, like the crucifixion crown of Christ, God’s hedge is a hedge of thorns, and with the loving mercy of God we must pass through the very midst of evil and carry our burden up the hill to Calvary.
  - c) Whatever our circumstances, the safest place to be is always in the Lord’s will.
  - d) The safest place to be is in the hollow of His hand – even (and especially) when that hollow takes the form of a bleeding nailprint.

**D.** Job ends with a moan (24-26).

1. The Hebrew of these verses is very difficult and translators have taken some liberties to find reasonable English.
2. V. 24 – *Sighings* and *groanings* are not strong enough to express Job’s tragic sorrow. The impression is given that groans come from his whole body.

3. v. 25 – Job was not complacent in his prosperity; he took precautions that God’s favor not be lost (1:15), yet calamity has struck just the same, and he has no idea why.
4. v. 26 – This verse has four sharp clauses, each of which strikes like a knife; I can’t relax, I can’t settle, I can’t rest, and agitation keeps coming back.
  - a) What causes a person to suffer is one of the surest indicators of what it is that he or she believes in. (Matt. 6:21.)
  - b) Job does not begrudge the loss of his physical estate, but of his spiritual estate.
    - (1) The loss of his peace with God.
    - (2) The loss of unbroken fellowship with his Creator.
    - (3) The loss of any felt sense of the Lord’s friendship and approval.
    - (4) The loss of spiritual peace that passes all understanding.
    - (5) Here was something worthy complaining about and Job freely confesses his dread of this condition.
  - c) We might well ask ourselves what we complain about, what causes us the greatest pain and fear.
  - d) Job understood the principle of Isaiah 32:17 – The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever.
    - (1) Since he knew he was a righteous man, where was his peace and confidence.

- (2)** Throughout his speeches, Job will repeatedly claim these terms of his covenant with God, but he wastes no time in claiming anything that the Lord has not promised him.
  - (a)** He insists on spiritual rights; not worldly rights.
  - (b)** He holds God to his word, and no more.

- b. First Round of speeches. 4:1 - 14:22.
- b.i. Eliphaz. 4:1 - 5:27.
- I.** The sympathetic silence of the friends is now broken by sympathetic speech.
  - A.** Job's desperate words, though not addressed to the friends, demand some comment.
  - B.** Eliphaz ventures a reply that is tactful in its manner and unobjectionable in its matter.
  - C.** He does not charge Job openly with any fault, but already there is a note of gentle disapproval, if not reproof, in his words.
- II.** He begins politely.
  - A.** He is uncertain about speaking at all, not about Job's reaction, but he cannot restrain himself. V. 2.
  - B.** Vv. 3, 4 – He begins with a pleasing tribute to Job's reputation, especially his ability to help others in their difficulties. (See Job's own account of this in chapter 29.)
  - C.** V. 5 – Already there is the insinuation that Job is unable to apply to himself what he preached to others.
    - 1.** *Impatient* and *dismayed* have been given physical application by some, but emotional distress would be less excusable.
    - 2.** Since we don't have the inflection and tone of voice Eliphaz used, commentators have generally found them smug, sarcastic, hypocritical.
    - 3.** However, we may give Eliphaz the benefit of the doubt, and find his words, not a taunt, but a kindly reminder that Job's past life of godliness has given him resources for the present crisis.

- D.** V. 6 – *Fear of God*, the standard term for wholesome piety, is Job’s hallmark (1:1, 8, 9, etc.).
1. *Integrity* of conduct, its necessary consequence, completes the character of the godly man.
    - a) It should provide Job with a basis for *confidence* and *hope*.
    - b) Eliphaz is far from accusing Job of sin; he endorses his faith, and tries to revive his spirit with the reminder that Job’s whole life had been built on the belief that God helps the good and hinders the bad.
  2. This is the teaching that each of the friends will affirm in one manner or another.
    - a) It is also Job’s belief.
    - b) They can’t say anything else without suggesting that moral effort is not worthwhile or that God is somehow unfair.
    - c) But a terrible pitfall is not far from each of them.
    - d) The friends must infer from Job’s suffering that he has sinned; Job must infer from his innocence that God is unjust.
- E.** V. 7 – Eliphaz’ question, which implies a universal rule, precipitates the issue.
1. By using the extreme terms *perished* and *cut off*, he implies that Job, as a righteous man, can count on speedy relief.
  2. He is not so naive as to pretend that the righteous never have trouble.
  3. As he will say at the end of his speech (5:17-26), the Lord delivers the righteous from their trouble.

- F. V.. 8 – But Eliphaz goes too far; it is one thing to appeal to an abstract principle, that seems self-evident to the mind of a man with moral sense; it is quite another to apply it to Job’s particular case.
1. Eliphaz claims that he has never seen an exception to the rule, “You reap what you sow.”
  2. Eliphaz deserves the response, “You haven’t seen much.”
  3. While the principle is based on observed events (harvest), even there it is not always true as evidenced by floods and drought.
  4. It is a faith that can and will be broken if based on the events of life; it can be held only eschatologically, in hope. Gal.6:7-8.
- G. VV. 9-11 – What Eliphaz’ argument lacks in substance he makes up for with rhetoric.
1. He illustrates his point with an elaborate illustration.
  2. Beasts of prey may terrify the world unchecked for a time, but the angry *breath of God* easily destroys them.
- H. v. 12 – How does Eliphaz know this?
1. He has appealed to experience.
  2. But suspecting that his position is vulnerable, he falls back on a claim to more immediate knowledge of divine mysteries.
  3. He came to understand the fate of the wicked as the result of a dream revelation.
- I. vv. 13 - 14 – The *deep sleep* is the same as that of Adam (Gen. 2:21), Abraham (Gen. 15:12), and Saul (1 Sam. 26:12), all induced by God, and the words are heard not in a trance, but in a dream.

- J. V. 15 -- 16 – There was a definite *form* (v. 16), but it was indescribable.
1. It was a hair raising experience.
  2. The spirit spoke with an audible voice.
- K. V. 17 – After this much build up we expect to hear more than a truism, but that is what we get.
1. The thing is so obviously impossible that the banality makes Eliphaz sound pretentious.
  2. Further, it is unfair, because Job has not questioned the ways of God, let alone claimed to be better than God.
  3. All he has done so far is to say how miserable he feels and that he wishes he were dead.
  4. Eliphaz is reading a lot into this to find criticism of God; the only fault he has seen in Job is weakness (4:5).
- L. v. 18 – 21 It is not clear how far the spirit's statement goes; it may end at v. 17 and 18-21 be Eliphaz' exposition, although translators generally continue the quotation to the end of the chapter.
1. Eliphaz is following a truth that will lead him into error.
  2. This is why it is impossible for Job to refute him; he must admit the premise, but contradict the conclusion.