

Job's initial response to the trials that came upon him was good. In Job 1:20-21 it says, "he fell to the ground, worshiped, and said, 'Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall return there. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD.'" After he was personally afflicted by Satan with sores from head to toe, and his wife told him to curse God and die, he said, "Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?" (2:10). But then as the days wore on, he fell into deep depression. In Job 3 he cursed the day of his birth and wished he could die.

Chapters 3–31 are the largest section of the book. They contain the speeches between Job and his three friends. We are going to look at four of Job's speeches in these chapters, and we will see that even in the midst of Job's suffering God was graciously and actively at work in Job's life, giving him hope and pulling him slowly out of his depression.

In chapter 9 Job saw no hope of any vindication. Job knew he was innocent and yet he was suffering. From his theological understanding, suffering was the punishment of sin, and should not be the experience of the righteous. Job wanted to know how he could vindicate himself before God (9:2). If he were to meet God in court what chances would he have of winning his case? (9:3) He concluded he had no chance at all. God is profound in wisdom and His power is vast. He moves mountains, shakes the earth, and walks upon the seas. He can tell the sun not to shine or hide the stars from our sight. He has made the constellations (9:5-9). He performs wonders that cannot be fathomed, miracles that cannot be counted (9:10). He works in unseen ways (9:11). No one can question what He is doing (9:12). Job concluded: "He is not a man like me that I might answer him, that we might confront each other in court. If only there were a mediator who could bring us together, but there is none." (9:32, 33).

We now come to chapter 10. Job continues to lament.

10:1 "I loathe my own life; I will give full vent to my complaint; I will speak in the bitterness of my soul.

10:2 "I will say to God, 'Do not condemn me; Let me know why You contend with me.

10:3 'Is it right for You indeed to oppress, to reject the labor of Your hands, and to look favorably on the schemes of the wicked?

10:4 'Have You eyes of flesh? Or do You see as a man sees?

10:5 'Are Your days as the days of a mortal, Or Your years as man's years,

10:6 that you must search out my faults and probe after my sin--

Job is still very bitter. He wants to know what charges God has against him: **Let me know why You contend with me** (Job 10:2), but God doesn't answer him. He feels fear, frustration, anger, and disappointment. He is very confused. In verse 3 he directs his complaint to God, praying in a typically Israelite fashion, freely expressing what is on his mind. Job knows that God is not unjust, but he feels that he is being rejected and treated as if he were guilty. Therefore he asks, **'Is it right for You indeed to oppress, to reject the labor of Your hands, and to look favorably on the schemes of the wicked?** Job (and all-believers) is **the labor of God's hands** (10:3); does it please God to oppress and reject something that He has created and bless the wicked who oppose Him?

He then asks God, **"'Have You eyes of flesh? Or do You see as a man sees? Are Your days as the days of a mortal, Or Your years as man's years. . .?"** In my opinion, the best understanding of these verses is that Job is asking something like, "God, do you know what it's like to be human? Do you know what it's like to have flesh and blood, to be mortal, to be weak, to get sick, to be dependent on food and air and

water to survive? Do you know what it is like to see through my eyes? Are you in a hurry to probe for my guilt, to search for my sin (10:3, NLT)? . . . If you understood my plight and saw things as I do, perhaps you would have more compassion on me."

Job had just spoken of a mediator only six verses back. A mediator is someone to stand between himself and God; the essential trait of a mediator is that he can speak to both parties. When mediating between God and man, the mediator has to have a standing with God. The mediator also has to be someone who knows what it is like to be human, who knows what it is to be weak and frail, to be tempted, to be in pain. It is as if Job were saying, "God, if you knew what it was like to be human, maybe you would understand me better. Maybe you wouldn't treat me differently. I am weak; I am frail. My life is short."

As Christians, we see how significant this is when read under the light of the NT. A mediator must be someone who can speak to God on equal terms; not just an angel, but like God Himself, and yet someone who absolutely knows the meaning of human pain and human frailty. We can see in this complaint a hint of the great salvation that is part of the answer to Job's prayer, the coming of Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 2:14 says, "since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same". Hebrews 2:17-18 says, "Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted."

"Men are declared to be His brethren, because He and they are of one nature. As they are partakers of flesh and blood, He also took part in the same, in order that He might die, and by death redeem his people from all the evils of sin" (Hodge).

"In order to be a perfect high priest, a person must sympathize with those on whose behalf he acts, and he cannot sympathize with them unless he enters into their experiences and share them for himself. Jesus did just this" (Bruce, 81). Through His sufferings and temptations, Jesus has gained perfect sympathy with us who also suffer and are tempted. "He is compassionate, because he can sympathize with the tempted, having been Himself tempted; and He is a true and faithful high priest, because He really expiated the sins of the people" (John Owen, Calvin's Commentary on Hebrews – n. 50).

Unknown to Job, in the midst of his trials God was at work in his life, forming in his mind the thoughts of redemption. God uses our afflictions to bring us to a greater understanding of ourselves and our end, and to cause us to recognize that life divorced of His mercy is futile and hopeless. Job in his suffering is becoming much more aware of the reality of human mortality and human weakness.

So Job's first breakthrough in Job's spiritual pilgrimage of faith was the recognition that he needed a mediator.

The second major breakthrough comes in Job's fourth speech (the last speech of the first cycle found in chapters 12-14). Although Job questioned why he was experiencing the things he was, he had never lost hope in God. In Job 13:15 he even says, "Though He slay me, I will hope in Him."

In the first six verses of Job 14, Job begins by pondering the frailness of man and the finality of death.

14:1 "Man born of woman is of few days and full of trouble.

14:2 He springs up like a flower and withers away; like a fleeting shadow, he does not endure.

People are weak, frail creatures. We are all buffeted and battered by the harsh realities of this world and our life quickly comes to an end. It is like a flower that only lasts for a season, or a shadow that appears in the morning and is gone by noon (14:2). Our lives are here today and gone tomorrow.

Verses 3 and 4 also speak of the frailty of our spiritual existence.

14:3 Do you fix your eye on such a one? Will you bring him before you for judgment?

14:4 Who can bring what is pure from the impure? No one!

Verses 3 and 4 reflect on the scrutiny of God and man's feeble moral nature. Job asks, can anyone make something unclean, clean? We are all morally corrupted. None of us are able to get rid of the core remnant of sin. Nothing good can come from us apart from the grace of God.

14:5 Man's days are determined; you have decreed the number of his months and have set limits he cannot exceed.

14:6 So look away from him and let him alone, till he has put in his time like a hired man.

The length of man's life is also dependent upon God's grace. God has decreed the number of "days and months" man will live. Man cannot survive a day beyond what God has determined. Because as a mortal, Job's days are so few he asks that God look away so that he can find rest – like a laborer after a hard day's work. Job is aware of the temporal nature of his life because he is learning in his affliction. It is affliction that teaches us of our need for dependence upon God and our need of grace.

14:7 "At least there is hope for a tree: If it is cut down, it will sprout again, and its new shoots will not fail.

14:8 Its roots may grow old in the ground and its stump die in the soil,

14:9 yet at the scent of water it will bud and put forth shoots like a plant.

14:10 But man dies and is laid low; he breathes his last and is no more.

NAS 14:11 As water evaporates from the sea, And a river becomes parched and dried up,

14:12 so man lies down and does not rise; till the heavens are no more, men will not awake or be roused from their sleep.

Death is irreversible. There is more hope for a tree that it will live again than there is for man (14:10). Our physical existence is over at death (14:7-10). "Though a tree is cut down, yet, in a moist situation, shoots come forth, and grow up as a newly planted tree. But when man is cut off by death, he is forever removed from his place in this world" (Henry).

Human beings are like a dry lake bed where the water does not return.

As gloomy as Job sounds, there is a glimmer of hope in verse 12; he says, "till the heavens are no more, men will not awake or be roused from their sleep." Although it is only incremental, Job moves from wanting death to speaking of death as sleep. The coffin becomes a bed and the man is waiting for the day when the heavens are no more. The primary point is that in this life our afflictions teach us the finality of death, but there is also the thought that men will awake after the heavens pass.

Modern men need to consider death more often. Ecclesiastes 7:1-2 says, "the day of death better than the day of birth. It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of every man; the living should take this to heart." The living take the day of one's death to heart since it reminds them of the temporal nature of life.

This is all part of the problem of evil. Why do humans suffer so much? Why is their life so short? Is there an after-life? Is there eternal life? Is there the possibility of resurrection? This is the thing that Job is moving towards.

14:13 "If only you would hide me in the grave and conceal me till your anger has passed! If only you would set me a time and then remember me!"

In verses 13-17 Job begins to rise above his thoughts about the finality of death and begins to think about life after death. He sees death as a transition, or a door.

Job asks that God would hide him in the grave (sheol; the place of the dead), so that the grave would protect him and he could "sleep" (14:12) *until* God's anger passes. In other words, if he died, it would put an end to his suffering. But he is sure that God would remember him after the time set by Him.

Job at this point in his pilgrimage is struggling, but he is moving towards the key doctrine of the Christian faith in terms of the problem of death, namely, the doctrine of the resurrection. His desires are foreshadowing this great work of God to come.

This leads to Job's question in the next verse: "If a man dies, will he live again?"

Garrett* 14:14 "If a man dies, will he live again? All of the days of my hard service I would hope until the coming of my transformation,

Garrett* 14:15 you would call me and I would answer you. You would long for the work of your hands."

The question here, "If a man dies, will he live again?" is a strong form of expressing negation. Job's point is that man will not live again on the earth as we do now. Any hope of that kind is, therefore, vain. Job had denied that man shall live again in this present world (14:10-12). But he is willing to wait for a "set time," when God shall remember (14:13) and his transformation comes.

The word "change" or "transformation" means a radical alteration. There is a change that takes place at death. We are absent from the body and present with the Lord. But there is a further change after that. Resurrection!

Job says that at "the coming of my transformation" God would call him and Job would answer God (14:15). By "the coming of transformation" Job is surely thinking about life after death, but it seems even more likely that he is specifically thinking of resurrection. Job looks forward to the day when after he has died, God would show His love for him and bring him to Himself. He even sees God longing to be with him – the work of His hands (14:15b). He knows that God has a desire for His handiwork. In the same way God desires us, the work of His hands, to be with Him forever.

Another reality in Job's longing to be with God was the understanding that his sins were pardoned.

14:16 Surely then you will count my steps but not keep track of my sin.

14:17 My offenses will be sealed up in a bag; you will cover over my sin.

Job believes that God would forgive him. Job recognized that God observed his paths and scrutinized his ways, but His sins would not be tracked; they would be sealed in a bag and covered. Literally, his sins will be smeared over (this is the same word in Job 13:4, NAS).

However, even though Job has risen to this height of faith, he then despairs once again in the verses that follow. This is typical of our faith in trials. One moment we have hope, the next we are in despair.

IN SUM:

The world is full of injustice and violence. It is caught in the rush and whirl of life and must face the harsh reality of death. Job's question is of utmost importance. "If a man dies, will he live again?"

Jesus spoke about life after death and the resurrection with more certainty than anyone has ever spoken. When challenged by the Sadducees, Jesus said, "Haven't you read where God says, 'I am the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.'" Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had died thousands of years before Jesus had come into this world. But the text does not say, "God was the God of Abraham, Isaac and of Jacob." Rather, it says He is their God - even in death, God is still their God. God knows Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Lk. 20:37). He belongs to them and they belong to Him. They are his people; they are the sheep of his pasture. He is not going to forget about or lose the work of his hands. Jesus said, "Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment" (Jn. 5:28, 29). Jesus will remember us and call us to Himself exactly as Job says.

The all-sufficing answer to the question if man will live again was given by Christ to Martha near the grave of Lazarus. There He declared, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live" (Jn 11:25-26).

In Christ there are no unsolvable problems in life and death. Jesus is the fountain of life. By faith in Him, we have life that is untouched by death. Of course, death has two meanings in this verse. Death in the first case is physical death. We will die physically. However, our union with Jesus secures our possession of life which is victorious over death itself.

Of course, Jesus' words to Martha (and us) would only be words if Jesus died and was never seen again. Christ's resurrection is a fact which, when taken in connection with His words while on earth, endorses and establishes His claim to be the Resurrection and the Life.

A great light has shined into the shadows of death. We should lift our hearts with thanksgiving and the triumphant challenge, "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"

In his prayer Job is calling upon God for compassion and mercy. As he does this, he imagines God calling for him after death and restoring him fully. And that, in fact, is the hope of our faith.

16:18 "O earth, do not cover my blood; may my cry never be laid to rest!

16:19 Even now my witness is in heaven; my advocate is on high.

16:20 My intercessor is my friend as my eyes pour out tears to God;

16:21 on behalf of a man he pleads with God as a man pleads for his friend.

In verse 18 he is expressing the thought that people had in OT times where the blood of someone who was murdered is pictured as crying out for vengeance. The crying would stop when the blood was covered or revenge had taken place. And if the next of kin did not avenge the person, God would. Job, of course, hadn't died, but he was expressing his longing to be vindicated before it was too late.

In 16:19-21 we see remarkable progress in Job's pilgrimage. In chapters 9 and 10 he has gone from absolute despair, to imagining how blessed he would be if there could be an intercessor between himself and God. Now he confesses that he has an intercessor! He says, "My witness is in heaven, the One who testifies for me."

There are four terms in verses 19 and 20 used by Job to describe the one who Job hoped would come to his defense: "witness", "advocate", "intercessor", and "friend". All these terms can and do apply to human beings elsewhere in the Old Testament, but the prepositional phrases "in heaven" and "on high" push the interpreter to think in terms of a divine redeemer. From a New Testament perspective, it is a simple matter to identify this person as Christ Jesus, but for Job, he was unknown and on defined. The glass through which he looked was even darker than ours (1 Cor. 13:12; Alden, 187).

Verse 21 defines what Job's advocate does. He argues the case of his friend before the bar of divine justice. His task is similar to that of Messiah in Isaiah 2:4, 11:4 (also Ro. 8:34; Heb. 7:25).

Job's close friends may mock him and turn away from him, and Job may pour out tears to God, but he has a friend who pleads with God as a man pleads for a friend. This friend will appear in 19:25. We must never forget the intimacy of God brought to us in Christ. He is our brother (Heb. 2:11, 2, 17). He is our friend (Jn. 15:14, 15). As a brother and friend, He pleads our case before God from a fervent love for us.

Job, in his pilgrimage of faith and his growth of faith, is now convinced that there has to be an intercessor between God and people. This is an amazing transformation in his thinking. "This is an evidence of returning confidence in God - to which Job always returns even after the most passionate and irreverent expressions. Such is his real trust in God, that though he is betrayed at times into expressions of impatience and irreverence, yet he is sure to return to calmer views, and to show that he has true confidence in the Most High" (Barnes).

"What can the believer, in the full light of the Gospel revelation, say more, with the knowledge of One in heaven ever making intercession for him? And yet Job's faith had risen to such a height as this, and had grasped such a hope as this. In no other book of the Bible is there such a picture of faith clinging to the all-just God for justification as in the Book of Job" (Ellicott).

Once more we should praise God that we have a great high priest who stands for us before God, living forever to make intercession for us. He stands before us as one who is man and who knows what it is to be mortal and weak; and yet he also can speak to God as an equal, as a man speaks to his neighbor.

19:23 "Oh that my words were written! Oh that they were inscribed in a book!

19:24 "That with an iron stylus and lead They were engraved in the rock forever!

19:25 "As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, And at the last He will take His stand on the earth.

19:26 "Even after my skin is destroyed, Yet from my flesh I shall see God;

When you read this passage in isolation, it appears to make no sense because Job has just spoken of how he is completely miserable. In speech after speech he considers himself to be attacked and unjustly treated by God. Suddenly, it seems out of nowhere he makes this great confession of faith. It does make sense, however, if we consider it in light of the pilgrimage of Job we have been describing, where Job first thinks, "If only there were an intercessor between me and God (9:32-33)." Then Job says, "I do have an intercessor. He does stand between me and God" (16:19-21)" Then finally he gives this great confession that combines his hope for a mediator (Job 9) , a witness (Job 16), and a redeemer, with his hope for resurrection in the One Person. This is the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of Job in the midst of his darkness.

Job believes that his friends would fail him, so he searches for some way to defend his integrity. Fearing that he may die and his integrity would never be restored, he wishes that his words were preserved as a permanent record written in a book. In verse 24 he switches from "inscribed" to "engraved" and desires that his words be engraved on a rock – a stone monument with the engraved letters filled with lead.

Job in the verse 25 abruptly breaks off from his wishful thinking and proclaims his deepest conviction. He has just been speaking hypothetically, now he speaks with assurance as he proclaims: I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will take His stand on the earth. The redeemer can be identified with the intercessor that he earlier has said will stand between him and God.

A redeemer (go 'el, or go 'al) in the OT is someone who had a legal obligation to family members. As Ellicott says, "This goel was the name given to the next of kin whose duty it was to redeem, ransom, or avenge one who had fallen into debt or bondage, or had been slain in a family feud. In Ruth, for instance, the goel is he who has to marry the widow of his relative, and to continue his name." Barnes adds,

The Hebrew word, לאל go'al, is from לאל gā'al, "to redeem, to ransom." It is applied to the redemption of a farm sold, by paying back the price, Leviticus 25:25; Ruth 4:4, Ruth 4:6; to anything consecrated to God that is redeemed by paying its value, Leviticus 27:13, and to a slave that is ransomed, Leviticus 25:48-49. The word לאל go'el, is applied to one who redeems a field, Leviticus 25:26; and is often applied to God, who had redeemed his people from bondage, Exodus 6:6; Isaiah 43:1. . . Among the Hebrews, the לאל go'el occupied an important place, as a blood-avenger, or a vindicator of violated rights.

In other words, Job was not looking for a redeemer to save him from his sins – he believed he was innocent; rather he was looking for someone to vindicate him. However, as Bensen says, the term goel "most properly agrees to Jesus Christ: for this word is primarily spoken of the next kinsman, whose office it was to redeem, by a price paid." How much greater is Christ who redeems us from sin, and based on His merits on the cross represents us before the Father and secures our release for sin! He pleads our case to make sure our rights are honored.

Job knew one thing with certainty-that his Redeemer lives and that in the end he would eventually appear and stand upon the earth. Furthermore, in verse 26 Job believes that even though his body will return to dust, he will see God in his flesh. This can only mean that he believed in the resurrection of his body.

CONCLUSION:

Throughout the book, Job points to two universal human needs. First, the need for an intercessor/deliverer, someone to stand between us and God. Job has made it clear, over and over again, that God is high, God is powerful, God is above all humans and God sees all. There needs to be someone to stand between us and this almighty figure.

Secondly, the book points out the need for redemption from death. Death is the great enemy, but he wants redemption from death. That redemption comes in this eschatological Redeemer (paraphrased from Duane Garret lecture on Job).

We must never forget that Job was blameless (he wasn't sinless, but he was as upright as is possible considering the fallen condition of man), and yet he placed his hope not in himself, but in his heavenly Redeemer. The same mediator/redeemer is your friend who is in heaven and pleads your case – even though your life is far from blameless! Christ cannot lose His case, for He died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God (1 Pet. 3:18). Christ has washed our robes and made them white in His blood (Rev. 7:14). “He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross” (Col. 2:13-14). We too can proclaim, “I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will take His stand on the earth. Even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh I shall see God” (Job 19:25-26).

Our afflictions cause us to know ourselves and our end better, and realize that life without Christ is bankrupt. We are in need of mercy. It is to help us see that there is a corruption that is within us that we cannot strip away.

Let our afflictions turn our thoughts to heaven.

2 Corinthians

4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.

4:17 For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,

4:18 while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

5:1 For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

5:2 For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven,

5:3 inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked.

5:4 For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life.

Before the Throne of God Above

Before the throne of God above

I have a strong and perfect Plea

A great High Priest whose name is Love

Who ever lives and pleads for me

My name is graven on His hands

My name is written on His heart

I know that while in Heaven He stands

No tongue can bid me thence depart

No tongue can bid me thence depart

When Satan tempts me to despair

And tells me of the guilt within

Upwards I look and see Him there

Who made an end to all my sin

Because the sinless Savior died

My sinful soul is counted free

For God the Just is satisfied

To look on Him and pardon me

To look on Him and pardon me

Behold Him there, the risen Lamb

My perfect spotless Righteousness

The great unchangeable I Am

The King of glory and of grace

One with Himself, I cannot die

My soul is purchased by His blood

My life is hid with Christ on high

With Christ, my Savior and my God

With Christ, my Savior and my God

MESSIANIC THEOLOGY IN JOB COMPARED TO THE REST OF THE BIBLE

There is a distinct difference, although they point to the same solution. In the rest of the Bible the messianic hope is centered around the election of Israel. God chose Israel as his chosen instrument. God made a promise to Israel in Genesis chapter 12 that "Those who bless you, I will bless; those who curse you, I will curse; and all the nations of the earth will find blessing in you." Then we have the whole story of redemption in the story of Israel. Israel has been chosen by God. The line of David was chosen by God and God gave a special promise to David in 2 Samuel 7. The prophets speak of a son who will come and bring redemption as in Isaiah 17. Or they speak of the branch of the house of David who will come and redeem his people; the shepherd of the house of David, who will guide his people. So you have all of these promises of messianic redemption that all flow from the fact that God has chosen Israel to be the agent of bringing salvation into the world; and it is finally fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ.

In Job you have no reference to Israel whatsoever. There is not the slightest hint of anything about the covenants, about Abraham, about the election of Abraham. There is nothing whatsoever about the promises to David. There is nothing at all, not even an echo of this history of redemption that we find in all the other literature that focuses on Israel's election.

Job focuses much more broadly and generally on the human condition and the nature of God. It also focuses very plainly on the evil and all the suffering that exists in the world. In light of all of this, is there any way out? Is there any solution? And we have this in the great confession of Job.

This is not the whole story because the book is not over and we still haven't gotten to God's speech. Both the Bible as a whole and the Book of Job point toward the need for a savior. The rest of the Bible does this by looking at the history of redemption as told in the story of Israel and how God chose Israel. This book does it, if you will, much more theologically and even philosophically. It looks at the concept of God and the concept of humanity and the nature of suffering and the nature of human mortality and our condition. It says, there must be some kind of solution. And Job in his pilgrimage of faith has said, "The solution is to be found in the heavenly redeemer, the eschatological redeemer, who will stand upon the earth, and speak to God as a friend; who will overcome death, so that even though I die, yet I will arise and I will see God." (paraphrased from Duane Garret, lecture on Job).

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