

Job 10 • When the Faithful Despair

Introduction

As pointed out previously, when James mentions Job, he does not praise Job for having “patience”, but “endurance”. (Ja. 5:11) The implication, which is drawn from many passages in the book of Job such as this one is that trials and suffering may at times provoke a reaction that is anything but experienced in quiet, unvoiced patience. One of the key aspects of the wisdom of God as taught in these pages is just how far one might go in expressing the anguish of what they are experiencing before crossing that line into the arena of inappropriate expression. However, the even greater lesson of wisdom provided by Job’s example is that although there may certainly be despair experienced when it comes to the physical, it is the endurance of one’s faith in the more important spiritual that is most important.

¹I loathe my own life;
I will give full vent to my complaint;
I will speak in the bitterness of my soul.
²I will say to God, ‘Do not condemn me;
Let me know why You contend with
me.
³Is it right for You indeed to oppress,
To reject the labor of Your hands,
And to look favorably on the schemes
of the wicked?
⁴Have You eyes of flesh?
Or do You see as a man sees?
⁵Are Your days as the days of a mortal,
Or Your years as man’s years,
⁶That You should seek for my guilt
And search after my sin?
⁷According to Your knowledge I am
indeed not guilty,
Yet there is no deliverance from Your
hand.

Read verses 1-7

Q: Chapters 9 & 10 are one continuous dialog from Job, but how has the subject drastically changed here from the previous?

A: Whereas chapter 9 is mainly a response to Bildad, at this point Job is directly addressing God.

Q: How are these two responses, the previous to Bildad and this to God, significantly differing in their tone and demeanor?

A: Whereas Job’s response to Bildad is much more measured and addressing what we might call doctrinal issues where the working of God is concerned, this is much more emotional and personal, seeming to come from the bitterness or at least monumental weight upon his soul.

Q: How is Job’s chief concern, which is repeated throughout the whole book of Job, captured in v.2?

A: “Let me know why You contend with me.” In spite of all that has occurred to him physically, he urgently desires to understand the greater spiritual underpinnings for what is taking place.

Q: What does v.3 mean? Is Job accusing God of being unfair?

A: Job is acknowledging that in the past, at least, he was under God’s care and protection. This expresses his confusion as to why God would seemingly abandon that which He so diligently took care of previously. It’s a poetic way of asking, “What has changed?” where God is concerned.

Q: What kind of questions are posed in v.4-6 and why?

A: They are rhetorical questions which are actually stipulating that God is above judging the way that man judges, so there must be a divine purpose behind these things which eludes Job’s understanding.

Q: What is Job actually acknowledging in v.7?

A: That he is completely in God’s power and control, even though by His standard Job is not guilty. It is an acknowledgment of God’s sovereignty in every situation regardless of Job’s spiritual state.

Application: We must acknowledge and submit to God’s **sovereignty** in every situation and regardless of our personal **spiritual** condition, even when we think it is so **good** as to warrant **exemption** from earthly circumstances.

⁸“Your hands fashioned and made me
altogether,
And would You destroy me?
⁹Remember now, that You have made
me as clay;
And would You turn me into dust
again?
¹⁰Did You not pour me out like milk
And curdle me like cheese;
¹¹Clothe me with skin and flesh,
And knit me together with bones and
sinews?
¹²You have granted me life and
lovingkindness;
And Your care has preserved my spirit.

Read verses 8-12

Q: To what aspect or role of God is Job making an appeal?

A: God the Creator who, up to a certain point from Job’s point of view, had also been his Supporter and Sustainer.

- (v.8) **“Your hands fashioned and made me”** – Job acknowledges the work and sovereignty of God the Creator.
- (v.9) **“You have made me as clay”** – Job acknowledges God the Potter who chose to fashion Job according to His image and will. (Is. 29:16; 30:14; 45:9; 64:8; Jer. 18:6; Rom. 9:21-23) In other words, it’s not just giving Job life, but forming him for a purpose.
- (v.10) **“Do not pour me out...and curdle me...”** – The Hebrew word for **“curdle”** may be better translated as **“congeal”**. Job is using an idiom of his day to describe the process by which God poured him out and formed him in the womb, in other words pouring him out and congealing him into the embryo from which he ultimately grew. This is acknowledging the Creator as working and shaping him even before birth.
- (v.11) **“Clothe me with skin and flesh”** – Job continues with his development from an embryo into someone developing into the whole body in which a baby will be born and continue to grow and function in life.
- (v.12) **“You have granted me life and lovingkindness”** – Job acknowledges that God, in addition to giving him form, provided both the physical essential of life and the spiritual essential of His lovingkindness.

Q: How does Job summarize the most important oversight aspect of God the Creator where Job is personally concerned?

A: **“And Your care has preserved my spirit”**. (v.12) Even more than guardian of Job’s physical life, Job acknowledges the even greater role of God over Job’s spiritual life.

Observation: The Hebrew word for **“care”** is an Old Testament word which is alternately translated as **“oversight”**, **“custody”**, or **“charge”** to convey the concept of someone not just taking an interest in another, but assuming responsibility for them in a guardian’s role.

Application: We need to acknowledge God’s role as our **Creator** for the whole process from **egg** to **embryo** to fully **developed** physically, but even more importantly, as it works in parallel to oversee our **spiritual** development.

¹³Yet these things You have concealed
in Your heart;
I know that this is within You:
¹⁴If I sin, then You would take note of
me,
And would not acquit me of my guilt.
¹⁵If I am wicked, woe to me!
And if I am righteous, I dare not lift up
my head.
I am sated with disgrace and conscious
of my misery.
¹⁶Should my head be lifted up, You
would hunt me like a lion;
And again You would show Your power
against me.
¹⁷You renew Your witnesses against me
And increase Your anger toward me;

Read verses 13-17

Q: What is Job actually saying in v.13?

A: He is acknowledging the sovereignty of God and attributing to Him everything which has taken place in Job’s life.

Q: Is Job finding comfort in this fact?

A: Not really, but rather seems to be upset that God knew all along, even before birth, of the suffering and tragedies which would befall Job in later life.

Q: What are the 3 “if/then” statements Job makes in v.14-15?

- (v.14) **“If I sin, then You would take note of me, and would not acquit me of my guilt.”** – Job acknowledges that God’s response to the presence of sin is understandable and justified. Man has no way to acquit themselves before God. (This hints doctrinally at the need for a Redeemer.)
- (v.15) **“If I am wicked, woe to me!”** – Job acknowledges that God would be justified in cursing him— the biblical meaning of a **“woe”**, if he were to

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Hardship after hardship is with me.

¹⁸“Why then have You brought me out
of the womb?
Would that I had died and no eye had
seen me!
¹⁹I should have been as though I had
not been,
Carried from womb to tomb.’
²⁰Would He not let my few days alone?
Withdraw from me that I may have a
little cheer
²¹Before I go—and I shall not return—
To the land of darkness and deep
shadow,
²²The land of utter gloom as darkness
itself,
Of deep shadow without order,
And which shines as the darkness.”

engage in a lifestyle of sin and rebellion— the biblical meaning of wickedness. (This hints doctrinally at the consequences for rejecting God.)

- (v.15) “*And if I am righteous, I dare not life up my head.*” – However, Job acknowledges that even in a righteous state that he still could not measure up to God. Man’s righteousness falls short of God’s. (This hints doctrinally at the need for Christ’s imparted righteousness.)

Q: How is v.16 an extension of this last point in v.15?

A: To attempt to show pride in one’s own righteousness or to juxtapose it against the righteousness of God leads to a spiritual rebuke that puts man back in his proper place. He can never measure up on his own.

Q: What events in Job’s life is he addressing in v.17?

A: That the tragedies and hardships came in successive, increasing waves, and with the appearance of his so-called friends, just seems to incur fresh and newer problems likewise coming in concentric waves.

Point: Like Job’s friends, Job does not seem to take into account the possible role of Satan, even though Job may be technically correct in that nothing could come about without God’s authorization.

Application: We need to acknowledge that there is no circumstance or condition by which we can **justify** ourselves before God, whether it is characterized by **sin**, **wickedness**, or even **righteousness**.

Read verses 18-22

Q: How might this closing section sound familiar?

A: It echoes the same sentiments Job originally voiced in chapter 3 when he broke his self-imposed silence.

Point: Job’s friends have been so ineffective that the person they purport to comfort seeks death to bring it all to an end.

Q: What is the image Job is projecting in v.19 with the phrase, “Carried from womb to tomb”?

A: In the Hebrew it portrays first being carried by the midwife as a baby born dead, and then carried by the pallbearers to the tomb.

Q: Why do v.20-21 sound familiar?

“Let darkness and black gloom claim it;
Let a cloud settle on it; Let the blackness of the day terrify it.
— Job 3:5

‘I should have been as though I had not been,
Carried from womb to tomb.’
— Job 10:19

It not just a theme previously visited, but will be visited again:

“For when a few years are past,
I shall go the way of no return.
— Job 16:22

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Q: Why do you suppose that Job describes his ultimate destination upon death as “the land of darkness and deep shadow...of utter gloom as darkness itself, of deep shadow without order...which shines as the darkness”?

A: Job seems to be expecting that there will be consequences in the afterlife which parallel his hardships and suffering in this life.

Application: Job’s complaint is **emotional**— that is, **flesh**-based. In the absence of **divine** information, one acts from the **human** nature originally given by the **divine**.

Overall Application

- *Have you ever thought that being obedient and even “good” in God’s estimation should be enough to change your circumstances? What is the truth where this is concerned?*
- *How well do you recognize that just as God was present and active during even the earliest stages of your physical development, that He has never ceased His oversight of an and concern for you?*
- *Is there ever any circumstance, behavior, or personal standard by which we can justify ourselves before God?*
- *How does Job’s example reveal the degree to which we are allowed to respond to God emotionally from our human nature? Is there a line in such cases where we might take it too far?*