

Job's First Response to Eliphaz

Job 6-7

Job 6:1-10 - *"Then Job answered and said: ²'Oh, that my grief were fully weighed, and my calamity laid with it on the scales! ³For then it would be heavier than the sand of the sea. Therefore my words have been rash. ⁴For the arrows of the Almighty are within me; My spirit drinks in their poison; the terrors of God are arrayed against me. ⁵Does the wild donkey bray when it has grass, or does the ox low over its fodder? ⁶Can flavorless food be eaten without salt? Or is there any taste in the white of an egg? ⁷My soul refuses to touch them. They are loathsome to me. ⁸'Oh, that I might have my request, hat God would grant me the thing that I long for! ⁹That it would please God to crush me, that He would loose His hand and cut me off! ¹⁰Then I would still have comfort; though in anguish I would exult, He will not spare, for I have not concealed the words of the Holy One."*

Background Notes

Several years ago I had a unique experience with the book of Job: I read it through in one sitting. I should add that I was sitting in bed! I was going through a time of sinus headaches that lasted for about a week. I had never had them before, and I have never had them since – praise the Lord! They would come in waves. The pain was so bad that I just had to lie in bed, but between the waves I could sit up and read – and I read the book of Job. Reading through the entire book when I was going through a time of suffering gave me a new appreciation for the book of Job. And that's another reason why God included it in the Bible. It's easier to identify with Job's feelings and words when you're going through a time of suffering.

In Job 4-5 we looked at Eliphaz's first speech to Job. Although Eliphaz seems to be the most sympathetic of Job's three friends, he still finds fault with Job. He and the other two friends based their counsel on the wrong premise. They were convinced that Job was suffering because of a secret sin in his life. The idea that all personal suffering is punishment for a personal sin was the (incorrect) basis for their counsel. Job responds to Eliphaz's first speech in Job 6-7.

Doctrinal / Teaching Point

Job's first response to Eliphaz contains disappointment and despair.

In Job 6:1-3, Job explains that his rash words were caused by the weight of his suffering. It was heavier than the wet sand of the sea (v3). And what made it extra hard to bear was that **God** was **allowing** it to happen! It seemed that God was directing His poison arrows and terrors directly at Job (v4). "Give me a break," Job says to Eliphaz. "Just as donkeys

and oxen sound off when they need food, and just as salt and something tasteless go together, so my complaining is just the natural outcome of my suffering, and loss of taste for life.”

In verses 8-9 Job wishes that he could die. *“Oh, that I might have my request, that God would grant me the thing that I long for, that it would please God to crush me, that He would loose His hand and cut me off!”* Notice again – there is **no** hint here of suicide or euthanasia because of His intense suffering. Job longs for death, but he knows that taking life is in the hands of **God**.

“Though in anguish I would exult, He will not spare; for I have not concealed the words of the Holy One” (v10). The idea seems to be that if the Lord took Job’s life, he would rejoice knowing that he had been innocent of defying God.

We can feel the depth of Job’s despair in verses 11-13: *“What strength do I have, that I should hope? And what is my end, that I should prolong my life? ¹² Is my strength the strength of stones? Or is my flesh bronze? ¹³ Is my help not within me? And is success driven from me?”* Verse 13 is probably more of a statement than a question: “I’m at the end of my rope, and there is no deliverance for me. My only strength is in God.”

In verses 14-18 Job tells Eliphaz that he and his buddies have proved to be a disappointment: *“To him who is afflicted, kindness should be shown by his friend, even though he forsakes the fear of the Almighty. ¹⁵ My brothers have dealt deceitfully like a brook, like the streams of the brooks that pass away, ¹⁶ that are dark because of the ice, and into which the snow vanishes. ¹⁷ When it is warm, they cease to flow; when it is hot, they vanish from their place. ¹⁸ The paths of their way turn aside. They go nowhere and perish.”*

A *wadi* is a streambed that is full of water in the rainy season, but completely dry in the summer heat. Job compares his so-called friends to *wadis*, and likens himself to a traveling caravan, a common sight in that day. Caravan drivers expect to find thirst-quenching waters in the *wadis* - but would find none. *“The caravans of Tema look, the travelers of Sheba hope for them. ²⁰ They are disappointed because they were confident; they come there and are confused. ²¹ For now you are nothing. You see terror, and are afraid” (v19-21).*

Job had never asks his friends for anything big. All he wants is a little sympathy. Instead, they seem afraid of him and his condition. *“For now you are nothing. You see terror and are afraid. ²² Did I ever say, ‘Bring something to me’? Or, ‘Offer a bribe for me from your wealth’? ²³ Or, ‘Deliver me from the enemy’s hand’? Or, ‘Redeem me from the hand of oppressors’?” (v21-23).*

In verses 24-30 Job challenges Eliphaz and the others to show him where he has gone wrong: *“Teach me, and I will hold my tongue. Cause me to understand how I have erred. ²⁵ How forceful are right words! But what does your arguing prove? ²⁶ Do you intend to rebuke my words, and the speeches of a desperate one, which are as wind? ²⁷ Yes, you overwhelm the fatherless, and you undermine your friend. ²⁸ Now therefore, be pleased to look at me, for I would never lie to your*

face. ²⁹ Yield now, let there be no injustice! Yes, concede, my righteousness still stands! ³⁰ Is there injustice on my tongue? Cannot my taste discern the unsavory?"

Job pleads with his friends to have an honest discussion with him; to stop treating his words like wind; to stop taking advantage of him, as if he were an orphan, or up for sale. He asks, "Please consider what you have said unjustly about my integrity!"

Chapter 7

Job 7:1-4 - *"Is there not a time of hard service for man on earth? Are not his days also like the days of a hired man? ² Like a servant who earnestly desires the shade, and like a hired man who eagerly looks for his wages, ³ so I have been allotted months of futility, and wearisome nights have been appointed to me. ⁴ When I lie down, I say, 'When shall I arise, and the night be ended?' For I have had my fill of tossing till dawn."*

In Job 7:1-4 Job likens his experience to the daily grind of a laboring servant - only Job's condition was worse! Verse 5 is a literal description of his physical condition: *"My flesh is caked with worms and dust; my skin is cracked and breaks out afresh."* We'd be disappointed with life if this were our condition, right? And verse 6: *"My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and are spent without hope."* As a weaver's shuttle quickly runs out of thread, so Job felt that he had come to the end of his life without hope.

In the rest of Job 7, Job addresses his comments to the Lord Himself. It is a prayer in the midst of Job's response to Eliphaz.

In verses 7-10 Job acknowledges to the Lord that his life is short, and that he will soon go down to the grave and be no more: *"Oh, remember that my life is a breath! My eye will never again see good. ⁸ The eye of him who sees me will see me no more; while your eyes are upon me, I shall no longer be. ⁹ As the cloud disappears and vanishes away, so he who goes down to the grave does not come up. ¹⁰ He shall never return to his house, nor shall his place know him anymore."*

What's significant here is that, even in his intense suffering, Job didn't turn away from God. Many people have done that, and still do today. Suffering should bring us closer to the Lord, even when we don't understand why we're suffering.

In verses 11-21 Job complains that the Lord will not leave him alone, and is unfairly testing him, and giving him no rest. *"Therefore I will not restrain my mouth. I will speak in the anguish of my spirit. I will complain in the bitterness of my soul. ¹² Am I a sea, or a sea serpent, that You set a guard over me? ¹³ When I say, 'My bed will comfort me, my couch will ease my complaint,' ¹⁴ then You scare me with dreams and terrify me with visions, ¹⁵ so that my soul chooses strangling and death rather than my body. ¹⁶ I loathe my life. I would not live forever. Let me alone, for my days are but a breath."*

¹⁷ “What is man, that You should exalt him, that You should set Your heart on him, ¹⁸ that You should visit him every morning, and test him every moment? ¹⁹ How long? Will You not look away from me, and let me alone till I swallow my saliva? ²⁰ Have I sinned? What have I done to You, O watcher of men? Why have You set me as Your target, so that I am a burden to myself? ^{s1}Why then do You not pardon my transgression, and take away my iniquity? For now I will lie down in the dust, and You will seek me diligently, but I will no longer be.”

In these verses we see the one area in Job’s life that needed to be corrected. Job didn’t turn away from the Lord, or fail in his faith, or voice his pains before the Lord - but **he questioned God’s ways**.

Was God just and fair to treat him like a sea monster (v12)? Was God fair to trouble him with nightmares (v13, 14)? Was God just by not letting Job die, but rather making him a special test case every day, and not giving him a moment’s rest (v15-19)? “*Let me alone till I swallow my saliva?*” expresses that he just wants to be left alone for a moment!

Was God being just and fair in not showing Job where he had sinned, so that Job could confess his sin and be forgiven before he die (v20, 21)? We sense the bitter despair here in Job’s prayer to God, as part of his response to Eliphaz.

The first response of Job to Eliphaz contains disappointment and despair.

Practical Application

Don’t be a “wadi friend”!

What’s a “*wadi* friend”? In chapter 6 Job referred to his three friends as *wadis*. During good times his friends were like streams in the desert, filled with the refreshing cool waters of rain and melting snows. But when Job’s time of trouble and suffering came, they were like dry riverbeds. They had no help to offer when the when the searing heat of the summer came.

What kind of friend are you? Do you dry up and disappear when your close friends are in trouble? I hope not! Don’t be a “*wadi* friend”!