

Introduction

From the title of this lesson, one might initially think that this is going to be a lesson about faith, and from a particular point of view would be right. However, this is not about trusting in God's control because one has received some kind of assurance either emotionally or supernaturally, but actually in the absence of it. Job shows that such faith is not an artificial emotion pretending everything is hunky-dory, but may involve an honest dialogue with God. Along the way, it is important to note that Job's main concern is whether he is still spiritually right with God even more than obtaining relief from his physical problems. In the course of this exchange, we see that the test is equally applied to those in contact with him, and that what is in God's hands is not just Job's trials, but the testing of everyone involved.

Read verses 1-6

¹Is not man forced to labor on earth,
And are not his days like the days of a hired man?
²As a slave who pants for the shade,
And as a hired man who eagerly waits for his wages,
³So am I allotted months of vanity,
And nights of trouble are appointed me.
⁴When I lie down I say,
'When shall I arise?'
But the night continues,
And I am continually tossing until dawn.
⁵My flesh is clothed with worms and a crust of dirt,
My skin hardens and runs.
⁶My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle,
And come to an end without hope.

Q: How has Job shifted the focus of his discourse which began in the last chapter?

A: Whereas he previously said much about the poor quality of his "friend's" support and responses, he now discusses his personal situation, beginning with the general condition of everyone.

Q: What are the main illustrations Job uses to describe man's role in life?

A: A forced laborer, a "hired man" and "a slave".

Q: What do these have in common?

A: The term "forced" in v.1 as also used elsewhere in Scripture carries with it the meaning of involuntary military service, enrolled into their labor pool. A "hired man" is actually the civilian counterpart to the forced laborer, someone who lives a hand-to-mouth existence depending on finding another day of grueling work in order to obtain a meager subsistence on a day-to-day basis. The "slave" is a forced laborer whose only compensation is another day of life.

Q: What are these figures hoping for in this life?

A: The forced and hired laborers "eagerly waits for his wages", which provides relief for each day, the slave "pants for the shade", the only relief he can hope for from his daily duties. They have nothing more to look forward to than the end of each day.

Q: How are their conditions summed up and applied to and by Job to himself personally?

A: "...months of vanity" and "nights of trouble" (v.3) These are references to brief periods of time in order to dramatically highlight how short our time on earth really is, particularly as these three examples share the common consequence in Job's day of having a short lifespan. They may also refer literally to Job's situation, indicating that

his trial has been ongoing for some months now, which would make sense considering it would take some time for his friends to hear about him and travel considerable distances to come to him.

Q: How does v.3 compliment and even multiply the effects of his situation as expressed in the opening verses?

A: Even at night there is no relief from the toils of each day.

Q: What may be significant about his characterization that this perpetual situation is “appointed me”?

A: It is Job’s way of describing that he does not know how long this will last, that he does not see the end. This is mirrored in v.6 with the comparisons “*swifter than a weaver’s beam*” and “*come to an end without hope*”. All of his illustrations contain an element of believing his time is short, although it continues to linger.

Q: How does v.5 deviate from the rest of this section?

A: Whereas he is using various illustrations to express his condition, v.5 is not metaphorical or allegorical— it is a description of the exact physical maladies he is literally experiencing.

Q: How may the reference to “a weaver’s shuttle” provide a dramatic illustration of “an end without hope”?

A: The Hebrew word for “*hope*” (“*tiqvah*”, Strong’s #8615b) carries with it a picture of a thread or rope. This appears to be an intended wordplay to illustrate his life racing to an inevitable end as a picture of a spool of thread running out by the machine using it.

Application: From man’s point of view, especially in the **midst** of trials, the pressing concern for the believer often boils down to, “How long can I **endure** this?”, and “When will this **end**?” One’s focus is extremely narrowed to each and every **day**.

⁷Remember that my life is but
breath;
My eye will not again see good.
⁸The eye of him who sees me
will behold me no longer;
Your eyes will be on me, but I
will not be.
⁹When a cloud vanishes, it is
gone,
So he who goes down to Sheol
does not come up.
¹⁰He will not return again to his
house,
Nor will his place know him
anymore.

Read verses 7-10

Q: What are the expressions Job draws upon to illustrate his greater point?

A: “*Breath*” (or literally “*wind*”) and “*a cloud vanishes, it is gone*” are temporal physical things illustrating his perceived ending which is “*I will not be*”, “*does not come up*”, and “*will not return*”.

Q: To whom will he cease to exist?

A: The end of his earthly existence will also cause him to vanish from those who knew him, both his friends (“*Your eyes*”) and those closest to him (“*his house*”).

Observation: This reference to not being seen will find a parallel to v.21 at the close of this chapter’s discourse. Job deems it important to let his compatriots know that time is not just short for his self, but for them as well where their friend Job and his situation is concerned.

Application: The shortness of **life** is not restricted to the length of time a believer has before he inevitably goes into the **afterlife**, but is also an **expiration** for those who would care for and minister to him. In these situations, God is not exclusively **testing** just the one, but equally for those around them— **everyone** is being **tested**.

Read verses 11-16

¹¹Therefore I will not restrain
my mouth;
I will speak in the anguish of my
spirit,
I will complain in the bitterness
of my soul.
¹²Am I the sea, or the sea
monster,
That You set a guard over me?
¹³If I say, 'My bed will comfort
me,
My couch will ease my
complaint,'
¹⁴Then You frighten me with
dreams
And terrify me by visions;
¹⁵So that my soul would choose
suffocation,
Death rather than my pains.
¹⁶I waste away; I will not live
forever.
Leave me alone, for my days are
but a breath.

Q: In v.11, Job seems to be claiming the right to complain. Is complaining something which God allows, or is it crossing over some kind of line here?

A: We are allowed the act of expostulating— that is, an earnest and sincere protest unaccompanied by an inappropriate attitude. What is never tolerated is most often referred to in Scripture as “murmuring” or “grumbling”.

I cry aloud with my voice to the LORD;
I make supplication with my voice to the LORD.
I pour out my complaint before Him;
I declare my trouble before Him.
Psalm 142:1-2

Give ear to my prayer, O God;
And do not hide Yourself from my supplication.
Give heed to me and answer me;
I am restless in my complaint and am surely distracted,
Psalm 55:1-2

Q: What might be important about who Job is complaining to?

A: He is not addressing those around him, but God alone.

Point: Although Job complains to those around him about their behavior and lack of support, he does not heap upon them the responsibility for what he is experiencing; that is directed to the Divine alone.

Q: How would you summarize each of the points of Job's complaint?

1. (v.12) His comparisons illustrate his being confined and restrained, that he has no liberty.
2. (v.13-15) He is terrified even at night by dreams and visions so bad that he would choose death to see them end.
3. (v.16) He wants to be alone from this experience for whatever little time he has left.

Application: It is not inappropriate or even unnatural for believer's in the midst of trials to complain for the purposes of seeking relief. Notice that Job is not blaming anything on God, but actually questioning his own endurance.

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⁷What is man that You magnify
him,
And that You are concerned
about him,
¹⁸That You examine him every
morning
And try him every moment?
¹⁹Will You never turn Your gaze
away from me,
Nor let me alone until I swallow
my spittle?
²⁰Have 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?
²¹Why 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, but I will
not be.”

Read verses 17-21

Q: When it comes to trials and testing, how does Job define what it means that God should “magnify him” or “are concerned about him”?

A: Job is speaking of these things in the context of “You examine him...and try him”. It is singling someone out for the closest scrutiny and evaluation possible.

Point: Note that this is actually happening to everyone at all times, not just during a test or trial.

Q: Is this the only time Job has been tested?

A: Going back to the opening verse of Job, his spiritual condition was summarized as, “blameless, upright, fearing God and turning from evil”. (Job 1:1) God has been closely examining Job his whole life.

Application: Job is correct that God is always watching, examining and testing every moment. We are to be faithful to His Word and ways in times of relative peace just as much as during our greatest trials. Neither our conduct or faith is supposed to change from one spiritual season to the next.

Q: According to v.20, what is the far greater issue of concern where Job is concerned?

A: Whether or not these are the consequences of sin.

Q: How is this directly related to his closing concern that “You will seek me, but I will not be”? (v.21)

A: When it comes to the forgiveness of sins, the opportunity ends with the conclusion of life. It is only while still alive that the opportunity still exists to “pardon my transgression”.

Application: Believers should be more concerned about potentially greater long-term **spiritual** consequences than the **temporal** physical experience.

Overall Application

Are we careful to limit others to what they’re actually responsible for, and to keep from assigning to them the trials or tests themselves?

How well do we recognize that once involved with someone, we are no longer a disinterested 3rd party? How is God using others’ situations to actually test us?

Do we understand the difference between grumbling and complaining?
How might this actually help us accomplish biblical endurance?