

Job 19 • When Deductive Logic Fails

Introduction

Without being facetious at all, a lot of the dialog in Job parallels the approach of modern day television talk shows. Surface facts are presented to the audience, close observers of the subject are brought in to provide their analysis, everyone chimes in with what is “obvious” to them as to both the root cause and the needed solution. Everyone **assumes** quite a number of things that may or may not, in reality, be true. But for those who really just want to make themselves feel good by affirming one way or the other that their opinion is “right”—rather than an overriding concern for the person who’s the object of the actual problem—it’s really an exercise to make everybody but the subject feel good about themselves. The true agenda is to validate one’s personal logic regardless of its absolute truth or effect.

Begin the study by reading this example of deductive logic:

One day a little boy was playing in his room in the new apartment his parents’ had rented. Suddenly the boy’s dog started howling. “Ahoooooooh! Ahoooooooh!” Not long after the howling began, the boy heard a siren. Rushing to the window, he looked out just in time to see a fire engine race by. Over the course of the next few months, this sequence of events happened a couple of times. The dog would begin howling and not long after a fire engine would race by. The boy came to a simple conclusion: whenever his dog howled, it would cause a fire engine to come by his house. In effect, the dog called the fire engine; it was the dog’s howling that caused the fire engine to race by.

Discuss this story and determine what is wrong with the logic. See if anyone in the group can come up with similar examples.

[Read v.1-6]

¹Then Job responded,

²“How long will you torment me
And crush me with words?”

³These ten times you have insulted me;
You are not ashamed to wrong me.

⁴Even if I have truly erred,
My error lodges with me.

⁵If indeed you vaunt yourselves against
me

And prove my disgrace to me,

⁶Know then that God has wronged me
And has closed His net around me.

Q: What is the context in which Job makes these statements? To whom is he responding? What does Job mean by, “How long will you torment me and crush me with words”?

A: The immediate context is Job’s response to Bildad’s second speech. Bildad, along with the others, attribute Job’s suffering to God’s punishment for some sin that he has committed. Their words are crushing to Job because though he admits he’s not sinless, he states that the nature of his sins (youthful, and probably negligible) are not consistent with the severity of his suffering and the **appearance** of punishment.

Q: How have Job’s friends fallen into the trap of deductive logic?

A: Job’s friends observe his catastrophic suffering, the nature and timing of which defies explanation. Therefore, Job’s friends can only resort to two premises. (A premise is a proposition, or assumption, that is used to support a conclusion.) The first premise is that the righteous prosper and only the wicked suffer. The second premise is that God, by nature good, would not allow a righteous person to suffer. Job suffers, therefore according to their premise he must be wicked; that is, he must have committed some sin worthy of the suffering. They conclude that he is hiding some sin (lying), or that he has committed a great sin that he is unaware of. And, because God is by nature good, Job is wrong to attribute his suffering to God.

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Q: What's wrong with Job's friends' observations? What's wrong with their assumptions?

A: A number of things. Their premises taint their observations and therefore their responses. They correctly observe that Job is suffering. They incorrectly assume his suffering is the result of sin (deductive logic). All three of Job's friends exercise deductive logic in coming to the conclusion that Job's suffering is a result of sin.

- Eliphaz's logic is based on experience ("*I have seen...*"—Job 5:3).
- Bildad's conclusion is based on tradition gained from observation ("*Please inquire of past generations, and consider the things searched out by their fathers*"—Job 8:8).
- Zophar bases his conclusion on man's wisdom ("*Would that God might speak...and show you the secrets of wisdom!*"—Job 11:5,6).

Their second premise, that God is too good to allow a good person to suffer, causes them to get angry and impatient with Job when he holds God accountable for his suffering. Both premises are based on partial truths and deductive logic.

Application: *What incorrect assumptions do Christians sometimes hold about suffering? After discussing the question, read 2 Timothy 3:12 as well as Romans 8:16-17.*

Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

2 Timothy 3:12

The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.

Romans 8:16-17

Q: What is the reaction of Job's friends when he says something like, "Know then that God has wronged me" (v. 6)? What is the other premise Job's friends are maintaining when it comes to God's nature? [Note: The premise that God is good by nature is correct. The premise that a good God could or would not allow suffering is incorrect.]

A: Job's friends find themselves in the position of defending God. They cannot accept the fact that, from Job's perspective, God has "wronged" him. They are arguing that it would be illogical for God to allow Job to suffer without apparent cause. That would make God unjust in their estimation. It's apparent that Job's affliction is so severe that in their experience they cannot imagine even the possibility that God could **NOT** be the author of it.

Application: *When someone begins blaming God in the midst of their troubles, is there a tendency to begin defending God?*

⁷“Behold, I cry, ‘Violence!’ but I get no answer;

I shout for help, but there is no justice.

⁸He has walled up my way so that I cannot pass,

And He has put darkness on my paths.

⁹He has stripped my honor from me

And removed the crown from my head.

¹⁰He breaks me down on every side, and I am gone;

And He has uprooted my hope like a tree.

¹¹He has also kindled His anger against me

And considered me as His enemy.

¹²His troops come together,

And build up their way against me

And camp around my tent.

¹³“He has removed my brothers far from me,

And my acquaintances are completely estranged from me.

¹⁴My relatives have failed,

And my intimate friends have forgotten me.

¹⁵Those who live in my house and my maids consider me a stranger.

I am a foreigner in their sight.

¹⁶I call to my servant, but he does not answer;

I have to implore him with my mouth.

¹⁷My breath is offensive to my wife,

And I am loathsome to my own brothers.

¹⁸Even young children despise me;

I rise up and they speak against me.

¹⁹All my associates abhor me,

And those I love have turned against me.

²⁰My bone clings to my skin and my flesh,

And I have escaped only by the skin of my teeth.

²¹Pity me, pity me, O you my friends,

For the hand of God has struck me.

²²Why do you persecute me as God does,

And are not satisfied with my flesh?

[Read v.7-12]

Q: To whom does Job directly attribute his troubles?

A: God.

Q: How well do you think this sits with his friends?

A: Not well, making them angry and impatient with Job [See Job 19:3 above.]

[Read v.13-22]

Q: What are some of the social dynamics of bodily suffering and affliction? (For better context, liken it to someone in the late stages of AIDS.)

1. Isolation (v.13)
2. Ostracism (v.14)
3. Loss of respect and authority (v.15-16)
4. Bodily odors associated with illness (e.g., a typical nursing home; v.17)
5. Becoming a laughing stock (v.18)
6. Betrayal, disloyalty and premature discussions of inheritance (v.19)
7. Weight loss, fragility and debilitation (v.20)
8. Lack of sympathy from friends, and even persecution because some believe he is at fault, or he's dug his own pit and is experiencing the consequences thereof, or he is receiving just punishment (v.21-22).

²³“Oh that my words were written!
Oh that they were inscribed in a book!
²⁴That with an iron stylus and lead
They were engraved in the rock forever!
²⁵As for me, I know that my Redeemer
lives,
And at the last He will take His stand on
the earth.
²⁶Even after my skin is destroyed,
Yet from my flesh I shall see God;
²⁷Whom I myself shall behold,
And whom my eyes will see and not
another.
My heart faints within me!
²⁸If you say, ‘How shall we persecute
him?’
And ‘What pretext for a case against
him can we find?’
²⁹Then be afraid of the sword for
yourselves,
For wrath brings the punishment of the
sword,
So that you may know there is
judgment.”

[Read v.23-29]

Q: What is Job asking for in verses 23-24?

A: To be remembered for the good of his life.

Q: What is the hope to which Job clings? What is a redeemer? Where else have we seen the concept of “redeemer”? (Also, cf. Job 16:19ff.)

A: Job hopes that someone will come to his rescue. Not only does Job call for a rescue from his physical affliction, but even more so for someone to prove his side of the argument; that is, prove that he is in fact an innocent man. Job desires someone who will come on his behalf, identify with him, and plead his case. (Hint: The opposite of Satan in his role as accuser.) In Job’s day, that someone would be a *goel*; that is, a “kinsman-redeemer.” Boaz was a kinsman redeemer for Ruth; that is, the near relative who would “buy back” one destined to be sold into bondage, redeeming them to a restored life.

Q: How does the concept of “kinsman-redeemer” apply to the salvation of mankind offered by Jesus?

A: Jesus is man’s kinsman-redeemer, for He is our kinsman (fully human) and our redeemer (fully divine). Therefore, Jesus was able to plead our case and purchase us from the bondage of sin with His blood. Job’s hope is that one day he will see his kinsman-redeemer, and that even if he dies, he will still see him.

Q: In what way does the Book of Job foreshadow the life and death of Christ?

A: Jesus, like Job, suffered without just cause.

Overall Application

- *How are we going to avoid repeating the behavior and mistakes of Job’s friends?*
- *How are we going to approach, communicate, even minister to those undergoing great trials and/or suffering?*
- *How will we identify and facilitate the need and process for the greater Person and work of the Redeemer on ALL parties’ parts?*