

Job's Complaint To God

Job 7:1-21

- A. Job begins by laying out the misery of the life he has endured as the grounds for his complaint **1-10**
1. Perhaps he is taking Eliphaz's advice (5:8) or perhaps just acting as a man of faith in turning to God
 - a. His friend had offered him no counsel he found worthy of taking, but there was still One who listened
 - b. Though Job's words are more of complaint than hope, the important point is that he is still talking to God
 - c. He accepts that God's hand is involved in what has happened, but faith will not let Job turn away from him
 - d. Even when a believer sees little hope of God answering as desired, he cannot help but want to go to him
 2. Life had taken on a meaninglessness so that as far as Job could see the best thing about it was its end **1-3**
 - a. 'Hard service' was the lot of those conscripted into the military or labor, as in Solomon's day
 - b. A hired man worked at the most menial, exhausting jobs with only small pay at the end to look forward to
 - c. The slave worked like the hired man but did not even have pay; he hoped only for the comfort of shade
 - d. The conscript looked forward to the end of his service, the hired man and slave to the end of the day
 - e. There was not that meaningful work God gave Adam in Eden, but the kind of work brought on by the Fall
 - f. For Job each day involved that grinding, meaningless existence of which the best part was its end
 3. Unlike those he had just described, Job had nothing that brought him any real comfort **4-5**
 - a. Though they received little or no pay for work that was often exhausting, they at least had sleep
 - 1) 'The sleep of a laborer is sweet, whether he eats little or much' (Eccl 5:12; cf Ps 127:2)
 - b. When Job laid down at night though the night just seemed to drag on so that he gained little real rest
 - 1) He tossed and turned all night asking himself how long it would be before he could get up
 - 2) Deprived of the sleep that brought some measure of relief, the night seemed to go on forever
 - c. When the morning finally came and he could see again, what he saw only made things worse for him
 - 1) He describes in most graphic terms the frightfulness of what disease had done to his body
 - 2) The worms that infest his sores anticipate the worms that will someday consume his body
 - 3) Everything about his body speaks of decay and death so it is not far off to say his was a living death
 4. While nights seem agonizingly slow, the days when he should have been busy with life seem to fly by **6**
 - a. This may seem contradictory, but it has been the experience of many people who live with suffering
 - b. The mind is so focused on the pain endured that the ability to do anything truly productive is minimal
 - c. Thus, little is accomplished and life becomes something of a blur with no achievements to mark the way
 - d. 'The prime of Job's life is passing him by with no achievements, no delight, no relationships, no hope'
 5. That sense of meaninglessness was only magnified by Job's realization that life is so short **7-10**
 - a. When Job had great wealth and a large family people thought he was building an enduring legacy
 - b. Job was sure there would be no legacy; he had lost everything and did not think he would be happy again
 - c. It turned out whatever his previous success, he was just a flash in the pan; here today, forgotten tomorrow
 - d. He was like a cloud, something to be admired one moment and the next gone from sight and mind
 - e. For one who walked with the eternal God the thought of insignificance was as bad as the suffering
- B. Since God hedged him in this hard life that gave no hope of relief, Job asks the Lord to leave him alone **11-16**
1. To this point Job has not directly pointed a finger at God to blame him for his misery
 - a. There is no doubt that he accepts God's sovereignty in the affairs of men and is thus involved (3:23)
 - b. His reverence for the Lord as an upright man has kept him from voicing questions about God's justice
 2. The seeming discrepancy between God's justice and Job's own experience leads him to break this silence
 - a. His questions do not arise from calm reflection on some of the finer points of theology he struggles with
 - b. His questions arise from his anguished spirit that has become bitter because of what he has suffered
 3. Job felt that he was being attacked as though he were some ancient supernatural evil
 - a. Yam (the sea) and Tannin (perhaps another name for Leviathan) were evil beings in ancient mythologies
 - b. His suffering is so great Job feels God is treating him as an enemy, tho he knows of no great sin in his life
 4. He has even been deprived of those simple comforts, like sleep, that can make suffering disappear for a while
 - a. Job cannot escape the terrible oppression of the Lord even in sleep, for fear and terror fill his dreams
 - b. So weary was he of inescapable torment, of hopelessness that offered no brighter future, he preferred death
 - c. While eternal life sounds good to the healthy and happy, Job would have found it to be unbearable
 - d. (While Job longed for death, he never speaks of taking his life; the how and when of that was his choice)

- C. He is left with the question of why the Lord over all creation would bother with his pitifully small life **17-21**
1. The psalmist once wrote words that sound very much like Job's here but with a very different meaning **17-19**
 - a. The psalmist asked, 'what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?' **8:4**
 - 1) There was a profound sense of wonder that the majestic Lord should look on man with such favor
 - b. Job however found the piercing gaze of the Lord examining every detail of his life to be unsettling
 - 1) 'God is to Job what Big Brother is to citizens in Orwell's 1984; his cameras are everywhere, and his secret police are close behind;' there was no comfort for Job in God's ever watchful eye
 - 2) Every morning God was there to examine him, every moment he was giving a new test
 - 3) And the results were always the same because the holy God was always able to find fault
 - 4) As with a parent, teacher or employer who always finds fault Job just wanted God to look away
 - 5) Even a moment's rest from God's gaze, just long enough for Job 'to swallow his spit' (ESV)
 - a) would have been a welcome instant of relief from the Lord's fault-finding examination
 2. This blameless man is driven to ask what he had done that caused God to come after him as he had **20-21**
 - a. When we have offended someone we sometimes pretend ignorance and ask, 'What have I done to you?'
 - 1) Job was not pretending; he really did not know why God was being so harsh and wanted to know
 - 2) What was his sin that had turned him into God's target, his punching bag?
 - 3) Why had he become such a burden to God who was having to spend all his time watching Job?
 - 4) The suffering was bad enough, but suffering for no apparent reason only made things worse
 - b. Worse than this though was the thought that God seemed no longer willing to forgive sins
 - 1) We know Job was diligent to offer sacrifices even for sins his children might have committed **1:5**
 - 2) From the earliest times the sacrifice was the God appointed means for finding forgiveness
 - 3) Despite his regular practice and trust that God used atoning sacrifices to forgive, it was not working
 - 4) It was for him as though one of the basic tenets of his faith had proven to be ill founded
 - 5) In that time he most needed to know God was on his side, he found no assurance at all
 - 6) Without pardon for sin, whatever that sin was, Job could only look forward to death in the near future
 - c. Two lines of thought arise from our reading of Job's words in this passage
 - 1) Job was right to connect suffering with our sin that the Lord's constant watching made him aware of
 - a) One thing he got wrong was that it is only what we see as great sins that brings great suffering
 - b) He was also wrong in thinking that all suffering is directly tied to our sin; the righteous also suffer
 - c) This is not made perfectly clear until we stand at the foot of the cross and see our dying Lord
 - 2) Second, Job illustrates for us a need to be ready to speak the language of lament to our Lord
 - a) The day may well come for any of us that suffering so darkens our soul that we no longer see hope
 - b) In that day we need to know how to voice our complaint to God as people of faith
 - c) If our trust in him is not strong enough at that time we will walk away rather than talk to him
 - d) May we learn from Job's words and then to our Lord's in the garden and we will be better prepared