



Job - Chapter Ten

- II [Job 3:1-42:6 - Dialogue: Job, His Suffering, and His Standing before God \(continues\)](#)
- II.b [Job 4:1-25:6 - The Friends and Job: Can Job be Right Before God? \(continues\)](#)
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Summary of Chapter Ten

Job concludes his response to the words of Bildad. Job is weary of life and expostulates with God (vv.1-6). He appeals to God for his innocence; and pleads on the weakness of his body and the manner of his formation (vv.7-13). Job complains of his sufferings and prays for respite (vv.14-20). Finally, he describes the state of the dead (vv.21-22).

II.b.i.4.B Job 10:1-22 - Job: I Loathe My Life

Refer to the chapter summary above.

- 1 'I loathe my life;
I will give free utterance to my complaint;
I will speak in the bitterness of my soul.
- 2 I will say to God, Do not condemn me;
let me know why you contend against me.
- 3 Does it seem good to you to oppress,

to despise the work of your hands
and favour the schemes of the wicked?
4 Do you have eyes of flesh?
Do you see as humans see?
5 Are your days like the days of mortals,
or your years like human years,
6 that you seek out my iniquity
and search for my sin,
7 although you know that I am not guilty,
and there is no one to deliver out of your hand?

Job 10:1-7

I loathe my life. I loathe my life. Job declared his rejection of his life with the same verb in Job 7:16 and 9:21. When Job is fully confronted with the mystery of God, he will reject his words using the same verb: <<*I despise myself*>> (Job 42:6a). The verb is repeated across these verses to contrast Job's changed attitude as he comes to recognise that he had given up on understanding what his own life and circumstances meant in a manner that assumed more than he could possibly see or know.

I will give free utterance to my complaint. It seems that Job believed that he had not yet begun to complain. He will, in the bitterness of his soul, say what he would say to God if given the chance. Such a poem is called a complaint, a moaning appeal to God's compassion. The parallel phrase the bitterness of my soul describes misery, but not sourness. This same misery can be seen in the account of the barren Hannah, who wanted a child of her own: <<*She was deeply distressed and prayed to the Lord, and wept bitterly*>> (1 Samuel 1:10).

I will say to God. As in Job 7:11, Job explicitly announces his turn to address his creator directly. He is not seeking to satisfy his curiosity here but his conscience. It is a remarkable fact, apparently unobserved by commentators, but very revealing of Job's mind, that in none of his petitions does he make the obvious request for his sickness to be cured, his situation to be reversed. As if everything will be all right when he is well again! That would not answer the question which is more urgent than every other concern: 'Why?'

Do not condemn me; let me know why you contend against me. Job would say to God, "Put your cards on the table. Make your case against me to show why I deserve this disaster in my life." The meaning of do not condemn me is literally

‘treat a person as wicked.’ That was Job’s problem with God. It appeared to him that the Almighty was giving him what a wicked man deserved when he knew Job was not a wicked man.

The tried saint may ask as Job did, “let me know why you contend against me.” Charles Spurgeon suggested several answers:

- “It may be that God is contending with you to show you his power to uphold you.”
- “It may be that God is contending with you to develop your graces.”
- “It may be that God is contending with you because you have some secret sin that is doing you great damage.”
- “It may be that God is contending with you because he wants you to enter the fellowship of his sufferings.”
- “It may be that God is contending with you to humble you.”

The seeking sinner might also ask as Job did, “let me know why you contend against me.” Spurgeon further suggested several answers to the seeking sinner:

- “It may be that God is contending with you because you are not yet thoroughly awakened to your lost condition.”
- “It may be that God is contending with you in order to test your earnestness.”
- “It may be that God is contending with you because you are harbouring one sin that you will not turn over to him.”
- “It may be that God is contending with you because you do not yet thoroughly understand the plan of salvation.”

Although it was not the case with Job, it is true that God often contends with both saints and sinners to deal with their sin. Charles Spurgeon again commented, “Trials often discover sins – sins we should never have found out if it had not been for them. We know that the houses in Russia are very greatly infested with rats and mice. Perhaps a stranger would scarcely notice them at first, but the time when you discover them is when the house is on fire; then they pour out in multitudes. And so does God sometimes burn up our comforts to make our hidden sins run out; and then he enables us to knock them on the head and get rid of them.”

Job was at no time stating that God did not have the right to judge him, he simply wanted to know the reasons. Scripture repeatedly acknowledges that God is the judge of all humankind: <<*The Lord rises to argue his case; he stands to judge the peoples*>> (Isaiah 3:13), <<*Hear the word of the Lord, O people of Israel; for the Lord has an indictment against the inhabitants of the land*>> (Hosea 4:1a), <<*Hear, you mountains, the controversy of the Lord, and you enduring foundations of the earth; for the Lord has a controversy with his*>>

people, and he will contend with Israel>> (Micah 6:2), <<The Lord within it is righteous; he does no wrong. Every morning he renders his judgement, each dawn without fail; but the unjust knows no shame>> (Zephaniah 3:5), and: <<Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies>> (Romans 8:33).

Job's awareness that he is the work of God's hands provides the theme for the verses that follow. Job vented more and more to God. "Does this make you happy? I am the work of your hands, and look at how you are treating me!"

Do you have eyes of flesh? Do you see as humans see? Job clearly knew that God was not limited in his vision as humans are; yet by the facts Job had seen and experienced, it seemed like God saw him with the same shallow and superficial vision that his friends used.

Although you know that I am not guilty. Job appealed to God's knowledge of Job and his character. Of course, God agreed with Job's self-estimation, even saying that Job was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil; refer to Job 1:1. Yet Job's present distress twisted his perception of God to the point where he could not see what could only be seen by the eye of faith that goes beyond the sight of present circumstances.

- 8 Your hands fashioned and made me;
and now you turn and destroy me.
- 9 Remember that you fashioned me like clay;
and will you turn me to dust again?
- 10 Did you not pour me out like milk
and curdle me like cheese?
- 11 You clothed me with skin and flesh,
and knit me together with bones and sinews.
- 12 You have granted me life and steadfast love,
and your care has preserved my spirit.

Job 10:8-12

Your hands fashioned and made me; and now you turn and destroy me. Job was a smart scientist and knew that God was the author of creation and specifically of mankind. He had the same understanding as the psalmist David who said: *<<I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well>> (Psalm 139:14).*

A wise woman once spoke to King David regarding his estranged son Absalom that showed her understanding that God always seeks to reconcile his creatures to himself: <<*We must all die; we are like water spilled on the ground, which cannot be gathered up. But God will not take away a life; he will devise plans so as not to keep an outcast banished for ever from his presence*>> (2 Samuel 14:14), or as the apostle would later write: <<*The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance*>> (2 Peter 3:9). Job seemed to sense that God would want him to be reconciled with God; Job just did not yet understand what he had done or what he needed to do to achieve it.

Remember that you fashioned me like clay; and will you turn me to dust again?

Through a sequence of vivid metaphors, Job describes his own conception and gestation as an act of God's creation. Job shares the wonder of the psalmist, see above, and the insight given to the prophet: <<*Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you*>> (Jeremiah 1:5a), but he employs it here to press his claim of innocence before God.

Job even seemed to understand that mankind came from the dust of the ground: <<*then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being*>> (Genesis 2:7). In wonderful poetry, Job illustrated the fashioning of his body by three images:

- Man is like a vessel of clay, shaped by a potter (v.9).
- Man is like a cheese, poured out by a cheese maker (v.10).
- Man is like a garment, woven by a weaver (v.11).

And now you turn and destroy me. Job knew that God had created him; now he felt that God wanted to destroy him. What Job did not know is that God had strictly forbidden this calamity to end in death: <<*The Lord said to Satan, 'Very well, he is in your power; only spare his life'*>> (Job 2:6). The reader can sympathise with what Job felt, and understand that he could not know this. Yet they also know the truth from the heavenly scene behind the earthly scene. In creation first, and now in Job's recent disasters, the might of God is seen. That God himself did it all is indisputable. Job does not question God's right to do it. However, God's reasons for his actions are what Job cannot detect or understand. Why should he create only to destroy? This was beyond Job's comprehension of the God that he had worshipped and followed all his life.

You have granted me life and steadfast love, and your care has preserved my spirit. Job could not deny God's past work in his life as creator and as preserver; yet all that made things more problematic, not less. The depth of his experience told him, "Why has the same God who created me and preserved me now so obviously abandoned me?"

Verses 8-12 would seem to argue against the sometimes Reformed or Calvinistic idea that God created man and - at least for the vast majority of those not elect for salvation - immediately destined these intricately, wonderfully designed and fashioned creatures for eternal damnation. This seems to be a strange and offensive idea to Job, especially considering the care lavished upon these creatures after their glorious creation.

In v.12, Job actually thanked God for three wonderful things:

- Life, i.e. You have granted me life.
- Divine Favour through steadfast love.
- Divine Visitation, that is, your care has preserved my spirit.

13 Yet these things you hid in your heart;

I know that this was your purpose.

14 If I sin, you watch me,

and do not acquit me of my iniquity.

15 If I am wicked, woe to me!

If I am righteous, I cannot lift up my head,

for I am filled with disgrace

and look upon my affliction.

16 Bold as a lion you hunt me;

you repeat your exploits against me.

17 You renew your witnesses against me,

and increase your vexation towards me;

you bring fresh troops against me.

Job 10:13-17

Yet these things you hid in your heart; I know that this was your purpose. Job begins to touch on the core of the problem that stirred inside of him. He knew that God knew all the causes and answers for Job's condition; yet God did not tell Job.

Again, because of Job Chapters 1 and 2, readers are in the curious position of knowing what Job did not know. The causes and intentions of Job's present calamity were hidden in God and were hidden from Job, but God has shared with the reader of the Book of Job what Job himself did not know. It is easy to read the Book of Job assuming that Job himself knew what happened in the heavenly realms as recorded in the first two chapters of the book. The reader

of the Book of Job must resist this assumption and instead empathise with Job, knowing that it was just as difficult for him to comprehend the workings of the spiritual realm as it is for everyone else.

If I am wicked, woe to me! Job states both sides of the dilemma he faces: if he is wicked and guilty of what his friends have inferred, it will not be good for him, thus he says, woe to me!; if he is righteous (refer also to Job 9:15 and 9:20), he feels he has no strength to walk upright because of the weight of his suffering (v.15) and the threat of further affliction (vv.16-17).

I am filled with disgrace and look upon my affliction. In effect, Job is saying, “I have abundance of shame in the disappointment of all my hopes and the continuance and aggravation of my misery, notwithstanding all my prayers to God to remove or mitigate it; and I am confounded within myself, not knowing what to say or do. Let my dire situation move you to pity and help me.”

Bold as a lion you hunt me; you repeat your exploits against me. Job felt as though God were no help to him at all in his present distress. Instead, he felt as though he were prey for God, who came against him like a fierce lion.

Other Scriptures describe God like a hunting lion: <<*I cry for help until morning; like a lion he breaks all my bones; from day to night you bring me to an end*>> (Isaiah 38:13), <<*Like a lion he has left his covert; for their land has become a waste because of the cruel sword, and because of his fierce anger*>> (Jeremiah 25:38), <<*He is a bear lying in wait for me, a lion in hiding; he led me off my way and tore me to pieces; he has made me desolate*>> (Lamentations 3:10-11), <<*For I will be like a lion to Ephraim, and like a young lion to the house of Judah. I myself will tear and go away; I will carry off, and no one shall rescue*>> (Hosea 5:14), and: <<*So I will become like a lion to them, like a leopard I will lurk beside the way*>> (Hosea 13:7).

18 ‘Why did you bring me forth from the womb?
Would that I had died before any eye had seen me,
19 and were as though I had not been,
carried from the womb to the grave.
20 Are not the days of my life few?
Let me alone, that I may find a little comfort
21 before I go, never to return,
to the land of gloom and deep darkness,
22 the land of gloom and chaos,
where light is like darkness.’

Job 10:18-22

Why did you bring me forth from the womb? Job caps the argument that he began in v.3 and returns to his earlier sentiments. He should have been stillborn: <<*Let the stars of its dawn be dark; let it hope for light, but have none; may it not see the eyelids of the morning – because it did not shut the doors of my mother’s womb, and hide trouble from my eyes*>> (Job 3:9-10); if he had to be born, he should have been left alone and allowed to die in peace: <<*I loathe my life; I would not live for ever. Let me alone, for my days are a breath. What are human beings, that you make so much of them, that you set your mind on them*>> (Job 7:16-17). Why should God make so much of humans that he would continually watch over them in such misery?

It is important to say that Job was not suicidal but his wish that he had never been born is something like a wish for death. Job felt these almost suicidal thoughts because he could not see any sense in his suffering. His friends saw sense in it for they believed that Job suffered because he has sinned and this is his proper correction, but Job knew they were wrong. The readers may see sense because they know what Job did not know from the first two chapters of the book. Even though Job could not see it, it was real nonetheless. It would have completely changed Job’s situation if he could see by faith the invisible, or at least comfort himself in the understanding that there were invisible dynamics in heavenly places that made sense of his situation.

Are not the days of my life few? Job is stating that human life passes quickly enough without having to go through such torment as well. The Lord came to show that life was for living well through obedience to God and not one lived in torment and sorrow: <<*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly*>> (John 10:10).

Let me alone, that I may find a little comfort. At this point in the story, Job would simply prefer that God would leave him alone. He did not recognise that it was only because God did not leave him alone that he had endured this far and was not completely destroyed by either the devil or despair.

The repetition of the terms darkness and gloom in Job’s description of death underscore his plea for a reprieve from suffering while he still has days left in the light of life.

The Book of Job well reflects the difficult apprehension of the truth of the afterlife in the OT. Statements of murky, near-despair like this are combined with occasional declarations of triumphant, confident faith, as in: <<*For I know that my Redeemer lives, and that at the last he will stand upon the earth*>> (Job 19:25). This cloudy understanding of the afterlife in the OT does not surprise the reader of the NT, who knows that Jesus Christ brought life and immortality to light: <<*but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel*>> (2 Timothy 1:10).