



Job - Chapter Twenty Seven

II Job 3:1-42:6 - Dialogue: Job, His Suffering, and His Standing before God (continues)

II.c Job 26:1-31:40 - Job: the Power of God, Place of Wisdom, and Path of Integrity (continues)

Summary of Chapter Twenty Seven

Job refuses to agree that his friends are right and he maintains that his circumstances are not an indication of undisclosed sin (vv.1-6). In images similar to those his friends have used against him, Job wishes that his adversaries would be considered as the wicked are before God (vv.7-23).

II.c.ii Job 27:1-23 - Job Maintains His Integrity

Refer to the chapter summary above.

¹ Job again took up his discourse and said:

² 'As God lives, who has taken away my right,
and the Almighty, who has made my soul bitter,
³ as long as my breath is in me
and the spirit of God is in my nostrils,
⁴ my lips will not speak falsehood,
and my tongue will not utter deceit.

Job 27:1-4

The first part of Job's long response is marked with the heading typical of the dialogues <<*Then Job answered*>> (Job 26:1 and the verse that introduces each

response from Job 4:1 onwards). The heading here and in Job 29:1, Job again took up his discourse, helps to bind together the entirety of Chapters 26-31 as Job's final speech of the dialogue, which functions as a closing statement as well as a direct response to his friends. It seems that Job waited for his friends to reply - it was, after all, Zophar's turn. However, they were silent, either out of weariness or frustration with Job; so Job continued.

As God lives, who has taken away my right. In the previous chapter Job praised the power of God but he also recognised that he needed something more than the might of God. He needed rescue from the one who has made my soul bitter. Job has previously referred to the bitterness of his soul: *<<I loathe my life; I will give free utterance to my complaint; I will speak in the bitterness of my soul>>* (Job 10:1).

Charles Spurgeon preached a sermon on this text title 'A Vexed Soul Comforted', speaking to the child of God who felt that God had made their soul bitter. "Child of God, are you vexed and embittered in soul? Then, bravely accept the trial as coming from your Father, and say, 'The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?' 'Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?' Press on through the cloud which now lowers directly in your pathway; it may be with you as it was with the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration, 'they feared as they entered the cloud,' yet in the cloud they saw their Master's glory, and they found it good to be there." and on another occasion he commented, "If it be the Almighty who has troubled us, surely he can also comfort us. He that is strong to sink is also strong to save. If he be almighty to embitter, he must also be almighty to sweeten. Oh, yes, that word 'Almighty' cuts both ways! It makes us tremble, and so it kills our pride; but it also makes us hope, and so it slays our despair."

My lips will not speak falsehood. In his bold and plain speaking to this point before his God and his friends, one might think that Job had spoken falsely. Yet Job did not think that he had and he insisted that he would not.

⁵ Far be it from me to say that you are right;
until I die I will not put away my integrity from me.

⁶ I hold fast my righteousness, and will not let it go;
my heart does not reproach me for any of my days.

Job 27:5-6

Far be it from me to say that you are right. When Job protested that he would not speak wickedness, he meant it especially in the context of saying that he would not agree that his friends were right in their accusations against him. You in the Hebrew is plural; Job is addressing his friends collectively.

By asserting that he will hold fast to his integrity, Job echoes the Lord's description of him in the prologue: <<*The Lord said to Satan, 'Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man who fears God and turns away from evil. He still persists in his integrity, although you incited me against him, to destroy him for no reason'*>> (Job 2:3).

Job will shortly describe himself as being clothed in righteousness: <<*I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; my justice was like a robe and a turban*>> (Job 29:14); both David and Isaiah use similar language: <<*I have done what is just and right; do not leave me to my oppressors*>> (Psalm 119:121), and: <<*I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels*>> (Isaiah 61:10).

My heart does not reproach me for any of my days. Job lived his life with a clear conscience before God, the model for Christian life: <<*While Paul was looking intently at the council he said, 'Brothers, up to this day I have lived my life with a clear conscience before God'*>> (Acts 23:1), <<*Therefore I do my best always to have a clear conscience towards God and all people*>> (Acts 24:16), <<*I am grateful to God – whom I worship with a clear conscience, as my ancestors did – when I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day*>> (2 Timothy 1:3), and: <<*Pray for us; we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honourably in all things*>> (Hebrews 13:18).

Introduction to Job 27:7-23

Because these verses seem more consistent with the speeches of Job's friends, it has been suggested that they may be misplaced and ought to be interpreted as belonging to Bildad's speech in Chapter 25. However, the similarity to the speeches of the friends can also be understood to be part of Job's purpose. Unlike his three friends, Job is not referring solely to what the wicked receive on earth, but wishes that his 'enemy' would be like the wicked 'when God cuts him off' and 'takes away his life' (v.8). If Job is actually blameless before God, then those who have been his adversaries ought to consider how God weighs their own actions in light of the judgement they have described.

- 7 'May my enemy be like the wicked,
and may my opponent be like the unrighteous.
- 8 For what is the hope of the godless when God cuts them off,
when God takes away their lives?
- 9 Will God hear their cry

when trouble comes upon them?

¹⁰ Will they take delight in the Almighty?

Will they call upon God at all times?

Job 27:7-10

Job declares that if he is right to maintain his integrity, then he also wishes that his adversaries would be considered as the wicked and the unrighteous. However, unlike his friends, who assume that judgement on the wicked is generally experienced in life on earth and is transparent to observers, Job says there is no hope for the wicked when God cuts him off and takes away his life.

For what is the hope of the godless? Job was accused by his friends of being a hypocrite, of clinging to hidden sin instead of confessing and repenting. Here Job agreed that the hope of the godless hypocrite was vain.

When God takes away their lives. Job clearly believed that it is God who ordains when a person is born and when they will die: <<*But Moses and Aaron fell facedown and cried out, “O God, the God who gives breath to all living things, will you be angry with the entire assembly when only one man sins?”*>> (Numbers 16:22 NIV), <<*But God said to him, “You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?”*>> (Luke 12:20).

Will God hear their cry when trouble comes upon them? Will they call upon God at all times? Job was in a difficult situation before his friends. He agreed that God did not hear the cry of the hypocrite but he had to endure his own season of silence from God. Job could comfort himself in the understanding that he did in fact call on God as a hypocrite would not.

¹¹ I will teach you concerning the hand of God;
that which is with the Almighty I will not conceal.

¹² All of you have seen it yourselves;
why then have you become altogether vain?

Job 27:11-12

I will teach you concerning the hand of God. Job was deeply frustrated at the lack of understanding from his friends. They knew certain principles about God and His way in the world, but they misapplied those principles to Job’s situation.

Hand, Hebrew *yad*, is often a metaphor for power but justice is the question that concerns Job and his friends. Eliphaz claimed to speak for God in correcting Job (Job 22:26-27). Job in turn has declared that he received revelation from God that

he could not deny (Job 6:10); he will not conceal what is with God, i.e. the thoughts of the Almighty.

Why then have you become altogether vain? Job's friends claimed to know God and his ways, yet they analysed Job's crisis in a nonsensical way. Summoning all the strength of his faith, he declared that he would teach his opponents 'concerning the hand of God,' and he now practically took hold of all that they had said about God's visitation on the wicked, and hurled it back on them as an anathema.

- 13 'This is the portion of the wicked with God,
and the heritage that oppressors receive from the Almighty:
- 14 If their children are multiplied, it is for the sword;
and their offspring have not enough to eat.
- 15 Those who survive them the pestilence buries,
and their widows make no lamentation.
- 16 Though they heap up silver like dust,
and pile up clothing like clay —
- 17 they may pile it up, but the just will wear it,
and the innocent will divide the silver.
- 18 They build their houses like nests,
like booths made by sentinels of the vineyard.
- 19 They go to bed with wealth, but will do so no more;
they open their eyes, and it is gone.
- 20 Terrors overtake them like a flood;
in the night a whirlwind carries them off.
- 21 The east wind lifts them up and they are gone;
it sweeps them out of their place.
- 22 It hurls at them without pity;
they flee from its power in headlong flight.
- 23 It claps its hands at them,
and hisses at them from its place.

Job 27:13-23

This is the portion of the wicked with God. In this section Job argued strongly - as strongly as any of his three friends - that judgement awaits the wicked man and that he will not be ultimately blessed. This was an important argument for Job to make in front of his friends because they accused him of overturning God's moral order in the world. Job insists that he agreed in general with the idea that wickedness is rewarded with judgement from God, i.e they receive from the Almighty.

The Hebrew phrase translated with God in v.13 is often explained as being better interpreted as 'from God,' because it would provide a parallel with the second line of the verse. The proposed change is minimal and consists of one letter in the Hebrew text being understood as accidentally appended to this phrase from the word that precedes it. However, since v.11 has the similar phrase 'with the Almighty,' the sense of v.13 in context does not require the change. The two phrases also appear central to Job's point: if his integrity is actually what is true 'with God,' then Job's friends ought to consider whether they are the ones who stand in danger of the judgement that they have described.

If their children are multiplied, it is for the sword; terrors overtake them like a flood; the east wind lifts them up and they are gone; it claps its hands at them, and hisses at them from its place. This description of the bitter portion of the wicked man includes many aspects that applied to Job and his own crisis; Jeremiah voiced a similar cry: <<*You invited my enemies from all around as if for a day of festival; and on the day of the anger of the Lord no one escaped or survived; those whom I bore and reared my enemy has destroyed*>> (Lamentations 2:22). It should not be taken as an admission of guilt; instead Job's idea was "I know that my situation looks like the judgement of God on the wicked, yet I assure you that it is not."