



## Job - Chapter Twenty Nine

### **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 Nine**

Job laments the loss of the past when he felt that he had the presence and protection of God (vv.1-6) as well as the respect of all those among whom he lived (vv.7-25), which matched the way he lived his life in pursuit of righteousness and justice; refer to vv.12-17).

#### **II.c.iv Job 29:1-31:40 - Job Finishes His Defence**

Job reflects on his life in the past (29:1-25), the present (30:1-31), and what he wishes would be revealed and vindicated in the future (31:1-40). Just as Job's soliloquy in Chapter 3 launched the dialogues with his sombre reflection on his origins, so too Chapters 29-31 conclude the dialogues with Job's reflections on his current and future state.

- <sup>1</sup> Job again took up his discourse and said:
- <sup>2</sup> 'O that I were as in the months of old,  
as in the days when God watched over me;
- <sup>3</sup> when his lamp shone over my head,  
and by his light I walked through darkness;
- <sup>4</sup> when I was in my prime,  
when the friendship of God was upon my tent;

- 5 when the Almighty was still with me,  
when my children were around me;
- 6 when my steps were washed with milk,  
and the rock poured out for me streams of oil!

### Job 29:1-6

Job again took up his discourse. Probably, after a pause, Job resumed his speech. This second address was not so much an answer to his friends as a statement of his whole case as he saw it. Refer to the comment made on Job 27:1.

O that I were as in the months of old, as in the days when God watched over me. Job longed not only for the days before he lost his children, his health and his wealth; he especially longed for the days before he lost his sense of God's closeness. There was a time when he felt that God watched over him; and those days were gone. Job refers to days in which he felt the presence of God guarding - when God watched over me (v.2), and guiding him, i.e. when his lamp shone over my head, and by his light I walked through darkness (v.3). Job fondly remembered the days when it seemed that God was for him rather than against him. It is a reminder of the fact that Job's great crisis after his catastrophic losses was primarily spiritual in that he did not sense the support and succour of God in the aftermath of his loss.

**Scripture shows that God continually watches over his people in bad times and in good times: <<And just as I have watched over them to pluck up and break down, to overthrow, destroy, and bring evil, so I will watch over them to build and to plant, says the Lord>> (Jeremiah 31:28).**

Charles Spurgeon commented: "It is a great thing for a man to be near to God; it is a very choice privilege to be admitted into the inner circle of communion, and to become God's familiar friend. Great as the privilege is, so great is the loss of it. No darkness is so dark as that which falls on eyes accustomed to the light." Spurgeon went on to describe the ways that Job sensed this great loss from God.

- "First, he complains that he had lost the consciousness of divine preservation" (as in the days when God watched over me).
- "Job had also lost divine consolation, for he looks back with lamentation to the time when God's candle shone upon his head" (when his lamp shone over my head).
- "Moreover, Job deplored the loss of divine illumination. 'By his light,' he says, 'I walked through darkness,' that is to say, perplexity ceased to be perplexity" (by his light I walked through darkness).

- “Moreover, Job had lost divine communion: so it seems, for he mourned the days of his youth, when the secret of God was upon his tabernacle” (when the friendship of God was upon my tent).

When I was in my prime. Job felt that it was a time when he was in his prime or in his autumn days which would be the season of harvest, because the friendship of God was evident on his household as well as his flocks and fields.

When my children were around me; when my steps were washed with milk, and the rock poured out for me streams of oil! Job painted a beautiful (if exaggerated) picture of his former happy life. He genuinely felt that he was in fellowship with God and the blessing flowed through every area of his life.

Washed with milk or butter. Job was renowned for his herds of cattle and his olive groves that produced riches from the earth.

### Introduction to Job 29:7-25

Job opens and closes this section with a description of the honour that he once received from people in every sphere of influence (vv.7-10 and vv.21-25). Job’s wish is not simply that he would regain his honour but that the grounds for this respect would be remembered (beginning with ‘because’ in v.12): he not only spoke in wisdom but also embodied what it required by caring for the poor and fatherless (v.12), for the one about to perish, and for the widow (v.13), and by protecting and preserving the needy (vv.14-17). When Job looks back on what he thought the course of his life would be, he uses several images, including that of a well-rooted tree that would continue to bear fruit, benefiting himself and others (vv.18-20).

7     When I went out to the gate of the city,  
        when I took my seat in the square,  
 8     the young men saw me and withdrew,  
        and the aged rose up and stood;  
 9     the nobles refrained from talking,  
        and laid their hands on their mouths;  
 10    the voices of princes were hushed,  
        and their tongues stuck to the roof of their mouths.

### Job 29:7-10

When I went out to the gate of the city, when I took my seat in the square. In this and the following verses Job remembered how greatly he was respected in the

community. He had a position of community leadership and was feared by the young men and honoured by the aged. Even princes and nobles stopped talking and listened to him. The bible teaches respect for both the older and younger generations: <<*Do not speak harshly to an older man, but speak to him as to a father, to younger men as brothers, to older women as mothers, to younger women as sisters – with absolute purity*>> (1 Timothy 5:1-2).

The gate of the city was a meeting place for social gatherings, commerce and for the elders to make laws and pass judgement on legal proceedings: <<*No sooner had Boaz gone up to the gate and sat down there than the next-of-kin, of whom Boaz had spoken, came passing by. So Boaz said, ‘Come over, friend; sit down here.’ And he went over and sat down. Then Boaz took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, ‘Sit down here’; so they sat down. He then said to the next-of-kin, ‘Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, is selling the parcel of land that belonged to our kinsman Elimelech. So I thought I would tell you of it, and say: Buy it in the presence of those sitting here, and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, redeem it; but if you will not, tell me, so that I may know; for there is no one prior to you to redeem it, and I come after you.’ So he said, ‘I will redeem it’>> (Ruth 4:1-4).*

- 11 When the ear heard, it commended me,  
and when the eye saw, it approved;
- 12 because I delivered the poor who cried,  
and the orphan who had no helper.
- 13 The blessing of the wretched came upon me,  
and I caused the widow’s heart to sing for joy.

### Job 29:11-13

When the ear heard, it commended me, and when the eye saw, it approved. Not only did Job gain the attention of the people and leaders of the city in days past; they also liked him and what he had to say. He was blessed and approved by those who heard him. Such a reputation was everything in their society: <<*By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain’s. Through this he received approval as righteous, God himself giving approval to his gifts; he died, but through his faith he still speaks*>> (Hebrews 11:4).

The blessing that Job received from others signified the blessing he had been to those who had no one to help them and needed to be delivered. In the next section, Job will lament his need for someone to deliver him, now that he is the one crying for help; refer to Job 30:20, 30:24 and 30:28.

Job described how his reputation for wisdom and goodness was deserved. He was a man full of good and noble works, especially to the poor and disadvantaged.

14 I put on righteousness, and it clothed me;  
my justice was like a robe and a turban.

15 I was eyes to the blind,  
and feet to the lame.

16 I was a father to the needy,  
and I championed the cause of the stranger.

### Job 29:14-16

Job had been a person of significant means who used his possessions and influence as if he were clothed with righteousness and justice to provide what the blind, lame, needy, and the stranger he did not know could not do for themselves. Job's actions contrast with how he is treated now that he is in need; refer to Job 30:10-15. In this Job was just like the great King David: <<*So David reigned over all Israel; and David administered justice and equity to all his people*>> (2 Samuel 8:15). The concept of being clothed with righteousness is also taught by Paul: <<*You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness*>> (Ephesians 4:22-24).

I championed out the cause. Job took up legal cases even when there could be no possible benefit for him. This is the way that God teaches that a righteous person should act for it is the way in which he acts: <<*Do not rob the poor because they are poor, or crush the afflicted at the gate; for the Lord pleads their cause and despoils of life those who despoil them*>> (Proverbs 22:22-23).

17 I broke the fangs of the unrighteous,  
and made them drop their prey from their teeth.

### Job 29:17

The wicked are pictured here as if they hunt for victims like predators. Job describes his actions on behalf of the needy as equivalent to breaking the fangs of the unrighteous, presumably because he exposed and unravelled the means by which they had snared the poor as their prey. Eliphaz has used similar language in his argument that Job had sinned: <<*The roar of the lion, the voice of the fierce lion, and the teeth of the young lions are broken. The strong lion perishes for*>>

*lack of prey, and the whelps of the lioness are scattered*>> (Job 4:10-11), and David uses a similar analogy in requesting that God should act on his behalf: <<*Rise up, O Lord! Deliver me, O my God! For you strike all my enemies on the cheek; you break the teeth of the wicked*>> (Psalm 3:7).

18 Then I thought, “I shall die in my nest,  
and I shall multiply my days like the phoenix;  
19 my roots spread out to the waters,  
with the dew all night on my branches;  
20 my glory was fresh with me,  
and my bow ever new in my hand.”

#### Job 29:18-20

I shall die in my nest, and I shall multiply my days like the phoenix. In his former confidence, Job felt that he would die happy and secure in his nest, after a good long life.

My roots spread out to the waters. The reader senses sense Job’s prior blessing and abundance of life. His former blessed life made his present crisis all the more unbearable and seemingly unjust. Job is likely referring to the internal strength (my glory) and the external vigour (my bow) that were the mutual signs of the benefits of a life lived in wisdom.

This is a metaphor taken from a healthy tree growing beside a stream where there is plenty of water; which in consequence flourishes in all seasons, its leaf does not wither, nor its fruit fall off, a theme take up elsewhere: <<*They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper*>> (Psalm 1:3), and: <<*They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green; in the year of drought it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit*>> (Jeremiah 17:8).

21 ‘They listened to me, and waited,  
and kept silence for my counsel.  
22 After I spoke they did not speak again,  
and my word dropped upon them like dew.  
23 They waited for me as for the rain;  
they opened their mouths as for the spring rain.

24 I smiled on them when they had no confidence;  
and the light of my countenance they did not extinguish.

Job 29:21-24

They listened to me, and waited, and kept silence for my counsel. After I spoke they did not speak again. Job again remembered how greatly he was respected and esteemed in the community. He was a man honoured for his wise words.

As one who utilised his means for righteousness and justice (vv.12-17), the smile and light of Job's face encouraged those without hope and reflected the character and presence of God.

25 I chose their way, and sat as chief,  
and I lived like a king among his troops,  
like one who comforts mourners.

Job 29:25

I chose their way, and sat as chief. This highlights the tremendous contrast between the former esteem Job enjoyed and the terrible criticism he had endured from his friends. There was a time when no one would have criticised Job the way his friends now did. Job is also a tremendous example of how a wealthy and powerful man should live his life; not in selfish indulgence, but in care and concern for the less fortunate.

It is with some irony that Job refers to the past, when some listened for his words and did not speak afterward (vv.21-22), and also to the way that he formerly lived like one who comforts mourners. His friends originally set out to comfort him in Job 2:11 but instead became agitated with his words and ended up acting as his accusers.