

JOB

LESSON 6

1. The difference between God and all his creatures is immense.
 - a) Above man are God's servants, angels, holy ones, yet he places no trust in them.
 - b) v. 19 – Shall he then trust man who lives in houses of clay.
2. The general idea of 19-21 is the frailty of man.
 - a) His existence is so fragile that they are crushed before the moth, they perish between morning and evening, he is like a tent held up by a single cord.
 - b) The effect is dismal in the extreme – they perish without regarding it, they die without wisdom.
3. It is precisely God's enormous advantage over man that makes his treatment of them seem so unfair.
 - a) God is so great that he does not need to put man down in order to protect God from competition.
 - b) The friends are right to appeal to the incomprehensibility of God, but they take a perilous step that Job refuses to follow.
 - c) From the irresistibility of God's omnipotence they infer that His justice is equally remote from man's ideas.
 - d) Job knows only too well that he is merely a creature, but a creature of such a God cannot be a "mere" creature.

- e) Job will not be silenced by reminders that it is not for puny man to question the ways of the Almighty.
- f) His questions may be unanswerable, but he will ask them and insist on his right to ask them.
- g) His questions arise not from unbelief, but from his belief in God.

- II. Viewed in this light, Eliphaz next word is a terrible blow to Job; he says that it is futile to call out in prayer because no one will answer. Vv. 1-2.
- A. This is not a general statement because Eliphaz himself has just claimed to be the recipient of a revelation.
1. It is Job who is disqualified.
 2. Eliphaz seems to have concluded that by his vexation and jealousy Job has become a fool. V. 2.
 3. He has despised the chastening of the Almighty. V. 17.
 4. As he cannot turn to God, neither can he turn to one of the holy ones.
 - a) The concept of a go-between is significant in Job.
 - b) Job sees the need for a mediator with increasing clarity.
 - c) Job can only grope after the need he recognizes, and could hardly have guessed at the incredible solution that God would provide in Jesus. 1 Tim. 2:5.
 5. v. 3 – The fool may seem to flourish for a while, but suddenly his fortune will be reversed. 3b suggests that the curse of a good man, like Eliphaz, can secure the downfall of the unworthy.
 6. v. 4 – Later Job will object to the doctrine that a man's sins are visited upon his children (21:19f). Some read *gate* as *tempest*, and see a cruel reference to Job 1:19. *There is no one to deliver them* is a frequent reference to an act of God that no one could prevent.
 7. v. 5 – The meaning of this verse is less clear. While it could mean that the rich man is reduced to begging, most translations give the impression of the ruin of his crops by pilferers.

8. vv. 6-7 – These verses imply that man’s troubles are innate and inevitable. In vv. 9-16 he ascribes such experiences to God, so, although a divine agent is not named in verses 3-7, he is probably insinuating that the Lord is the hidden cause of the fool’s troubles, even though they are so universal that they might appear to be natural (v. 7).
 - a) If the familiar simile *as the sparks fly upward* (the Hebrew is literally ‘the sons of Resheph’) simply describes something that happens unavoidably all the time, then Eliphaz has given up the attempt to find a moral explanation, and offers dismal comfort to any sufferer.
9. v. 8 – So far Eliphaz’s teaching has been rather gloomy.
 - a) Now he tries to strike a more cheerful note.
 - b) Faith in God delivers from pessimism.
 - c) The invitation to pray is couched in legal terms; *to seek God* is a deliberate act, not just leaving his cause to God, but submitting (lit., ‘I present’) his case.
 - d) The advice is a little fatuous because there is nothing that Job wants more.
- B. vv. 9 - 16 – The ancient hymn is one of the most beautiful in the Bible, and also one of the clearest passages in Job; no comment is needed.
 1. The poem recites the attributes of God.
 2. The present tense implies that these are his characteristic and continual deeds.
 - a) God has absolute power over nature. Vv. 9-10.
 - b) He is supreme in the affairs of men. Vv. 11-15.
 - c) Wrongs are redressed; injustice is silenced. V. 16.

- C. Vv. 17- 26 – The final poem in Eliphaz’s speech speaks of the happiness of the man who takes the troubles of life in the right spirit.
1. It is a beautiful tribute to the fatherly care of God, strict, but kind.
 - a) His apparent severity in sending sickness (v. 18), setbacks (v. 19), famine and war (v. 20), fire and flood (v. 21), plagues and wild beasts (22) – [there is not the slightest doubt that these things come from His sovereign hand] – is more than outweighed by His goodness in sending remedies for all these disasters.
 - b) At least that is the way that it will work out for the man who is not impatient of the chastening of the Almighty.
 2. v. 17 – When disaster hits the godly man he recognizes this as part of God’s training, and so can rejoice in adversity.
 - a) This is a new idea to cover the case that was not included in the simplistic classification of verses 11-16, where the wicked are confounded and the good are helped.
 - b) Neither applies to Job; he is a good man confounded, no helped.
 - c) His words are good, and doubtless Job has said the same thing many times to depressed souls; troubles are tests; the person who realizes this responds creatively; the rebellious only make more trouble for themselves by resentment.
 3. vv. 23 -26 – The pleasing sketch of a wise man’s life, not free from troubles, but, much better, transforming difficulties into nurture and blessedness.
- D. v. 27 – Eliphaz speaks for all wisdom teachers, hence the *we*.

1. He is quite convinced that what he says is true.
 2. Now it is up to Job to give heed and experience it for himself.
- E. Where is Eliphaz's defect? Why does the Lord single him out in the end and say, "My anger flares up against you because what you say about me isn't correct." (42:7)
1. His fault is not that his doctrine is unsound; it is his ineptness as a counselor; true words are thin medicine for a man in the depths.
 - a) It is little comfort to offer him health while he scratches himself on an ashheap.
 - b) To offer him wealth when the raiders have taken his possessions.
 - c) To promise him descendants while his children lie crushed beneath the stones.
 - d) Tums are good for the tummy but they do little for cancer.
 - (1) Because it is wrongly applied, it becomes useless.
 - (2) More than useless, it is a lie.
 - (3) Eliphaz's basic assumption that Job is being corrected and disciplined sounds good, but it is simply wrong.
 - (4) God's primary purpose in allowing Job's suffering is not to rehabilitate him, but practically the opposite: to honor him and to glorify his faith.
 2. Job is about to take new strides into a new and deeper understanding of God.

- a) By binding God to certain rules, Eliphaz has safeguarded his morality.
 - b) But to bring God under obligation to a morality beyond His will is a threat to His sovereignty, especially when it is a man who thinks that he knows what that morality should be.
 - c) The rules is not that “God must do good.: The rules is that “What God does is good.”
3. Job believes that God, as Sovereign, may give or retrieve His gifts at His pleasure (1:21); He may send good or bad (2:10).
- a) He is not accountable to any man for such actions.
 - b) Eliphaz thinks he knows how to get along with a predictable (and that means, to some extent, manageable) God.
 - c) Job who has no such pretensions, faces the agony of getting along with a God over whom he has absolutely no control.
 - d) Job’s lament began his undertaking to find the rightness of his relationship with God in his present condition.
 - (1) Eliphaz’s speech that promised everything would be all right if Job would just do this or that was perceived by Job as a deflection from his most urgent need.
 - (2) Unless we understand that, we will not understand the vehemence of the outburst of Job in his next speech.
4. Job must test the answers of man and reject them; in the end he finds satisfaction in what God himself will tell him.

- a) The final restoration of Job is not in conflict with the conclusion that Eliphaz is wrong at this point.
- b) For one thing, the restoration comes after Job has settled everything with God, and it is not the means by which God restored their friendship; it was not a bribe.
- c) Further, Job's way back to this happy state is completely different from the route prescribed by Eliphaz.

2.b.ii. Job's First Speech. 6:1 - 7:21.

I. To be generous with Eliphaz, let us assume that his chiding was gentle, not mocking; yet Job is stung by it.

A. His response is a tremendous emotional outburst.

1. He defends himself mightily against Eliphaz' insinuation that somewhere in his life there must be some fault that needs correction.

2. Job insists that:

a) His wild words are fully justified. 6:2-7.

b) He still wishes to die. 6:8-10.

c) His hope that his friends would refresh him has been disappointed, leaving him even more desperate. 6:11-23.

d) He challenges them to be straightforward in their accusations. 6:24-30.

e) Then he returns to the theme of man's miserable lot; hope for relief requires more strength than any man has to hold on.

(1) The only way out is death, the sooner the better. 7:1-10.

(2) Since this remedy lies solely in God's hands, Job turns to him with greater passion. 7:11-21.

f) In his closing words he looks into the abyss of doubt which is the worst torture for the person who loves God – he must have some measure of understanding of God's ways to guard his mind against the thought that God is not fair.

II. Chapter 6.

- A. Vv. 2-3 – Job is not in the least sobered by Eliphaz’ reproof.
1. He has warned Job against the fatal consequences of bad tempter (5:2).
 2. Job not only admits that his words have been rash; he insists that his behavior is justified by the infinite weight of his vexation.
 3. He uses *the sand of the sea* for what is immeasurable.
- B. V. 4 – Job is terrified.
1. The word used in 4c describes the armament of God set in battle-array against him.
 2. For the first time Job explicitly names God as the ultimate (and even immediate) cause of his suffering.
- C. Vv. 5-6 – The questions are rhetorical.
1. This is often done in wisdom discourse to indicate the absurd.
 2. There is often a hidden meaning; comparison of human conduct with the behavior of animals is often made in such proverbs.
 3. The husbandman knows how to interpret the cries of animals; he doesn’t just get annoyed.
 4. Job also has a right to bray like a hungry wild donkey and to bellow like a starving bull.
 5. The questions in v. 6 deride Eliphaz speech as insipid, like tasteless food that can be nauseating if not seasoned.
- D. V. 7 – sums up the point.
1. The dish that has been served up to Job is sickening, and he must say how it makes him feel.
 2. The events that have transpired (especially the implied attack upon his integrity) are more than he can stomach.

- E. vv. 8-9 – At this point Job obviously prays.
1. He has been encouraged to entrust his problems to God (5:8).
 2. He has only one desire, already expressed in chapter 3 – to die.
 3. If God were really compassionate, He would crush him at once (9a).
 4. He could do this as effortlessly as a weaver snips off a thread.
- F. V. 10 – There are language problems in the verse, but the gist of it seems to be that God owes it to him to end his life, he has not, in spite of the insinuations of Eliphaz, committed sin, and, should God in mercy grant his wish, he prays for courage to be faithful. Job fears that he cannot maintain his right behavior much longer.
- G. V. 11 – any suggestion of insolence in Job's words is removed in the hopelessness of his next words; he simply hasn't the strength to hold out for the renewal Eliphaz promised in 5:17-27.
- H. VV. 12-13 – Job has no false fortitude.
1. He is a man of flesh and nerves, not stone and bronze.
 2. All his resources are spent; he has no endurance left.
- I. V. 14 – Job makes a more direct attack on his friends (the *you* is plural).
1. By complaining that their failure to supply a *friend* with *kindness* has forfeited their claim to be religious men, Job seems harsh with Eliphaz who has done his best.
 2. His disappointment is greater because Eliphaz' confident manner promised so much.

- J. V. 15 – His friends (*my brothers*) have proved false like a wadi stream.
- K. Vv. 16 -17 – the image is further developed by depicting the wadi in winter and in summer.
1. In the winter and spring they are filled with muddy torrents, described as dark with ice and swollen with [melted] snow.
 2. In the summer they dry up and vanish.
- L. Vv. 18-20
1. v. 18 – Travelers who count on water supplies at their camps, but if they depend on them they waste and perish.
 2. v. 19 – The desert merchants from Tema and Sheba look for water as Job looked for consolation from his friends.
 3. v. 20 – Like Job they were all the more disappointed because their hopes had been built up.
- M. V. 21 – The double image of the dried up wadi applies to Job's experience with his friends.
1. Not only has he found them to be unreliable and inconsistent, he has felt deceived by them.
 2. He suffers not only a disappointment of expectation, but a danger to life.
 3. Job knows the reason that they have adopted their position – they have seen his misfortune and been frightened; anyone associating too closely with a person suffering from God's wrath may himself become the object of that wrath.
 4. His friends lack the courage to identify themselves with him; loyalty would demand that, but Job feels that they intend to be commentators and observers rather than take his part.

- N. Vv. 22-23 – Job disclaims any excessive demands upon his friends; the little he has asked from them is the “loyalty” of friendship (v. 14).
1. The first two claims that Job denies have to do with money; such a request would be an imposition upon friends.
 2. The second claims that Job says he never made is to have asked his friends to risk danger in order to rescue him from some adversary or from some tyrant or bandit.
- O. Vv. 24-25 – The inference that Job must have sinned was latent in Eliphaz’ first speech.
1. In v. 24 Job protests that he is not aware of any sin of inadvertence.
 - a) He leaves off his bitter bantering and asks the friends in all seriousness to point out what his guilt is.
 - b) All it will take to silence Job is to say what it is in plain language.
 2. In v. 25b he demands not only a specific indictment, but proof (this thought will be completed in vv. 28-30).
 - a) Thus far only vague generalities about the inevitability of human sin have been expressed.
 - b) Eliphaz has never been specific, and so for all of his talk he has never addressed Job’s sense that he is innocent and unjustly treated.
- P. V. 26 – Here Job seems to be saying that his words, *the speech of a despairing man*, have been treated by them as something to be blown away (lit., *for the wind*).
- Q. Vv. 27-28 – If it comes to gratuitous accusations, Job can give as good as he gets.

1. Now he seems to retaliate with charges of his own; you would even gamble over an orphan and bargain over your friend.
 2. There is no more indication that his friends gambled over orphans than there is that Job asked for bribes.
 3. This may be what Job is getting at, but there certainly has been a deterioration in their relationship.
- R. V. 28-30 – This begins a new speech as shown by the *But now*; he urges them to change their minds.
1. Using a solemn legal oath, he insists that he can distinguish the validity of his position from the invalidity of theirs.
 2. This assumes that the reference to *my tongue* and *my taste* (lit. *palate*) is a figure for discernment.
 3. The kernel of these verses is v. 29b – *my integrity is at stake*.
 4. He asks them to turn to him for significant communication; his death wish is temporarily set aside, so that his protestation of innocence can dominate the discussion.
 5. V 29 – Turning to him involves a change of attitude – turn from the unfair course you have adopted; do not unjustly assume my guilt.

Chapter 7

- I. Vv. 1-10 – God is first directly addressed, and it is not until vv. 12-21 that he speaks consistently to God without indirect contemplative remarks.
 - A. V. 1—The rest of Job’s speech is more like a soliloquy that turns into a remonstrance against God.
 1. His theme is once more the *hard service* that men have *upon earth*.
 2. The burdensome thing, whatever the context, is that the labor is not of one’s own choosing nor for one’s own benefit.
 3. Chapter one shows that Job did not mind hard work; it is the indignity of his present plight that he resents.
 - B. Vv. 2-3 – One forced by poverty to become a hireling lost his self-respect as if he had become a slave.
 1. Job does not even have the satisfaction of wages at the end of his work-day.
 2. Instead of pay there is emptiness; instead of rest, nights of misery.
 - C. V. 4 – There is no point in quibbling that Job complains about the endless months and nights of misery (v. 3) and the next about the swiftness of life (v. 6).
 1. Such conflicting thoughts are bound to rage in the mind of one who says *I am full of tossing*.
 2. Job hopes to find relief in sleep, but the night is the worst time for the depression that comes with the shock of sudden deprivation.
 - D. V. 5 – The mental anguish is inseparable from the physical pain and reinforced by a repulsive description of his degrading

illness – *my flesh wears maggots as clothes; my skin is caked with dirt; its scabby and festering.*

- E. V. 6 – The brevity of life is illustrated by the weaver’s shuttle. Some suggest that “without hope” should be “as the thread runs out.”
- F. V. 7-10 – Job wants for God to take notice of him; otherwise he will come into life and go into death all for nothing (7-10), so completely does God fill Job’s desire; hence, Job’s pathetic appeal.
 - 1. V. 7 – *Remember that my life is a breath.*
 - a) But in another respect all he wants is for God to leave him alone (11-19), so terrifying has God become to Job.
 - b) His desire is still for death since his *eye will never again see good.*
 - c) His life’s thread has run out (6b) and it is time God snipped it off (6:9).
 - 2. Vv. 8-10.
 - a) The desire to see God is central to Job’s need (19:27; 42:5), but God must first look on Job.
 - b) God must call before Job can answer.
 - c) Since vv. 9 and 10 emphasize the finality of death, from which there is no return, verse 8 seems to imply that God Himself, as well as Job’s human acquaintances, might soon find that it is too late.
- II. Vv. 11-21 – Job has two grounds for his astonishing request that God should leave him alone: 1) The misery of his pain ridden life (vv. 1-5), and 2) the imminence and inevitability of his death (vv. 6-10).
 - A. His present misery is due to God’s attack on him, so if only God would leave him alone he could be more comfortable.

- B. Not that he would have anything to hope for, even if the arrows of the Almighty (6:4) should be held back; for he is marked down for death, and does not question that such is his immediate destiny.
- C. This fact leads him to beg God to leave him alone; he craves the last blessing of a dying man.
- D. Vv. 11-12 – Job wonders if he is some threat to the cosmos that must be kept in check by God. For some persons it is philosophical to accept the sad fact that death is the end of all and then to make the best of one’s transitory and futile life.
 - 1. Not so with Job.
 - a) He has experienced how rich life can be in a right relationship with God.
 - b) But why did God throw that relationship into ruins?
 - 2. Job’s existence has turned into a nightmare and he asks why.
 - a) The very asking of the question sustains his access to God.
 - b) Job does not now adorn the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable jewel of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God’s sight is very precious (1 Pet. 3:4).
 - c) But this does not mean that his opposite mood disqualifies his claim to godliness.
 - (1) A calm and heavenly frame for a closer walk with God is not the uniform standard for biblical religion.
 - (2) Hannah prayed with the incoherence of a drunken woman. 1 Sam. 1:13.

(3) Jesus offered up prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears. Heb. 5:7.

d) So Job makes his way to God with prayers that are sobs.

e) Job does not curb his speech, but breaks out into even greater vehemence.

E. Vv. 13 -14 – Even sleep cannot give him relief from the terrors.

F. V. 15 – Job would prefer death (strangling) to a life in which he is unaccountably persecuted day and night by God.

1. It is not the fact of them that drives him to despair, but the belief that they are expressions divine hostility.

G. V. 16 – Since his life is so fragile and brief (a breath) and since God is terrorizing him (vv. 13-15), his only wish is that God would leave him alone long enough for him to swallow his spit (v. 19).

H. Vv. 17-19 – He wishes that God would leave him alone long enough for him to have a moment of privacy.

1. Far from feeling separated from God, Job is vividly aware of being under his constant scrutiny.

2. Whatever can be said about the relationship of humankind with God has been negated by Job.

3. He has rejected life, feels rejected of God, and the conventional encouragements have lost their meaning for him.

I. Vv. 20-21 – At the end of his speech Job returns to the question, “Why.”

1. What he is questioning is not altogether clear.

2. Prior questions are summed up in “What have I done to you?”

3. *If* has no support in the Hebrew text; it has been influenced by an interpretation that makes Job's speech insolent and implies that human sin makes no difference to God.
 4. Job knows he is a sinner, but he cannot understand why, having offered the sacrifice, he has not been forgiven.
 5. He is unaware of any other sin, certainly not one that will justify what he perceives to be an assault of God upon him.
 6. We know that Job was entirely correct; his sufferings are so beyond any sin he knows of that there must be some explanation beyond the categories of guilt and punishment.
- J. Job's thoughts are as violent as the shaker in which God has permitted Satan to test him.
1. Job's pain has the authenticity of all who have been injured in their wrestling with God, even though they limp for the rest of their life (Gen. 32:31.)
 2. If he seems defiant, it is the defiance of faith.
 3. All Job has known about God he still believes.
 4. But God's inexplicable ways have Job's mind perplexed to the breaking point.
 5. Job is in the right, but he does not know that God is watching him with silent compassion and admiration until the test is fully done and it is time to state His approval publicly (42:8).

Chapter 8

2.b.iii. – Bildad’s first speech.

Job’s arguments should have put the final nails in the “health and wealth” gospel of his friends. Anyone who counts on having tangible blessings as a reward or validation of faith will in the long run be disappointed. Such blessings may be enjoyed in this life, but they may not be insisted on as the prerogatives of righteousness. Being a believer is no guarantee against any sort of failure or disaster, including sickness, family breakdown, or complete mental collapse. All that God guarantees is that he will be with us, and at times it may appear that he is reneging even on that.

All of Job’s eloquence has been wasted on Bildad. If Eliphaz comes across as cool and sophisticated, Bildad comes across as the staunch, ramrod traditionalist, the one who sees all issues in black and white and who prides himself on his straightforward, no-nonsense approach. His mind is already made up on every important question, and on many unimportant ones as well. With this approach, he doesn’t have to think, he just has to stick to the old tried and true answers (8:8-9).

- I. The disagreement between Job and his friends becomes wider in Bildad’s first speech.
 - A. He does not begin as courteously as Eliphaz, but accuses Job bluntly of being a windbag, vehement but empty (2b).
 - B. Bildad is objective and analytical in his speech about God and man.
 1. He is a neat but superficial thinker.
 2. He is a moralist, and in his simple theology everything can be explained in terms of two kinds of men – the blameless (20a, the word used of Job in 1:1) and the secretly wicked (13b).
 - C. Outwardly the same, God distinguishes between them by prospering the one and destroying the other.
 1. To suggest that it ever happens otherwise is to throw doubt on God’s justice.

2. And this, according to Bildad, is what Job is doing, so he asks, Does God twist justice or right judgment (v. 3)?

II. Vv. 4-7.

- A. Job had not said this; he believes in God's justice but he cannot see it.
- B. Bildad sees the implications of Job's questions and they are dangerous for his theology.
 1. He sees God as a static guarantor of the world order; Job's sense is that it is God, not he, who has changed, and that threatens Bildad's view of God.
 2. Bildad's doctrine of retribution in the positive sense assures that God cannot fail to respond to good behavior; an unbending doctrine of retribution not only makes the sinner the victim of his own guilt, it chains God also, and compels him to respond with favor to any human merit.
- C. Bildad's position is that because God's actions match a man's behavior, he can reason backwards from the effect to the cause
 1. Job's children must have sinned.
 2. Bildad strikes a low blow when he injects Job's children into the argument.
 3. This cuts near the bone, because it was the very thing Job was concerned about and for which he offered sacrifice.
 - a) Regardless of whether Job's children had sinned, Job's conscience was clear on the matter.
 - b) Bildad is prying into a naturally sensitive area and trying to send Job on a guilt trip.
 - c) One of Satan's favorite ploys – if he cannot get us through our own sins he will try to get us through the sins of others.

- d) Satan loves to persuade people that real, heartfelt forgiveness of sins is unobtainable, and that there is no such thing as a clear conscience.