

**Job's Third Reply To**

**Eliphaz**

**Chapters 23-24**

## **Job 23:1-7**

“Then Job answered and said: “Today also my complaint is bitter; my hand is heavy on account of my groaning. Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat! I would lay my case before him and fill my mouth with arguments. I would know what he would answer me and understand what he would say to me. Would he contend with me in the greatness of his power? No; he would pay attention to me. There an upright man could argue with him, and I would be acquitted forever by my judge.”

# Job Longs To Talk Directly To God

- Job complained in Chapter 7:11, “in the bitterness of his soul” and he desired that God would leave him alone and let him die and quit tormenting him in his dreams.
- Here in Chapter 23, it’s a different kind of bitterness.
- In Chapter 7, Job was bitterly angry at God but in Chapter 23, Job was bitterly frustrated by his lack of connection with God.

- The crisis experience is driving Job back towards God not away from Him.
- Some people are driven towards God initially during a crisis experience believing if they get right with God their suffering will end.
- They bargain with God but when God doesn't fulfill their expectations they become bitter towards God and draw away from God.

- Some people are driven away from God during a crisis experience believing that they don't deserve this kind of suffering and are angry and bitter towards God and want nothing to do with Him.
- Some people are driven away from God during a crisis experience but slowly over time they begin to experience their need for God and once again are drawn to Him.
- “Good men are washed towards God even by the rough waves of their grief; and when their sorrows are deepest, their highest desire is not to escape from them, but to get at their God.”-Spurgeon, Charles
- Job never prayed for his troubles to end but did pray to know God more directly.

- Job said that he was “groaning” and his hands were “heavy”.
- Paul said something similar in Romans 8.
- “For we know that the whole creation has been **groaning** together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, **groan** inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.”-**Romans 8:22-23**
- All of creation along with believers “groan” for the time when the curse of the Fall will be totally reversed and we will be fully restored in our relationship with God.

- During this time Jesus is on the throne reigning by truth and righteous.
- “ The wolf shall **dwell** with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder’s den.

- They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be **full** of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea...Behold, the **dwelling** place of God is with man. He will **dwell** with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. **He** will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”-**Isaiah 11:6-9; Revelation 21:3-4**
- This is exactly what Job and believers since the Fall are “groaning” for is a time when God and man dwell together along with all of creation in perfect harmony.

## **Job Wants To Know God**

- Job desires to have a sit-down conversation directly with God.
- “Here Job’s courageous honesty is seen at its best. His consuming desire is to come face to face with God, not by a contrived penance, as Eliphaz recommends, but in a fair trial.” –Andersen, Francis
- Job demonstrates that he knows and understands the character of God better than his friends.

- Job's three friends based their theology upon the false premise that God brings suffering upon the sinner but is full of grace and blessing upon the righteous.
- The god that Job's friends portray is a distant and indifferent being who shows up to punish and bless and who doesn't care for or need man.
- Job sees God completely different than his friends.

- Job knew that when he had his sit down with God that he would have a mutual **understanding** with God and God would have a mutual **understanding** with Job (vs. 5).
- Job knew that God was all-powerful but when he had his face-to-face with God, he wouldn't be confronted with judgment, in fact God would, “**pay attention**” to what Job would have to say to Him (vs.6).
- Job knew that God wouldn't condemn him but God would **acquit** him “forever” (vs.7).

# Job 23:8-10

“Behold, I go forward, but he is not there, and backward, but I do not perceive him; on the left hand when he is working, I do not behold him; he turns to the right hand, but I do not see him. But he knows the way that I take; when he has tried me, I shall come out as gold.”

- In the midst of Job's affliction he sought God, "forward...backward...towards the left...and towards the right" but couldn't find Him (vs. 8-9).
- "I can assure you that any man who has that longing for God in his heart is going to find Him. God will meet him."-McGee, J Vernon
- Even though Job couldn't see God or where to find Him, God is present in Job's life and knows the direction in which Job was headed.

# Job Gained Confidence

- We are witnessing a change in the way in which Job is understanding His suffering.
- Earlier in the Book of Job, Job was distraught and demanded an answer from God to why he was suffering; now Job has yielded to the will of God knowing that he **“shall come out as gold”** when the trial is complete.
- “Here Job's assurance that God is concerned with his wellbeing rises to its highest point.”-Hartley, John
- Job had a new foundation in his suffering: **God is for Job not against him.**

- This passage could possibly be the inspiration for Peter.
- “In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than **gold** that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”-**1 Peter 1:6-9**

## Truth In Suffering

- Here in this passage we get a lesson in how to go through suffering.
- By Faith we understand:
  - God **knows** what we are going through because **“He knows the way that I take”**.
  - God has a **purpose** not to punish us but to “try” or test us.

- The trial will **end** one day as Job testified “**I shall come out**”.
- God will bring **good** from the trial for we “**shall come out as gold**”.
- God sees us as **precious** in the midst of the trial for only precious metal like “**gold**” is put in the fire.
- Now [Job] accepts the testing, because he knows: I shall come forth as gold. This image, drawn from metallurgy, does not necessarily imply purification. It could mean simply that the test proves that Job had been pure gold all along.” –Andersen, Francis

## **Job 23:11-12**

“My foot has held fast to his steps; I have kept his way and have not turned aside. I have not departed from the commandment of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my portion of food.”

## Job's Confidence

- Job had confidence before God because he had **“not turned aside”** from walking in the way of God.
- Job had confidence before God because he had kept the **“commandments”** given by God.
- Job had confidence before God because he **“treasured”** or loved the words of God more than food.

- Jesus said “For where your **treasure** is, there your heart will be also.”-**Matthew 6:21**
- Job’s heart treasured God’s word because he knew they contained God’s heart to man.
- Jesus made it clear that our heart’s allegiance can only be in one place and Job placed his in the confidence and security of God’s word.

- “Then note, that what God had spoken to him he treasured up. He says in the Hebrew that he had hid God’s word more than ever he had hidden his necessary food. They had to hide grain away in those days to guard it from wandering Arabs. Job had been more careful to store up God’s word than to store up his wheat and his barley; more anxious to preserve the memory of what God had spoken than to garner his harvests. Do you treasure up what God has spoken?”-Spurgeon, Charles

# God Is Unique

- God is different from any person in creation since He does not change.
- God is not fickle but is an unchangeable foundation which man can rely upon day in and day out for all eternity.
- Nobody can turn God back from His desire to accomplish His purpose for our lives for **“He will complete what he appoints for me, and many such things are in his mind”**.

- Job seemed to come closer and closer to the place God wanted him to be in his crisis.
- Job began to realize that he trusted God with his life before the trial maybe because God doesn't change He can be trusted in the midst of his trial.
- The circumstances of life go up and down and change continually but God is the One consistent and if God loved and cared for him before the crisis event, again because God does not change, He must love and care for me in the midst of the crisis as well.

# God Is Awesome

- Job was experiencing what it seems happens with in the lives of all true believers.
- The tension between the Holiness of God and the “**dread**” of our sinful nature before Him.
- Paul stated the tension experienced by believers: “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.”-**Romans 7: 24-25**

- “Job’s strongest assertions of faith seem always to be coupled with equally strong assertions of fear and pain. In this chapter his confidence in his own righteousness is more unassailable than ever, yet at the same time ‘thick darkness covers’ his face and he is filled with dread. Somehow Job’s faith is elastic enough to embrace simultaneously both terror and confidence.”-Mason, Mike

## **Job 24:1-8**

“Why are not times of judgment kept by the Almighty, and why do those who know him never see his days? Some move landmarks; they seize flocks and pasture them. They drive away the donkey of the fatherless; they take the widow’s ox for a pledge.

They thrust the poor off the road; the poor of the earth all hide themselves. Behold, like wild donkeys in the desert the poor go out to their toil, seeking game; the wasteland yields food for their children. They gather their fodder in the field, and they glean the vineyard of the wicked man. They lie all night naked, without clothing, and have no covering in the cold. They are wet with the rain of the mountains and cling to the rock for lack of shelter.”

# Why Must The Godly Wait

- The NIV translates verse 1 as: “Why does the Almighty not set times for judgment? Why must those who know him look in vain for such days?”-Job 24:1
- Job seems to be trying to understand the purpose God would have in delaying His **judgment** by letting things in this world lean towards the prosperity of the wicked.
- Apparently the lesson from the Flood had been forgotten by Job at this point in history.
- “The lesson taught by the flood was this is a moral universe, that sin will not for ever go unpunished; and Jesus himself used the flood to point to this moral (Matthew 24:37-39). But these men chose to neglect it.”-Green, Gene

## **The Wicked Continue In Wicked Works**

- While God waits in judgment the wicked person keeps on keeping on with doing works that are contrary to God's word.
- They remove **landmarks** which is strictly forbidden in the Book of Deuteronomy and comes with a curse for those who do it and those who encourage it.
- “You shall not move your neighbor’s **landmark**, which the men of old have set, in the inheritance that you will hold in the land that the LORD your God is giving you to possess.”-**Deuteronomy. 19:17**

- “Cursed be anyone who moves his neighbor’s **landmark**.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.”- **Deuteronomy 27:17**
- They abuse the **orphan** and and take advantage of the **widow** two things Scripture is explicit about not doing.
- “Cursed be anyone who perverts the justice due to the sojourner, the **fatherless**, and the **widow**.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.”-**Deuteronomy 27:18**

## **God Desires All To Come To Him**

- Job and his friends seem to have been at a disadvantage in that they haven't seen the full heart of God displayed in His Son Jesus as we do today.
- We know that God's heart is that all would come to repentance and that no one should perish (**2 Peter 3:9**)

- “Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord GOD, I have no **pleasure** in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live...”.-**Ezekiel 33:11**
- God loves the world and all the people from Adam to the last person who will ever be born equally. He shines His light upon the righteous and unrighteous alike.
- John says, “He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the **whole** world.”-**1 John 2:2**

- The word “propitiation” that John uses in chapter 2:2, was a pagan word used to describe an animal or human sacrifice to appease the god or gods in order to advert their wrath so that their crops would be productive.
- The Biblical idea of “propitiation” is God Himself presented Himself in Jesus Christ in order to turn God’s wrath away from our sin.
- “a sacrifice that bears God’s wrath and turns it into favor.”-ESV Study Bible

- “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”-**2 Corinthians 5:21**
- “Not only does the truth of propitiation lead us to the heart of the New Testament gospel, it also leads us to a vantage point from which we can see the heart of many other things as well.”-Packer, J.I.
- Before Jesus, in the Old Testament the offering was made to cover sin, but after Jesus’ death and resurrection our sins now have been not only covered but made void.

- “So wonderful is his love towards mankind, that he would have them all to be saved, and is of his own self prepared to bestow salvation on the lost.”- Calvin, John
- A Day is coming when God will judge all the wicked works done by man but until that Day anyone who would confess with their mouth and believe in the their heart that Jesus is Lord will be saved.

## **Job 24:9-12**

“There are those who snatch the fatherless child from the breast, and they take a pledge against the poor. They go about naked, without clothing; hungry, they carry the sheaves; among the olive rows of the wicked they make oil; they tread the winepresses, but suffer thirst. From out of the city the dying groan, and the soul of the wounded cries for help; yet God charges no one with wrong.”

## **More Wickedness**

- Job was looking at all the wickedness going on around him: stealing children from their mothers, taking pledges against the poor, allowing the poor to go without clothes, making themselves rich off the backs of the poor.
- People were wounded and crying out for help in the cities but the wicked turned a deaf ear to it.

# **God Charges No One As Guilty**

- If a person looks on the surface of things it does appear that God is doing nothing and the wicked are getting away with their wrongs.
- When a righteous person is going through a trial there is a tendency for that person to look at the wicked and say “what about him Lord”.
- Paul pointed out: “Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.”-**Galatians 6:7**

- “The eyes of the LORD are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good.”-**Proverbs 15:3**
- “The LORD preserves all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy.”-**Psalm 145:20**
- The Lord is not mocked by the wicked He sees their works and He will destroy everything they have worked so hard to build up against Him.
- “The LORD has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble.”-**Proverbs 16:4**

## **Job 24:13-17**

“There are those who rebel against the light, who are not acquainted with its ways, and do not stay in its paths. The murderer rises before it is light, that he may kill the poor and needy, and in the night he is like a thief. The eye of the adulterer also waits for the twilight, saying, ‘No eye will see me’; and he veils his face. In the dark they dig through houses; by day they shut themselves up; they do not know the light. For deep darkness is morning to all of them; for they are friends with the terrors of deep darkness.”

# Rebel Against The Light

- The Light that Job appears to be referencing is the Light that is God Himself.
- “And night will be no more. They will need no **light** of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their **light**, and they will reign forever and ever.”-**Revelation 22:5**
- The wicked **rebel** against the Light, do not know the **ways** of the Light, and are not committed to the **path** of the Light.

- Jesus said: “And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people **loved the darkness** rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.”-**John 3:19-20**
- Job says that **murder, theft, and adultery** happen under the cover of darkness acting as if no one will see but God sees and will expose every deed committed in darkness.

- Since God is light and in Him is no darkness at all it is impossible to have a relationship with Him and still be rebelling against the Light by walking in the darkness.
- “Light is the purest, the most subtle, the most useful, and the most diffusive of all God’s creatures; it is, therefore, a very proper emblem of the purity, perfection, and goodness of the Divine nature.”-Clarke, Adam

## **Job 24:18-21**

“You say, ‘Swift are they on the face of the waters; their portion is cursed in the land; no treader turns toward their vineyards. Drought and heat snatch away the snow waters; so does Sheol those who have sinned. The womb forgets them; the worm finds them sweet; they are no longer remembered, so wickedness is broken like a tree.’ They wrong the barren, childless woman, and do no good to the widow.”

# The Wicked Are Punished

- Job seemed to know that the wicked are punished but for him it was not coming quickly enough.
- There are no assurances in life nor security in the life to come for those who walk their own path.
- Job understood that God will punish the wicked if not in this life then in death.
- I think many believers are like Job and have great difficulty understanding the ways of God and how He operates generally in the world and how He works specifically in individuals particularly.
- Sometimes we have to simply find refreshment for our souls by trusting in the Lord and not leaning on our own understanding of how we think things should be.

## **Job 24:22-25**

“ Yet God prolongs the life of the mighty by his power; they rise up when they despair of life. He gives them security, and they are supported, and his eyes are upon their ways. They are exalted a little while, and then are gone; they are brought low and gathered up like all others; they are cut off like the heads of grain. If it is not so, who will prove me a liar and show that there is nothing in what I say?”

# The Security Of The Wicked

- Job was aggravated by God giving the wicked what **appeared** to him to be security and support all the while having **His eyes upon their ways**.
- Their lives are prolonged by God's mighty power.
- It is a mystery why God prolongs the life of one individual who wants nothing to do with Him and another who follows God but that person's life is cut short.
- Everyone dies in the end but Job wants to know why the wicked person's life is prolonged only to do more wicked deeds.

## Futility Will Be The Reward

- The wicked may have security and a prolonged life, relying upon those two fleeting things, but in the end, “they are brought low and gathered up like all others; they are **cut off like the heads of grain**”.
- “In the East, they generally reap their harvest by just taking off the tops of the ears of corn, and leaving the straw. Thus will the wicked be cut off.”-Spurgeon, Charles

## Job's Challenge

- Job asked his friends to prove him a liar in what he had just stated about the prosperity of the wicked, their abuse and misuse of the weak and downtrodden, the Lord giving them security and a long life to perform more wicked deeds only to die and be brought low in the end.
- It is hard truth to swallow the mystery of wickedness at work while God sees it and allows it.
- God has purpose in the wicked deeds of mankind even if it is veiled to our understanding of the way we think it should be.

- “Job challenges all men to contradict what he affirms, — that the righteous may be greater sufferers, and the wicked may for awhile prosper, but that God will, in the end, overthrow the ungodly, and establish the righteous.”-Spurgeon, Charles