



JOB

Job and His Family

1 There was once a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job. That man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil. ²There were born to him seven sons and three daughters. ³He had seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred donkeys, and very many servants; so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the east. ⁴His sons used to go and hold feasts in one another's houses in turn; and they would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. ⁵And when the feast days had run their course, Job would send and sanctify them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all; for Job said, "It may be that my children have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts." This is what Job always did.

Attack on Job's Character

⁶One day the heavenly beings^a came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan^b also came among them. ⁷The LORD said to Satan,^b "Where have you come from?" Satan^b answered the LORD, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it." ⁸The LORD said to Satan,^b "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." ⁹Then Satan^b answered the LORD, "Does Job fear God for nothing? ¹⁰Have you not put a fence around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. ¹¹But stretch out your hand now, and touch all that he

Read Job 1

The author of the book takes great pains to portray Job as an exceptionally righteous man in order to show that Job is an innocent victim of unfortunate circumstances beyond his control. He has done nothing to bring on the suffering that he will soon have to face.

Reflect: We often blame those who are suffering, presuming that they did something to bring it on. The book of Job shows that suffering is not necessarily the consequence of personal mistakes.

Pray: Pray that you will be understanding and compassionate toward those who suffer, rather than insensitive to them, even blaming them for their troubles.

Act: When you see someone in difficulty, try to show concern and offer that person a helping hand rather than disdain and an accusing look.

^a Heb sons of God

^b Or the Accuser; Heb *ha-satan*

Read Job 2

Stripped of his possessions and his reputation, having lost his family, and suffering a terrible bodily affliction, Job demonstrates that he is indeed a righteous man. Despite his misfortune, he turns to God with faith and devotion.

Reflect: Our first response to suffering is often anger and resentment. If we consider ourselves righteous, we might even accuse God of being unfair toward us. But Job's response is filled with faith: "We accept good things from God; should we not accept evil?"

Pray: Ask God for the strength of character and devotion you need to accept graciously the sufferings of life, especially those over which you might have no control.

Act: Look honestly at the way you deal with suffering. Do you get angry with God? Are you quick to blame someone else?

has, and he will curse you to your face." ¹² The LORD said to Satan,^a "Very well, all that he has is in your power; only do not stretch out your hand against him!" So Satan^a went out from the presence of the LORD.

Job Loses Property and Children

¹³ One day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in the eldest brother's house, ¹⁴ a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys were feeding beside them, ¹⁵ and the Sabeans fell on them and carried them off, and killed the servants with the edge of the sword; I alone have escaped to tell you." ¹⁶ While he was still speaking, another came and said, "The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants, and consumed them; I alone have escaped to tell you." ¹⁷ While he was still speaking, another came and said, "The Chaldeans formed three columns, made a raid on the camels and carried them off, and killed the servants with the edge of the sword; I alone have escaped to tell you." ¹⁸ While he was still speaking, another came and said, "Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house, ¹⁹ and suddenly a great wind came across the desert, struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people, and they are dead; I alone have escaped to tell you."

²⁰ Then Job arose, tore his robe, shaved his head, and fell on the ground and worshiped. ²¹ He said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there; the LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD."

²² In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrongdoing.

Attack on Job's Health

2 One day the heavenly beings^b came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan^a also came among them to present himself before the LORD. ² The LORD said to Satan,^a "Where have you come from?" Satan^c answered the LORD, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it." ³ The LORD said to Satan,^a "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." ⁴ Then Satan^a answered the LORD, "Skin for skin! All that people have they will give to save their lives."^d ⁵ But stretch out your hand now and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse you to your face." ⁶ The LORD said to Satan,^a

^a Or *the Accuser*; Heb *ha-satan*

^b Heb *sons of God*

^c Or *The Accuser*; Heb *ha-satan*

^d Or *All that the man has he will give for his life*

“Very well, he is in your power; only spare his life.”

7 So Satan^a went out from the presence of the LORD, and inflicted loathsome sores on Job from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. ⁸ Job^b took a potsherd with which to scrape himself, and sat among the ashes.

9 Then his wife said to him, “Do you still persist in your integrity? Curse^c God, and die.” ¹⁰ But he said to her, “You speak as any foolish woman would speak. Shall we receive the good at the hand of God, and not receive the bad?” In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

Read Job 3

Job's patience with his suffering soon deteriorates and he curses the day of his birth. Better that he had never been born, he says, than to have to endure what he is experiencing. This cursing is as close as Job gets to blaspheming God.

Reflect: Job's cry is not unlike the laments found in the Psalms. They show that ancient Israel was not slow to complain to God about the hardships of life. If we utter such a complaint, it does not mean that we lack faith. On the contrary, it shows that we believe that God is in charge of all aspects of our life.

Pray: Bring your troubles to God in prayer. Lament if need be, but trust that God is aware of your suffering and cares for you.

Act: Do not allow yourself to become trapped in complaint. Do what you can to move beyond it.

Job's Three Friends

11 Now when Job's three friends heard of all these troubles that had come upon him, each of them set out from his home—Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. They met together to go and console and comfort him. ¹² When they saw him from a distance, they did not recognize him, and they raised their voices and wept aloud; they tore their robes and threw dust in the air upon their heads. ¹³ They sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great.

Job Curses the Day He Was Born

3 After this Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth. ² Job said:

³ “Let the day perish in which I was born,
and the night that said,
'A man-child is conceived.'”

⁴ Let that day be darkness!
May God above not seek it,
or light shine on it.

⁵ Let gloom and deep darkness claim it.
Let clouds settle upon it;
let the blackness of the day terrify it.

⁶ That night—let thick darkness seize it!
let it not rejoice among the days of the year;
let it not come into the number of the
months.

⁷ Yes, let that night be barren;
let no joyful cry be heard^d in it.

⁸ Let those curse it who curse the Sea,^e
those who are skilled to rouse up Leviathan.

⁹ 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—

¹⁰ because it did not shut the doors of my mother's
womb,
and hide trouble from my eyes.

¹¹ “Why did I not die at birth,
come forth from the womb and expire?”

¹² Why were there knees to receive me,
or breasts for me to suck?

¹³ Now I would be lying down and quiet;
I would be asleep; then I would be at rest

¹⁴ with kings and counselors of the earth
who rebuild ruins for themselves,

^a Or the Accuser; Heb *ha-satan*

^b Heb *He*

^c Heb *Bless*

^d Heb *come*

^e Cn: Heb *day*

Read Job 4

Job's visitors come to support and console him. In an attempt to encourage Job in his suffering, Eliphaz, the first visitor to speak, reminds Job of the advice he himself previously gave to others who suffered, thinking that this might give Job some insight into his own plight.

Reflect: Frequently we avoid those who are suffering, because we feel helpless in the face of misfortune and we are not sure what to say. Often, our presence itself offers them a bit of strength.

Pray: Include in your prayers and solace those who are suffering. Commit them to the loving care of God.

Act: Allow your love for your friends to reach out to them when they are in any kind of distress. This can be done by means of a simple phone call or a card.

- 15 or with princes who have gold,
who fill their houses with silver.
- 16 Or why was I not buried like a stillborn child,
like an infant that never sees the light?
- 17 There the wicked cease from troubling,
and there the weary are at rest.
- 18 There the prisoners are at ease together;
they do not hear the voice of the taskmaster.
- 19 The small and the great are there,
and the slaves are free from their masters.
- 20 "Why is light given to one in misery,
and life to the bitter in soul,
21 who long for death, but it does not come,
and dig for it more than for hidden treasures;
22 who rejoice exceedingly,
and are glad when they find the grave?
- 23 Why is light given to one who cannot see the way,
whom God has fenced in?
- 24 For my sighing comes like^a my bread,
and my groanings are poured out like water.
- 25 Truly the thing that I fear comes upon me,
and what I dread befalls me.
- 26 I am not at ease, nor am I quiet;
I have no rest; but trouble comes."

Eliphaz Speaks: Job Has Sinned

- 4** Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered:
2 "If one ventures a word with you, will you be
offended?
But who can keep from speaking?
- 3 See, you have instructed many;
you have strengthened the weak hands.
- 4 Your words have supported those who were
stumbling,
and you have made firm the feeble knees.
- 5 But now it has come to you, and you are impatient;
it touches you, and you are dismayed.
- 6 Is not your fear of God your confidence,
and the integrity of your ways your hope?
- 7 "Think now, who that was innocent ever perished?
Or where were the upright cut off?
- 8 As I have seen, those who plow iniquity
and sow trouble reap the same.
- 9 By the breath of God they perish,
and by the blast of his anger they are
consumed.
- 10 The roar of the lion, the voice of the fierce lion,
and the teeth of the young lions are broken.
- 11 The strong lion perishes for lack of prey,
and the whelps of the lioness are scattered.

^a Heb *before*

Read Job 5

Eliphaz tries to help Job to understand his suffering. He encourages him to turn to God with trust. He believes that good can come from suffering. While suffering might be punishment for misdeeds, it can also act as a kind of discipline. In other words, "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger."

Reflect: When we are unable to remove the suffering itself, we must look for ways to make the best of it. The virtues of patience and long-suffering can be developed only in times of hardship.

Pray: Join your suffering to the suffering of Jesus. Pray that your own pain will mellow you and make you more sensitive to the pain of others.

Act: Allow your own suffering to teach you how to walk gently through life.

- 12 "Now a word came stealing to me,
my ear received the whisper of it.
13 Amid thoughts from visions of the night,
when deep sleep falls on mortals,
14 dread came upon me, and trembling,
which made all my bones shake.
15 A spirit glided past my face;
the hair of my flesh bristled.
16 It stood still,
but I could not discern its appearance.
A form was before my eyes;
there was silence, then I heard a voice:
17 'Can mortals be righteous before^a God?
Can human beings be pure before^a their Maker?
18 Even in his servants he puts no trust,
and his angels he charges with error;
19 how much more those who live in houses of clay,
whose foundation is in the dust,
who are crushed like a moth.
20 Between morning and evening they are destroyed;
they perish forever without any regarding it.
21 Their tent-cord is plucked up within them,
and they die devoid of wisdom.'

Job Is Corrected by God

- 5** "Call now; is there anyone who will answer you?
To which of the holy ones will you turn?
2 Surely vexation kills the fool,
and jealousy slays the simple.
3 I have seen fools taking root,
but suddenly I cursed their dwelling.
4 Their children are far from safety,
they are crushed in the gate,
and there is no one to deliver them.
5 The hungry eat their harvest,
and they take it even out of the thorns;^b
and the thirsty^c pant after their wealth.
6 For misery does not come from the earth,
nor does trouble sprout from the ground;
7 but human beings are born to trouble
just as sparks^d fly upward.
8 "As for me, I would seek God,
and to God I would commit my cause.
9 He does great things and unsearchable,
marvelous things without number.
10 He gives rain on the earth
and sends waters on the fields;
11 he sets on high those who are lowly,
and those who mourn are lifted to safety.

^a Or more than

^b Meaning of Heb uncertain

^c Aquila Symmachus Syr Vg: Heb *snare*

^d Or *birds*; Heb *sons of Resheph*

Read Job 6

Assuring Job of God's justice, as Eliphaz has done, gives Job no comfort. Instead, he claims that he is guilty of nothing that might result in the kind of suffering he is enduring. Not only is Eliphaz wrong in his assessment of the situation, but his words actually add to Job's sorrow.

Reflect: It sometimes happens that our suffering is misunderstood by the very people who are trying to console us. Under such circumstances, striking back at them will probably accomplish nothing good.

Pray: Ask God for patience when others either dismiss your suffering as the consequence of your own mistakes or try to explain it away rather than offer you support and understanding.

Act: Learn from others' misunderstanding of you just how easy it is for you to misunderstand someone else's suffering.

- 12 He frustrates the devices of the crafty,
so that their hands achieve no success.
- 13 He takes the wise in their own craftiness;
and the schemes of the wily are brought to a
quick end.
- 14 They meet with darkness in the daytime,
and grope at noonday as in the night.
- 15 But he saves the needy from the sword of their
mouth,
from the hand of the mighty.
- 16 So the poor have hope,
and injustice shuts its mouth.
- 17 "How happy is the one whom God reproves;
therefore do not despise the discipline of the
Almighty.^a
- 18 For he wounds, but he binds up;
he strikes, but his hands heal.
- 19 He will deliver you from six troubles;
in seven no harm shall touch you.
- 20 In famine he will redeem you from death,
and in war from the power of the sword.
- 21 You shall be hidden from the scourge of the tongue,
and shall not fear destruction when it comes.
- 22 At destruction and famine you shall laugh,
and shall not fear the wild animals of the earth.
- 23 For you shall be in league with the stones of the field,
and the wild animals shall be at peace with you.
- 24 You shall know that your tent is safe,
you shall inspect your fold and miss nothing.
- 25 You shall know that your descendants will be
many,
and your offspring like the grass of the earth.
- 26 You shall come to your grave in ripe old age,
as a shock of grain comes up to the threshing
floor in its season.
- 27 See, we have searched this out; it is true.
Hear, and know it for yourself."

Job Replies: My Complaint Is Just

- 6** Then Job answered:
2 "O that my vexation were weighed,
and all my calamity laid in the balances!
- 3 For then it would be heavier than the sand of the
sea;
therefore my words have been rash.
- 4 For the arrows of the Almighty^a are in me;
my spirit drinks their poison;
the terrors of God are arrayed against me.
- 5 Does the wild ass bray over its grass,
or the ox low over its fodder?

^a Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

- 6 Can that which is tasteless be eaten
without salt,
or is there any flavor in the juice
of mallows?^a
- 7 My appetite refuses to touch them;
they are like food that is
loathsome to me.^a
- 8 “O that I might have my request,
and that God would grant my desire;
9 that it would please God to crush me,
that he would let loose his hand
and cut me off!
- 10 This would be my consolation;
I would even exult^a in unrelenting
pain;
for I have not denied the words of
the Holy One.
- 11 What is my strength, that I should wait?
And what is my end, that I should
be patient?
- 12 Is my strength the strength of stones,
or is my flesh bronze?
- 13 In truth I have no help in me,
and any resource is driven from me.
- 14 “Those who withhold^b kindness
from a friend
forsake the fear of the Almighty.^c
- 15 My companions are treacherous like a
torrent-bed,
like freshets that pass away,
16 that run dark with ice,
turbid with melting snow.
- 17 In time of heat they disappear;
when it is hot, they vanish from
their place.
- 18 The caravans turn aside from their
course;
they go up into the waste, and perish.
- 19 The caravans of Tema look,
the travelers of Sheba hope.
- 20 They are disappointed because they
were confident;
they come there and are confounded.
- 21 Such you have now become to me;^d
you see my calamity, and are afraid.
- 22 Have I said, ‘Make me a gift’?
Or, ‘From your wealth offer a
bribe for me’?
- 23 Or, ‘Save me from an opponent’s hand’?
Or, ‘Ransom me from the hand of
oppressors’?
- 24 “Teach me, and I will be silent;
make me understand how I have
gone wrong.
- 25 How forceful are honest words!
But your reproof, what does it
reprove?
- 26 Do you think that you can reprove
words,
as if the speech of the desperate
were wind?
- 27 You would even cast lots over the
orphan,
and bargain over your friend.
- 28 “But now, be pleased to look at me;
for I will not lie to your face.
- 29 Turn, I pray, let no wrong be done.
Turn now, my vindication is at stake.
- 30 Is there any wrong on my tongue?
Cannot my taste discern calamity?

Job: My Suffering Is without End

- 7** “Do not human beings have a hard service on
earth,
and are not their days like the days of a laborer?
- 2 Like a slave who longs for the shadow,
and like laborers who look for their wages,
3 so I am allotted months of emptiness,
and nights of misery are apportioned to me.
- 4 When I lie down I say, ‘When shall I rise?’
But the night is long,
and I am full of tossing until dawn.
- 5 My flesh is clothed with worms and dirt;
my skin hardens, then breaks out again.

^a Meaning of Heb uncertain

^b Syr Vg Compare Tg: Meaning of Heb uncertain

^c Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

^d Cn Compare Gk Syr: Meaning of Heb uncertain

Read Job 7

Job offers a heartrending description of life filled with hardships. He considers life drudgery. He compares it with vigorous and dangerous military service. He feels like a slave who cannot escape life's misery. What a pity that life is so short and at the same time so burdensome. There does not seem to be enough time for a change to occur.

Reflect: Everyone faces hardships. It may be that we spend too much time trying to run away from them and not enough time trying to discover what good might be derived from them.

Pray: In times of trouble, place yourself in the hands of God and remember that, regardless of how hard life may be, God still loves you.

Act: Since life is really short, don't waste the time you have with constant complaining. Move beyond it.

- 6 My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle,
and come to their end without hope.^a
- 7 "Remember that my life is a breath;
my eye will never again see good.
- 8 The eye that beholds me will see me no more;
while your eyes are upon me, I shall be gone.
- 9 As the cloud fades and vanishes,
so those who go down to Sheol do not come up;
- 10 they return no more to their houses,
nor do their places know them any more.
- 11 "Therefore I will not restrain my mouth;
I will speak in the anguish of my spirit;
I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.
- 12 Am I the Sea, or the Dragon,
that you set a guard over me?
- 13 When I say, 'My bed will comfort me,
my couch will ease my complaint,'
- 14 then you scare me with dreams
and terrify me with visions,
15 so that I would choose strangling
and death rather than this body.
- 16 I loathe my life; I would not live forever.
Let me alone, for my days are a breath.
- 17 What are human beings, that you make so much
of them,
that you set your mind on them,
18 visit them every morning,
test them every moment?
- 19 Will you not look away from me for a while,
let me alone until I swallow my spittle?
- 20 If I sin, what do I do to you, you watcher of
humanity?
Why have you made me your target?
Why have I become a burden to you?
- 21 Why do you not pardon my transgression
and take away my iniquity?
For now I shall lie in the earth;
you will seek me, but I shall not be."

Bildad Speaks: Job Should Repent

- 8** Then Bildad the Shuhite answered:
2 "How long will you say these things,
and the words of your mouth be a great wind?
3 Does God pervert justice?
Or does the Almighty^b pervert the right?
4 If your children sinned against him,
he delivered them into the power of their
transgression.
5 If you will seek God
and make supplication to the Almighty,^b

^a Or as the thread runs out

^b Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

Read Job 8

A second visitor appears. In his attempt to give Job advice, Bildad appeals to Job's religious tradition. He insists that good behavior will be blessed with happiness, while misfortune is punishment for wickedness. All Job has to do is remember past events and he will see that God is not unfair.

Reflect: Remembering how God has cared for us in the past can often provide encouragement in times of misfortune. Furthermore, reflecting on how biblical heroes and many of the saints continued to trust in God despite hardships can also encourage us.

Pray: Reflect on the steadfastness that you have seen in the lives of holy people whom you know, and plead with God to grant you the same disposition.

Act: Read stories about biblical heroes or the lives of the saints in order to see how they dealt with the hardships they had to face.

- 6 if you are pure and upright,
surely then he will rouse himself for you
and restore to you your rightful place.
- 7 Though your beginning was small,
your latter days will be very great.
- 8 “For inquire now of bygone generations,
and consider what their ancestors have found;
9 for we are but of yesterday, and we know nothing,
for our days on earth are but a shadow.
10 Will they not teach you and tell you
and utter words out of their understanding?
- 11 “Can papyrus grow where there is no marsh?
Can reeds flourish where there is no water?
12 While yet in flower and not cut down,
they wither before any other plant.
13 Such are the paths of all who forget God;
the hope of the godless shall perish.
14 Their confidence is gossamer,
a spider's house their trust.
15 If one leans against its house, it will not stand;
if one lays hold of it, it will not endure.
16 The wicked thrive^a before the sun,
and their shoots spread over the garden.
17 Their roots twine around the stoneheap;
they live among the rocks.^b
18 If they are destroyed from their place,
then it will deny them, saying, ‘I have never
seen you.’
19 See, these are their happy ways,^c
and out of the earth still others will spring.
- 20 “See, God will not reject a blameless person,
nor take the hand of evildoers.
21 He will yet fill your mouth with laughter,
and your lips with shouts of joy.
22 Those who hate you will be clothed with shame,
and the tent of the wicked will be no more.”

Job Replies: There Is No Mediator

- 9** Then Job answered:
2 “Indeed I know that this is so;
but how can a mortal be just before God?
3 If one wished to contend with him,
one could not answer him once in a
thousand.
4 He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength
—who has resisted him, and succeeded?—
5 he who removes mountains, and they do not
know it,
when he overturns them in his anger;

^a Heb *He thrives*

^b Gk Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain

^c Meaning of Heb uncertain

Read Job 9

Job responds to Bildad by reflecting on the power of the creator. He argues that the natural world, which was once a delight to him, has now been turned against him. He sees this as evidence of God's arbitrary mistreatment of him.

Reflect: Many people experience the natural world as indifferent to human concerns. Floods, drought, and other natural disasters may lead them to consider it brutal. However, the force of its power should remind us that we are simply a part of the natural world, not in control of it.

Pray: Rather than expecting God to reach down and snatch you from the fury of the natural world, pray that you will learn to respect nature and to stand in awe of God's wonderful creation.

Act: Take time out today to marvel at the glorious world of which you are a part.

- 6 who shakes the earth out of its place,
and its pillars tremble;
- 7 who commands the sun, and it does not rise;
who seals up the stars;
- 8 who alone stretched out the heavens
and trampled the waves of the Sea;^a
- 9 who made the Bear and Orion,
the Pleiades and the chambers of the south;
- 10 who does great things beyond understanding,
and marvelous things without number.
- 11 Look, he passes by me, and I do not see him;
he moves on, but I do not perceive him.
- 12 He snatches away; who can stop him?
Who will say to him, 'What are you doing?'
- 13 "God will not turn back his anger;
the helpers of Rahab bowed beneath him.
- 14 How then can I answer him,
choosing my words with him?
- 15 Though I am innocent, I cannot answer him;
I must appeal for mercy to my accuser.^b
- 16 If I summoned him and he answered me,
I do not believe that he would listen to my voice.
- 17 For he crushes me with a tempest,
and multiplies my wounds without cause;
- 18 he will not let me get my breath,
but fills me with bitterness.
- 19 If it is a contest of strength, he is the strong one!
If it is a matter of justice, who can summon him?^c
- 20 Though I am innocent, my own mouth would
condemn me;
though I am blameless, he would prove me
perverse.
- 21 I am blameless; I do not know myself;
I loathe my life.
- 22 It is all one; therefore I say,
he destroys both the blameless and the wicked.
- 23 When disaster brings sudden death,
he mocks at the calamity^d of the innocent.
- 24 The earth is given into the hand of the wicked;
he covers the eyes of its judges—
if it is not he, who then is it?
- 25 "My days are swifter than a runner;
they flee away, they see no good.
- 26 They go by like skiffs of reed,
like an eagle swooping on the prey.
- 27 If I say, 'I will forget my complaint;
I will put off my sad countenance and be of
good cheer,'
- 28 I become afraid of all my suffering,
for I know you will not hold me innocent.

^a Or trampled the back of the sea dragon

^b Or for my right

^c Compare Gk: Heb me

^d Meaning of Heb uncertain

Read Job 10

Job continues to lament the circumstances of his miserable life. He remembers the artistry with which he was fashioned in his mother's womb. He cannot understand why, after such delicacy and tenderness, God seems to have turned against him.

Reflect: The intricacy of the human body is a marvel to behold. Unfortunately, too many people have lost a sense of respect for life in all of its stages, from beginning to end.

Pray: Thank God for life itself and for both the daily physical miracles you experience and the divine providence that binds you to our creator.

Act: Spend some time today reflecting on life itself, on your heartbeat and on your breathing. Discover what you might do to ensure clean air and water for yourself and for the next generation.

- 29 I shall be condemned;
 why then do I labor in vain?
 30 If I wash myself with soap
 and cleanse my hands with lye,
 31 yet you will plunge me into filth,
 and my own clothes will abhor me.
 32 For he is not a mortal, as I am, that I might
 answer him,
 that we should come to trial together.
 33 There is no umpire^a between us,
 who might lay his hand on us both.
 34 If he would take his rod away from me,
 and not let dread of him terrify me,
 35 then I would speak without fear of him,
 for I know I am not what I am thought to be.^b

Job: I Loathe My Life

- 10** "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 favor 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?
 8 Your hands fashioned and made me;
 and now you turn and destroy me.^c
 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.
 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,

^a Another reading is *Would that there were an umpire*

^b Cn: Heb for I am not so in myself

^c Cn Compare Gk Syr: Heb made me together all around, and you destroy me

- 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 toward
me;
you bring fresh troops against me.^a
- 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?^b
Let me alone, that I may find a
little comfort^c
21 before I go, never to return,
to the land of gloom and deep darkness,
22 the land of gloom^d and chaos,
where light is like darkness.”

Read Job 11

A third visitor appears. His words are devoid of consolation or understanding. Instead, they are harsh and accusatory. According to Zophar, Job's refusal to admit any wrongdoing is actually proof of his guilt. For this reason alone, Job should confess his wrongdoing.

Reflect: We sometimes become very indignant and even sarcastic when people do not follow the advice that, in good faith, we offer them. Such behavior on our part can stem from injured pride rather than concern for the other.

Pray: Pray for wisdom to know when to offer advice to someone else and for humility in the event that your advice is not accepted.

Act: Before you give advice to another, listen carefully to what that person may have to say, lest your advice be inappropriate and, therefore, rejected.

Zophar Speaks: Job's Guilt Deserves Punishment

- 11** Then Zophar the Naamathite answered:
2 “Should a multitude of words go unanswered,
and should one full of talk be vindicated?
3 Should your babble put others to silence,
and when you mock, shall no one shame you?
4 For you say, ‘My conduct^e is pure,
and I am clean in God’s^f sight.’
5 But O that God would speak,
and open his lips to you,
6 and that he would tell you the secrets of wisdom!
For wisdom is many-sided.^g
Know then that God exacts of you less than your
guilt deserves.
- 7 “Can you find out the deep things of God?
Can you find out the limit of the Almighty?^h
8 It is higher than heavenⁱ—what can you do?
Deeper than Sheol—what can you know?
9 Its measure is longer than the earth,
and broader than the sea.
10 If he passes through, and imprisons,
and assembles for judgment, who can hinder
him?
11 For he knows those who are worthless;
when he sees iniquity, will he not consider it?
12 But a stupid person will get understanding,
when a wild ass is born human.^g
- 13 “If you direct your heart rightly,
you will stretch out your hands toward him.
14 If iniquity is in your hand, put it far away,
and do not let wickedness reside in your tents.
15 Surely then you will lift up your face without
blemish;
you will be secure, and will not fear.
16 You will forget your misery;
you will remember it as waters that have
passed away.

^a Cn Compare Gk: Heb *toward me; changes and a troop are with me*

^b Cn Compare Gk Syr: Heb *Are not my days few? Let him cease!*

^c Heb *that I may brighten up a little*

^d Heb *gloom as darkness, deep darkness*

^e Gk: Heb *teaching*

^f Heb *your*

^g Meaning of Heb uncertain

^h Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

ⁱ Heb *The heights of heaven*

Read Job 12

Once again Job defends himself against the accusations of one who does not know the circumstances of his life. Each of the men who has offered Job advice has cast himself in the role of the knowledgeable sage. However, according to Job, they have all actually lacked wisdom.

Reflect: Our religious tradition does indeed provide us with all the specific directives for living life faithfully and successfully. However, there is no teacher like life experience itself. If we hope to provide advice for another, we must respect what that person has learned from his or her life experience.

Pray: Ask God for the wisdom to appreciate the life experience of others, especially when that experience is very different from your own.

Act: Listen carefully when someone confides in you. Be slow to offer casual advice, especially when it has not been solicited.

- 17 And your life will be brighter than the noonday;
its darkness will be like the morning.
18 And you will have confidence, because there is hope;
you will be protected^a and take your rest in safety.
19 You will lie down, and no one will make you afraid;
many will entreat your favor.
20 But the eyes of the wicked will fail;
all way of escape will be lost to them,
and their hope is to breathe their last.”

Job Replies: I Am a Laughingstock

- 12** Then Job answered:
2 “No doubt you are the people,
and wisdom will die with you.
3 But I have understanding as well as you;
I am not inferior to you.
Who does not know such things as these?
4 I am a laughingstock to my friends;
I, who called upon God and he answered me,
a just and blameless man, I am a laughingstock.
5 Those at ease have contempt for misfortune,^b
but it is ready for those whose feet are unstable.
6 The tents of robbers are at peace,
and those who provoke God are secure,
who bring their god in their hands.^c
7 “But ask the animals, and they will teach you;
the birds of the air, and they will tell you;
8 ask the plants of the earth,^d and they will teach
you;
and the fish of the sea will declare to you.
9 Who among all these does not know
that the hand of the LORD has done this?
10 In his hand is the life of every living thing
and the breath of every human being.
11 Does not the ear test words
as the palate tastes food?
12 Is wisdom with the aged,
and understanding in length of days?
13 “With God^e are wisdom and strength;
he has counsel and understanding.
14 If he tears down, no one can rebuild;
if he shuts someone in, no one can open up.
15 If he withholds the waters, they dry up;
if he sends them out, they overwhelm the land.
16 With him are strength and wisdom;
the deceived and the deceiver are his.
17 He leads counselors away stripped,
and makes fools of judges.
18 He looses the sash of kings,
and binds a waistcloth on their loins.

^a Or you will look around

^b Meaning of Heb uncertain

^c Or whom God brought forth by his hand;
Meaning of Heb uncertain

^d Or speak to the earth

^e Heb him

- 19 He leads priests away stripped,
and overthrows the mighty.
- 20 He deprives of speech those who are
trusted,
and takes away the discernment
of the elders.
- 21 He pours contempt on princes,
and looses the belt of the strong.
- 22 He uncovers the deeps out of
darkness,
and brings deep darkness to light.
- 23 He makes nations great, then
destroys them;
he enlarges nations, then leads
them away.
- 24 He strips understanding from the
leaders^a of the earth,
and makes them wander in a
pathless waste.
- 25 They grope in the dark without light;
he makes them stagger like a
drunkard.

Read Job 13

Realizing the emptiness of the advice of his visitors, Job appeals directly to God. Still, Job is torn. He yearns to plead his cause of innocence before God. At the same time, he begs God to turn away from him so that he can have some relief from his suffering.

Reflect: There are times when we turn to God with mixed feelings. We might be angry that we are forced to endure misfortune, while at the same time we trust in God's loving providence.

Pray: Do not allow your anger or confusion to keep you from turning to God in prayer. Prayer at such times can be a humble admission of your fundamental need of God's care.

Act: Do what you can to develop the habit of placing your needs before God in prayer.

- 13** "Look, my eye has seen all this,
my ear has heard and understood it.
- 2 What you know, I also know;
I am not inferior to you.
- 3 But I would speak to the Almighty,^b
and I desire to argue my case with God.
- 4 As for you, you whitewash with lies;
all of you are worthless physicians.
- 5 If you would only keep silent,
that would be your wisdom!
- 6 Hear now my reasoning,
and listen to the pleadings of my lips.
- 7 Will you speak falsely for God,
and speak deceitfully for him?
- 8 Will you show partiality toward him,
will you plead the case for God?
- 9 Will it be well with you when he searches you
out?
Or can you deceive him, as one person
deceives another?
- 10 He will surely rebuke you
if in secret you show partiality.
- 11 Will not his majesty terrify you,
and the dread of him fall upon you?
- 12 Your maxims are proverbs of ashes,
your defenses are defenses of clay.
- 13 "Let me have silence, and I will speak,
and let come on me what may.
- 14 I will take my flesh in my teeth,
and put my life in my hand.^c
- 15 See, he will kill me; I have no hope;^d
but I will defend my ways to his face.
- 16 This will be my salvation,
that the godless shall not come before him.
- 17 Listen carefully to my words,
and let my declaration be in your ears.
- 18 I have indeed prepared my case;
I know that I shall be vindicated.

^a Heb adds *of the people*

^b Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

^c Gk: Heb *Why should I take . . . in my hand?*

^d Or *Though he kill me, yet I will trust in him*

- 19 Who is there that will contend with me?
For then I would be silent and die.

Job's Despondent Prayer

- 20 Only grant two things to me,
then I will not hide myself from
your face:
21 withdraw your hand far from me,
and do not let dread of you terrify
me.
22 Then call, and I will answer;
or let me speak, and you reply to me.
23 How many are my iniquities and my
sins?

Make me know my transgression
and my sin.

- 24 Why do you hide your face,
and count me as your enemy?
25 Will you frighten a windblown leaf
and pursue dry chaff?
26 For you write bitter things against me,
and make me reap^a the iniquities of
my youth.
27 You put my feet in the stocks,
and watch all my paths;
you set a bound to the soles of
my feet.
28 One wastes away like a rotten thing,
like a garment that is moth-eaten.

Read Job 14

Job has reached the point where he considers life utterly futile. Life is so short and most of its days are filled with misery. Even a tree, if it is cut down, has a chance to grow again. Not human beings. According to Job, death is the end of all possibility.

Reflect: When we are in the stranglehold of suffering, we may feel that life has no meaning and that there is no hope for a second chance. These are the times when our confidence in God is sorely tested.

Pray: When you are at the brink of despair, pray the prayer of Jesus: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Act: At times of great difficulty, turn to the natural world. It can remind you that life can indeed spring out of death.

- 14 "A mortal, born of woman, few of days and full of trouble,
2 comes up like a flower and withers,
flees like a shadow and does not last.
3 Do you fix your eyes on such a one?
Do you bring me into judgment with you?
4 Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?
No one can.
5 Since their days are determined,
and the number of their months is known to you,
and you have appointed the bounds that they
cannot pass,
6 look away from them, and desist,^b
that they may enjoy, like laborers, their days.
7 "For there is hope for a tree,
if it is cut down, that it will sprout again,
and that its shoots will not cease.
8 Though its root grows old in the earth,
and its stump dies in the ground,
9 yet at the scent of water it will bud
and put forth branches like a young plant.
10 But mortals die, and are laid low;
humans expire, and where are they?
11 As waters fail from a lake,
and a river wastes away and dries up,
12 so mortals lie down and do not rise again;
until the heavens are no more, they will not
awake
or be roused out of their sleep.
13 O that you would hide me in Sheol,
that you would conceal me until your wrath is
past,
that you would appoint me a set time, and
remember me!

^a Heb *inherit*

^b Cn: Heb *that they may desist*

- 14 If mortals die, will they live again?
All the days of my service I would
wait
until my release should come.
- 15 You would call, and I would answer you;
you would long for the work of
your hands.
- 16 For then you would not^a number my
steps,
you would not keep watch over
my sin;
- 17 my transgression would be sealed
up in a bag,
and you would cover over my iniquity.
- 18 “But the mountain falls and
crumbles away,
and the rock is removed from its
place;
19 the waters wear away the stones;
the torrents wash away the soil of
the earth;
so you destroy the hope of mortals.
- 20 You prevail forever against them,
and they pass away;
you change their countenance,
and send them away.
- 21 Their children come to honor, and
they do not know it;
they are brought low, and it goes
unnoticed.
- 22 They feel only the pain of their own
bodies,
and mourn only for themselves.”

Read Job 15

Initially Eliphaz tried to encourage Job. But because the suffering man rejected the counsel of his visitors, Eliphaz now taunts him. According to Eliphaz, Job's stubborn insistence on his innocence, which is challenged by his suffering, actually calls down further punishment from God.

Reflect: Some people blame victims for their suffering. They maintain that victims of some form of abuse probably invited such violation, or that people are poor because they refuse to work hard. The story of Job shows that people are not always responsible for their suffering, and we do them a serious injustice to think that they are.

Pray: Intercede for those who suffer, regardless of the kind of suffering they are enduring or the possibility of their own culpability.

Act: Do what you can to alleviate the suffering of others. Avoid trying to decide who is worthy of your concern and who is not.

Eliphaz Speaks: Job Undermines Religion

- 15** Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered:
² “Should the wise answer with windy knowledge,
and fill themselves with the east wind?
3 Should they argue in unprofitable talk,
or in words with which they can do no good?
4 But you are doing away with the fear of God,
and hindering meditation before God.
5 For your iniquity teaches your mouth,
and you choose the tongue of the crafty.
6 Your own mouth condemns you, and not I;
your own lips testify against you.
7 “Are you the firstborn of the human race?
Were you brought forth before the hills?
8 Have you listened in the council of God?
And do you limit wisdom to yourself?
9 What do you know that we do not know?
What do you understand that is not clear
to us?
10 The gray-haired and the aged are on our side,
those older than your father.
11 Are the consolations of God too small for you,
or the word that deals gently with you?
12 Why does your heart carry you away,
and why do your eyes flash,^b
13 so that you turn your spirit against God,
and let such words go out of your mouth?
14 What are mortals, that they can be clean?
Or those born of woman, that they can be
righteous?
15 God puts no trust even in his holy ones,
and the heavens are not clean in his sight;

^a Syr: Heb lacks *not*

^b Meaning of Heb uncertain

- 16 how much less one who is
abominable and corrupt,
one who drinks iniquity like water!
- 17 “I will show you; listen to me;
what I have seen I will declare—
18 what sages have told,
and their ancestors have not hidden,
19 to whom alone the land was given,
and no stranger passed among
them.
- 20 The wicked writhe in pain all their days,
through all the years that are laid
up for the ruthless.
- 21 Terrifying sounds are in their ears;
in prosperity the destroyer will
come upon them.
- 22 They despair of returning from
darkness,
and they are destined for the sword.
- 23 They wander abroad for bread,
saying, ‘Where is it?’
They know that a day of darkness
is ready at hand;
24 distress and anguish terrify them;
they prevail against them, like a
king prepared for battle.
- 25 Because they stretched out their
hands against God,
and bid defiance to the Almighty,^a
26 running stubbornly against him
with a thick-bossed shield;
- 27 because they have covered their
faces with their fat,
and gathered fat upon their loins,
28 they will live in desolate cities,
in houses that no one should
inhabit,
houses destined to become heaps
of ruins;
29 they will not be rich, and their
wealth will not endure,
nor will they strike root in the earth;^b
30 they will not escape from darkness;
the flame will dry up their shoots,
and their blossom^c will be swept
away^d by the wind.
- 31 Let them not trust in emptiness,
deceiving themselves;
for emptiness will be their
recompense.
- 32 It will be paid in full before their time,
and their branch will not be green.
- 33 They will shake off their unripe
grape, like the vine,
and cast off their blossoms, like
the olive tree.
- 34 For the company of the godless is
barren,
and fire consumes the tents of
bribery.
- 35 They conceive mischief and bring
forth evil
and their heart prepares deceit.”

Job Reaffirms His Innocence

- 16** Then Job answered:
2 “I have heard many such things;
miserable comforters are you all.
3 Have windy words no limit?
Or what provokes you that you keep on talking?
4 I also could talk as you do,
if you were in my place;
I could join words together against you,
and shake my head at you.
5 I could encourage you with my mouth,
and the solace of my lips would assuage your
pain.
6 “If I speak, my pain is not assuaged,
and if I forbear, how much of it leaves me?
7 Surely now God has worn me out;
he has^e made desolate all my company.

^a Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

^b Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain

^c Gk: Heb *mouth*

^d Cn: Heb *will depart*

^e Heb *you have*

Read Job 16

Once again Job protests his innocence and the inadequacy of the counsel given him. Formerly he gave that same advice to others. However, he insists that it is not relevant in his case. He continues to feel that God has unfairly singled him out for suffering.

Reflect: There are times when the teachings of the faith do not fit our experience well. What are we to do? Deny the authenticity of our experience? Reject the teachings of the faith? Is it possible somehow to reinterpret both of them?

Pray: Beg God for courage to be faithful to your convictions and for the wisdom to know when to remain firm in those convictions and when to be willing to change.

Act: Knowing how to live in a way that is faithful to the teaching of the faith requires that you know those teachings. Where might you turn in order to learn the faith better?

- 8 And he has^a shriveled me up,
which is a witness against me;
my leanness has risen up against me,
and it testifies to my face.
- 9 He has torn me in his wrath, and hated me;
he has gnashed his teeth at me;
my adversary sharpens his eyes against me.
- 10 They have gaped at me with their mouths;
they have struck me insolently on the cheek;
they mass themselves together against me.
- 11 God gives me up to the ungodly,
and casts me into the hands of the wicked.
- 12 I was at ease, and he broke me in two;
he seized me by the neck and dashed me to
pieces;
he set me up as his target;
his archers surround me.
- He slashes open my kidneys, and shows no mercy;
he pours out my gall on the ground.
- 14 He bursts upon me again and again;
he rushes at me like a warrior.
- 15 I have sewed sackcloth upon my skin,
and have laid my strength in the dust.
- 16 My face is red with weeping,
and deep darkness is on my eyelids,
17 though there is no violence in my hands,
and my prayer is pure.
- 18 “O earth, do not cover my blood;
let my outcry find no resting place.
- 19 Even now, in fact, my witness is in heaven,
and he that vouches for me is on high.
- 20 My friends scorn me;
my eye pours out tears to God,
21 that he would maintain the right of a mortal with God,
as^b one does for a neighbor.
- 22 For when a few years have come,
I shall go the way from which I shall not return.

Job Prays for Relief

- 17** My spirit is broken, my days are extinct,
the grave is ready for me.
- 2 Surely there are mockers around me,
and my eye dwells on their provocation.
- 3 “Lay down a pledge for me with yourself;
who is there that will give surety for me?”
- 4 Since you have closed their minds to
understanding,
therefore you will not let them triumph.
- 5 Those who denounce friends for reward—
the eyes of their children will fail.

^a Heb you have

^b Syr Vg Tg: Heb and

Read Job 17

Job turns to God and laments his situation. It is not enough that his afflictions have broken his spirit. Those who should be consoling him taunt him instead. He feels that there is nowhere to turn and no one to give him comfort, not even God.

Reflect: Job's turmoil is not unlike the turmoil of many people. Not only do they not know why they are suffering, but they are also criticized by those who blame them for their situation. Do you know people who suffer and are blamed for it? Are you one of them?

Pray: Ask for the grace to endure your suffering without despair, even when there appears to be no end in sight to the suffering.

Act: Do something concrete to bring a bit of happiness into the life of someone else who is suffering.

- 6 “He has made me a byword of the peoples,
and I am one before whom people spit.
7 My eye has grown dim from grief,
and all my members are like a shadow.
8 The upright are appalled at this,
and the innocent stir themselves up against the
godless.
9 Yet the righteous hold to their way,
and they that have clean hands grow stronger
and stronger.
10 But you, come back now, all of you,
and I shall not find a sensible person among
you.
11 My days are past, my plans are broken off,
the desires of my heart.
12 They make night into day;
‘The light,’ they say, ‘is near to the darkness.’^a
13 If I look for Sheol as my house,
if I spread my couch in darkness,
14 if I say to the Pit, ‘You are my father,’
and to the worm, ‘My mother,’ or ‘My sister,’
15 where then is my hope?
Who will see my hope?
16 Will it go down to the bars of Sheol?
Shall we descend together into the dust?”

Bildad Speaks: God Punishes the Wicked

- 18** Then Bildad the Shuhite answered:
2 “How long will you hunt for words?
Consider, and then we shall speak.
3 Why are we counted as cattle?
Why are we stupid in your sight?
4 You who tear yourself in your anger—
shall the earth be forsaken because of you,
or the rock be removed out of its place?
5 “Surely the light of the wicked is put out,
and the flame of their fire does not shine.
6 The light is dark in their tent,
and the lamp above them is put out.
7 Their strong steps are shortened,
and their own schemes throw them down.
8 For they are thrust into a net by their own
feet,
and they walk into a pitfall.
9 A trap seizes them by the heel;
a snare lays hold of them.
10 A rope is hid for them in the ground,
a trap for them in the path.
11 Terrors frighten them on every side,
and chase them at their heels.

^a Meaning of Heb uncertain

Read Job 18

The counsel of Job's visitors is soon replaced by condemnation. Irate that Job is so critical, Bildad attacks Job with contempt. He argues that Job's misery is the direct result of his own wickedness. He is getting what he deserves.

Reflect: It may be difficult to comprehend how people can be critical of those who suffer. But they can be. You may not be overtly critical, but are you perhaps insensitive? Do you sometimes think that the suffering of others is really none of your business? Do you ever turn your back on them?

Pray: Implore God to grant you a compassionate heart, a heart like the heart of Jesus, who wept over the upcoming destruction of the city of Jerusalem.

Act: Do what you can to look past the anger of others and to try to find the sincerity of their motives.

- 12 Their strength is consumed by hunger,^a
and calamity is ready for their stumbling.
- 13 By disease their skin is consumed,^b
the firstborn of Death consumes their limbs.
- 14 They are torn from the tent in which they trusted,
and are brought to the king of terrors.
- 15 In their tents nothing remains;
sulfur is scattered upon their habitations.
- 16 Their roots dry up beneath,
and their branches wither above.
- 17 Their memory perishes from the earth,
and they have no name in the street.
- 18 They are thrust from light into darkness,
and driven out of the world.
- 19 They have no offspring or descendant among
their people,
and no survivor where they used to live.
- 20 They of the west are appalled at their fate,
and horror seizes those of the east.
- 21 Surely such are the dwellings of the ungodly,
such is the place of those who do not know
God.”

Job Replies: I Know That My Redeemer Lives

- 19** Then Job answered:
2 “How long will you torment me,
and break me in pieces with words?
3 These ten times you have cast reproach upon me;
are you not ashamed to wrong me?
4 And even if it is true that I have erred,
my error remains with me.
5 If indeed you magnify yourselves against me,
and make my humiliation an argument
against me,
6 know then that God has put me in the wrong,
and closed his net around me.
7 Even when I cry out, ‘Violence!’ I am not
answered;
I call aloud, but there is no justice.
8 He has walled up my way so that I cannot pass,
and he has set darkness upon my paths.
9 He has stripped my glory from me,
and taken the crown from my head.
10 He breaks me down on every side, and I am
gone,
he has uprooted my hope like a tree.
11 He has kindled his wrath against me,
and counts me as his adversary.
12 His troops come on together;
they have thrown up siegeworks^c against me,
and encamp around my tent.

^a Or Disaster is hungry for them

^b Cn: Heb It consumes the limbs of his skin

^c Cn: Heb their way

Read Job 19

Job resumes his solitary defense of his innocence. He insists that his suffering is evidence not of his sinfulness but rather of the disruption of order in life. Furthermore, it is God—not Job—who is responsible for that disruption.

Reflect: Job is posing a question that many people struggle with today: If God is really in charge of everything in the world, how are we to understand the suffering of innocent people? Why does God allow it? Is it always a test? Is there another way of understanding it?

Pray: Pray that you will be able to continue to trust God even in the face of the suffering of innocent people, your own or someone else's.

Act: You may have friends with deep faith who suffer yet remain faithful to God. Ask them why they think God allows it, and how their suffering may have strengthened their faith.

- 13 “He has put my family far from me,
and my acquaintances are wholly estranged
from me.
- 14 My relatives and my close friends have failed me;
15 the guests in my house have forgotten me;
my serving girls count me as a stranger;
I have become an alien in their eyes.
- 16 I call to my servant, but he gives me no answer;
I must myself plead with him.
- 17 My breath is repulsive to my wife;
I am loathsome to my own family.
- 18 Even young children despise me;
when I rise, they talk against me.
- 19 All my intimate friends abhor me,
and those whom I loved have turned
against me.
- 20 My bones cling to my skin and to my flesh,
and I have escaped by the skin of my teeth.
- 21 Have pity on me, have pity on me, O you my
friends,
for the hand of God has touched me!
- 22 Why do you, like God, pursue me,
never satisfied with my flesh?
- 23 “O that my words were written down!
O that they were inscribed in a book!
24 O that with an iron pen and with lead
they were engraved on a rock forever!
- 25 For I know that my Redeemer^a lives,
and that at the last he^b will stand upon the
earth;^c
- 26 and after my skin has been thus destroyed,
then in^d my flesh I shall see God,^e
- 27 whom I shall see on my side,^f
and my eyes shall behold, and not another.
My heart faints within me!
- 28 If you say, ‘How we will persecute him!’
and, ‘The root of the matter is found in him’;
29 be afraid of the sword,
for wrath brings the punishment of the sword,
so that you may know there is a judgment.”

Zophar Speaks: Wickedness Receives Just Retribution

- 20** Then Zophar the Naamathite answered:
2 “Pay attention! My thoughts urge me to answer,
because of the agitation within me.
- 3 I hear censure that insults me,
and a spirit beyond my understanding
answers me.
- 4 Do you not know this from of old,
ever since mortals were placed on earth,

^a Or *Vindicator*

^b Or *that he the Last*

^c Heb *dust*

^d Or *without*

^e Meaning of Heb of this verse uncertain

^f Or *for myself*

Read Job 20

The advice offered by the visitors shows that they do not take Job's protestations of innocence seriously. Zophar reiterates the teaching about retribution: Goodness will be rewarded and wickedness punished. He does not seek to console Job with this teaching, but to accuse him of wrongdoing.

Reflect: When people are overburdened with troubles, it does not help to bombard them with accusations of guilt, whether those accusations are correct or not. Suffering people need help to stand up so that they can face their problems and move on.

Pray: Seek true wisdom in God, the kind of wisdom that knows how to help other people. Do not seek to reaffirm any sense of self-righteousness that you might be harboring.

Act: It is so easy to pass judgment on others, especially when their lives are lived in deplorable circumstances. You do not like to be judged; do not judge others.

- 5 that the exulting of the wicked is short,
and the joy of the godless is but for a moment?
6 Even though they mount up high as the heavens,
and their head reaches to the clouds,
7 they will perish forever like their own dung;
those who have seen them will say, 'Where are they?'
8 They will fly away like a dream, and not be found;
they will be chased away like a vision of the night.
9 The eye that saw them will see them no more,
nor will their place behold them any longer.
10 Their children will seek the favor of the poor,
and their hands will give back their wealth.
11 Their bodies, once full of youth,
will lie down in the dust with them.
12 "Though wickedness is sweet in their mouth,
though they hide it under their tongues,
13 though they are loath to let it go,
and hold it in their mouths,
14 yet their food is turned in their stomachs;
it is the venom of asps within them.
15 They swallow down riches and vomit them up again;
God casts them out of their bellies.
16 They will suck the poison of asps;
the tongue of a viper will kill them.
17 They will not look on the rivers,
the streams flowing with honey and curds.
18 They will give back the fruit of their toil,
and will not swallow it down;
from the profit of their trading
they will get no enjoyment.
19 For they have crushed and abandoned the poor,
they have seized a house that they did not build.
20 "They knew no quiet in their bellies;
in their greed they let nothing escape.
21 There was nothing left after they had eaten;
therefore their prosperity will not endure.
22 In full sufficiency they will be in distress;
all the force of misery will come upon them.
23 To fill their belly to the full
God^a will send his fierce anger into them,
and rain it upon them as their food.^b
24 They will flee from an iron weapon;
a bronze arrow will strike them through.
25 It is drawn forth and comes out of their body,
and the glittering point comes out of their gall;
terrors come upon them.
26 Utter darkness is laid up for their treasures;
a fire fanned by no one will devour them;
what is left in their tent will be consumed.

^a Heb *he*

^b Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain

- 27 The heavens will reveal their iniquity,
and the earth will rise up against
them.
- 28 The possessions of their house will
be carried away,

- dragged off in the day of God's^a
wrath.
- 29 This is the portion of the wicked
from God,
the heritage decreed for them by God."

Read Job 21

For a brief moment, Job sets aside his adamant defense of his own innocence and offers evidence of the absence of justice in the world. A righteous man, he is afflicted with terrible misery, but many godless people escape the retribution that is their due. All traces of fairness seem to have disappeared.

Reflect: We can all agree that life is not always fair; good people are not always happy, and wicked people sometimes seem to prosper. However, this should never tempt us to ease up on our efforts to live with integrity.

Pray: Pray that you not fall into the trap of resentment, but that you learn to accept the difficulties of life with equanimity.

Act: Do not resent those who seem to benefit from their misdeeds. Rather, continue to live your faith in God.

Job Replies: The Wicked Often Go Unpunished

- 21** Then Job answered:
2 "Listen carefully to my words,
and let this be your consolation.
- 3 Bear with me, and I will speak;
then after I have spoken, mock on.
- 4 As for me, is my complaint addressed to
mortals?
Why should I not be impatient?
- 5 Look at me, and be appalled,
and lay your hand upon your mouth.
- 6 When I think of it I am dismayed,
and shuddering seizes my flesh.
- 7 Why do the wicked live on,
reach old age, and grow mighty in power?
- 8 Their children are established in their presence,
and their offspring before their eyes.
- 9 Their houses are safe from fear,
and no rod of God is upon them.
- 10 Their bull breeds without fail;
their cow calves and never miscarries.
- 11 They send out their little ones like a flock,
and their children dance around.
- 12 They sing to the tambourine and the lyre,
and rejoice to the sound of the pipe.
- 13 They spend their days in prosperity,
and in peace they go down to Sheol.
- 14 They say to God, 'Leave us alone!
We do not desire to know your ways.
- 15 What is the Almighty,^b that we should serve him?
And what profit do we get if we pray to him?'
- 16 Is not their prosperity indeed their own
achievement?^c
The plans of the wicked are repugnant to me.
- 17 "How often is the lamp of the wicked put out?
How often does calamity come upon them?
How often does God^d distribute pains in his
anger?
- 18 How often are they like straw before the wind,
and like chaff that the storm carries away?
- 19 You say, 'God stores up their iniquity for their
children.'
Let it be paid back to them, so that they may
know it.

^a Heb *his*

^b Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

^c Heb *in their hand*

^d Heb *he*

- 20 Let their own eyes see their destruction,
and let them drink of the wrath of
the Almighty.^a
- 21 For what do they care for their
household after them,
when the number of their months
is cut off?
- 22 Will any teach God knowledge,
seeing that he judges those that
are on high?
- 23 One dies in full prosperity,
being wholly at ease and secure,
24 his loins full of milk
and the marrow of his bones moist.
- 25 Another dies in bitterness of soul,
never having tasted of good.
- 26 They lie down alike in the dust,
and the worms cover them.
- 27 “Oh, I know your thoughts,
and your schemes to wrong me.
- 28 For you say, ‘Where is the house of
the prince?
Where is the tent in which the
wicked lived?’
- 29 Have you not asked those who
travel the roads,
and do you not accept their
testimony,
30 that the wicked are spared in the
day of calamity,
and are rescued in the day of wrath?
- 31 Who declares their way to their face,
and who repays them for what
they have done?
- 32 When they are carried to the grave,
a watch is kept over their tomb.
- 33 The clods of the valley are sweet to
them;
everyone will follow after,
and those who went before are
innumerable.
- 34 How then will you comfort me with
empty nothings?
There is nothing left of your
answers but falsehood.”

Eliphaz Speaks: Job’s Wickedness Is Great

- 22** Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered:
2 “Can a mortal be of use to God?
Can even the wisest be of service to him?
3 Is it any pleasure to the Almighty^a if you are
righteous,
or is it gain to him if you make your ways
blameless?
4 Is it for your piety that he reproves you,
and enters into judgment with you?
5 Is not your wickedness great?
There is no end to your iniquities.
6 For you have exacted pledges from your family
for no reason,
and stripped the naked of their clothing.
7 You have given no water to the weary to drink,
and you have withheld bread from the
hungry.
8 The powerful possess the land,
and the favored live in it.
9 You have sent widows away empty-handed,
and the arms of the orphans you have
crushed.^b
10 Therefore snares are around you,
and sudden terror overwhelms you,
11 or darkness so that you cannot see;
a flood of water covers you.

^a Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

^b Gk Syr Tg Vg: Heb *were crushed*

Read Job 22

Eliphaz has not been moved at all by Job's protestations of innocence. He tries one last time to convince Job to admit his guilt and reform his life, assuring him that God will then take away his sufferings.

Reflect: The only time we should encourage people to reform their lives is when we have clear evidence of their wrongdoing. The story of Job teaches that suffering is not the clear evidence we need. Furthermore, no one is in any position to guarantee how God will act.

Pray: Seek God's guidance when giving advice to someone, for you can never really understand another person and you do not know how God might be working in that person's life.

Act: Examine your motives when you are about to pass judgment on the behavior of another. Are you acting out of concern for that person or from an attitude of self-righteousness?

- 12 "Is not God high in the heavens?
See the highest stars, how lofty they are!
- 13 Therefore you say, 'What does God know?
Can he judge through the deep darkness?
- 14 Thick clouds enwrap him, so that he does not see,
and he walks on the dome of heaven.'
- 15 Will you keep to the old way
that the wicked have trod?
- 16 They were snatched away before their time;
their foundation was washed away by a flood.
- 17 They said to God, 'Leave us alone,'
and 'What can the Almighty^a do to us?'^b
- 18 Yet he filled their houses with good things—
but the plans of the wicked are repugnant
to me.
- 19 The righteous see it and are glad;
the innocent laugh them to scorn,
- 20 saying, 'Surely our adversaries are cut off,
and what they left, the fire has consumed.'
- 21 "Agree with God,^c and be at peace;
in this way good will come to you.
- 22 Receive instruction from his mouth,
and lay up his words in your heart.
- 23 If you return to the Almighty,^a you will be
restored,
if you remove unrighteousness from your tents,
- 24 if you treat gold like dust,
and gold of Ophir like the stones of the
torrent-bed,
- 25 and if the Almighty^a is your gold
and your precious silver,
- 26 then you will delight yourself in the Almighty,^a
and lift up your face to God.
- 27 You will pray to him, and he will hear you,
and you will pay your vows.
- 28 You will decide on a matter, and it will be
established for you,
and light will shine on your ways.
- 29 When others are humiliated, you say it is pride;
for he saves the humble.
- 30 He will deliver even those who are guilty;
they will escape because of the cleanness of
your hands."^d

Job Replies: My Complaint Is Bitter

- 23** Then Job answered:
2 "Today also my complaint is bitter;^e
his^f hand is heavy despite my groaning.
- 3 Oh, that I knew where I might find him,
that I might come even to his dwelling!

^a Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

^b Gk Syr: Heb *them*

^c Heb *him*

^d Meaning of Heb uncertain

^e Syr Vg Tg: Heb *rebellious*

^f Gk Syr: Heb *my*

Read Job 23

Job clings to the hope that he will eventually be vindicated. He knows that he will receive justice only if he stands before the bench of divine justice. Therefore, he demands his day before the tribunal of God.

Reflect: There are times when, like Job, we expect God to explain or justify what appears to be unfair. Known as theodicy (God-righteousness), this demand for the vindication of God is both bold and trusting. It is bold of us to make such demands of God; it is trusting of us to believe that God is really just and will answer our pleas.

Pray: Beg God for perseverance in time of great distress of both body and spirit.

Act: Remind yourself again and again, especially in times of trial, that God wants what is best for you, because God loves you.

- 4 I would lay my case before him,
and fill my mouth with arguments.
- 5 I would learn what he would answer me,
and understand what he would say to me.
- 6 Would he contend with me in the greatness of his
power?
No; but he would give heed to me.
- 7 There an upright person could reason with him,
and I should be acquitted forever by my judge.
- 8 "If I go forward, he is not there;
or backward, I cannot perceive him;
9 on the left he hides, and I cannot behold him;
I turn^a to the right, but I cannot see him.
- 10 But he knows the way that I take;
when he has tested me, I shall come out like gold.
- 11 My foot has held fast to his steps;
I have kept his way and have not turned aside.
- 12 I have not departed from the commandment of
his lips;
I have treasured in^b my bosom the words of
his mouth.
- 13 But he stands alone and who can dissuade him?
What he desires, that he does.
- 14 For he will complete what he appoints for me;
and many such things are in his mind.
- 15 Therefore I am terrified at his presence;
when I consider, I am in dread of him.
- 16 God has made my heart faint;
the Almighty^c has terrified me;
- 17 If only I could vanish in darkness,
and thick darkness would cover my face!^d

Job Complains of Violence on the Earth

24 "Why are times not kept by the Almighty,^c
and why do those who know him never see his
days?

- 2 The wicked^e remove landmarks;
they seize flocks and pasture them.
- 3 They drive away the donkey of the orphan;
they take the widow's ox for a pledge.
- 4 They thrust the needy off the road;
the poor of the earth all hide themselves.
- 5 Like wild asses in the desert
they go out to their toil,
scavenging in the wasteland
food for their young.
- 6 They reap in a field not their own
and they glean in the vineyard of the wicked.
- 7 They lie all night naked, without clothing,
and have no covering in the cold.

^a Syr Vg: Heb *he turns*

^b Gk Vg: Heb *from*

^c Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

^d Or *But I am not destroyed by the darkness;
he has concealed the thick darkness from me*

^e Gk: Heb *they*

Read Job 24

The only norms for judging God that were available to Job were human norms, and according to them, God was either unjust or indifferent toward Job's troubles. Furthermore, God seems to disregard the crimes so often committed against the most vulnerable members of society.

Reflect: It is so easy to observe the suffering of others and to decide not to become involved. Think about the times when you may have acted in this way.

Pray: Acknowledge your insensitivity to the hardships of others. Ask for the strength and courage that you need to act with more compassion.

Act: Look beyond the difficulties of your own life and do something concrete to lessen the burdens of another.

- 8 They are wet with the rain of the mountains,
and cling to the rock for want of shelter.
- 9 "There are those who snatch the orphan child
from the breast,
and take as a pledge the infant of the poor.
- 10 They go about naked, without clothing;
though hungry, they carry the sheaves;
11 between their terraces^a they press out oil;
they tread the wine presses, but suffer thirst.
- 12 From the city the dying groan,
and the throat of the wounded cries for help;
yet God pays no attention to their prayer.
- 13 "There are those who rebel against the light,
who are not acquainted with its ways,
and do not stay in its paths.
- 14 The murderer rises at dusk
to kill the poor and needy,
and in the night is like a thief.
- 15 The eye of the adulterer also waits for the twilight,
saying, 'No eye will see me';
and he disguises his face.
- 16 In the dark they dig through houses;
by day they shut themselves up;
they do not know the light.
- 17 For deep darkness is morning to all of them;
for they are friends with the terrors of deep
darkness.
- 18 "Swift are they on the face of the waters;
their portion in the land is cursed;
no treader turns toward their vineyards.
- 19 Drought and heat snatch away the snow waters;
so does Sheol those who have sinned.
- 20 The womb forgets them;
the worm finds them sweet;
they are no longer remembered;
so wickedness is broken like a tree.
- 21 "They harm^b the childless woman,
and do no good to the widow.
- 22 Yet God^c prolongs the life of the mighty by his
power;
they rise up when they despair of life.
- 23 He gives them security, and they are supported;
his eyes are upon their ways.
- 24 They are exalted a little while, and then are gone;
they wither and fade like the mallow;^d
they are cut off like the heads of grain.
- 25 If it is not so, who will prove me a liar,
and show that there is nothing in what I say?"

^a Meaning of Heb uncertain

^b Gk Tg: Heb *feed on or associate with*

^c Heb *he*

^d Gk: Heb *like all others*

Read Job 25

Bildad defends God against the accusations of Job. He does so by comparing the grandeur of God to the limitations of God's creatures, both celestial and human. It is clear from this passage that Bildad does not have a very high opinion of human nature.

Reflect: Many people speak disdainfully of those they do not like. Not even those who are guilty of crimes should be called "maggot," "worm," "scum," or worse. Such names undermine or even deny people their basic human dignity.

Pray: Pray for the grace to remember that all people are children of God and deserve the kind of respect that such dignity bestows on them. This is true regardless of the manner in which they live their lives.

Act: Resolve to treat everyone you meet today as you would treat Christ, for in respecting them you will indeed be respecting Christ.

Read Job 26

Job acknowledges the creative power of God that is exercised over both the heavens and the nether world. God also has authority over the forces of chaos, identified as "the sea" and "Rahab." However, Job's words are probably not words of praise but of complaint, for he experiences the power seen in creation as having been turned against himself.

Reflect: When I am overcome with grief, even the wonders of creation may seem to be poised against me. What once brought joy and reassurance to my spirit now adds to the burden of my suffering.

Bildad Speaks: How Can a Mortal Be Righteous Before God?

- 25** Then Bildad the Shuhite answered:
² "Dominion and fear are with God;^a
 he makes peace in his high heaven.
³ Is there any number to his armies?
 Upon whom does his light not arise?
⁴ How then can a mortal be righteous before God?
 How can one born of woman be pure?
⁵ If even the moon is not bright
 and the stars are not pure in his sight,
⁶ how much less a mortal, who is a maggot,
 and a human being, who is a worm!"

Job Replies: God's Majesty Is Unsearchable

- 26** Then Job answered:
² "How you have helped one who has no power!
 How you have assisted the arm that has no
 strength!
³ How you have counseled one who has no
 wisdom,
 and given much good advice!
⁴ With whose help have you uttered words,
 and whose spirit has come forth from you?
⁵ The shades below tremble,
 the waters and their inhabitants.
⁶ Sheol is naked before God,
 and Abaddon has no covering.
⁷ He stretches out Zaphon^b over the void,
 and hangs the earth upon nothing.
⁸ He binds up the waters in his thick clouds,
 and the cloud is not torn open by them.
⁹ He covers the face of the full moon,
 and spreads over it his cloud.
¹⁰ He has described a circle on the face of the
 waters,
 at the boundary between light and darkness.
¹¹ The pillars of heaven tremble,
 and are astounded at his rebuke.
¹² By his power he stilled the Sea;
 by his understanding he struck down Rahab.
¹³ By his wind the heavens were made fair;
 his hand pierced the fleeing serpent.
¹⁴ These are indeed but the outskirts of his ways;
 and how small a whisper do we hear of him!
 But the thunder of his power who can
 understand?"

^a Heb him

^b Or the North

Pray: Turn to God, the gracious creator, with praise and gratitude, and trustingly commit yourself to God's loving care.

Act: Develop the habit of opening your mind and heart to the soothing comfort that nature can give.

Read Job 27

After he once again asserts his innocence, Job describes the fate of the wicked. Though they are presently prospering, misfortune will finally overtake them. If their circumstances ultimately will be reversed, surely the plight of the innocent sufferer will also be resolved.

Reflect: Sometimes we have to wait for circumstances to change, for wrongs to be corrected, for justice to unfold in our lives. If we can do nothing to effect such changes, we must learn to be patient and trusting and guard ourselves against bitterness and despair.

Pray: Recite The Lord's Prayer slowly and thoughtfully, lingering over the passage "lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

Act: Never give up hope that good will ultimately be victorious over evil. Instead, renew your confidence that sin and death have been conquered through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Job Maintains His Integrity

- 27** Job again took up his discourse and said:
² "As God lives, who has taken away my right,
 and the Almighty,^a 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.
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.
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?^a
 Will they call upon God at all times?
¹¹ I will teach you concerning the hand of God;
 that which is with the Almighty^a I will not conceal.
¹² All of you have seen it yourselves;
 why then have you become altogether vain?
¹³ "This is the portion of the wicked with God,
 and the heritage that oppressors receive from
 the Almighty:^a
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^b hurls at them without pity;
 they flee from its^c power in headlong flight.
²³ It^b claps its^c hands at them,
 and hisses at them from its^c place.

^a Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

^b Or *He* (that is God)

^c Or *his*

Read Job 28

This hymn describes the insatiable desire of the human spirit for wisdom. However, such wisdom is elusive; only God knows where it is to be found. As for humans: "...the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding."

Reflect: Everyone searches for meaning in life, which is really the search for wisdom. We all know that regardless of the insight we gain through reflecting on our life experience, this insight never completely satisfies us, and so we continue to search.

Pray: May your prayer be: "O, God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy your consolations, through Christ our Lord. Amen."

Act: Stop for a moment before you make important decisions and ask God for guidance in your search for wisdom.

Interlude: Where Wisdom Is Found

- 28** "Surely there is a mine for silver,
and a place for gold to be refined.
2 Iron is taken out of the earth,
and copper is smelted from ore.
3 Miners put^a an end to darkness,
and search out to the farthest bound
the ore in gloom and deep darkness.
4 They open shafts in a valley away from human
habitation;
they are forgotten by travelers,
they sway suspended, remote from people.
5 As for the earth, out of it comes bread;
but underneath it is turned up as by fire.
6 Its stones are the place of sapphires,^b
and its dust contains gold.
7 "That path no bird of prey knows,
and the falcon's eye has not seen it.
8 The proud wild animals have not trodden it;
the lion has not passed over it.
9 "They put their hand to the flinty rock,
and overturn mountains by the roots.
10 They cut out channels in the rocks,
and their eyes see every precious thing.
11 The sources of the rivers they probe;^c
hidden things they bring to light.
12 "But where shall wisdom be found?
And where is the place of understanding?
13 Mortals do not know the way to it,^d
and it is not found in the land of the living.
14 The deep says, 'It is not in me,'
and the sea says, 'It is not with me.'
15 It cannot be gotten for gold,
and silver cannot be weighed out as its price.
16 It cannot be valued in the gold of Ophir,
in precious onyx or sapphire.^b
17 Gold and glass cannot equal it,
nor can it be exchanged for jewels of fine gold.
18 No mention shall be made of coral or of crystal;
the price of wisdom is above pearls.
19 The chrysolite of Ethiopia^e cannot compare
with it,
nor can it be valued in pure gold.
20 "Where then does wisdom come from?
And where is the place of understanding?
21 It is hidden from the eyes of all living,
and concealed from the birds of the air.
22 Abaddon and Death say,
'We have heard a rumor of it with our ears.'

^a Heb *He puts*

^b Or *lapis lazuli*

^c Gk Vg: Heb *bind*

^d Gk: Heb *its price*

^e Or *Nubia*; Heb *Cush*

- 23 “God understands the way to it,
and he knows its place.
24 For he looks to the ends of the earth,
and sees everything under the
heavens.
25 When he gave to the wind its weight,
and apportioned out the waters by
measure;
- 26 when he made a decree for the rain,
and a way for the thunderbolt;
27 then he saw it and declared it;
he established it, and searched it out.
28 And he said to humankind,
‘Truly, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom;
and to depart from evil is
understanding.’”

Read Job 29

Job reflects on days gone by when he enjoyed friendship with God and the respect of others. In his own prosperity he was mindful of those less fortunate than he. He was the champion of righteousness and an advocate for those who were in any way helpless. He mourns the loss of those days.

Reflect: Who has not looked back on the past and grieved the loss of “the good old days”? Such reminiscing can either underscore the troubles of the present or encourage us with hope that the future will once again hold happiness.

Pray: Thank God for the blessings of the past and renew your conviction that God has even more blessings in store for you in the future.

Act: Spend some time reflecting on the people and events of the past that have brought happiness and fulfillment to your life.

Job Finishes His Defense

- 29** Job again took up his discourse and said:
2 “O that I were as in the months of old,
as in the days when God watched over me;
3 when his lamp shone over my head,
and by his light I walked through darkness;
4 when I was in my prime,
when the friendship of God was upon my tent;
5 when the Almighty^a 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!
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.
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.
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.
17 I broke the fangs of the unrighteous,
and made them drop their prey from their teeth.
18 Then I thought, ‘I shall die in my nest,
and I shall multiply my days like the phoenix;^b
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.’”

^a Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

^b Or *like sand*

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

Read Job 30

Despite the fact that Job was previously secure and a respectable member of society, he is now in misery and is looked upon with scorn. He has turned to God for help, and it appears that God has turned away from him.

Reflect: The repetitiveness of Job’s complaints mirrors our own manner of complaint. That is precisely part of our anguish. There is nothing new to say; there is nothing different to experience. Our misery is like a constant pain, and there seems to be nothing we can do to remedy it.

Pray: When you feel like you are standing on the threshold of despair, beg God not to abandon you to your weaknesses, but to stand guard lest you become overwhelmed by them.

Act: Find ways to distract yourself when you are tempted to despair. Seek the company of others; engage in activities that you enjoy.

- 30** “But now they make sport of me,
those who are younger than I,
whose fathers I would have disdained
to set with the dogs of my flock.
2 What could I gain from the strength of their
hands?
All their vigor is gone.
3 Through want and hard hunger
they gnaw the dry and desolate ground,
4 they pick mallow and the leaves of bushes,
and to warm themselves the roots of broom.
5 They are driven out from society;
people shout after them as after a thief.
6 In the gullies of wadis they must live,
in holes in the ground, and in the rocks.
7 Among the bushes they bray;
under the nettles they huddle together.
8 A senseless, disreputable brood,
they have been whipped out of the land.
9 “And now they mock me in song;
I am a byword to them.
10 They abhor me, they keep aloof from me;
they do not hesitate to spit at the sight
of me.
11 Because God has loosed my bowstring and
humbled me,
they have cast off restraint in my presence.
12 On my right hand the rabble rise up;
they send me sprawling,
and build roads for my ruin.
13 They break up my path,
they promote my calamity;
no one restrains^c them.
14 As through a wide breach they come;
amid the crash they roll on.
15 Terrors are turned upon me;
my honor is pursued as by the wind,
and my prosperity has passed away like a
cloud.
16 “And now my soul is poured out within me;
days of affliction have taken hold of me.

^a Heb lacks *like dew*

^b Meaning of Heb uncertain

^c Cn: Heb *helps*

- 17 The night racks my bones,
and the pain that gnaws me takes
no rest.
- 18 With violence he seizes my garment;^a
he grasps me by^b the collar of my
tunic.
- 19 He has cast me into the mire,
and I have become like dust and
ashes.
- 20 I cry to you and you do not answer
me;
I stand, and you merely look at me.
- 21 You have turned cruel to me;
with the might of your hand you
persecute me.
- 22 You lift me up on the wind, you
make me ride on it,
and you toss me about in the roar
of the storm.
- 23 I know that you will bring me to death,
and to the house appointed for all
living.
- 24 “Surely one does not turn against
the needy,^c
when in disaster they cry for help.^d
- 25 Did I not weep for those whose day
was hard?
Was not my soul grieved for the poor?
- 26 But when I looked for good, evil came;
and when I waited for light,
darkness came.
- 27 My inward parts are in turmoil, and
are never still;
days of affliction come to meet me.
- 28 I go about in sunless gloom;
I stand up in the assembly and
cry for help.
- 29 I am a brother of jackals,
and a companion of ostriches.
- 30 My skin turns black and falls from me,
and my bones burn with heat.
- 31 My lyre is turned to mourning,
and my pipe to the voice of those
who weep.

- 31** “I have made a covenant with my eyes;
how then could I look upon a virgin?
- 2 What would be my portion from God above,
and my heritage from the Almighty^e on high?
- 3 Does not calamity befall the unrighteous,
and disaster the workers of iniquity?
- 4 Does he not see my ways,
and number all my steps?
- 5 “If I have walked with falsehood,
and my foot has hurried to deceit—
- 6 let me be weighed in a just balance,
and let God know my integrity!—
- 7 if my step has turned aside from the way,
and my heart has followed my eyes,
and if any spot has clung to my hands;
- 8 then let me sow, and another eat;
and let what grows for me be rooted out.
- 9 “If my heart has been enticed by a woman,
and I have lain in wait at my neighbor’s
door;
- 10 then let my wife grind for another,
and let other men kneel over her.
- 11 For that would be a heinous crime;
that would be a criminal offense;
- 12 for that would be a fire consuming down to Abaddon,
and it would burn to the root all my harvest.

^a Gk: Heb *my garment is disfigured*

^b Heb *like*

^c Heb *ruin*

^d Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain

^e Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

Read Job 31

Job ends his speech with one last declaration of innocence. He gives an account of his former righteousness, of the good deeds he performed for the sake of others. Such a life of integrity cries out for redress. Job ends with a legal demand: "Let the Almighty answer me."

Reflect: We all reach a point in life when there is nothing else we can say or do on our own behalf. At such times, our only recourse is to turn to God in confidence and wait. These are the times that test our faith, that uncover our human limitations and reveal our fundamental need for God.

Pray: Pray that you will be able to continue to serve others even when you are burdened with your own troubles.

Act: Make St. Augustine's adage your own: "Pray as if everything depended on God; work as if everything depended on you."

- 13 "If I have rejected the cause of my male or
female slaves,
when they brought a complaint against me;
14 what then shall I do when God rises up?
When he makes inquiry, what shall I answer him?
15 Did not he who made me in the womb make them?
And did not one fashion us in the womb?
16 "If I have withheld anything that the poor desired,
or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail,
17 or have eaten my morsel alone,
and the orphan has not eaten from it—
18 for from my youth I reared the orphan^a like a father,
and from my mother's womb I guided the
widow^b—
19 if I have seen anyone perish for lack of clothing,
or a poor person without covering,
20 whose loins have not blessed me,
and who was not warmed with the fleece of my
sheep;
21 if I have raised my hand against the orphan,
because I saw I had supporters at the gate;
22 then let my shoulder blade fall from my shoulder,
and let my arm be broken from its socket.
23 For I was in terror of calamity from God,
and I could not have faced his majesty.
24 "If I have made gold my trust,
or called fine gold my confidence;
25 if I have rejoiced because my wealth was great,
or because my hand had gotten much;
26 if I have looked at the sun^c when it shone,
or the moon moving in splendor,
27 and my heart has been secretly enticed,
and my mouth has kissed my hand;
28 this also would be an iniquity to be punished by
the judges,
for I should have been false to God above.
29 "If I have rejoiced at the ruin of those who hated me,
or exulted when evil overtook them—
30 I have not let my mouth sin
by asking for their lives with a curse—
31 if those of my tent ever said,
'O that we might be sated with his flesh!'^d—
32 the stranger has not lodged in the street;
I have opened my doors to the traveler—
33 if I have concealed my transgressions as others do,^e
by hiding my iniquity in my bosom,
34 because I stood in great fear of the multitude,
and the contempt of families terrified me,
so that I kept silence, and did not go out of doors—

^a Heb *him*

^b Heb *her*

^c Heb *the light*

^d Meaning of Heb uncertain

^e Or as *Adam did*

35 O that I had one to hear me!
 (Here is my signature! Let the
 Almighty^a answer me!)
 O that I had the indictment written
 by my adversary!
 36 Surely I would carry it on my shoulder;
 I would bind it on me like a crown;
 37 I would give him an account of all my
 steps;
 like a prince I would approach him.

38 “If my land has cried out against me,
 and its furrows have wept
 together;
 39 if I have eaten its yield without
 payment,
 and caused the death of its owners;
 40 let thorns grow instead of wheat,
 and foul weeds instead of barley.”

The words of Job are ended.

Read Job 32

A new voice is heard, that of a younger man named Elihu. He claims that, out of deference for their age and wisdom, he has waited until the other visitors have spoken. When he does speak, he chides them for not having convinced Job of his errors. Elihu believes that he will succeed where the others have failed.

Reflect: We too may have found ourselves in situations where we step forward, thinking that we will be successful where others have failed. Such behavior can flow more from an attitude of arrogance than from a desire to be of service. At such times, we would do well to examine our motives.

Pray: Humbly call on God for guidance before you put yourself forward, presuming to possess solutions that have eluded others.

Act: Be very careful in pointing out the failures of others. A helping hand can be more effective than criticism.

Elihu Rebukes Job’s Friends

32 So these three men ceased to answer Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes. ² Then Elihu son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram, became angry. He was angry at Job because he justified himself rather than God; ³ he was angry also at Job’s three friends because they had found no answer, though they had declared Job to be in the wrong.^b ⁴ Now Elihu had waited to speak to Job, because they were older than he. ⁵ But when Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouths of these three men, he became angry.

⁶ Elihu son of Barachel the Buzite answered:

“I am young in years,
 and you are aged;
 therefore I was timid and afraid
 to declare my opinion to you.

⁷ I said, ‘Let days speak,
 and many years teach wisdom.’

⁸ But truly it is the spirit in a mortal,
 the breath of the Almighty,^a that makes for
 understanding.

⁹ It is not the old^c that are wise,
 nor the aged that understand what is right.

¹⁰ Therefore I say, ‘Listen to me;
 let me also declare my opinion.’

¹¹ “See, I waited for your words,
 I listened for your wise sayings,
 while you searched out what to say.

¹² I gave you my attention,
 but there was in fact no one that confuted Job,
 no one among you that answered his words.

¹³ Yet do not say, ‘We have found wisdom;
 God may vanquish him, not a human.’

¹⁴ He has not directed his words against me,
 and I will not answer him with your speeches.

¹⁵ “They are dismayed, they answer no more;
 they have not a word to say.

^a Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

^b Another ancient tradition reads *answer, and had put God in the wrong*

^c Gk Syr Vg: Heb *many*

- 16 And am I to wait, because they do
not speak,
because they stand there, and
answer no more?
17 I also will give my answer;
I also will declare my opinion.
18 For I am full of words;
the spirit within me constrains me.
19 My heart is indeed like wine that has
no vent;

- like new wineskins, it is ready to
burst.
20 I must speak, so that I may find relief;
I must open my lips and answer.
21 I will not show partiality to any
person
or use flattery toward anyone.
22 For I do not know how to flatter—
or my Maker would soon put an
end to me!

Read Job 33

Turning to Job, Elihu defends God against Job's accusation of divine indifference. He argues that Job's misfortunes were not unexpected. God sent warnings to him through night visions and illness. Job should have heeded these warnings, but he did not. Therefore, he has no one to blame for his troubles but himself.

Reflect: In what ways might you be responsible for the difficulties in which you find yourself? Have you made wrong choices along the way? Have you ignored what might have been signs of impending danger? Have you taken ill-advised risks?

Pray: Prayerfully reflect on the circumstances of your life and ask God for insight into the motives for your behavior.

Act: Take responsibility for your actions. You cannot change your behavior if you deny engaging in it.

Elihu Rebukes Job

33

- “But now, hear my speech,
O Job,
and listen to all my words.
2 See, I open my mouth;
the tongue in my mouth speaks.
3 My words declare the uprightness of my heart,
and what my lips know they speak sincerely.
4 The spirit of God has made me,
and the breath of the Almighty^a gives me life.
5 Answer me, if you can;
set your words in order before me; take your
stand.
6 See, before God I am as you are;
I too was formed from a piece of clay.
7 No fear of me need terrify you;
my pressure will not be heavy on you.
8 “Surely, you have spoken in my hearing,
and I have heard the sound of your words.
9 You say, ‘I am clean, without transgression;
I am pure, and there is no iniquity in me.
10 Look, he finds occasions against me,
he counts me as his enemy;
11 he puts my feet in the stocks,
and watches all my paths.’
12 “But in this you are not right. I will answer you:
God is greater than any mortal.
13 Why do you contend against him,
saying, ‘He will answer none of my^b words?’
14 For God speaks in one way,
and in two, though people do not perceive it.
15 In a dream, in a vision of the night,
when deep sleep falls on mortals,
while they slumber on their beds,
16 then he opens their ears,
and terrifies them with warnings,
17 that he may turn them aside from their deeds,
and keep them from pride,

^a Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

^b Compare Gk: Heb *his*

18 to spare their souls from the Pit,
 their lives from traversing the River.
 19 They are also chastened with pain
 upon their beds,
 and with continual strife in their bones,
 20 so that their lives loathe bread,
 and their appetites dainty food.
 21 Their flesh is so wasted away that it
 cannot be seen;
 and their bones, once invisible,
 now stick out.
 22 Their souls draw near the Pit,
 and their lives to those who bring
 death.
 23 Then, if there should be for one of
 them an angel,
 a mediator, one of a thousand,
 one who declares a person upright,
 24 and he is gracious to that person,
 and says,
 'Deliver him from going down into
 the Pit;
 I have found a ransom;
 25 let his flesh become fresh with youth;

let him return to the days of his
 youthful vigor';
 26 then he prays to God, and is
 accepted by him,
 he comes into his presence with joy,
 and God^a repays him for his
 righteousness.
 27 That person sings to others and says,
 'I sinned, and perverted what was right,
 and it was not paid back to me.
 28 He has redeemed my soul from
 going down to the Pit,
 and my life shall see the light.'
 29 "God indeed does all these things,
 twice, three times, with mortals,
 30 to bring back their souls from the Pit,
 so that they may see the light of life.^b
 31 Pay heed, Job, listen to me;
 be silent, and I will speak.
 32 If you have anything to say, answer me;
 speak, for I desire to justify you.
 33 If not, listen to me;
 be silent, and I will teach you wisdom."

Elihu Proclaims God's Justice

34 Then Elihu continued and said:
 2 "Hear my words, you wise men,
 and give ear to me, you who know;
 3 for the ear tests words
 as the palate tastes food.
 4 Let us choose what is right;
 let us determine among ourselves what is good.
 5 For Job has said, 'I am innocent,
 and God has taken away my right;
 6 in spite of being right I am counted a liar;
 my wound is incurable, though I am without
 transgression.'
 7 Who is there like Job,
 who drinks up scoffing like water,
 8 who goes in company with evildoers
 and walks with the wicked?
 9 For he has said, 'It profits one nothing
 to take delight in God.'
 10 "Therefore, hear me, you who have sense,
 far be it from God that he should do
 wickedness,
 and from the Almighty^c that he should do
 wrong.
 11 For according to their deeds he will repay them,

^a Heb *he*

^b Syr: Heb to be lighted with the light of life

^c Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

Read Job 34

Elihu speaks to the other visitors, agreeing with them in their denunciation of Job, whose declaration of innocence is actually a condemnation of God. Elihu insists that God is both a caring creator and an all-knowing judge. It is Job, not God, who has gone astray.

Reflect: We have to wonder what good can come from the condemnation of someone who has already been beaten down by hardship and the criticism of others. Is this condemnation meant to help the one suffering or to enhance the stature of the one condemning?

Pray: Ask God for a heart of compassion and understanding that might truly provide strength and encouragement to another rather than add to that person's burden.

Act: Encourage people rather than denouncing them. If they are indeed at fault, help them to see their error rather than simply criticizing them.

- and according to their ways he will make it befall them.
- 12 Of a truth, God will not do wickedly,
and the Almighty^a will not pervert justice.
- 13 Who gave him charge over the earth
and who laid on him^b the whole world?
- 14 If he should take back his spirit^c to himself,
and gather to himself his breath,
15 all flesh would perish together,
and all mortals return to dust.
- 16 "If you have understanding, hear this;
listen to what I say.
- 17 Shall one who hates justice govern?
Will you condemn one who is righteous and mighty,
18 who says to a king, 'You scoundrell'
and to princes, 'You wicked men!';
19 who shows no partiality to nobles,
nor regards the rich more than the poor,
for they are all the work of his hands?
- 20 In a moment they die;
at midnight the people are shaken and pass away,
and the mighty are taken away by no
human hand.
- 21 "For his eyes are upon the ways of mortals,
and he sees all their steps.
- 22 There is no gloom or deep darkness
where evildoers may hide themselves.
- 23 For he has not appointed a time^d for anyone
to go before God in judgment.
- 24 He shatters the mighty without investigation,
and sets others in their place.
- 25 Thus, knowing their works,
he overturns them in the night, and they are
crushed.
- 26 He strikes them for their wickedness
while others look on,
27 because they turned aside from following him,
and had no regard for any of his ways,
28 so that they caused the cry of the poor to come
to him,
and he heard the cry of the afflicted—
- 29 When he is quiet, who can condemn?
When he hides his face, who can behold him,
whether it be a nation or an individual?—
- 30 so that the godless should not reign,
or those who ensnare the people.
- 31 "For has anyone said to God,
'I have endured punishment; I will not offend
any more;

^a Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

^b Heb lacks *on him*

^c Heb *his heart his spirit*

^d Cn: Heb *yet*

- 32 teach me what I do not see;
if I have done iniquity, I will do it
no more?[?]
- 33 Will he then pay back to suit you,
because you reject it?
For you must choose, and not I;
therefore declare what you know.^a
- 34 Those who have sense will say to me,
and the wise who hear me will say,

- 35 ‘Job speaks without knowledge,
his words are without insight.’
- 36 Would that Job were tried to the limit,
because his answers are those of
the wicked.
- 37 For he adds rebellion to his sin;
he claps his hands among us,
and multiplies his words against
God.”

Read Job 35

Elihu challenges Job to provide an explanation for his suffering other than the one found in the religious tradition, namely punishment for wrongdoing. Elihu insists that, if Job were truly righteous, he would search for God rather than for answers to his questions or for relief from his afflictions.

Reflect: The men who came to counsel Job never seemed to have considered the goodness of his previous life. Had they done so, they might not have been so quick to conclude that Job’s suffering was the consequence of sinfulness.

Pray: Pray that you will not jump to conclusions regarding the life of another. Circumstances can be deceiving.

Act: Before you judge the life of another, listen to what that person has to say. First Nation people tell us that we must walk a mile in the moccasins of another.

Elihu Condemns Self-Righteousness

- 35** Elihu continued and said:
² “Do you think this to be just?
You say, ‘I am in the right before God.’
- ³ If you ask, ‘What advantage have I?
How am I better off than if I had sinned?’
- ⁴ I will answer you
and your friends with you.
- ⁵ Look at the heavens and see;
observe the clouds, which are higher than you.
- ⁶ If you have sinned, what do you accomplish
against him?
And if your transgressions are multiplied, what
do you do to him?
- ⁷ If you are righteous, what do you give to him;
or what does he receive from your hand?
- ⁸ Your wickedness affects others like you,
and your righteousness, other human beings.
- ⁹ “Because of the multitude of oppressions people
cry out;
they call for help because of the arm of the
mighty.
- ¹⁰ But no one says, ‘Where is God my Maker,
who gives strength in the night,
¹¹ who teaches us more than the animals of the
earth,
and makes us wiser than the birds of the air?’
- ¹² There they cry out, but he does not answer,
because of the pride of evildoers.
- ¹³ Surely God does not hear an empty cry,
nor does the Almighty^b regard it.
- ¹⁴ How much less when you say that you do not
see him,
that the case is before him, and you are
waiting for him!
- ¹⁵ And now, because his anger does not punish,
and he does not greatly heed transgression,^c
- ¹⁶ Job opens his mouth in empty talk,
he multiplies words without knowledge.”

^a Meaning of Heb of verses 29-33 uncertain

^b Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

^c Theodotion Symmachus Compare Vg:
Meaning of Heb uncertain

Read Job 36

Elihu seems to soften his view of Job's predicament. It is possible that the suffering is meant to be more a correction of error than harsh punishment for deliberate sin. Surely Job will acknowledge that he has made mistakes. Elihu does not consider the possibility that the suffering far outweighs any mistakes Job has made.

Reflect: If we cannot discover any correspondence between the character of our lives and the situation in which we find ourselves, it makes very little difference whether we see our plight as a punishment or as a corrective. Such a distinction is lost on the one who suffers.

Pray: Seek from God wisdom that enables you to be supportive rather than judgmental toward those who suffer, to be empathetic rather than philosophical.

Act: Know when to be silent yet steadfastly present with others in their suffering.

Elihu Exalts God's Goodness

- 36** Elihu continued and said:
² "Bear with me a little, and I will show you,
 for I have yet something to say on God's behalf.
³ I will bring my knowledge from far away,
 and ascribe righteousness to my Maker.
⁴ For truly my words are not false;
 one who is perfect in knowledge is with you.
⁵ "Surely God is mighty and does not despise any;
 he is mighty in strength of understanding.
⁶ He does not keep the wicked alive,
 but gives the afflicted their right.
⁷ He does not withdraw his eyes from the righteous,
 but with kings on the throne
 he sets them forever, and they are exalted.
⁸ And if they are bound in fetters
 and caught in the cords of affliction,
⁹ then he declares to them their work
 and their transgressions, that they are
 behaving arrogantly.
¹⁰ He opens their ears to instruction,
 and commands that they return from iniquity.
¹¹ If they listen, and serve him,
 they complete their days in prosperity,
 and their years in pleasantness.
¹² But if they do not listen, they shall perish by the
 sword,
 and die without knowledge.
¹³ "The godless in heart cherish anger;
 they do not cry for help when he binds them.
¹⁴ They die in their youth,
 and their life ends in shame.^a
¹⁵ He delivers the afflicted by their affliction,
 and opens their ear by adversity.
¹⁶ He also allured you out of distress
 into a broad place where there was no constraint,
 and what was set on your table was full of
 fatness.
¹⁷ "But you are obsessed with the case of the wicked;
 judgment and justice seize you.
¹⁸ Beware that wrath does not entice you into
 scoffing,
 and do not let the greatness of the ransom
 turn you aside.
¹⁹ Will your cry avail to keep you from distress,
 or will all the force of your strength?
²⁰ Do not long for the night,
 when peoples are cut off in their place.
²¹ Beware! Do not turn to iniquity;

^a Heb ends among the temple prostitutes

- because of that you have been
 tried by affliction.
 22 See, God is exalted in his power;
 who is a teacher like him?
 23 Who has prescribed for him his way,
 or who can say, 'You have done wrong'?

Elihu Proclaims God's Majesty

- 24 "Remember to extol his work,
 of which mortals have sung.
 25 All people have looked on it;
 everyone watches it from far away.
 26 Surely God is great, and we do not
 know him;
 the number of his years is
 unsearchable.

- 27 For he draws up the drops of water;
 he distills^a his mist in rain,
 28 which the skies pour down
 and drop upon mortals abundantly.
 29 Can anyone understand the
 spreading of the clouds,
 the thunderings of his pavilion?
 30 See, he scatters his lightning around him
 and covers the roots of the sea.
 31 For by these he governs peoples;
 he gives food in abundance.
 32 He covers his hands with the lightning,
 and commands it to strike the mark.
 33 Its crashing^b tells about him;
 he is jealous^b with anger against
 iniquity.

- 37** "At this also my heart trembles,
 and leaps out of its place.
 2 Listen, listen to the thunder of his voice
 and the rumbling that comes from his mouth.
 3 Under the whole heaven he lets it loose,
 and his lightning to the corners of the earth.
 4 After it his voice roars;
 he thunders with his majestic voice
 and he does not restrain the lightnings^c when
 his voice is heard.
 5 God thunders wondrously with his voice;
 he does great things that we cannot
 comprehend.
 6 For to the snow he says, 'Fall on the earth';
 and the shower of rain, his heavy shower of
 rain,
 7 serves as a sign on everyone's hand,
 so that all whom he has made may know it.^d
 8 Then the animals go into their lairs
 and remain in their dens.
 9 From its chamber comes the whirlwind,
 and cold from the scattering winds.
 10 By the breath of God ice is given,
 and the broad waters are frozen fast.
 11 He loads the thick cloud with moisture;
 the clouds scatter his lightning.
 12 They turn round and round by his guidance,
 to accomplish all that he commands them
 on the face of the habitable world.
 13 Whether for correction, or for his land,
 or for love, he causes it to happen.
 14 "Hear this, O Job;
 stop and consider the wondrous works of God.

^a Cn: Heb *they distill*

^b Meaning of Heb uncertain

^c Heb *them*

^d Meaning of Heb of verse 7 uncertain

Read Job 37

Elihu seems to anticipate the impending manifestation of God. It is the creator who is revealed in and through the wonders of the natural world. Traces of ancient Near Eastern mythology can be seen in his description, implying that it is the God of Israel and no other who brought everything into existence.

Reflect: The order seen in the world illustrates divine governance of the entire universe. How can a mere human being challenge divine control on any level of creation?

Pray: In times of great distress, trust that the creator, who holds all of creation in delicate balance, also holds you in loving care, and will not allow what distresses you to destroy you.

Act: Spend time observing the order in the world of nature. Allow this order to reassure you that God is mindful of your needs as well.

- 15 Do you know how God lays his command upon them,
and causes the lightning of his cloud to shine?
- 16 Do you know the balancings of the clouds,
the wondrous works of the one whose knowledge is perfect,
- 17 you whose garments are hot
when the earth is still because of the south wind?
- 18 Can you, like him, spread out the skies,
hard as a molten mirror?
- 19 Teach us what we shall say to him;
we cannot draw up our case because of darkness.
- 20 Should he be told that I want to speak?
Did anyone ever wish to be swallowed up?
- 21 Now, no one can look on the light
when it is bright in the skies,
when the wind has passed and cleared them.
- 22 Out of the north comes golden splendor;
around God is awesome majesty.
- 23 The Almighty^a—we cannot find him;
he is great in power and justice,
and abundant righteousness he will not violate.
- 24 Therefore mortals fear him;
he does not regard any who are wise in their own conceit.”

The LORD Answers Job

- 38** Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind:
- 2 “Who is this that darkens counsel by words
without knowledge?
- 3 Gird up your loins like a man,
I will question you, and you shall declare to me.
- 4 “Where were you when I laid the foundation of
the earth?
Tell me, if you have understanding.
- 5 Who determined its measurements—surely you know!
Or who stretched the line upon it?
- 6 On what were its bases sunk,
or who laid its cornerstone
- 7 when the morning stars sang together
and all the heavenly beings^b shouted for joy?
- 8 “Or who shut in the sea with doors
when it burst out from the womb?—
- 9 when I made the clouds its garment,
and thick darkness its swaddling band,
- 10 and prescribed bounds for it,
and set bars and doors,
- 11 and said, ‘Thus far shall you come, and no farther,
and here shall your proud waves be stopped?’

^a Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

^b Heb *sons of God*

Read Job 38

God finally speaks to Job, not about Job's misfortune or divine justice, but about the splendor of the heavens. God provides no answers to Job's question, but questions Job instead. Is Job able to comprehend the wonders of the world? Can he control them? The answers to these questions are obvious to all.

Reflect: The splendor and order of the universe have captivated the imaginations of women and men from time immemorial. While there may be disputes among scientists and believers alike about the source and nature of that splendor and order, there is no dispute about their reality. Our world is magnificent to behold.

Pray: Pray Psalm 65, praising God for the wonders of creation.

Act: Arrange your schedule so that you can watch the sun rise or set, realizing that you are a part of the marvels that you are observing.

- 12 “Have you commanded the morning since your days began,
and caused the dawn to know its place,
13 so that it might take hold of the skirts of the earth,
and the wicked be shaken out of it?
14 It is changed like clay under the seal,
and it is dyed^a like a garment.
15 Light is withheld from the wicked,
and their uplifted arm is broken.
- 16 “Have you entered into the springs of the sea,
or walked in the recesses of the deep?
17 Have the gates of death been revealed to you,
or have you seen the gates of deep darkness?
18 Have you comprehended the expanse of the earth?
Declare, if you know all this.
- 19 “Where is the way to the dwelling of light,
and where is the place of darkness,
20 that you may take it to its territory
and that you may discern the paths to its home?
21 Surely you know, for you were born then,
and the number of your days is great!
- 22 “Have you entered the storehouses of the snow,
or have you seen the storehouses of the hail,
23 which I have reserved for the time of trouble,
for the day of battle and war?
24 What is the way to the place where the light is distributed,
or where the east wind is scattered upon the earth?
- 25 “Who has cut a channel for the torrents of rain,
and a way for the thunderbolt,
26 to bring rain on a land where no one lives,
on the desert, which is empty of human life,
27 to satisfy the waste and desolate land,
and to make the ground put forth grass?
- 28 “Has the rain a father,
or who has begotten the drops of dew?
29 From whose womb did the ice come forth,
and who has given birth to the hoarfrost of heaven?
30 The waters become hard like stone,
and the face of the deep is frozen.
- 31 “Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades,
or loose the cords of Orion?
32 Can you lead forth the Mazzaroth in their season,
or can you guide the Bear with its children?
33 Do you know the ordinances of the heavens?
Can you establish their rule on the earth?

^a Cn: Heb and they stand forth

- 34 “Can you lift up your voice to the clouds,
so that a flood of waters may cover you?
35 Can you send forth lightnings, so that they may go
and say to you, ‘Here we are’?
36 Who has put wisdom in the inward parts,^a
or given understanding to the mind?^a
37 Who has the wisdom to number the clouds?

- Or who can tilt the waterskins of the heavens,
38 when the dust runs into a mass and the clods cling together?
39 “Can you hunt the prey for the lion, or satisfy the appetite of the young lions,
40 when they crouch in their dens, or lie in wait in their covert?
41 Who provides for the raven its prey, when its young ones cry to God, and wander about for lack of food?

Read Job 39

God now turns Job’s attention to the animals that inhabit the world and quizzes Job about their habits. Does Job understand them? Despite the Genesis injunction to subdue and have dominion over them (Gen 1:28), can Job really exercise control over them?

Reflect: All of the animals mentioned were really outside of human control at the time of the writing of this book. Once again, the wonders of creation force Job to confront his own human limitations. Have our advances in science prompted us to disdain aspects of the natural world that we cannot understand or control?

Pray: Thank God for the diversity with which the natural world continues to unfold. Pray for an attitude of respect and wonder toward that world of which we are a part.

Act: There are many excellent books and videos that will provide you with information about the marvels of our world.

- 39** “Do you know when the mountain goats give birth?
Do you observe the calving of the deer?
2 Can you number the months that they fulfill,
and do you know the time when they give birth,
3 when they crouch to give birth to their offspring,
and are delivered of their young?
4 Their young ones become strong, they grow up
in the open;
they go forth, and do not return to them.
5 “Who has let the wild ass go free?
Who has loosed the bonds of the swift ass,
6 to which I have given the steppe for its home,
the salt land for its dwelling place?
7 It scorns the tumult of the city;
it does not hear the shouts of the driver.
8 It ranges the mountains as its pasture,
and it searches after every green thing.
9 “Is the wild ox willing to serve you?
Will it spend the night at your crib?
10 Can you tie it in the furrow with ropes,
or will it harrow the valleys after you?
11 Will you depend on it because its strength is great,
and will you hand over your labor to it?
12 Do you have faith in it that it will return,
and bring your grain to your threshing floor?^b
13 “The ostrich’s wings flap wildly,
though its pinions lack plumage.^a
14 For it leaves its eggs to the earth,
and lets them be warmed on the ground,
15 forgetting that a foot may crush them,
and that a wild animal may trample them.
16 It deals cruelly with its young, as if they were not
its own;
though its labor should be in vain, yet it has
no fear;

^a Meaning of Heb uncertain

^b Heb *your grain and your threshing floor*

- 17 because God has made it forget wisdom,
and given it no share in understanding.
- 18 When it spreads its plumes aloft,^a
it laughs at the horse and its rider.
- 19 “Do you give the horse its might?
Do you clothe its neck with mane?
20 Do you make it leap like the locust?
Its majestic snorting is terrible.
- 21 It paws^b violently, exults mightily;
it goes out to meet the weapons.
- 22 It laughs at fear, and is not dismayed;
it does not turn back from the sword.
- 23 Upon it rattle the quiver,
the flashing spear, and the javelin.
- 24 With fierceness and rage it swallows
the ground;
it cannot stand still at the sound
of the trumpet.
- 25 When the trumpet sounds, it says ‘Aha!’
From a distance it smells the battle,
the thunder of the captains, and
the shouting.
- 26 “Is it by your wisdom that the hawk
soars,
and spreads its wings toward the
south?
27 Is it at your command that the eagle
mounts up
and makes its nest on high?
28 It lives on the rock and makes its
home
in the fastness of the rocky crag.
29 From there it spies the prey;
its eyes see it from far away.
30 Its young ones suck up blood;
and where the slain are, there it is.”

Read Job 40:1–14

The magnificence of the universe has brought Job humbly to acknowledge the inappropriateness of his complaints about his lot in life. God speaks to Job again, showing how presumptuous he is in demanding an explanation from God, as if he, Job, were God’s equal.

Reflect: Are we not assuming an attitude of equality with God when we expect, even demand, that we should be able to understand the way God works in our lives? What will it take for us to acknowledge our limitations in this matter, as Job was eventually able to do?

Pray: Humbly turn to God, accepting your inability to control or understand every aspect of your life.

Act: Stand humbly before the awesomeness of the natural world, realizing that you are a very small yet important part of it and that it is not yours to control, but God’s.

40 And the LORD said to Job:
2 “Shall a faultfinder contend with the
Almighty?^c
Anyone who argues with God must respond.”

Job’s Response to God

- 3 Then Job answered the LORD:
4 “See, I am of small account; what shall I answer you?
I lay my hand on my mouth.
5 I have spoken once, and I will not answer;
twice, but will proceed no further.”

God’s Challenge to Job

- 6 Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind:
7 “Gird up your loins like a man;
I will question you, and you declare to me.
8 Will you even put me in the wrong?
Will you condemn me that you may be justified?
9 Have you an arm like God,
and can you thunder with a voice like his?
10 “Deck yourself with majesty and dignity;
clothe yourself with glory and splendor.
11 Pour out the overflowings of your anger,
and look on all who are proud, and abase them.
12 Look on all who are proud, and bring them low;
tread down the wicked where they stand.
13 Hide them all in the dust together;
bind their faces in the world below.^d
14 Then I will also acknowledge to you
that your own right hand can give you victory.

^a Meaning of Heb uncertain

^b Gk Syr Vg; Heb *they dig*

^c Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

^d Heb *the hidden place*

Read Job 40:15—41:34

God speaks about two mythological beasts. Though the Israelites might have seen some aspect of Mesopotamia in the hippopotamus Behemoth and of Egypt in the crocodile Leviathan, these animals really represent monsters of cosmic chaos. However, before the great creator, they are nothing more than playthings.

Reflect: When we are in the throes of agony or distress, it takes great faith to maintain that the chaos of our lives is really under God's control. Yet, this is precisely what this passage tells us. Not even primordial or cosmic chaos can rival the power of God.

Pray: Commit yourself to the all-powerful creator before whom the problems of life are no match. Trust that God will protect you despite the chaos you may be experiencing.

Act: Reflect on the death and resurrection of Jesus, through which he conquered the forces of evil.

- 15 “Look at Behemoth,
which I made just as I made you;
it eats grass like an ox.
- 16 Its strength is in its loins,
and its power in the muscles of its belly.
- 17 It makes its tail stiff like a cedar;
the sinews of its thighs are knit together.
- 18 Its bones are tubes of bronze,
its limbs like bars of iron.
- 19 “It is the first of the great acts of God—
only its Maker can approach it with the sword.
- 20 For the mountains yield food for it
where all the wild animals play.
- 21 Under the lotus plants it lies,
in the covert of the reeds and in the marsh.
- 22 The lotus trees cover it for shade;
the willows of the wadi surround it.
- 23 Even if the river is turbulent, it is not frightened;
it is confident though Jordan rushes against its
mouth.
- 24 Can one take it with hooks^a
or pierce its nose with a snare?

- 41**^b “Can you draw out Leviathan^c with a
fishhook,
or press down its tongue with a cord?
- 2 Can you put a rope in its nose,
or pierce its jaw with a hook?
- 3 Will it make many supplications to you?
Will it speak soft words to you?
- 4 Will it make a covenant with you
to be taken as your servant forever?
- 5 Will you play with it as with a bird,
or will you put it on leash for your girls?
- 6 Will traders bargain over it?
Will they divide it up among the merchants?
- 7 Can you fill its skin with harpoons,
or its head with fishing spears?
- 8 Lay hands on it;
think of the battle; you will not do it again!
- 9^d Any hope of capturing it^e will be disappointed;
were not even the gods^f overwhelmed at the
sight of it?
- 10 No one is so fierce as to dare to stir it up.
Who can stand before it?^g
- 11 Who can confront it^g and be safe?^h
—under the whole heaven, who?ⁱ
- 12 “I will not keep silence concerning its limbs,
or its mighty strength, or its splendid frame.
- 13 Who can strip off its outer garment?

^a Cn: Heb *in his eyes*

^b Ch 40.25 in Heb

^c Or *the crocodile*

^d Ch 41.1 in Heb

^e Heb *of it*

^f Cn Compare Symmachus Syr: Heb *one is*

^g Heb *me*

^h Gk: Heb *that I shall repay*

ⁱ Heb *to me*

- Who can penetrate its double coat
of mail?^a
- 14 Who can open the doors of its face?
There is terror all around its teeth.
- 15 Its back^b is made of shields in rows,
shut up closely as with a seal.
- 16 One is so near to another
that no air can come between
them.
- 17 They are joined one to another;
they clasp each other and cannot
be separated.
- 18 Its sneezes flash forth light,
and its eyes are like the eyelids of
the dawn.
- 19 From its mouth go flaming torches;
sparks of fire leap out.
- 20 Out of its nostrils comes smoke,
as from a boiling pot and burning
rushes.
- 21 Its breath kindles coals,
and a flame comes out of its mouth.
- 22 In its neck abides strength,
and terror dances before it.
- 23 The folds of its flesh cling together;
it is firmly cast and immovable.
- 24 Its heart is as hard as stone,
as hard as the lower millstone.
- 25 When it raises itself up the gods are
afraid;
at the crashing they are beside
themselves.
- 26 Though the sword reaches it, it does
not avail,
nor does the spear, the dart, or
the javelin.
- 27 It counts iron as straw,
and bronze as rotten wood.
- 28 The arrow cannot make it flee;
slingstones, for it, are turned to chaff.
- 29 Clubs are counted as chaff;
it laughs at the rattle of javelins.
- 30 Its underparts are like sharp
potsherds;
it spreads itself like a threshing
sledge on the mire.
- 31 It makes the deep boil like a pot;
it makes the sea like a pot of
ointment.
- 32 It leaves a shining wake behind it;
one would think the deep to be
white-haired.
- 33 On earth it has no equal,
a creature without fear.
- 34 It surveys everything that is lofty;
it is king over all that are proud.”

Read Job 42:1–6

Job acknowledges both the majesty of God’s wisdom and providence and his own foolishness in thinking that he should be able to comprehend such mysteries. He humbly admits his human limitations and disowns his previous audacity.

Reflect: God brought Job to new insight into the limitations of human nature by pointing to the splendor of the world. This led Job to new insights into the majesty of the God who holds all of creation, Job included, with tender care.

Job Is Humbled and Satisfied

- 42** Then Job answered the LORD:
² “I know that you can do all things,
and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.
³ ‘Who is this that hides counsel without
knowledge?’
Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand,
things too wonderful for me, which I did not
know.
⁴ ‘Hear, and I will speak;
I will question you, and you declare to me.’
⁵ I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear,
but now my eye sees you;
⁶ therefore I despise myself,
and repent in dust and ashes.”

Job’s Friends Are Humiliated

7 After the LORD had spoken these words to Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite: “My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends; for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has.

^a Gk: Heb *bridle*

^b Cn Compare Gk Vg: Heb *pride*

Pray: Entreat God to lead you too through the mysteries of the universe to an appreciation of your place in that universe and to humble contemplation of the God who brought it all into existence.

Act: Join your breathing to the sound of the wind, and your heartbeat to the pulse of outer space. Learn to recognize yourself as a manifestation of the wonders of creation.

Read Job 42:7–17

God finds fault with those who criticized Job, saying that Job was correct in claiming innocence. They erred in not valuing Job's experience of innocent suffering. Job's misfortune is eventually reversed, and he is restored to a life of comfort.

Reflect: Contrary to what some have claimed, Job is not here rewarded for his steadfastness. Rather, in the ancient world, if a man is wrongly accused of having sinned, his vindication takes the form of double repayment. This newly acquired good fortune is considered concrete proof of his original innocence.

Pray: Pray for those who have misunderstood and misjudged you. Leave their fate to God.

Act: Realize that as valuable as the theory of retribution might be, it does not cover every eventuality. We must always be attentive to the new insights we gain from experience.

⁸ Now therefore take seven bulls and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you, for I will accept his prayer not to deal with you according to your folly; for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has done.” ⁹ So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went and did what the LORD had told them; and the LORD accepted Job's prayer.

Job's Fortunes Are Restored Twofold

¹⁰ And the LORD restored the fortunes of Job when he had prayed for his friends; and the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before. ¹¹ Then there came to him all his brothers and sisters and all who had known him before, and they ate bread with him in his house; they showed him sympathy and comforted him for all the evil that the LORD had brought upon him; and each of them gave him a piece of money^a and a gold ring. ¹² The LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; and he had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand donkeys. ¹³ He also had seven sons and three daughters. ¹⁴ He named the first Jemimah, the second Keziah, and the third Keren-happuch. ¹⁵ In all the land there were no women so beautiful as Job's daughters; and their father gave them an inheritance along with their brothers. ¹⁶ After this Job lived one hundred and forty years, and saw his children, and his children's children, four generations. ¹⁷ And Job died, old and full of days.

^a Heb a *qesitah*