

Having begun to consider Job's response to Eliphaz last week (16), we come this week to finish that response in chapter 17. But before I do that, I want to start with a brief reminder of three things: (1) the book as a whole. If you remember several months ago, I mentioned the book of Job is one five OT poetical books. That means, it's poetry, and as such, must be interpreted accordingly. Whoever wrote the book, obviously organized it to fit its poetic nature.

(2) The speeches of Job's friends. Most of what Job's friends say is true, though usually misapplied to Job. John Calvin—"We must always remember, the general ideas that Job's friends advance are good, but they apply them poorly." It's for this reason, we haven't hesitated to find sound theology in most of what they say.

(3) The speeches of Job. Most of what Job says can be reduced into two categories: first, positive statements (wherein he sees things clearly). He understands God is testing him and purifying him. He understands he has a mediator with God who bears witness of his innocence; He knew that his Redeemer lives. Second, negative statements (wherein he sees things unclearly). Because of his present affliction, at times, he's unable to see God as reconciled, and views him as an enemy. And he struggles to make sense of things.

I. Job is Broken (vv1-5)

II. Job is Grieved (vv6-9)

III. Job is Hopeless (vv10-16)

I. Job is Broken (vv1-5)

1. Verse 1 has three related phrases—"My spirit is broken, my days are extinguished, the grave is ready for me."
2. "My Spirit is broken"—this phrase is translated very differently by the KJV—"My breath is corrupt."
3. It's because the Hebrew word literally means "wind" and is at times translated "breath" but usually "spirit."
4. The other word—translated "broken" by the NKJ—means "to corrupt or destroy"—his spirit was destroyed.
5. "My days are extinguished"—they are extinct—they've run their course—they are finished or completed.
6. "The grave is ready for me"—the grave was ready for him—it was prepared for him; it anticipated him.
7. V2—"Are not mockers with me? And does not my eye dwell on their provocation?"—this is why his spirit is broken.
8. The word "provocation" means "contention" or "aggravation"—it refers to behavior intended to irritate or make angry.
9. When Job says—"does not my eye dwell on their provocation" he means, he's fixated upon it—it's all he sees.
10. The word rendered "dwell on" means "to remain abide or continue"—it was impossible for him not to see it.
11. John Trapp—"I lodge not so much in my bed as in the thoughts of my friends' unkindness. A man may sleep better upon bare boards than upon hard words."
12. Who does Job mean by mockers? Well, while it certainly includes his three friends, it may include others (to mock is to scorn or ridicule).
13. V3—"Now put down a pledge for me with Yourself. Who is he who will shake hands with me?"—to become a pledge and shake hands are the same things.

14. Prov.6:1—"My son, if you become surety for your friend, if you have shaken hands in pledge for a stranger."
15. A pledge is a surety or promise—Job is asking God to put down guarantee for him because there's none among his friends who would/can.
16. Job has basically said the same thing back 16:21—"Oh, that one might plead for a man with God, as a man pleads for his neighbor!"
17. Here the imagery is slightly different, in that it switches from an advocate (16:21) to a pledge or surety.
18. A pledge, surety, or guarantee all serve as a promise of something to come—usually a debt that's owed.
19. For example—if my son buys a car I might serve as a pledge or guarantee that the money is forthcoming.
20. A down payment is similar to pledge—you put down so much money, as a promise that the rest will follow.
21. Job is asking God for a pledge or down payment be put down with (before God)—the pledge is distinct from God.
22. Job needed someone to act as a pledge before God—to ensure or guarantee him all will be finally well.
23. V3b—"Who is he who will shake hands with me?"—there's no one able or willing to serve as that pledge with God.
24. V4—"For You have hidden their heart from understanding"—that is, God has hidden these things from his mockers.
25. This is why he was unable to have a man plead his cause (16:21), or find a man to serve as his pledge (17:3).
26. God hid from them the true cause of Job's afflictions and He hid from them the only cure for Job's afflictions.
27. V4b—"Therefore You will not exalt them"—that is, He will not give them honor of actually helping.
28. Verse 5 further describes these mockers—"He who speaks flattery to his friends, even the eyes of his children will fail."
29. The Hebrew word rendered "flattery" carries with it the idea of gain—to speak in order to receive something (ESV – 'he who informs against his friends to get a share in his property').
30. He's accusing his friends of having ulterior motives—perhaps they thought they would be rewarded for their help.
31. V5—"Even the eyes of his children will fail"—that is, will have nothing (they will fail from having what their eyes desired).
32. Consideration 1—The power of words—here I'm thinking about verses 1-2 and the provocation of the mockers.
33. As Job's eyes gazed on his mockers and his ears heard their mockery, his heart and spirit were broken
34. Consideration 2—The need for a pledge—here of course I'm thinking of v3 and Job's desire for a pledge.
35. In the context Job desired a pledge from God to ensure him that things are well, and will be well in the future.
36. This is basically what he meant by a pledge—a guarantee or down-payment of things that will happen (he was not able to find anyone on earth who could serve as such a pledge, guarantee, or down-payment).
37. Eph.1:13-14—"you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance."

38. The Holy Spirit is given to us as a pledge or down payment of our inheritance (eternal life in heaven).
39. There's a sense in which God gives us His Spirit to ensure us things will eventually be ok (more than ok).
40. Consideration 3—The need for illumination—here I am thinking about v4 and God hiding their hearts.
41. Why did God hide understanding from their hearts? As a just chastisement for their mistreatment of Job.
42. The hearts of Job's friends, were not hidden from all understanding, but from understanding Job's condition.
43. Thus, here's my point—even Christian people remain totally dependent upon God's illuminating grace.
44. This He may temporarily remove if we are a proud and self-sufficient—this is likely the case with Job's friends.
45. James 4:6—"God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble"—and that grace includes illumination.

## II. Job is grieved (vv6-9)

1. Focus is now turned from his friends to God (as Job rightly understood God was in control of all things).
2. V6—"But He has made me a byword of the people, and I have become one in whose face men spit."
3. The actual term "byword" literal refers to a "proverb"—to be made a "byword" is to become an object of ridicule and scorn.
4. Job 30:9—"And now I am their taunting song; yes, I am their byword"—that is, their taunting proverb.
5. Steven Lawson—"To his peers Job had become a 'proverb,' or an object lesson of shame to his countrymen. He was the object of taunting and derision, one in whose face people spit."
6. Thus, I don't think people literally spit on him, but they despised him and treated him an object of scorn.
7. V7—"My eye has also grown dim because of sorrow, and all my members are like shadows"—his body was wasting away.
8. When he says his "eye has grown dim" he's referring to what happens when a person grows old—their eyes grow dim.
9. Here, his eye is growing dim, but because of age, but sorrow, Ps.6:7—"My eye wastes away because of grief; it grows old because of all my enemies."
10. V8—"Upright men are astonished at this, and the innocent stirs himself up against the hypocrite"—who these men are, we don't know.
11. In this chapter we have reference to two groups of people—there's mockers, flatterers, and taunters, and there's the upright and innocent.
12. The biggest question is—in which of these categories is Job placing his three friends? There's just no way to know for sure.
13. Personally, I have a very hard time applying the words, "upright" and "innocent" to Job's three friends.
14. It seems best, as we read through this chapter, that Job describes his friends as mockers and flatterers (though there may be other people also).
15. I think he's simply saying—"Good men are astonished how evil I have been treated by my friends and others."

16. V9—"Yet the righteous will hold to his way, and he who has clean hands will be stronger and stronger."
17. By "righteous" Job is likely referring to the "upright" and "innocent" of v8—they are the same people.
18. But I also suggest, Job is referring to himself—regardless how others respond, this is how I will respond (remember, Job was also upright, innocent, and righteous).
19. First, "the righteous will hold to his way"—by "his way" is meant Job's way as he walked in God's way.
20. This refers to integrity and perseverance—the righteous hold to their way regardless of all opposition.
21. Second, "he who has clean hands will be stronger and stronger"—"clean hands" is the same thing as "righteous (it underscores the fact that usually 'righteous' refers to practical righteousness)."
22. By "stronger and stronger" is meant spiritual strength—they not only hold their way, but grow stronger.
23. Thus, here I want to briefly pause, and suggest three practical observations from verses 6-9 (especially v9).
24. Observation 1—Faithfulness on the part of others, encourages us to persevere—the righteous will hold to his way, as they see how Job endured against great opposition.
25. Simply put, the way we act will have a direct impact upon others—it will encourage or discourage them.
26. Though some mocked and ridiculed Job, others would behold his integrity, and go from strength to strength.
27. I think of many you, who have had trials and afflictions, and yet, you continue to love and serve God.
28. This is motivation for me; it encourages me to press onward; it helps me to continue to love and serve God.
29. Phil. 1:14—"and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear."
30. They heard about Paul's imprisonment, and the fact that he did so gladly, clinging to the promises of God.
31. This put wind in their sail; it emboldened them to preach the gospel openly without fear of consequences.
32. Observation 2—Regardless how others treat us, we must hold to God's way—we're ultimately responsible for us.
33. Although Job was terribly mistreated by others, he resolved to maintain his way; to walk in God's word.
34. And this is something we all have to learn, and it's a difficult lesson; we can't blame anyone for our actions.
35. To "hold on to your way" implies effort—our enemies will tempt us to let go and fail to stay the course.
36. Job has many reasons to give up and blame others; but instead, he resolved to "hold fast" to his way.
37. And so too, we all have obstacles or hinderances in our way—but our duty has been plain in His word.
38. We must hold fast to our way and not deviate to the left or right—regardless of who goes with us or not.
39. Though at times this way is difficult and lonely, it is a way of blessing, which ultimately leads to life eternal (it's the narrow and difficult path that leads to life, which few find).

40. Observation 3—God usually gives additional grace as we hold to His way—He meets us in the path of obedience.
41. Scripture everywhere promises, that God gives to the humble and strengthens those who walk in His way.
42. Ps.84:11—"The LORD will give grace and glory; no good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly."
43. Isa.40:31—"Those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."
44. Here we find that God doesn't intend us to hold to this way in our strength; no, He gives us sufficient strength.
45. Regardless of what others may do, I'm holding fast to my way and trusting that God will give me strength.
46. Hymn—"I have decided to follow Jesus; No turning back, no turning back; Tho' none go with me, still I will follow; Tho' none go with me, still I will follow; no turning back, no turning back."

### III. Job is Hopeless (vv10-16)

1. Having spoken more brightly and clearly in vv8-9, in vv10-16, he falls prey again to his hopelessness.
2. V10—"But please, come back again, all of you, for I shall not find one wise man among you"—again, I think he's speaking to his three friends.
3. V11—"My days are past, my purposes are broken off, even the thoughts of my heart"—he felt as if were to die.
4. And thus, all that he purposed and thought to do would come to nothing—all of his dreams would remain unfilled.
5. V12—"They change the night into day; 'The light is near,' they say, in the face of darkness"—who's the "they" in this verse?
6. Someone is changing the night into day—saying, "the light is near" although in reality, the darkness is near.
7. Well, he's likely referring to the days, purposes, and thoughts of v11—these, as it were, are deceiving him.
8. It's as if these things were saying to him—"The light is near, even though in fact, the darkness is coming."
9. By "light" is meant "life" and by "darkness" is meant "death"—his days, purposes, and thoughts were lying to him.
10. V13—"If I wait for the grave as my house, if I make my bed in the darkness, if I say to corruption, 'You are my father,' and to the worm, 'You are my mother and my sister,' where then is my hope? As for my hope, who can see it?"
11. Notice there are four related worlds—grave, darkness, corruption, and worm—these all refers to death.
12. When the body dies, it's laid in the grave, which is dark, and it undergoes corruption, in part by worms.
13. To refer to corruption as your father and the worm as your mother or sister, simply means they are close to you.
14. It's as if corruption and the worm were family members; kin folk; as close as a father, mother, or sister.
15. V15—"Where then is my hope? As for my hope, who can see it?"—that is, his hope of recovery and happiness.

16. His hope of being restored to his former life—his hope of having his family, possessions, and health.
17. V16—"Will they go down to the gates of Sheol? Shall we have rest together in the dust?"—who is meant by "they" and "we"?
18. Well, it's likely that he refers to what he hoped for—all that he lost—his family, possessions, and health.
19. Thus, he means—"Will my hopes go down to the grave with me? Shall my hopes and I rest together in the dust?"
20. He was fearful that he would die before his hopes were realized; he was afraid his hopes would die with him.
21. Thus, in the time that remains, I want to point an important distinction between temporal and eternal hopes.
22. (1) Temporal hopes—temporal hopes are hopes for temporal things—things that are good but temporal.
23. These includes the general blessings of this life—marriage, children, possessions, wealth, health, and deliverance from temporal enemies.
24. These are all good things in themselves, but none of them transcend the grave—these are temporal blessings.
25. And, from the context, it's rather evident these are largely the things that Job meant by hope in verse 15.
26. V11—"My days are past, my purposes are broken off, even the thoughts of my heart"—Job felt as his days were ended, his hopes had ended.
27. This is what he meant by his "purposes" and "the thoughts of his heart"—those things he hoped would happen.
28. For example, deliverance from pain and restoration to his formal happiness; a family and possessions.
29. Most people have plans or purposes they hope come to pass—they have thoughts or desires of the heart.
30. For example, most younger people hope to marry and have children, and older people hope to have grandchildren.
31. Most people hope to complete some form of education, and find a job they enjoy that pays them well.
32. All Christian parents hope their children are converted, and all Christian grandparents hope their grandchildren are converted.
33. Most people hope to live a long life and share their golden years with their spouse and extended family.
34. Those with chronic health problems hope that eventually they find deliverance or relief from their affliction.
35. Christian pastors hope to live long lives among a single church and die after they've served for 50 years.
36. Christian missionaries hope to be of service to God and see many conversions and local churches planted.
37. But let me ask you—Does any Christian have any unqualified promise from God that any of these purposes or desires will come to pass?
38. Put another way—Does God promise any Christian that all of any of there temporal hopes with come to pass.
39. Well the obvious answer to this question is, NO—God nowhere promises these hopes will be fulfilled.

40. Now, in the case of Job are they fulfilled? Is he spared from death and restored to his prior health and happiness, YES.
41. Thus, before I move on to briefly consider eternal hopes, let me a twofold response to temporal hopes.
42. (a) We must plead with God—by that I mean, these temporal hopes are good things that must be sought.
43. And we should the LORD'S dealing with Job encourage us and motivate us to cry to Him for such things.
44. Are such things lawful? Would they bring joy to you and glory to Him? Would they advance His kingdom?
45. (b) We must submit to God—that is, while we must cry to God for such things, we must submit to His will.
46. Prov.16:9—"A man's heart plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps"—we make plans and then trust God.
47. He knows what we need best—He knows what will bring Him more glory—plan and desire, but submit and trust.
48. Cry to Him and plead with Him, but do so knowing that He will give to you what is best and most helpful.
49. (2) Eternal hopes—by eternal hopes I mean, purposes and/or desires that transcend this temporary life.
50. While Christians may have a variety of temporal hopes, every Christian shares the same basic eternal hope.
51. And while it's possible to lose sight of that hope, and possibly even for a season doubt that it's yours.
52. This eternal hope, the hope of being with our Savior in heaven for all eternity, will of necessity, be fulfilled (this hope will not die in the grave).