

Having been away from the book of Job for several months, I think it's necessary to begin with a short review. There's a sense in which I can summarize the entire book of Job with three words: suffering, sovereignty, and Savior.

(1) The book of Job teaches us about suffering—that is, it teaches the fact that all Christians will suffer to varying degrees. Job suffered physically, mentally, and spiritually. He lost his possessions, children, and health.

(2) The book of Job teaches us about sovereignty—that is, it illustrates the mysterious truth of God's sovereign providence. It takes us behind the scenes to look into the wise and mysterious dealings of God with His people. Thus, neither Satan, nor Job and his friends, are the main figure of the book. God is.

(3) The book of Job teaches us about the Savior—that is, in Job we have a shadow of Christ, who was the only perfectly righteous sufferer. Thus, all throughout the book we have glimpses of our beloved Savior as a righteous sufferer.

Now, if you remember, at the end of chapter 2, three friends of Job come from their own place to mourn with Job and comfort him (2:11). In chapter 3 we have the lamentation of Job, wherein he cursed the day of his birth (3:1). This gives way to a series of discussions between Job and his three friends. In fact, there's three rounds of dialogue. A friend speaks and Job answers. This happens from chapter 4 to chapter 31.

Remember what I've said about Job's three friends—while most of what they say is true, it simply wasn't true of Job. In other words, the problem wasn't so much with their theology as with their application of it to Job.

Thus, chapter 21 is Job's response to Zophar's last discourse in chapter 20. If you remember, for whatever reason, Zophar only speaks twice as the other friends speak three times. Both times Zophar spoke, he made mention of the hypocrite (chapter 11 and 20).

- I. Job's Complaint (vv1-6)
- II. Job's Correction (vv7-26)
- III. Job's Conclusion (vv27-34)
- IV. Observations

I. Job's Complaint (vv1-6)

1. Job begins his complaint by exhorting his friends to listen carefully to his speech, v2—"Listen carefully to my speech, and let this be your consolation. Bear with me that I may speak, and after I have spoken, keep mocking."
2. It's as if Job is saying—"if they were to listen to his words, that would itself provide him with comfort.
3. But, if they listened to him and refused to be corrected, then they can continue with their mockery of him.
4. v4—"As for me, is my complaint against man? And if it were, why should I not be impatient?"—the first part of this verse is unclear.
5. He means—"My complaint isn't merely against man, but God. He's ultimately responsible for my dilemma."
6. The second part of v4 is best rendered—"and if so, why should I not be impatient?"—that is, if my complaint is ultimately against God and not man, then don't I have reason to be impatient?

7. The word rendered "impatient" by the NKJ is better rendered "troubled" by the KJ as it means "to be vexed or grieved."
8. Albert Barnes—"That is, since my cause is with God - since my difficulty is in understanding His dealings with me - since I have carried my cause up to Him, and all now depends on Him, why should I not be allowed to have concern in regard to the result? If I manifest anxiety, who can blame me? Who would not, when his all was at stake, and when the divine dealings toward him were so mysterious?"
9. V5—"Look at me and be astonished; put your hand over your mouth. Even when I remember I am terrified, and trembling takes hold of my flesh."
10. That is, he trembled when he remembered his family, possessions, and health have been taken from him.
11. It's as if he meant—"When I look in the mirror at my disfigured image, terror and trembling overtakes me."
12. Just the thought of what he experienced, caused him to tremble in terror—his body "shook" in horror.

II. Job's Correction (vv7-26)

1. In this section, Job seeks to correct the thinking of Zophar (20), as well as his other two friends (Eliphaz and Bildad).
2. Actually, within this section, Job responds to something his friends said, in almost every single verse.
3. If you recall, the thinking of his friends was this—sinners suffer and because Job was suffering, he was a secret sinner (or a hypocrite).
4. He basically says three things byway of correction: (1) wicked people prosper, (2) wicked people perish, and (3) God's providence determines both.
5. (1) Wicked people prosper (vv7-16)—this runs contrary to Job's friends, who believed outward prosperity was an indication of inward piety.
6. The righteous prosper and the wicked suffer—thus, the fact that Job was suffering meant, he must be a secret sinner.
7. But in contrast to this, Job here asserts that wicked people prosper (vv7-10) and they rejoice (vv11-12).
8. V13—"They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave"—that is, they die with ease.
9. Albert Barnes—"The idea is, that when they die they are not afflicted with lingering disease, and great bodily pain, but having lived to an old age in the midst of comforts, they drop off suddenly and quietly, and sleep in the grave."
10. Verses 14-15 describe what the wicked says—"Depart from us, for we do not desire the knowledge of Your ways. Who is the Almighty, that we should serve Him? And what profit do we have if we pray to Him?"
11. Because they see nothing beautiful or appealing in the Creator, they've chose to love and serve the created.
12. V16 has been variously understood—it likely means—their riches and wealth are not in their power.
13. Even though they fail to acknowledge and serve God, He nevertheless, is the ultimate giver of all things.
14. V16b—"the counsel of the wicked is far from me"—that is, because the wicked is a carnal-minded fool.

15. He's a fool because (a) he prefers the created over the Creator, and (b) he thinks his prosperity is in his own hand (whereas it's actually in God's hand).
16. (2) Wicked people perish (vv17-21)—here Job clarifies—though wicked people prosper and despise God; this all comes to end.
17. V17—"How often is the lamp of the wicked put out? How often does their destruction come upon them, the sorrows God distributes in His anger?"
18. To put out the lamp of the wicked refers to their death—the phrase is only applied to the death of the wicked.
19. It refers to the abrupt nature of their death—all is fine and well, and then, they are ushered into darkness, v18—"They are like straw before the wind, and like chaff that a storm carries away."
20. V19—"They say, 'God lays up one's iniquity for his children'" —that is, they deceive themselves in thinking they won't be held accountable for their own sins.
21. The last half of v19 through v21 is what's called an imprecatory prayer—a prayer for God's judgment to fall upon His enemies.
22. V19b-20—"Let Him recompense him, that he may know it. Let his eyes see his destruction, and let him drink of the wrath of the Almighty."
23. V21—"For what does he care about his household after him, when the number of his months is cut in half?"
24. This is a reason behind the imprecatory prayer—he should be judged because, he cares little for the eternal good of his household.
25. (3) God's providence determines both (vv22-26)—that is, God determines who prospers and when they die.
26. V22—"Can anyone teach God knowledge, since He judges those on high"—Job provides a fact and supplies a proof.
27. (a) A fact—"Can anyone teach God knowledge"—the point being, nobody can because God knows everything.
28. (b) A proof—"since He judges those on high"—by those "on high" is meant "the judges of this world."
29. Thus, what Job is saying is this—the fact that God judges the judges of the world, proves He knows everything.
30. And, if He knows everything, then He knows best how to govern the affairs of both the wicked and righteous.
31. Job rightly understood, that at the heart of his friends thinking, was the misunderstanding of God's providence.
32. "Providence" is simply defined as God's ways within this world; it's His work of fulfilling His eternal plans.
33. Everything comes to pass as the result of God's work—every single detail falls under His sovereign providence.
34. Thus, verse 23-24 describe the death of a rich man, and v25 the death of a poor man—but who determines who is who.
35. It's God's sovereign providence that ultimately determines who's rich and poor and who dies young or old.
36. V26—"They lie down alike in the dust, and worms cover them"—for all their differences they all die and decay.

III. Job's Conclusion (vv27-34)

1. Job's conclusion is a strong rebuke to his friends—he basically accuses them of speaking empty lies.

2. V27—"Look, I know your thoughts, and the schemes with which you would wrong me"—he then goes on to reveal their thoughts.
3. V28—"For you say, 'Where is the house of the prince? And where is the tent, the dwelling place of the wicked?'"
4. Earlier Job mentioned that wicked people prosper, and he now accuses them of disagreeing with him.
5. It's as if they were saying—"Where's the evidence that what you are telling us is true; where's the proof?"
6. V29—"Have you now asked those who travel the road? And do you no know their signs?"—that is, ask someone if you don't trust me.
7. "The evidence is everywhere for all to see—it's common knowledge—get out and find it's true for yourself."
8. V30—"For the wicked are reserved for the day of doom; they shall be brought out on the day of wrath."
9. Regardless if the wicked lived in wealth or poverty, there's coming a day when they shall be doomed.
10. V31—"Who condemns his way to his face? And who repays him for what he has done?"—this is in contrast to what he shall receive from God.
11. One day God will confront him to his face, but for now, there are but few people willing to confront him.
12. V32—"Yet he shall be brought to the grave, and a vigil kept over the tomb. The clods of the valley shall be sweet to him; everyone shall follow him, as countless have gone before him."
13. Again, regardless if he lived in wealth or poverty, and regardless if he was ever confronted in this life—he will die just like everyone else.
14. V34—"How then can you comfort me with empty words, since falsehood remains in your answers?"
15. This is a direct rebuke to all three friends—they spoke empty and meaningless words filled with falsehood.

IV. Observations

1. There's really one overriding lesson from this chapter, and it's the same one we've seen in most previous chapters.
2. Christians must live by faith and not by sight or sense—this was the fundamental problem with Job's friends.
3. They judged the situation of Job based on sight—because he was suffering, he must have been a sinner.
4. But Job also erred too, in that at times he judged his situation by sense—because he didn't feel accepted with God, he viewed God as an enemy.
5. Thus, here's the overriding lesson of chapter 21—Christians must live by faith and not sight or sense.
6. And so, in closing, I want to turn our attention upon what Job says about the wicked (let me summarize it into three points).
7. If you remember, Job was being accused of being wicked, and so what he does is, he describes the wicked.
8. (1) Wicked people often enjoy many possessions in this life—the first thing I need to say is, God often gives wealth and riches to righteous people.
9. This can be proven by Job himself, for if you recall he was the most righteous and wealthy man in the land.

10. But I think it's right to say, that ordinarily, "God has chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom" (Jas.2:5).
11. For example, just look at our own country—who are the people who have the most riches and wealth?
12. Are they righteous or wicked? Generally speaking, the wealthiest are the most wicked in our country (why?).
13. (a) As a blessing—that is, God often gives wealth and riches to wicked people as a kindness toward them.
14. Most often, these outward or physical riches, are in response to a man's diligent labor and work ethic.
15. Prov.10:4—"Lazy hands make for poverty, but diligent hands bring wealth"—this is true, in the broad sense for everyman.
16. Anthony Burgess—"God out of a general love in a providential way does give many a man outward prosperity and wealth, for his diligence, industry, and honest dealing in the world."
17. But regardless how diligent a man has been, all temporal wealth and riches ultimately come from God.
18. In April of 1741, Jonathan Edwards preached a sermon entitled: Those Whom God Hates, He Often Gives Plenty of Earthly Things To.
19. Gen.27:39—"Then Isaac his father answered and said to him (Esau): Behold, your dwellings shall be of the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above."
20. That is, while Esau received no spiritual blessing from God, he nevertheless, received physical blessing.
21. Thus, it's true, and it's very important to maintain, that in His general kindness, God gives men good things.
22. He gives material possessions, family, friends, and enjoyment in the good and lawful things of this life.
23. (b) As a judgment—that is, God often gives wealth and riches to wicked people as a judgment upon them.
24. God often gives wicked people many possessions as a judgment, in that they preferred these before Him.
25. V15—"Who is the Almighty, that we should serve Him? And what profit do we have if we pray to Him?"
26. In other words, they failed to find anything in God or in the service of God, worthy of their hearts or time.
27. And so, because they failed to find their ultimate delight in God and the things of God, He gives them things.
28. There are fewer things worse than God giving a person over to the created—to fill his heart with things.
29. (2) Wicked people often experience little hardship in this life—that is, their lives appear to be trouble free.
30. Now, notice I said "appear to be"—often times, such people give the appearance all is well, when on the inside there's great turmoil.
31. But nevertheless, it's often true, that many wicked people, especially the wicked rich, have few troubles.
32. Now, let me remind you—all Christians experience similar hardships as we all live within this same world.
33. For example, the cars of Christians break down just as the cars of non-Christians, and the parents of Christians get sick and die, just as much as the parents of non-Christians.

34. But, and here's the important point—the righteous have additional troubles that are unique only to them.
35. (a) They have new enemies—because the righteous are no longer of the world, they now have new enemies.
36. Satan and this world, now level a relentless attack upon them—they are the objects of their intense hatred.
37. Jn.15:19—"If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."
38. This is increasingly becoming evident in this country—to stand for true morality, makes you a target.
39. Job 21:31—"Who condemns his way to his face? And who repays him for what he has done?"—this refers to the wicked man.
40. Far from condemning him the world rewards him, but it will condemn those who disagree or oppose him.
41. This is, in part, a reason behind Job's struggles—Satan was harassing and tempting Job to deny God.
42. Why? Because Job was a Christian man—a righteous man—he was a man who loved and glorified God.
43. The world loves its own and those who are unsaved are at home in it—they feel comfortable within it.
44. But this all changes when you become a Christian—this world becomes a source of extreme vexation.
45. (b) They have a new Father—because God is now their Father, Christians undergo His loving chastisements.
46. Job 21:9—"Their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them"—they know nothing of God's loving chastisement.
47. Ps.73:12-14—"Behold, these are the ungodly, who are always at ease; they increase in riches. Surely I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence. For all day long I have been plagued, and chastened every morning."
48. This is one major reason why Christians often encounter hardships and trouble, because God loves them.
49. Hebrews 12:8—"But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons."
50. There was a time in this country, if you saw a disobedient and disrespectful child, you would think he had no father.
51. Why? Because all fathers discipline their children—it's one of many privileges of having a loving father.
52. This is the primary reason behind Job's complaint—he knew his troubles were ultimately from God Himself (v4).
53. (c) They have new desires—because they now love God, they sorrow because they often grieve Him.
54. Lk.6:21, 25—"Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall weep."
55. (3) Wicked people will one day be cut off from this life—that is, one day "the lamp of the wicked will be put out."
56. Never does Scripture refer to the death of the righteous in this way—their lamp is never "put out"—why is that?
57. And here's the reason—our light will only shine brighter when we die—we then shine as stars in the sky.