

A 'Free Pass' for the Wicked?

Job 24:1 – 25

Nutshell: Job 24 is his definitive tirade on the wicked getting away with it. This he insists to silence his 3 friends' contention that God only sends catastrophe on the wicked. But do God's dealing with the wicked prove a point about His character one way or the other? Indeed, yes, but Job has lost the point.

Review

I. Job is the ABCs, or kindergarten, of the Bible. It lays out the **basics** of the God-man relationship. Yet it's a kindergarten where you come out with a Ph.D.

II. The Story so far

A. God told Satan that Job was THE best, 1:8

Kid-speak: Who was the best guy in the world in Job's day? Yeah, Job! Who's the best guy in the world *now*? (Mom? Dad? Tie?)

1. Satan objected: "Only for blessings," 1:10
2. God said Satan could take them away, 1:12
3. Job lost all children and possessions, 1:13-19
4. But he worshiped without protest, 1:20-21

B. God bragged on Job again, 2:3

1. Satan objected, "Skin for skin," 2:4-5
2. God said Satan could touch him, 2:6
3. Satan gave Job agonizing boils, 2:7-9; 30:18, 30
4. Job still didn't sin, 2:10

Kid-speak: God let Satan do really bad things to Job. But could those things take Job away from God? Nope. Can we let bad things take *us* away from God? No!

C. After 7 days, Job cursed his birth, 3:1-26.

D. Most of Job is an argument cycle, chaps. 4-31.

Argument Cycle 1

1. Eliphaz trusted *personal revelation*, 4:12,
2. Bildad trusted *tradition*, 8:8,
3. Zophar trusted *mystery*, 11:7

4. *Each man had a deficient view of God, 42:7*

5. Job answered each one: chs. 4-14

E. They increasingly hinted that only sin could have brought on these afflictions

F. **Job has increasingly accepted that premise**

1. Thus, he begins accusing God for wrongful punishment, 40:8; 9:15; 10:2-7.

2. *What Satan couldn't do, the friends did!*

Consider your power as a friend.

Argument Cycle 2

G. The 3 friends speak again. Job answers each one, six more speeches, chaps. 15-21

Argument Cycle 3

H. One last cycle, minus Zophar, 22-25

I. Finally, Job insists on his uprightness, 26-31

‡ The 3 friends bluffed no confession of sin, 32:1

J. Enter the human hero of the book (a type of Christ: truth incarnate), **Elihu**, ch 32-37

1. God corrects Job, 38:2; 40:2, 8, and his 3 other friends, 42:7, but never Elihu

2. God agreed with Elihu, 32:2; 40:8

3. Elihu's *last* speech, chap 37, becomes God's *whole* speech: Creation, 38-41. God tag-teamed w/ Elihu.

Kid-speak: Who is the person in the book who has the right answer? Elihu!

K. Job will *sulk* in 40:4-5, then *repent* in 42:1-6

Theme of Job: How can *I* be right in God's eyes

(justification) if **He** is not right in my eyes
(sanctification)?

III. Themes in Job:

- A. God's sovereignty: the main lesson Job learned: God is in charge, Job 42:2
- B. God's righteousness. His *sovereignty* ↑ is not arbitrary.
- C. The necessity of Trials, Ps 119:67, 71. Trials show me my fallen nature. Better trust God.

Kid-speak: Does God have to let bad things happen to us for us to learn to be good? Yes. We just won't learn if everything always goes good for us.

- D. Death. Christ's abandonment on the cross is especially previewed.
- E. God's faithfulness. He didn't quit until Job was restored.
- F. God's justice is what Job mainly argued vs.; but God *does* begin to requite the wicked here on earth, Job, 34:10, 20

IV. Argument Cycle Recap, chaps 3-31

Kid-speak: Last time, Job said that God wasn't the same as He used to be. Can that be true? No, God is always the same. He's always good and He always tells the truth.

Job 24:1-25

V. Important Elements in the Chapter

- A. Job appealed to God in his first four speeches, starting in chap 6. In his last three speeches, he has *not* addressed God, starting in chap 19.
 - 1. Even though the three prayers weren't especially reverent, at least he appealed to God.
 - 2. Now, true to his description of his relationship with God, Job is actually avoiding Him.
- B. Chap 24 is Job's most in-depth argument for one of his main contentions: God allows bad people to have long, happy lives.
 - 1. This is Job's main answer to his 3 friends' contention that big punishments from God are reserved for the wicked only. That's why they're sure Job was hiding some big sin/sins.
 - 2. The wicked's impunity is one of the main points that Elihu will have to refute (see III. F. and VII. C. 3.)

Chap 3, Job curses his birth

Ch 4-5, **Eliphaz**: make things right with God

Ch 6-7, Job: My *pain* is talking. "God, hear me."

Ch 8, **Bildad**: only the wicked get swept away

Ch 9-10, Job: God deserted me. "Why, God?"

Ch 11, **Zophar**: God is *unfathomable*

Ch 12-14, Job: God lets the wicked rule. "God, I won't regrow if you chop me down."

↑1. Job thought God was tired of his collected sins. Job awaited the *afterlife* for God's favor to resume, Job 14:14-17.

2. ↑ The only way Job could put it together
Ch 15, **Eliphaz**: You're just another failed sinner
Ch 16-17, Job: "God, You plucked me." My Witness is in Heaven. "You blinded them."

Ch 18, **Bildad**: The wicked (= Job) are consumed
Ch 19, Job: Earth will tell my injustice, yet I know I'll rise and see Messiah (No prayer)

Ch 20, **Zophar**: The wicked only *seem* sturdy

Ch 21, Job: God *doesn't* judge bad men (~~Prayer~~)

Ch 22, **Eliphaz**: God sees what you say He can't: your cheating of the poor. (!) But repent and you'll be fully restored: a counselor with God.

Ch 23, Job: God has changed course. (~~Prayer~~)

Kid-speak: Job said that God lets bad people get away with being bad. But does God do that? No.

C. There are 7 groupings of pronouns in Job 24.

1. The first 5 alternate between the oppressors and the oppressed.
 - a. V 2-4
 - b. V 5-8
 - c. V 9
 - d. V 10-12
 - e. V 13
2. Group 6, v 14-21, then focuses on oppressors, calling them both “they” and “he.”
3. Group 7 adds God back to the mix, and perhaps refers to the rich and poor.

VI. The Flow of the Argument

- A. Job begins by contrasting God’s blueprint to our knowledge of it. Job’s goal is to show that his friends are not as well acquainted with that blueprint as they have presumed, v 1.
- B. Job will then alternate between describing the poor and their oppressors, v 2-21.
 1. Implication 1: why isn’t God helping the afflicted?
 2. Implication 2: why isn’t God thwarting the wicked?
- C. Finally, Job will resolve the question he first posed about God’s mysterious agenda, v 22-24
 1. Yes, the wicked come to an end by God’s hand, but so it is with *all* men.
 2. Meantime, it is surely God who has given the wicked all the tools they use in their wickedness.
 3. Job ends with a flat challenge: Will ya’ll dare deny this? v 25

Kid-speak: Job said that God wasn’t helping poor people. Is that true? Sometimes it looks like it, but God hasn’t forgotten about them. If they trust Him, He will help them.

VII. Observations

- A. Job has definitely lost any deference towards God he may have started with.
 1. Job rehearses both the evil men’s prosperity and the troubles of the afflicted as settled matters.
 2. It is not clear if Job is reversing views he had previously held. Most likely, he just never had talked about it in this light. Once he began, compelled in answering his 3 friends, the clarity of the problem became undeniable to him.
- B. His friends don’t have an answer after this!
 1. Bildad’s next speech is a mere grandstand. He addresses none of the unresolved dilemmas Job poses in chap 24.
 2. And no other friend will answer either. Especially after Job goes on his self-vindicating spiel in chaps. 29-31, they realize that their attempt to bluff him into confession of sin had failed.

Kid-speak: Does God make all the bad people stop being bad right away? And does He help all

the poor people right away? No, but He keeps track of both, and He does what is right. But sometimes, it looks to us like it takes a long time.

C. Job has extensive knowledge of both the rich and the poor. As we see in his final vindication, he really was a man involved in the community, probably much more than his friends, e.g., 29:12-16; 17 (stopping the wicked). His love of neighbor had been part of his God-testified blamelessness.

1. Job's descriptions are very eloquent. We have no reason to doubt their accuracy. Had they been inaccurate, the 3 friends would surely have retorted.
2. What is inaccurate in Job is his **INTERPRETATION** of these facts. The interpretation comes out in his assessment of God's involvement, v 22-24.
 - a. He is wrong that God had effectively encouraged the evildoers.
 - b. But the 3 friends couldn't oppose this, because by their framework, so many evildoers shouldn't even have been around.
 - c. Elihu will have the answer to this, **34:10-30**, a section about as long as our chapter.

Kid-speak: Had Job been somebody who helped the poor? Yes. Did Job punish bad people? Yes. Was God using Job to do those things. Yes!

D. Job is describing every society in history, some less, some more, but all environments for the predator and the prey. This is consistent because of man's nature.

1. Pressing on us the need for a new nature. Job had one, but his rebellion had caused a reversion.
2. The French Revolution was an exploitation of such class tensions. Marxism is a continued call to the poor to overthrow the rich. Both are consciously based on violence and bloodshed.
 - a. Marxists have imbedded themselves in influential positions in America. The shock of recent, massive changes in our society are not so shocking once we see their plan to control the universities and raise generations of radicals. Well-played by them. Stupid by us.
 - b. We must retrain our youth in the comparative superiority of our capitalistic system

Kid-speak: Some people say that all the poor people should get together and get rid of all the rich people. Is that the right way to do it? No. But should we all pray for God's help? Yes.

VIII. Applications

A. It is imperative that we adopt Elihu's view of God's justice right now on earth (and throughout history).

1. Yes, the wicked take as much power as they can, crushing the poor in the process.
2. But God hears the cries of the afflicted and answers, Ps 12:5; Jms 5:1-6; Job 34:28.

B. But, just as God USED wicked men's murderous plans to accomplish redemption on the Cross, so He continues to use their campaign against us:

1. Both for *our* sanctification and eventual rescue, 2 Thess 1:5
2. And as final confirmation of *their* judgments, 2 Thess 1:6

Kid-speak: How does God use the people who hate Him to help *us*? When they're bad to us, it makes us decide if we really want to follow God.

C. We find Elihu's view elsewhere as well, such as Psalm 73, which contains, first doubt (like Job's), then illumination (like Elihu's).

IX. The Gospel in Job 24

A. There IS injustice in the world. We all wish for justice (Well, all but the oppressors).

1. Many set about to enforce their *own* justice, small scale or large.
2. Others crusade for human perfection, believing in man's natural goodness.

B. But the Gospel is that God had to first put His people's personal injustices upon His Son on the cross. **We** are unjust.

1. Then, for us, final justice becomes a matter that is in God's hands. Immediate justice is mainly keeping *ourselves* to doing right, walking in both mercy and truth.
2. God's deed at the Cross also puts men on notice that a Judge has been appointed. One of our race is finally worthy to distribute justice.
3. That Judge is offering peace terms in the Gospel. Once man's situation is understood, the urgency of that peace carries its own alarm bell.

Kid-speak: Does God say that anyone can come to Him and He will wash away their sins by Christ's blood? Yes. Even those who were hurting His people? Yes.

X. For the Walking Wounded (1 Thess 5:14, "Uphold the strengthless")
Arguing with God's ways in our mind is not a unique sin.

XI. Conviction (2 Tim 4:2, "Convince, rebuke"): **What have I done wrong? How have I lost righteousness?**
I need to recognize when I am blaming God.

XII. Correction/ Realignment (2 Tim 4:2, "Exhort/encourage"):
How will I correct my error? How will I regain uprightness?
We have to hoist our perspective above where we judge God's motives by how circumstances affect *us*.

XIII. Schooling in Righteousness: **How do I take this on the road?**
God, the prosperity of the wicked *does* bother me, even though I know that You have it all in hand. Help me stay current with coming into Your presence, to show me the true timescale by which justice is upheld, Ps 73:17.

Wrap-up: Job is right about the wicked seeming to get away with it.

The inequities in life are part of the landscape which naturally separate mankind into two groups. Luke 6:20-26 lays the two groups out in the context of socio-economic as well as spiritual conditions.

Remember, if we're not poor, we have to 'jump track' to join Jesus' religion. He brings in

some well-off (have more than enough) folk TO help the poor among His people, 1 Tim 6:17-19.

Job had no problem in this area. He was lowly. He helped the poor. He opposed oppressors.

But our skin is attached to all of us. When we are miserable bodily, we cannot help feeling complaint. Without this feeling, for one thing, it's hard for us to identify with the afflicted, as Christ has identified with us.

Enough bodily pain will cause us to doubt if God is for us. Job teaches us to confess His continued sympathy in the face of seemingly zero evidence of it.