

Chapters 26-31 form Job's final speech. In the three previous chapters (26-28), he largely had his three friends in mind, but in the final three chapters (29-31), he's left them behind. And instead of thinking about them, he does three things: in chapter 29 he remembers his former happiness; in chapter 30 he reflects on his present sorrow; in chapter 31 he restates his innocence.

Thus, within this chapter Job remembers or reflects upon his former happiness. In short, he remembers four things: his peace (vv1-6), his works (vv7-17), his hopes (vv18-20), and his advice (vv21-25). And as we'll see next week, all of this is in contrast to his present suffering. Perhaps we can say, in chapter 29 Job takes a walk, through memory lane, as he remembers better days.

- I. His Peace (vv1-6)
- II. His Works (vv7-17)
- III. His Hopes (vv18-20)
- IV. His Advice (vv21-25)
- V. Lessons

I. His Peace (vv1-6)

1. By "peace" I refer to his inward peace of mind—he at one time enjoyed the intimate blessing of God.
2. V2—"Oh, that I were as in months past, as in the days when God watched over me"—that is, in the days prior to his suffering.
3. He's thinking back to a time before he lost everything—his children, possessions, health, and respect.
4. We can divide these memories into three categories (memories about his person, his house, and his prosperity).
5. (1) His person, v3—"When His lamp shone upon my head, and when by His light I walked through darkness."
6. Scripture uses the concept of "light" in several ways—oftentimes, it's used to describe a sense of God's blessing.
7. The lamp of God once shone upon his head—that is, he felt and was assured of God's peace and presence.
8. It was by this light he "walked through darkness"—that is, through the hardships of this present world.
9. In Job's day the wealthy would hang a lamp from the ceiling to provide light for those within the house.
10. Job is using this as an imagery to describe the blessing of God—God was with him, blessing and directing him.
11. Verse 3 is an explanation of the previous phrase "when God watched over me"—when He caused His light to shine upon my head and guided me through the darkness.
12. Keep in mind, Job no longer feels or senses this light upon His head, or guiding or directing his steps.
13. V2—"Oh, that I were as in months past, as in the days when God watched over me"—he felt as if God were no longer watching over him.
14. Now, this of course wasn't true—God was watching over him just as much in the present as in the past.
15. But here was the difference—Job no longer felt or sensed it—he was no longer aware of God's presence.

16. (2) His house, vv4-5—"Just as I was in the days of my prime, when the friendly counsel of God was over my tent; when the Almighty was yet with me, when my children were around me."
17. Job is thinking back when he was in his prime—when his children were younger dependent upon him.
18. The single Hebrew word rendered "friendly counsel" literally means "secret" and refers to a friendly intimacy.
19. It simply means, God's intimate and friendly blessing was over his tent—that is, was over his household.
20. V5—"When the Almighty was yet with me, when my children were around me"—by "yet with me" he means "by felt sense."
21. Again, it's not that God was no longer "with" Job, but that he was no longer aware of that presence as he once was.
22. Job felt "as if" God had left him—that He was no longer "with him"—that He was no longer close to him.
23. That his children were "around him" means, they were abundant, obedient, and shared in God's blessing.
24. Ps.128:3—"Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the very heart of your house, your children like olive plants all around your table."
25. These were fond and happy memories for Job—when his house was filled with children and laughter.
26. When He sensed the blessings of God upon his family—when they enjoyed the close fellowship of God.
27. (3) His prosperity, v6—"When my steps were bathed with cream, and the rock poured out rivers of oil for me!"
28. These are figurative and poetic ways to describe spiritual and physical prosperity—things were good for Job.
29. By "cream" is meant "butter" which along with "oil" was very expensive—both of which Job had in abundance.
30. MH—"His dairy abounded to such a degree that he might, if he pleased, *wash his steps with butter*; and his olive-yards were so fruitful, beyond expectation, that it seemed as if the *rock poured him out rivers of oil*. He reckons his wealth, not by his silver and gold, which were for hoarding, but by his butter and oil, which were for use; for what is an estate good for unless we take the good of it ourselves and do good with it to others?"
31. Thus, while Job does miss his family and possessions, if you notice, the thing he missed most was God.
32. He missed those days when God was with Him, shining His light upon him; when he knew His friendship; when the Almighty was with him.

II. His Works (vv7-17)

1. By "works" I refer to his good works or his benevolent works of love, especially towards those in need.
2. In verses 7-17 we find two things about his works—the results of his works (vv7-11), and the nature of his works (vv12-17).
3. (1) The results of his works (vv7-11)—within verses 7-11, Job describes the way he was treated for his good works.
4. V7—"When I went out to the gate by the city, when I took my seat in the open square"—this was the place where people gathered.

5. It was especially the place where all the leaders of the community gathered to discuss various subjects.
6. V8—"The young men saw me and hid, and the aged arose and stood"—that is, they stood out of respect.
7. V9—"The princes refrained from talking, and put their hand on their mouth"—by princes is meant leaders.
8. V10—"The voice of nobles was hushed, and their tongue stuck to the roof of their mouth"—this was a display of respect.
9. V11—"When the ear heard, then it blessed me, and when the eye saw, then it approved me"—this refers to the way others thought of Job.
10. When they heard of and saw his good deeds, they blessed and praised Job—they spoke highly of him.
11. (2) The nature of his works (vv12-17)—within verses 12-17, Job describes the specific nature of his works.
12. V12—"Because I delivered the poor who cried out, the fatherless and the one who had no helper"—the word "because" ties vv12-17 back to vv7-11.
13. In other words, the reason why Job was respected among leaders, was because he was known for good works.
14. Job was known for his benevolent and gracious heart—he took up the cause of the hopeless and helpless.
15. The poor (v12), the fatherless and helpless (v12b), the perishing (v13), the widow (v13b), and the blind and lame (v15).
16. V17—"I broke the fangs of the wicked, and plucked the victim from his teeth"—he cared for the needy.
17. Thus, Job isn't bragging, but merely remembering better days—days when he had the means to help others.

III. His Hopes (vv18-20)

1. By "hopes" I mean his previous aspirations or expectations of future blessing—his hopes of temporal joys.
2. I think most of us daydream about the future—about having a number of children and grandchildren.
3. Most of us think about a time when we shall retire and spend our final years with our wife and family.
4. But here's the tragedy—these plans or hopes will not always come to pass for each one of us—this is a fact.
5. Things will change and for some us, change in ways we could never have perceived and planned for.
6. V18—"Then I said, 'I shall die in my nest, and multiply my days as the sand'"—I will die old and happy.
7. V19—"My root is spread out to the waters, and the dew lies all night on my branch"—his heart and home were prosperous.
8. V20—"My glory is fresh within me, and my bow is renewed in my hand"—this refers to his honor and strength.
9. In other words, Job had every reason to believe his happiness would continue till the end of his days.

IV. His Advice (vv21-25)

1. By "advice" I refer to the advice he gave to others—unlike his friends, he was an effective counsellor.
2. Not only was Job known for assisting the poor, but also for counseling and comforting those in distress.
3. V21—"Men listened to me and waited, and kept silence for my counsel"—he words were as dew to them,"
4. V23—"They waited for me as for the rain, and they opened their mouth wide as for the spring rain"—his words refreshed them.
5. Verse 24 is one of few verses in this chapter that isn't clear—it either means one of two things—if he would have mocked them, they would not have believed it (KJV, NKJV).
6. Or else, he smiled on them when they did not believe—either way, the last phrase is clear—"the light of my countenance they did not cast down."
7. They highly esteemed his favor and blessing—he not only blessed people physically but also spiritually.
8. V25—"I chose the way for them, and sat as chief; so I dwelt as a king in the army, as one who comforts mourners."
9. It appears Job was some type of formal leader or governor within his community—he was a man of honor.
10. Now, stop and think for a moment—everything Job said about himself, has been removed from him.
11. He no longer felt the presence and blessing of God; he no longer was able to help others; he no longer had hopes of a long and happy life; and he no longer comforted the mourning.

V. Lessons

1. I almost feel like apologizing, having skimmed this wonderful chapter so quickly and in a surface way.
2. There are so many wonderful and practical truths found within these 25 verses that we could spend months considering them.
3. But in the time that we have this morning, I merely want to suggest two primary or major lessons from them.
4. (1) Our circumstances can quickly change—this obviously was true of Job in the fullest possible way (in fact, we can summarize his changes into four categories).
5. (a) Relational changes—his children died, his friends became enemies, and he became a reproach to the people.
6. And this of course can happen to us—your husband or wife leaves you, or else someone suddenly dies.
7. (b) Financial changes—he lost all of his possessions in one day—his house, servants, and all his livestock.
8. (c) Physical changes—by this I'm referring to his health—he went from healthy to being covered in sores.
9. If you remember in previous chapters, he lost so much weight he became scary to those around him.
10. If you think about it physical health is a fragile thing—we're all just one test away from major changes.
11. (d) Spiritual changes—he went from the bright light of God's countenance to the dark valley of depression.
12. For most Christians, life is filled with up and downs, and that includes spiritual ups and downs—there are mountains and valleys.

13. (2) We must remember the past dealings of God—that is, when things abruptly or gradually change in our lives.
14. Now, let me put it this way—most of us will experience negative or difficult changes in the near future.
15. Some of us will have a loved one leave us or die—others will undergo serious health or financial changes.
16. And perhaps even worse than these would be spiritual changes, when we walk through a valley of darkness.
17. When we walk through dark times, but no longer feel or sense God's light upon our heads guiding our steps.
18. Thus, the question I want to answer in closing is this—in such times as these, why must we remember the past dealings of God?
19. (a) To remember God hasn't changed—this is perhaps the most important thing to remember in times of change.
20. Regardless how much change we undergo, God hasn't changed in His being, word, or in His purposes.
21. God is the same when we are happy and sad; He's the same when we are rich and poor; and He's the same when we are healthy or sick.
22. In short, He's the same when everything is going perfectly as when everything is in complete turmoil.
23. Everything changes except God—every created thing changes for the better or for the worse, except God.
24. This is to say, regardless how difficult our changes are, God is no different before or after the changes.
25. And if God doesn't change and is no different after these changes, this means His purpose toward you doesn't change.
26. Just because God may have caused our circumstances to change, this doesn't mean He has changed toward us.
27. Mal.3:6—"For I am the LORD, I do not change; therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob"—these words were originally given to Israel.
28. The nation of Israel changed—she became disobedient—her circumstances didn't change but she did.
29. But the reason she wouldn't be consumed (destroyed) was because God, who is the LORD, does not change.
30. Perhaps I can put it this way—God is the same on the mountain peaks as He is in the deep valleys—He never changes.
31. (b) To remember temporal things are fleeting—that is, while God doesn't change all created things do.
32. This is what God often does—He takes away our temporal blessings so that we will learn they are temporary.
33. Prov.27:1—"Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth"—in other words, things can quickly change.
34. (c) To remember to appreciate present blessings—we have to appreciate them because they may not last.
35. We have to remember past blessings in order to appreciate present blessings, because they are temporal.
36. It's very easy for Christians to take such blessings for granted, even worse than this, to come to expect them.

37. Most of us are married, we have a houseful of children (grandchildren); we have houses, cars, and savings.
38. I personally believe this is especially a danger for citizens of this country—because we all are privileged.
39. And thus, at times God may take away some or many of these blessings to teach us to rightly value them.
40. But not only this, He may do so in order to teach us to esteem these blessings that matter most—people and grace.
41. These are the true treasures that really matter—our family members and friends (esp. Christian brethren).
42. While good health is a blessing, and a stable job and savings are blessings, let us not forget about people.
43. But of course, more than this, we must learn to appreciate spiritual blessings, such as peace and good conscience.
44. Let me clarify something—while it's true we can never lose our salvation; we can forgo spiritual blessings.
45. We can lose our peace and joy; we can lose a good conscience; we can lose the sense of God's presence.
46. Let me put it like this—sometimes God removes past blessings in order to teach us contentment with present things.
47. Heb.13:5—"Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have (with things present). For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'"
48. If there were any people whose circumstances greatly changed it was these first-century Hebrew Christians.
49. Having been converted to Christ, they became hated both by their fellow unsaved Jews and the Romans.
50. And if you remember, most of them had the possessions taken from them, and now had little outward comfort (they were all very similar to Job).
51. And what does the apostle tell them—"be without covetousness" and "be content with things present."
52. Hymn—"When upon life's billows you are tempest-tossed, when you are discouraged, thinking all is lost, count your many blessings; name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord has done."
53. (d) To remember our Savior who endured great changes—when your circumstances change, remember His changed too.
54. Matt.27:46—"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"—ever since He was born God's light shone upon His head; He always walked by the light of His Father.
55. And now, while He was upon that cross, that light no longer shone upon Him, but instead darkness fell over the land.
56. And the reason darkness fell over the land is because, spiritual darkness fell over the heart of our Savior.
57. By this I mean, the sense of His Father's love was hidden behind the clouds of the just judgement of God.
58. Thus, in this sense things were not the same for our Savior while on the cross, as they had been prior.
59. And so, when things change for us, let us remember, that no person before or after, ever endured such a change as our Savior.
60. And it's because of that change, God will never change toward us—He will always receive us and love us, regardless of our circumstances.