

NOTE: The following verses come from different Bible translations. The NIV is the primary version used due to its simplistic style, but at times other translations are more accurate or clear so they are used instead. Verses that are not from the NIV are marked to the left of the verse (for example, see 6:3,14, etc.).

So far, we have seen in Job 1 and 2 that Job's suffering sprung from a confrontation between God and Satan.

In Job's opening speech in chapter 3, Job cursed the day of his birth. He did this not just because he was suffering, but also because his view of God had fallen apart. He had held to a theological structure we call the doctrine of retribution (or retributive justice). Retributive justice simply says that the problem of evil is solved by the fact that God punishes the wicked and rewards the just. Job, however, knows that he is innocent; therefore, his suffering makes no sense to him. His experience is a complete contradiction to the theological world that he has adhered to, and has explained life as he knew it. Now, nothing makes sense to him. Job still believes in God, but he is in a dilemma.

We need to remember that the doctrine of retribution is not totally false; however, it is inadequate in explaining evil and suffering, and in this case, it does not apply at all.

In chapters 4 and 5, Eliphaz, Job's friend, speaks. He knew that Job was saying that everything he had believed in had collapsed. Therefore, he rebuked Job and sought to persuade him to confess that he had sinned and repent so that Job could be healed and their world would be back to the way they knew it.

**6:1 Then Job replied:**

**6:2 "If only my anguish could be weighed and all my misery be placed on the scales!**

**NLT 6:3 they would be heavier than all the sands of the sea. That is why I spoke so rashly.**

**6:4 The arrows of the Almighty are in me, my spirit drinks in their poison; God's terrors are marshaled against me.**

Verses 1–3 express the depth of Job's anguish. His misery outweighs anything that anyone has experienced. Job admits that he spoke rashly, but he believes he has good reason to complain!

Moreover, Job sees God as marshalling an attack against him. He has been struck with the arrows of God and their poison has made its way to his spirit.

**6:5 Does a wild donkey bray when it has grass, or an ox bellow when it has fodder?**

"The meaning of Job here is, that he did not complain without reason; and this he illustrates by the fact that the wild animal that had a plentiful supply of food would be gentle and calm, and that when its bray was heard it was proof that it was suffering" (Barnes). So Job says that his complaints are not unfounded; there is a reason for his complaining.

Next Job rebukes his friends for their shallow thinking and attitude they have toward him.

**6:6 Is tasteless food eaten without salt, or is there flavor in the white of an egg?**

**6:7 I refuse to touch it; such food makes me ill.**

The answer of Eliphaz was unsatisfying. This is all Eliphaz was saying, "Job, you need to repent!" His speech was as disagreeable to the mind as an egg white was bland to the taste. His counsel could not be relished. To Job it was completely unpalatable; he says, "I refuse to touch it; such food makes me ill" (6:7).

Even if Eliphaz's words were gentle, not mocking, Job is stung by them and he breaks forth in great emotion. In 6:14–17, Job accuses his friends of dealing treacherously with him.

**ESV 6:14 "He who withholds kindness from a friend forsakes the fear of the Almighty.**

"Kindness" is *hesed* (חֶסֶד) in Hebrew. It is a word most often used in relation to the lowly, needy and miserable. It is used of God's loving-kindness toward His covenant people and was to be a characteristic of those who love God.

Job is accusing his friends of forsaking their covenant-love for him. In Job's mind, their lack of compassion is forsaking the fear of God.

**6:15 But my brothers are as undependable as intermittent streams, as the streams that overflow**

**6:16 when darkened by thawing ice and swollen with melting snow,**

**6:17 but that cease to flow in the dry season, and in the heat vanish from their channels.**

Job's friends' friendship is likened to a wadi (an intermittent stream). There is no rain in the summertime in Israel, so the wadis are nothing but dry stream beds. But when the rainy season comes and there is the snowmelt coming from the mountains in Lebanon, the wadis suddenly become raging torrents—even flash floods. For a brief season there will be plenty of water and all of the vegetation will flourish and the flowers will bloom. But then of course, summer will come again, the rain will stop, and the wadis will dry up once more. That is what Job is saying his friends are like. When times were good, they were great; but now that times are bad for him, they offer him nothing; they are dry stream beds.

**ESV 6:24 "Teach me, and I will be silent; make me understand how I have gone astray.**

**6:25 How painful are honest words! But what do your arguments prove?**

**6:26 Do you mean to correct what I say, and treat the words of a despairing man as wind?**

**6:27 You would even cast lots for the fatherless and barter away your friend.**

Job asks that his friends teach him. Eliphaz spoke words of truth (6:25a), but he still failed to explain the hard facts of Job's experience (6:25b). His arguments proved nothing since they didn't address what had actually happened to Job. Job wants answers, but he isn't getting any.

Job's friends were treating his words as wind (6:26b)—as if they meant nothing! If they listened to what he said, they may be able to give a better, more thoughtful answer. Instead, they picked at Job's words and were not willing to make allowances for the hasty expressions of a man in despair. "They were disposed to make him 'an offender for a word' rather than to enter into the real merits of the case" (Barnes).

In 6:27 Job tells them, "You would cast lots over the fatherless and bargain over your friend." In the ancient world, if someone was an orphan he was totally unprotected and would inevitably fall into slavery; he became property that people could gamble over until somebody took him away as a slave.

To paraphrase: "You know who I am, you know how I have lived my life, and yet you insult and disrespect me whom once you called your friend."

After urging them to change their minds (6:28–30) and complaining a little more (7:1–6), Job prays and expresses to God how bitterly He has treated him. This is the first step that will eventually lead to the resolution that Job needs.

**7:7 Remember, O God, that my life is but a breath; my eyes will never see happiness again.**

**7:8 The eye that now sees me will see me no longer; you will look for me, but I will be no more.**

**7:9 As a cloud vanishes and is gone, so he who goes down to the grave does not return.**

**7:10 He will never come to his house again; his place will know him no more.**

Job wants to stir God to compassion. He wants God to be mindful that he is at the limits of what his body can bear. He asks God to remember that he is just mortal. He is weak. He is like a cloud that vanishes (7:9). If God does not act and stop afflicting him, Job will be no more. Those who see him now will see him no more (7:8a); he will not return to his house (7:10). God will look for him, but not find him (7:8b). His request is urgent. He feels that he will soon die. He is fearful that he will not see happiness again (7:7b).

**7:11 "Therefore I will not keep silent; I will speak out in the anguish of my spirit, I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.**

**7:12 Am I the sea, or the monster of the deep, that you put me under guard?**

Because Job feels that he has been unjustly treated and his end is near, he isn't going to hold back how he feels. "Complaining or not, I will not keep silent."

In verse 12 he asks why God has set a guard over him.

**Am I the sea . . . that you put me under guard?**

"The sea" in the Bible can refer to the physical sea, part of God's good creation, but the sea for the ancient Israelites was thought of as a frightening, dangerous place. The Israelites were not seafarers, but even seafaring peoples in the ancient world had a great dread of the sea. They knew its power and they knew that if you fall into it, it could kill you.

In the Bible, the seashore is the boundary God sets around the sea. In Job 38:10–11 God says, "I placed boundaries on it and set a bolt and doors, and I said, 'Thus far you shall come, but no farther; And here shall your proud waves stop.'" The shoreline has been made by God to keep the sea back and people safe on dry land. It is God's wall to protect people from its dangers. In Revelation 21:1 it says, "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; *and there was no more sea.*" The sea "is the principle of disorder, violence, or unrest that marks the old creation (Isa. 57:20; Psa. 107: 25–28; Eze. 28:8). It is not that the sea is evil in itself, but that its aspect is one of hostility to mankind" (Thomas, Revelation, 440).

**Am I . . . the monster of the deep. . . that you put me under guard?**

If there is a monster, people keep close track of it lest it destroy the unwary. The monster of the deep is probably another reference to Leviathan that will come up again toward the end of the book.

“The sense of the verse is, that God had treated him as if he were untamable and turbulent, as if he were like the restless ocean, or as if he were some monster, which could be restrained within proper limits only by the stern exercise of power” (Barnes). Thus, Job is saying, “Am I like a raging and tumultuous sea, that it is necessary to restrain and confine me?” (Barnes) “Am I so dangerous that you need to exercise constant watchfulness over me like a frightful monster of the deep?”

Job is very direct in his complaining to God. We should understand, however, that this is quite normal in Hebrew poetry and in Hebrew prayers. If you read the Psalms, you will notice that very often the psalmists will speak to God in amazingly direct terms. They will say things like, “God, where are you? Have you forgotten about us? Aren’t you going to save us?” These are things that we typically would not pray. So, when Job is very direct in his prayers, we should not necessarily think of that as irreverence; rather, that is how people prayed.

**7:17 "What is man that you make so much of him, that you give him so much attention,  
7:18 that you examine him every morning and test him every moment?  
7:19 Will you never look away from me, or let me alone even for an instant?  
7:20 If I have sinned, what have I done to you, O watcher of men? Why have you made me your target? Have I become a burden to you?  
7:21 Why do you not pardon my offenses and forgive my sins? For I will soon lie down in the dust; you will search for me, but I will be no more."**

This is remarkably similar to Psalm 8:3–9 (ESV):

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas. O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Psalm 8 begins with the magnitude of creation and God, the Almighty Creator. This is something the book of Job stresses constantly. When the psalmist looked at how vast the universe is and how small we appear in comparison he asks, “What is man that you are mindful of him?” The question is something beautiful and positive. It is really a question expressing joy and amazement. The writer rejoices that though we are seemingly minute specks in the universe around us, God watches over us. He cares for us. He protects us. Not only that, God has even elevated us. For all our weakness and mortality, He has made us rulers over the world and set all the animals under us. In short, it is a psalm praising God for making us special and keeping His eye on us.

Job, by contrast, says, “What is mankind that you make so much of them, that you give them so much attention and examine them every morning?” For Job, the fact that God watches man so intently is not a thing of comfort; it is a thing of terror because he now sees God as someone who is constantly looking for a reason to condemn and punish him. Job has taken Psalm 8 and has turned it on its head. He views God’s unceasing gaze (which is usually an expression of interest and approval) as something to dread.

When Job says, “Why do you not pardon my offenses?” (7:21), He is not saying, “I confess, I am a sinner.” Job will maintain throughout all his speeches, right up to the very end, that he did not commit any sins to deserve what has happened to him. Rather, this type of question is fairly common in the Bible and other ancient Near Eastern poetry. It is as if the person says, “Okay God, if I sinned, forgive me. I don’t know what it was, but forgive me if I did something wrong.” Job is really just saying, “God, ease up. I don’t know why You’re doing this.”

To a great extent, we need to understand this as the outcry of a man who is in deep anguish and who is in a theological crisis. We’ll say this again and again. In Job’s mind, retribution is the only way God works. Yet, since the doctrine of retribution has collapsed, Job is left with a picture of God as one who arbitrarily struck him down. Thus, he cries out to God, “God, stop looking at me! Leave me alone!” (7:19)

Job’s trials have caused Job to question what God is like. His thoughts are skewed. He looks at God like a warrior raining arrows down upon him (6:4). “Usually the faithful aspire for the eyes of the Lord to shine on their lives, for such observation brings deliverance, security, and blessing” (Psa. 33:18–19; 34–16; Hartley, 151). Yet, in 7:18–19 Job hopes that God would stop looking at him. He asks, “If I have sinned, what have I done to you, O watcher of men? Why have you made me your target? Have I become a burden to you?” When life is going smoothly these questions rarely come to mind.

The reality is that God hasn’t changed. God was never Job’s enemy. Job was never perceived as burdensome. God loved Job. His watchful eye was a good thing that was sustaining Job through the trial. But when trials reach our limit it becomes harder to believe what we once believed about God. Nevertheless, it needs to be clear that Job never lost his faith in God. Job 13:15 records his famous words, “Though He slay me, I will hope in Him.”

#### IN CONCLUSION:

Job is making progress ever so slightly.

In comparison with his opening curse-lament, his mood is less caustic. Instead of thinking only about the advantages of dying, he begins to ponder the possibility of relief from his illness in this life. Forcefully, though, he defends his right to lament. While he vividly bemoans his pain, both physical and emotional, the majority of his speech is an attack on his antagonists, both the comforters and God. He denounces his friends for their lack of faithful loyalty and their thinking that he deserves his affliction. And he accuses God, directly and pointedly, of being excessively cruel to him. Although Job has a long way to go before he gains the confidence to challenge God for a resolution for his case, he has taken the first step (Hartley, 153, 154).