

# Job's Final Speech

## Introduction

### a. objectives

1. subject – Job speaks one last time, reflecting on his life and what it means to walk by faith
2. aim – To cause us to recognize what it means to walk by faith, even when confused about life
3. passage – Job 29:1-31:40

### b. outline

1. Job Reflects on His Past (29:1-25)
2. Job Reflects on His Present (30:1-31)
3. Job Reflects on His Future (31:1-40)

### c. opening

1. **chaps. 22-31** represent **Round Three** of the dialogue of Job and his friends
  - a. Job responded to Eliphaz's third speech (**22-24**), and then cut off Bildad's third speech when he realized that his friends could/would not offer any *sound, theologically relevant* advice, offering (instead) a "higher" view of God than they hold (**25-28**)
  - b. **now:** in **chaps. 29-31**, Job will give his **final speech** of the book
    1. **note #1: chap. 29** seems to be distinct from **chaps. 26-28**, given the intro in **29:1**
    2. **note #2: chap. 31** ends with "*the words of Job are ended*" – this is *truly* the *last* speech of Job
      - a. he will respond *briefly* to God in **40:3-5** and **42:1-6**, but only in repentance for his *own* words
2. **Calvin** notes the following that we must consider (from **Sermon 118** on **31:35-40**):
  - a. it is a **dangerous** thing to "confront" God for answers to life's issues, *especially* when we think that we are "in the right" or deserve "an answer"
    1. **true:** sometimes our sufferings are according to the *threats* God makes in his law
      - a. the laws of morality are *often* accompanied with *specific* threats (**e.g. Genesis 2:17**)
    2. **but:** God is *not* punishing Job for his sins (even though he *deserved* to be)
      - a. the point of these sufferings is *clearly apparent* from **chaps. 1-2**: a *means* by which God will show **the faith and patience of his servant** under his *divinely ordained purpose*
    3. **yet (up to this point):** Job has pled with God to 1) make a case for his integrity, and 2) know why he is enduring the way he is (**i.e.** the essence of Job's replies to his friends)
      - a. but (**now**) ... Job is *coming to realize* that any attempt to "make a case" before the Almighty is *fraught with danger*, for a sinful man must recognize:
 

"... there is nothing more frightening than for God to enter into a legal encounter with us. If he makes himself the plaintiff, alas, what can happen to us? So if we continue to provoke him and seek to plead against him, do we not do so to our great bewilderment? ... And how will that turn out? ... if he wishes to use his power and keep us ignorant, as it were, wanting us not to know why he is using such great rigor against us, even in such an extreme time, we must still lower our heads and find our refuge in what we have already declared, namely, that God is always and everywhere just. And yet even though we do not know the reason he torments us, let us continue to glorify him at all times."(Calvin)
  4. **thus:** Job's final speech is a **recognition** = there is *no point* in attempting to "defend" oneself before God ... there may be no answer forthcoming and it is **okay to be okay with that** ...
    - a. **IOW:** the **faith** of Job is beginning to *genuinely show up* – his friends attempted to "derail" it, but (now) Job realizes that the only proper answer is to simply "settle in" (by faith) to whatever God has purposed for him ...
- b. so ... Job (**now**) reflects upon the reality of his life: first his past (**29**), then his present situation (**30**), then what he hopes is revealed and vindicated in the future (**31**)

## I. Job Reflects on His Past (29:1-25)

### Content

#### a. Job reflects on his past

1. **read 29:2-6:** Job remembers a time when life was *good*, when he had *honor* and *prosperity*
  - a. in **vv. 7-25**, he lists a number of things that were special to him in those days:
    1. "*the young men saw me and withdrew*", "*the aged rose and stood*" (**v. 8**) = he was a man of **respect**; even "*princes*" and "*nobles*" were "*hushed*" as he came out (**vv. 9-10**)
      - a. **i.e.** at the "*gate of the city*" (**v. 7**) is where the honored men would gather to discuss the business of the city and to make judgments over legal matters (**e.g. Lot; Genesis 19:1**)
      - b. **note:** the NT term *ecclesia* is a Greek word for those "called out", applied to a gathering of a city "council" to render judgments – the early Christians "took" this word, with its meaning of being "called out" as honored, and as a "gathering" of the people of Christ

2. “because I delivered the poor”, “the blessing of him who was about to perish came upon me”, “I caused the widow’s heart to sing for joy” (v. 12-13) = he was a man with a reputation for being generous to others, including the poor and those in dire straights
3. “I put on righteousness, and it clothed me”, “my justice was like a robe” (v. 14) = he was a man of justice, being “eyes to the blind” (v. 15), “father to the needy” (v. 16) – he took from his own understanding of righteousness and applied it *fairly* to others
  - a. **i.e.** “I broke the fangs of the unrighteous” (v. 17) = he overcame the power of the *unjust*
4. “men listened to me and waited” (v. 21), “I smiled on them when they had no confidence” (v. 24), “I chose their way and sat as chief” (v. 25) = he was a man of wisdom, others looking to him for advice and direction in life, “like one who comforts mourners” (**i.e.** those who don’t know where to find comfort and help)
5. **LOW:** Job reflects on a *fulfilling life*: having respect, a reputation for generosity, being just and having wisdom
  - b. but ... he *attributes* it all as “days when God watched over me” (v. 2)
    1. in **vv. 2-6**, he *reiteratively* speaks of God watching over him: God’s light was with him (v. 3), he had God’s friendship (v. 4), his life was filled with the Lord’s prosperity (**vv. 5-6**)
    2. **LOW:** Job recognizes that all of the blessings of his life **are due to the presence and blessing of the Lord** – he was what he was, and did what he did only because of God’s blessing
      - a. **we know:** Job was a man of righteousness as a *function of God’s decree* – the pronouncement of God over Job (1:8) was the *power of God* spoken forth – **i.e.** Job was righteous *because God declared it to be so, to accomplish a greater purpose*
2. **Job reflects upon his life, and recognizes a life of righteousness – a righteousness that poured out of him only by the grace of God over him**
  - a. **LOW:** Job has no *reason* to “defend” himself before God – he recognizes that his (former) life of righteousness and prosperity **is from the hand of God**

## II. Job Reflects on His Present (30:1-31)

### Content

#### a. Job reflects on what has changed

1. **read 30:1-4, 9-11:** Job laments that those from whom he *once* had respect *now* mock him
  - a. **e.g.** “men who are younger than I” (v. 1) = those who *should* respect him, even if not *earned*
  - b. in **vv. 3-8**, he *describes* those who (**now**) *disrespect* him (**in contrast to before**):
    1. “they gnaw the dry ground” (v. 3), “they pick saltwort” (a sour-tasting plant), “the roots of the broom tree for food” (v. 4), “they are driven out from human company” (v. 5), “in the gullies ... they dwell” (v. 6), “they have been whipped out of the land”
      - a. **i.e.** they have no food, they have no companionship, they live in terrible conditions
    2. **meaning:** those who “*laugh*” at him (v. 1) are **themselves the truly needy ones**:
      - a. as a result of the disasters that have come upon him (under God’s purposes; **see v. 11**), those who *once* respected and honored him *have turned away*; his *sufferings* have become a “*means*” by which others now *mock him* ... but Job sees them as the ones to be pitied ...
  - c. so ... in **vv. 9-15**, Job describes their (**now**) *pitiable* reaction to him:
    1. they “*abhor me*” (v. 10), “I am a byword to them” (v. 9), “they do not hesitate to spit at the sight of me” (v. 10), “they have cast off restraint in my presence” (v. 11), “they break up my path” (v. 13), “terrors are turned upon me” (v. 15)
      - a. this is the reaction of fallen people when God lifts his hand of restraint **from them**
      - b. this is *common amongst sinful men*, for the reprobate to mock and jeer; when trouble befalls those *pursuing the things of God*, the reprobate see it as an “*opportunity*” to mock God
        1. **e.g.** those at the foot of the cross of Jesus (**Luke 23:35-38**) – mocking him for the “*suffering*” he is enduring – **i.e.** rejecting *him* and the God he *proclaimed*
      - c. **irony:** although it *appears* that Job is the needy one, it becomes all too apparent *to him* that they are the truly needy (**i.e.** they have nothing of any substance; **see above**)
    2. **LOW:** Job has no *reason* to “defend” himself before God – he recognizes that his (former) friends now mock him **because that’s what sinful, spiritually needy men do**
2. **read 30:16-19, 24-27:** Job (unfortunately) laments his own *internal struggle*
  - a. **note:** although Job is *certainly* “growing” in his faith and understanding, he has not yet reached *full maturity* – he is living **the common reality of the saved**: the struggle with the flesh that leads to *doubt* and *confusion* (thus, his “*scolding*” by God and his *repentance* in **42:1-6**)
    1. especially when everyone is “*piling on*” (**see above**) ...

### Job’s Final Speech

- b. in **vv. 16-31**, Job describes this inner turmoil:
  1. “the night racks my bones” (**v. 17**), “God has cast me into the mire” (**v. 19**), “I cry to you for help and you do not answer me” (**v. 20**), “my inward parts are in turmoil” (**v. 27**), “I go about darkened” (**v. 26**), “my lyre is turned to mourning” (**v. 31**)
  2. **IOW**: like all *justified* men, Job struggles with *sanctification* – the natural tendency of the flesh to raise doubts and fears in our *spirit* about the goodness of God
- 3. **Job reflects upon the negative aspects of his present life, but (underneath it all) recognizes that, despite his struggles, he is actually “better off” than others who do not know God**
  - a. **IOW**: Job has no *reason* to “defend” himself before God – he recognizes that his (current) life of rejection and misery *is from the hand of God* – the *proof* of that comes in what he says next ...

### III. Job Reflects on His Future (31:1-40)

#### Content

##### a. Job reflects on his *hoped for* vindication

1. **read 31:5-8, 35-37**: Job (again) contends that he has been righteous
  - a. **note**: this section is characterized by a series of *conditional clauses* (i.e. “if” statements)
    1. **i.e.** in sections beginning in **vv. 5, 9, 13, 16, 24, 29, 38 (x7)**, along with a series of *subordinate conditionals* within each section (e.g. **vv. 7, 19, 20, 21, 25, 26, 31, 33, 39**)
    2. each starting “if” proposes a *hypothetical*: *if* I am guilty of “this or that”, *then* I am worthy to be judged by God in a certain way *appropriate* to the sin of which I am guilty:
      - a. spoken falsehood → crop failure (**vv. 5, 8**); lust towards a woman → loss of my wife (**vv. 9, 10**); unfair support of my servants → similar fate from God (**vv. 13, 14**); failure to take care of the poor → broken arm (**vv. 16, 22**); put confidence in gold → punished by judges (**vv. 24, 28**); rejoiced at the ruin of an enemy → public shaming (**vv. 29, 36**); theft of others crops → my own crops would fail (**vv. 38, 40**)
    3. however ... the *point* of each “if” is *rhetorical*: I am *not* guilty of any of these things, and my life has demonstrated this by the fact that *none of these judgments have befallen me*
      - a. **i.e.** before this attack by the devil, Job had lived without any of these judgments in his life
  - b. **IOW**: Job parallels his life from **chap. 29** – he is righteous, and has lived faithfully – the judgment of his “friends” is wrong, and he *appeals* for something more ...
2. **read 31:1-2, 6, 14, 23, 28, 35**: Job pleads for *vindication* from God himself
  - a. sprinkled amongst his *rhetorical* assertions of righteousness is his *belief* that all of this is *known by God*, and (thus!) he has no *need* to defend himself *before God*
    1. **remember**: to enter into a “dispute” with God over righteousness/unrighteousness is a foolish effort, since the omniscient God *knows* and *purposes* the destinies of men
  - b. **IOW**: Job is recognizing that his attempts (like his friends!) to “defend” himself is foolish
3. **Job seeks simply to be vindicated in the purposes of God, that God himself knows all of this to be true because he has purposed all things in Job’s life**
  - a. **we know**: in the *gospel*, the *righteousness of God* is revealed (**Romans 1:16-17**) – that any righteousness necessary to stand before God in judgment **can only come from him**
    1. any attempt to stand before God and “defend” oneself is foolish – what we need is an *alien righteousness*, the righteousness *he imputes* to his own (**Romans 5:18-19**)  
“Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.”
4. **the message of Job is simple**: the only way to stand *righteous* before God is to “put down” all sense of “self-righteousness” and **come by faith in Christ alone** – we have no other *defense* before a holy God but the **righteousness of Christ himself**