

Job 6-7 – “What Is Man that You Make So Much of Him”  
Psalm 88  
Hebrews 2

February 26, 2012

Our Psalm of response is Psalm 88.

Psalm 88 is something of an extended meditation on Job’s problem.

Heman the Ezrahite says that he is cut off from the hand of God,  
and that it is *God* who has put him in the depths of the pit.

“Your wrath lies heavy upon me, and you overwhelm me with all your waves.”

Psalm 88 concludes:

“Afflicted and close to death from my youth up, I suffer your terrors; I am helpless.

Your wrath has swept over me; your dreadful assaults destroy me.

They surround me like a flood all day long; they close in on me together.

You have caused my beloved and my friend to shun me;

my companions have become darkness

[or perhaps, darkness has become my only companion].”

The only note of comfort in the whole Psalm is the opening line:

“O LORD, God of my salvation...”

In other words, Psalm 88 cries out to God from the pit.

The only two things I know is that 1) you have put me here –

and 2) you are the one who will deliver me from here.

I once had a pastor friend ask me,

“Why would you ever sing Psalm 88 in worship?”

I replied, “Have you never had anyone in your church who suffered from depression?”

If you have ever known the dark night of the soul –

and perhaps you are experiencing that darkness intimately – even today! –

Psalm 88 reminds you that even believers – even the most faithful of Christians –

will have days like this.

Job – who is one of the few men whom God calls “my servant” –

of whom God says, “he is blameless and upright,

one who fears God and turns away from evil” –

Job spent weeks in this state.

And of course, our Lord Jesus had a day like this.

Psalm 88 is preeminently a Psalm of the cross.

Perhaps it is fitting that we will be spending “Lent” considering the sufferings of Job,

and seeing how the sufferings of “my servant Job”

point us to the suffering servant, our Lord Jesus Christ.

But in the same way that Job *prefigures* Christ,

we who are baptized into Christ

are also called to share in his sufferings.

Sing Psalm 88  
Hebrews 2

Last time we saw that Eliphaz started by suggesting that maybe this is just “common wrath.”

Compared to God, what is man?

Can mortal man be in the right before God?

Can a man be pure before his maker?

Eliphaz is willing to grant (for the moment) the possibility that Job is innocent –  
but “affliction does not come from the dust...

man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward.”

Trouble is the common lot of man.

Now, Eliphaz has a good point.

When earthquakes leveled Christchurch in New Zealand

that was an example of God’s common wrath –

disasters strike the righteous and the wicked together;

diabetes, cancer, heart attacks –

these are part of God’s common wrath against humanity.

Yes, in a general sense, all these things only happen because of sin –

but not because of *your* sin – rather, because of original sin –

because humanity is in rebellion against God.

Common wrath is an important category

because sometimes people think that God is “picking on them” –

when in fact, they are simply experiencing what happens to everyone.

But *sometimes* God *is* picking on you!

If you look at Job,

in a single day,

but in four separate actions,

he lost all his worldly possessions –

as well as all his ten children!

*Rightly* does Job say,

“the terrors of God are arrayed against me”

*Well* does he ask,

“Why have you made me your mark?

Why have I become a burden to you?”

Eliphaz had said that “vexation kills the fool” (5:2) –

Job now replies, “you have no idea!”

### **1. Oh That It Would Please God to Crush Me! Job’s Monologue (6:2-13)**

#### **a. There Is Nothing Common in What Has Happened to Me! (v2-7)**

*Then Job answered and said:*

<sup>2</sup> *“Oh that my vexation were weighed,*

*and all my calamity laid in the balances!*  
<sup>3</sup> *For then it would be heavier than the sand of the sea;*  
*therefore my words have been rash.*

Job admits that his opening speech in chapter 3 was pretty pointless!  
Cursing the day of your birth cannot possibly accomplish anything!  
But Job's point is that there is no reason on earth that can explain his torment.  
My words have been rash – but my words have been right!  
because it is *God* who has done this to me: [read v4]

<sup>4</sup> *For the arrows of the Almighty are in me;*  
*my spirit drinks their poison;*  
*the terrors of God are arrayed against me.*  
<sup>5</sup> *Does the wild donkey bray when he has grass,*  
*or the ox low over his fodder?*  
<sup>6</sup> *Can that which is tasteless be eaten without salt,*  
*or is there any taste in the juice of the mallow?<sup>[a]</sup>*  
<sup>7</sup> *My appetite refuses to touch them;*  
*they are as food that is loathsome to me.<sup>[b]</sup>*

God is shooting poisoned arrows at me!  
He's feeding me with loathsome food –  
so don't be surprised that I'm braying like a wild donkey!

**b. So I Wish God Would Just Cut Me Off (v8-13)**

<sup>8</sup> *“Oh that I might have my request,*  
*and that God would fulfill my hope,*  
<sup>9</sup> *that it would please God to crush me,*  
*that he would let loose his hand and cut me off!*

I just want to die.

But notice how he says it:  
He says, “Oh, that it would please God to crush me.”

Job is responding to Eliphaz!  
Eliphaz spoke of “crushing” twice in 4:19 and 5:4 to speak of how  
people are crushed by the events of life.  
Job now says, “Oh, that it would please God to crush me.”

But this is not a common word.  
It is only used 18 times in the OT –  
6 times in Job, and 5 times in Isaiah.

It is the word used in Isaiah 53,  
when it says that the Servant of the LORD

“was crushed for our iniquities” (v5)  
and that “it was the will of the LORD to crush him” (v10).

Now, I’m not suggesting that Job knows this!

He does not realize that he is a picture of the Suffering Servant.

But *you* are supposed to hear the connection!

Job is thinking – I just wish God would crush me and put me out of my misery!

But God’s point is that it is only through the suffering of his innocent servant  
that God will bring comfort to the human race!

Job says this – but since he doesn’t understand it, it brings him no comfort!

<sup>10</sup> *This would be my comfort;  
I would even exult<sup>[c]</sup> in pain unsparing,  
for I have not denied the words of the Holy One.*

Job’s friends have come to comfort him.

They have come to help him make sense of his misery.

They want him to see that what has happened to him  
fits into the pattern of life in God’s world.

But Job says that there is no explanation that will bring him comfort.

Only death would bring comfort –

because in death he at least would have the consolation of knowing,

“that I have not denied the words of the Holy One.”

His one consolation is that he has not cursed God –

he has remained faithful to God.

But if he continues in his misery, he cannot guarantee that he will hold out!

Verses 11-13 bear this out:

<sup>11</sup> *What is my strength, that I should wait?*

*And what is my end, that I should be patient?*

<sup>12</sup> *Is my strength the strength of stones, or is my flesh bronze?*

<sup>13</sup> *Have I any help in me,  
when resource [sound wisdom] is driven from me?*

Job’s words here are important.

What is my strength?

“strength” is the word used all over scripture

to refer to how God delivered Israel from Egypt with a “mighty hand”

The normal response is

“the LORD is my strength”

But Job isn’t quite so sure!

I am flesh – I am not stone or bronze that I should endure this misery!

When *God* is the one whose arrows pierce me,  
what *is* my strength to endure?

And further, what is my end?

This word “end” is used in Genesis 6, when it says that God will make an end of all flesh.  
It is likewise used in Ezekiel 7 to refer to the “end” of Jerusalem,  
as God will now pour his wrath out on his people.  
Or perhaps more to the point here, think of Psalm 39:4 – “let me know my end”

I am transient – my days swiftly pass.

Where am I going?

And where can I find help – where can I find wisdom  
[the word “resource” is usually translated “sound wisdom” in Job and Proverbs]  
who can help me in my distress?

Job knows all the right answers.

He knows that the LORD is his help and deliverer –  
but the LORD is the one pursuing him!  
The LORD is the one who shooting at him!

What do you do when the one who is supposed to be your strength and wisdom  
is the one who is attacking you?!!

Well, at least you can rely on your friends, right?

When all else goes wrong,  
at least your friends will stand by you!

## **2. Show Me Where I Am Wrong! Job’s Reply to His Friends (6:14-30)**

### **a. My Friends Are Not Helping (v14-20)**

In verses 14-20 Job refers to his friends in the third person.

<sup>14</sup> “*He who withholds<sup>[d]</sup> kindness from a friend  
forsakes the fear of the Almighty.*”

The word translated “kindness” is the word *hesed* –  
often translated steadfast love, or covenant faithfulness.  
This is the sort of “friendship” that Jesus referred to in John 15.  
A friend shows covenant loyalty –  
a friend is faithful in all his dealings.  
We are to love our neighbors as ourselves –  
and Jesus taught us that *everyone* we meet is our neighbor!

But who is my friend?

A friend, as Gregory the Great points out,  
is one “who is united to us in a faithful attachment”

in which we mutually aid each other  
“toward attaining hereafter the eternal country.” (7.28)  
Friendship is always directed toward an end.

Nowadays we tend to think of friendship in terms of “warm personal relations” –  
but friendship has to do with loyalty and commitment.

A neighbor is someone who is in your ‘vicinity.’  
A friend is someone who shares a common end – a common goal –  
someone to whom you are bound in a common venture.

You are to be good and loving neighbors to all people –  
but you are to be faithful friends to one another in the church.  
This is why Paul talks about the church as the body of Christ –  
daily exhorting one another and warning one another.

How do you show friendship?  
One day I was having lunch with a friend.  
My eyes wandered.  
Under the table I felt a sharp kick.  
That was *hesed* – that was covenant faithfulness.

If you see your friend stumble, and you do nothing about it!  
That is to withhold *hesed* – to withhold kindness from a friend.

And one who “withholds *hesed* from a friend”  
forsakes the fear of the Almighty.

This is strong language!  
But Job’s point is that this is just one of those basic principles of life:  
you *don’t* betray a friend.

The word for “friend” here in verse 14 (and verse 27)  
is the same word for “friend” or “companion” in Psalm 88.

Jesus will be abandoned by his friends on the cross –  
as Psalm 88 will say,  
“you have caused my beloved and my friend to shun me.”

And Job says that his friends – his “brothers” –

- <sup>15</sup> *My brothers are treacherous as a torrent-bed,  
as torrential streams that pass away,*  
<sup>16</sup> *which are dark with ice,  
and where the snow hides itself.*  
<sup>17</sup> *When they melt, they disappear;  
when it is hot, they vanish from their place.*

<sup>18</sup> *The caravans turn aside from their course;  
they go up into the waste and perish.*  
<sup>19</sup> *The caravans of Tema look,  
the travelers of Sheba hope.*  
<sup>20</sup> *They are ashamed because they were confident;  
they come there and are disappointed.*

The image in verses 18-20 suggests a scene that would have been familiar to his hearers.

The caravans of Tema and Sheba regularly traveled through the desert.

As regular travelers in this terrain, they *knew* where to find water.

They would only turn aside from their course  
if they had confidence that they would find water!

You don't go on a wild-goose chase in the desert!  
But this time, the experienced traveler is ashamed  
because the water course that had never let him down before  
has run dry –  
and so now he will perish in the wilderness!

In the same way,

Job says, I'm parched with thirst in the wilderness, looking for water –  
and you – my friends and brothers – came to bring comfort,  
to bring cool water for my parched lips –

but instead you turn against me!

**b. So Teach Me, and Show Me My Fault (v21-30)**

<sup>21</sup> *For you have now become nothing;  
you see my calamity and are afraid.*

You *were* my friends.

Now you are nothing to me!

A friend would not turn against me in my hour of need!

It's not like I've asked you to bribe someone.

<sup>22</sup> *Have I said, 'Make me a gift'?*  
*Or, 'From your wealth offer a bribe for me'?*  
<sup>23</sup> *Or, 'Deliver me from the adversary's hand'?*  
*Or, 'Redeem me from the hand of the ruthless'?*

It's not like I'm asking for something devious or wicked.

If you want to make yourselves useful,  
show me where I am wrong?!

Show me how my speech has strayed from what is right!

<sup>24</sup> “Teach me, and I will be silent;  
 make me understand how I have gone astray.  
<sup>25</sup> How forceful are upright words!  
 But what does reproof from you reprove?  
<sup>26</sup> Do you think that you can reprove words,  
 when the speech of a despairing man is wind?  
<sup>27</sup> You would even cast lots over the fatherless,  
 and bargain over your friend.  
<sup>28</sup> “But now, be pleased to look at me,  
 for I will not lie to your face.  
<sup>29</sup> Please turn; let no injustice be done.  
 Turn now; my vindication is at stake.  
<sup>30</sup> Is there any injustice on my tongue?  
 Cannot my palate discern the cause of calamity?

In essence, in verses 21-30

Job says that his friends have betrayed him  
 because they refuse to accept his claim of innocence.  
 Eliphaz had tried to find some way to account for Job’s suffering that didn’t involve Job’s guilt.  
 Job says, sorry, but common wrath won’t work.  
 God has it in for me.

So if you can show me my fault – if you can show why God is doing this – I will thank you!

Verse 30 is the key to the whole section:

“Is there any injustice on my tongue?  
 Cannot my palate discern the cause of calamity?”

I’m telling you that none of this is my fault.  
 The cause of my calamity is *God*.  
 If you would show covenant loyalty – if you would show *hesed* to me –  
 then you would either show me my fault, or join my side!

And so, since his so-called “friends” are obviously weak and foolish –  
 Job turns to address God.

Why does Job address God in the middle of a debate with his friends?

David Clines answers this well,

“Direct address to God in the midst of formal debate...may be out of place...,  
 but, all [things] considered, it is only in that direction that speech has any value for Job.  
 The monologue of chap. 3 was impotent,  
 dialogue with the friends has already proved distressingly disappointing;  
 where else can Job turn his words than toward God?  
 His instinct to do so,  
 his single-minded assurance that it is God with whom he has to do,  
 will prove his salvation in the end.” (196)



Like Heman the Ezrahite in Psalm 88,  
like Peter and the 12 in John 6,  
Job realizes that in spite of the absurdity of the situation,  
he has nowhere else to turn!  
“Lord, to whom shall we go? You alone have the words of eternal life...”

And so he turns to God:

### **3. Why Don't You Leave Me Alone? Job's First Address to God (7:1-21)**

#### **a. The Misery of Life (v1-6)**

*“Has not man a hard service on earth,  
and are not his days like the days of a hired hand?  
<sup>2</sup> Like a slave who longs for the shadow,  
and like a hired hand who looks for his wages,*

A day laborer was supposed to be paid at the end of each day.  
I am like a laborer who never gets paid.

<sup>3</sup> *so I am allotted months of emptiness,  
and nights of misery are apportioned to me.*

And oh, how long those nights of misery are!

<sup>4</sup> *When I lie down I say, ‘When shall I arise?’  
But the night is long,  
and I am full of tossing till the dawn.*

My nights are just as toilsome as my days –  
there is no rest!  
And what is more,

<sup>5</sup> *My flesh is clothed with worms and dirt;  
my skin hardens, then breaks out afresh.  
<sup>6</sup> My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle  
and come to their end without hope.*

#### **b. The Eye of Him Who Sees Me: God's Eyes Are Troubling Job (v7-10)**

<sup>7</sup> *“Remember that my life is a breath;  
my eye will never again see good.  
<sup>8</sup> The eye of him who sees me will behold me no more;  
while your eyes are on me, I shall be gone.  
<sup>9</sup> As the cloud fades and vanishes,  
so he who goes down to Sheol does not come up;  
<sup>10</sup> he returns no more to his house,  
nor does his place know him anymore.*

Normally we think of the eyes of the LORD as a good thing.  
“His eyes are on the sparrow – and I know he watches me!”  
But Job is not so sure.

After all, if God is pursuing me – if *he* is the one who is attacking me –  
then the sooner he looks away, the better!

**c. Am I the Sea? The Terrors of God (v11-16)**

Finally, in verse 11, Job gives up on all his indirect complaints!

Job pours out his soul before God.

God does not expect you to “buck up” under troubles.  
Job is an example of what an upright man does when undeserved trouble comes.

<sup>11</sup> *“Therefore I will not restrain my mouth;  
I will speak in the anguish of my spirit;  
I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.*

You may not grumble against the LORD –  
but you may complain!

The word “complain” can be translated, “meditate, sing, or complain.”  
Psalm 55:17 says, “Evening and morning and at noon I utter my complaint and moan,  
and he hears my voice. He redeems my soul in safety...”  
This is the word used in Psalms 77 and 119 for “meditating” on God’s words and deeds.

Scripture regularly forbids grumbling against the LORD.  
Grumbling and murmuring comes from a rebellious attitude, and says,  
“I’m not listening to you anymore!”  
The complaint arises from the bitterness of your soul –  
from your meditation on the pain and anguish of your spirit –  
but the complaint still believes that God is God – and I am not!

In our church order we have a procedure for bringing a complaint.  
If you are convinced that the elders have done something wrong,  
you may bring a complaint to us – and if we don’t satisfy you,  
you may appeal it to the presbytery.  
A complaint remains convinced that there is a solution – even though we don’t see it yet!  
On the other hand,  
there is no procedure in the church order for grumbling!

I was once called in to try to help a church that was going through some difficulties.  
There were lots of people who would grumble about the problems.  
But I couldn’t find anyone who would complain about it.

Don’t be a grumbler – be a complainer!

(I'll bet you never thought you'd hear your pastor say that!)

But listen to Job's complaint!

In chapter 3, Job had raised the specter of Leviathan –  
wondering if perhaps the ancient sea monster could reverse history  
and go back and blot out the night of Job's conception.

But now, Job asks God:

<sup>12</sup> *Am I the sea, or a sea monster,  
that you set a guard over me?*

Am I Leviathan?  
That you treat me like I'm a threat to you!  
The ancient world viewed the sea and the tannin (the sea monsters)  
as powers that threatened their gods.  
Why are you hunting me like you would hunt a sea monster?

And while Job's friends have proven comfortless,  
not even sleep provides any relief:

<sup>13</sup> *When I say, 'My bed will comfort me,  
my couch will ease my complaint,'*  
<sup>14</sup> *then you scare me with dreams  
and terrify me with visions,*  
<sup>15</sup> *so that I would choose strangling  
and death rather than my bones.*  
<sup>16</sup> *I loathe my life; I would not live forever.  
Leave me alone, for my days are a breath.*

Do you understand what "leave me alone" means?

Do you know what it means to say to the living God, "Leave me alone"?  
We are so used to thinking of God's presence as a *good thing*,  
that we forget that *sometimes* the presence of God is dreadful!

Job understands that God is against him.

We have here the opposite of Romans 8 –  
if God is against us, who can be for us?!!  
If God is against me,  
then what is the point?  
Why are you keeping me alive?  
Obviously your point is to destroy me.  
Why not just finish the job?!

If that doesn't turn the standard wisdom of the scriptures enough on its head,  
Job goes on in verses 17-18 to invert Psalm 8

Psalm 8:4 says,  
“what is man that you are mindful of him,  
and the son of man that you care for him?”

verses 17-18 are a bitter parody of Psalm 8:4!

**d. Why Are You Doing This to Me? (v17-21)**

<sup>17</sup> *What is man, that you make so much of him,  
and that you set your heart on him,*  
<sup>18</sup> *visit him every morning  
and test him every moment?*

Not only is there the direct parallel of “what is man that you make so much of him,”  
but also the word “visit him” in verse 18 is the same word translated,  
“that you *care* for him” in Psalm 8:4.

The word simply means “to visit” –

and can be translated in a number of ways.

If you think about all the different ways that the “coming” of God can be used,  
it makes sense that God’s “visit” can either be a good thing or a bad thing!  
For Job, God’s visit has been a terrifying nightmare!

Job here portrays himself as a representative of all “mankind.”  
What is man, that you make so much of him?

<sup>19</sup> *How long will you not look away from me,  
nor leave me alone till I swallow my spit?*

Perhaps it is not the most polite of phrases,  
but it is perfectly clear!

God, I cannot take your relentless pursuit of me.  
All I’m asking is,  
Will you just give me enough time to swallow my spit?

In verses 20-21, Job then brings up the question of sin.  
Notice that Job is not saying, “I have sinned, please forgive me,”  
but rather, “if I have sinned, why do you not pardon me?”

<sup>20</sup> *If I sin, what do I do to you, you watcher of mankind?  
Why have you made me your mark?  
Why have I become a burden to you?*  
<sup>21</sup> *Why do you not pardon my transgression  
and take away my iniquity?*

Job is saying, “I am not aware of any sin that God has against me.”  
But even if there is some sin out there,

how are my sufferings commensurate with any such sin?

Indeed, this is precisely the sort of response we should hope for from a Christian!

I am yours, O Lord.

My sins are covered by the blood of Christ.

Why do you not pardon my transgression?

*For now I shall lie in the earth;*

*you will seek me, but I shall not be.”*

Job again inverts the normal pattern.

Normally it is man who seeks God – “the one who seeks me will find me.”

But here Job says that God will seek Job – but because Job is but a breath,

he will die,

and God will seek Job in vain.

At the end of the book, God will say that Job has spoken rightly.

What is man that you are mindful of him –

the son of man that you visit him?

And while Hebrews 2 is clearly quoting Psalm 8 – rather than Job 7 –

perhaps the emphasis on *suffering* in Hebrews 2 should remind us of the connection!

“at present we do not yet see everything in subjection to him.

But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus,

crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death,

so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist,

in bringing many sons to glory,

should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering...

Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood,

he himself likewise partook of the same things,

that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death,

that is, the devil,

and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham.

Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect,

so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God,

to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

For because he himself has suffered when tempted,

he is able to help those who are being tempted.”