

When a person renders justice for the helpless, many will celebrate and honor him, but if later God allows unexplained suffering in his life, some will accuse him of hidden sins. Despite our works of justice, all must confess some complicity in injustice. So trust in Christ the Judge who alone is just and justifier.

Introduction – Essentially this very ancient book explores the mystery of why the righteous suffer. Job was such a man. He was the paragon of virtue in his time and place, and his life was a picture of blessing...until it all fell apart. When Job’s friends show up to comfort him, it’s not long before they are hurling accusations of secret sin because NO ONE can crash that badly unless he somehow deserves it. Throughout the book Job maintains his innocence, and in Job 29 he mounts his final defense. Here we learn for the first time that Job is not only passively innocent of the charges, but he is actively righteous and just. You may not often long for justice and judgment, but Job certainly did. His longing is meant to awaken yours, because if you’re a Christian the seeds of that longing are there.

I. The Beautiful Fruit of Justice

A. Friendship of God (vv. 2-5a)

First and foremost, Job talks about the comfort he had in his God. Notice how emotionally charged his words are! Job longs for the good old days when God watched over him and blessed his life. In the past Job felt the presence and protection of God. Also Job understood where he stood in God’s sight, knowing God’s mind and not being in the dark. Those days were the prime of his life. Job’s greatest treasure was his friendship with God, and he yearns for the day when they used to be close.

B. Prosperity of home (vv. 5b-6)

Second, Job rejoices that he had comfort in his family. Almighty God was still with Job in those days when his children surrounded him (cf. Job 1:2). He remembers how his 10 children were the fruit of God’s favor. God’s blessing was also evident on his business, wealth, and homestead. The image of butter indicates his animals on the farm are so plentiful and productive they overflow with blessings. The oil is olive oil that was used for cooking, lamp fuel, and skin ointment. Having streams of oil indicates abundance in everything necessary for life, and flowing in superabundance from the rock. His cup runneth over! This is supernatural fruitfulness with a divine cause.

C. Respect of the community (vv. 7-11, 21-23)

Third, Job rejoices in his godly reputation. This man became a judge due to the respect he commanded in the community—from men and women, young and old, prince and pauper. As a recognized chief of his city, Job’s occasional duties included serving as a councilman and magistrate, helping to manage the community, and settling disputes. His opinions and judgments carried the most weight among the council of elders in the public square (the ancient equivalent of the courtroom, chamber of commerce, congress, and community center). Verses 21-23 develop the thought. Now Job’s neighbors eagerly await his words as one waits for the refreshing rains.

II. The Loathsome Result of Injustice

A. The vulnerable helplessly suffers without justice (vv. 12-17)

1. Don’t miss the reason why Job had a beautiful blessed life—he saw and heard the loathsome result of injustice and did everything in his power to do what is right—to do justice and judge rightly (Mic 6:8; Jn 7:24). The Bible says justice is actually a debt we owe the vulnerable (Job 31:16-23). People don’t talk this way unless they believe justice is owed to others.

2. Notice the categories of vulnerable people Job helped: the poor (v. 12a), the fatherless (v. 12b), the dying (v. 13a), the widow (v. 13b), the blind (v. 15a), the lame (v. 15b), the needy (v. 16a), the stranger/foreigner/alien (v. 16b). What these all have in common that they are economically powerless and marginalized: the sick, disabled, and terminally ill; immigrant outsiders; the poor without family support; kids without a dad; the unborn. What Job has done is act like a good ancient Near East king who dispenses social justice to the needy and oppressed. Here Job emphatically states such was his way of life in the past. This is not false boasting since God's assessment of Job's character and life are identical (Job 1:1; cf. Job 31:24-28).

B. The fool arrogantly pontificates about justice (v. 1; cf. Job 42:7)

God's law consistently upholds the requirement to defend the weak and helpless (Ex 22:21-27; Dt 24:17-22; 26:12-13; Jer 22:3; Zech 7:9-12; Mk 10:17-22; Lk 4:18-19; 20:46-27; 2 Cor 8:8-15; Jas 1:27). Job lived a life of justice. But now, for reasons unknown to Job and his friends, God has him in a place where he is crying out for someone to defend him! The accusers prove their foolishness by the way they try to help Job: by piling on insults. How cruel the world sometimes works against the righteous. Such are the loathsome results of injustice. The desperately vulnerable find no relief (much less justice) and the truly righteous suffer fools without any vindication.

III. The Royal Provider of Justice

A. He restores our hopes while justice delays (vv. 18-20; cf. Job 42:10-17)

Job hoped his life would turn out differently. Instead of unmitigated, abject suffering, Job expected long and vigorous life, and more blessings from God's hand and more honor from men's lips. After all, he had worshiped God faithfully and rendered justice righteously. Didn't he put himself in the path of God's blessing? And hadn't it worked, at least for a while, better than anyone would expect? And yet in the end for Job, justice delayed became justice delivered. After his storm of suffering blew over, God fulfilled Job's hopes for the end of his life. The Lord restored his former blessing, position, and reputation, and Job died a happy man. That was then. From our vantage point, Job's been dead—a long, long time. Even so, don't you still hope for one who will do justice and render righteous judgment? We all do because it's a universal human longing (Ps 72)! Only the greater Job, Jesus Christ, the Righteous and Just Son of God, can fully satisfy your longing. The NT begins by shouting that Jesus the royal Son of David is the object of your longing for justice and judgment. That's why the crowds were so excited on the first Palm Sunday. The Greater Job, the royal provider of justice was coming into his kingdom!

B. He chooses to share our suffering today (vv. 24-25; cf. Mt 25:34-40)

Remember the gospel stories! Like Job but infinitely more so, Jesus gives sight to the blind, strength to the lame, and life to the dying. He defends the weak and befriends the immigrant. Jesus protects and provides for the widow, the orphan, the poor, and the needy. His justice is not only for those who come to him, but he seeks out those who are in the dark, who have fallen through the cracks, who are invisible to society. And he breaks the teeth of the wicked who prey upon such who are vulnerable. His judgments are measured, appropriate, and just. Jesus identifies with those who suffer injustice and enters into their suffering. He chooses to share in your suffering. Today he says to you, "I smiled on you when you had no confidence, and the light of my face you didn't cast down. I chose your way and sat as Lord, and I lived with you as a king comforting you in your defeat, sorrow, and loss" (Job 29:24-25).

Conclusion – As a minister of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, I urge you to listen carefully to God's definitive proclamation regarding justice and judgment (Rom 3:21-26). Brothers and sisters, having been freely forgiven of your sins and justified by faith in Jesus Christ alone, go forth to seek justice, love mercy, and walk humbly before your God.