

An Isolated Case

Job 19:15 - 23

Nutshell: Job inventories all the people alienated from him, even his wife. He blames it on God and wishes for an accounting.

Accounting is God's strong suit. Fortunately, God would not grant his foolish request, except in a way he could never expect by exacting the accounting from Someone Else.

I. Context: The 3 friends accusing. Job defending ~~God~~ himself.

II. Text

Job 19:15 Sojourners of my house and my maids, || have calculated me as a stranger; I have been an alien in their eyes.

Literal Standard Version with modifications

The next four outline items, III. - VI., are based on the 4 uses of Scripture listed in 2 Tim 3:16 AND the 3 depictions of preaching in 2 Tim 4:2.

III. Teaching

A. Job is the ABCs, or kindergarten, of the Bible. It lays out the basics of the God-man relationship. Yet it's a kindergarten where you come out with a Ph.D.

B. Review

1. *God bragged* to Satan that godly Job was THE best, 1:8
 - a. Satan said Job's devotion was 'bought' with blessings, 1:10
 - b. God said Satan could take them away, 1:12
 - c. Job lost all children and possessions, 1:13-19
 - d. But he worshiped and didn't murmur vs. God, 1:20-21
2. God bragged on Job again, 2:3
 - a. Satan said Job would sell God out for his own skin, 2:4-5
 - b. God said Satan could touch him, 2:6
 - c. Satan gave Job death-preferred boils, 2:7-9; 30:18, 30
 - d. Job still didn't sin, 2:10
 - e. Job went 7 days like this, then cursed his birth, 3:1-26.
3. Thus begins the bulk of the book, the **argument cycle**, 4:31.
 - a. Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar have each spoken (Eliphaz trusting *personal revelation*, 4:12, Bildad in *tradition*, 8:8, Zophar in *mystery*, 11:7), Job answering each one: six

- speeches, chaps. 4-14 = **Argument Cycle 1**
- b. They have increasingly hinted that Job must have sinned to have received this degree of calamity
 - c. **Job has increasingly accepted that premise**; thus he begins accusing God for wrongful punishment, 40:8; 9:15; 10:2-7. *What Satan couldn't do, the friends did!* Consider your power as a friend.
 - d. The 3 friends speak again, Job intervening with his answers, six more speeches, 15-21 = **Argument Cycle 2**
 - e. One last cycle, minus Zophar, 22-25
 - f. Job insists on his uprightness, 26-31 = **Argument Cycle 3**
 - ‡ g. The 3 friends fail to induce a confession of sin, 32:1
4. Then the human hero of the book (a type of Christ- truth incarnate), **Elihu**, sets things straight, chaps 32-37
 - a. God corrects Job, 38:2; 40:2, 8, and his three other friends, 42:7, but never Elihu
 - b. Elihu and God were in agreement, 32:2; 40:8
 - c. Elihu's *last* speech, chap 37, becomes God's *whole* speech: Creation, 38-41. God tag-teamed with Elihu.
 5. Job will *sulk* in 40:4-5, then *repent* in 42:1-6
 6. The theme of Job: How can *I* be right in God's eyes (justification) if *He* is not right in my eyes (sanctification)?

Kid-speak: In Job, Satan came before God, and who brought up the subject of Job? Not Satan, God! But *can* Satan ask about us? Yes, especially if we're being bad. He'll say, "See there God! There's one of Your 'holy' ones! Ha!" Then would we deserve it if Satan hurt us somehow? Yes.

C. Themes in Job:

1. God's sovereignty: the main lesson Job learned, Job 42:2
 2. God's righteousness. His *sovereignty* is not arbitrary.
 3. The necessity of Trials, Ps 119:67, 71. Trials show me my fallen nature. I'd best trust God, not me.
 4. Death. Christ's death is especially previewed.
 5. God's faithfulness. He didn't quit until Job was restored.
 6. God's justice is what Job mainly argued vs.; but God does begin to requite the wicked here on earth, Job, 34:10,20
- D. Argument Cycle Recap, chaps 3-31
1. 3, Job curses his birth
 2. 4-5, **Eliphaz** advises Job to make things right with God

3. 6-7, **Job** seeks to correct Eliphaz' perspective, that Job's pain makes him long for death. Job calls on God.
4. 8, **Bildad** says that only the wicked get swept away
5. 9-10, **Job**: God has abandoned me. "Why, God?"
6. 11, **Zophar**, an early postmodernist, claims God is *unfathomable*, yet uses rationality to exhort Job to repent
7. 12-14, **Job** retorts that God's sovereignty includes the wicked's exaltation. "God, I won't regrow if you chop me."
- ✦ a. Job thought God was tired of his accumulated sins. Hence, he awaited the *afterlife* for God's favor to resume, Job 14:14-17.
- b. That view turns a foundation of faith toward cynicism

Kid-speak: Did Job stop believing in God? No, but He said some bad things about God. It took a while for God to get Job back on track. Is it easy to get off track? Yes. But does God promise to help us stay on track? Yes, if we'll keep putting our trust in Him.

8. 15, **Eliphaz** puts Job in a long line of failed evildoers
9. 16, **Job** said God had savagely attacked him
10. 17, Job sees his case failing, egged on by his friends
11. 18, **Bildad**: "The wicked are consumed- *just like Job!*"
12. 19:1-6, **Job** : "God's beating me. *Ya'll* don't need to."
 - a. 19:7-8 "God has blocked off my cries"
 - b. 19:9-11 "God has spitefully sullies my honors"
 - c. 19:12 "God's coordinated armies have overcome me"
 - d. 19:13-14 "Friends and brothers are now like strangers"

- E. 19:15, Guests staying with Job, like his own maids, treat Job differently. It's like they hadn't met him. He's a stranger.
1. This was one of God's coordinated forces breaking Job down, 19:12
 2. Adding to his friends' and brothers' ostracization, 19:13-14

Job 19:16 I have called to my servant, || And he does not answer, || By mouth I beseech him.

- F. Beyond keeping his distance, Job's servant (singular. A chief servant *or* speaking of his male servants in general) pretends

not to hear Job

1. Why would you voluntarily draw near? It might be contagious.
2. If a servant ignores Job, it's not as though Job can do much in reprisal- nor has motivation to do so

Job 19:17 My spirit is estranged to my wife, || Yet I intreated for the sons of my belly.

G. Job now reaches the height of his estrangement scale: his *wife* is estranged

1. Job's afflicted spirit now seems altered to her
2. Actually, she may be the only one more deeply wounded than Job
 - a. She had said, "Bless God and die," 2:9, meaning make things right with God, then kill yourself
 - b. Foolish, but overwrought with love for Job

Kid-speak: Job thought his wife didn't even know who he was anymore. His sickness had made her treat him differently. She must have been very sad, but imagine how lonely Job felt! Even his wife was 'creeped out' by his sickness.

H. The second half of the statement seems to be leverage used to break the estrangement between them

1. Paraphrased: "For our dead children's sake, don't distance me."
2. The "sons of my belly," meaning they came from *his* inward parts as well as *hers*
 - a. The children represented the real UNION between them. On that basis, how could she allow this detachment?
 - b. We can hardly blame her, of course. Job had become desperate and seemed very close to death. Nothing everyday about that. Isa 49:15 has "sons of her womb."

Job 19:18 In addition, lads spurn me. I rise, and they speak about me. **19** All my menfolk advisers ["the men of my counsel] loathe me. And this one I loved has changed *sides* concerning me.

I. Job can see how people react to him. Rising must have been no

small task in his state. Even the youths convene in a hubbub at the sight.

- J. His “menfolk advisors” were probably primarily the 3 friends, now chiding him unjustly
 - 1. One of them, maybe Eliphaz, was “this one I loved.” That must have shamed Eliphaz (or whoever) at least a little. But he’ll be chiding Job again in chap 22.
 - 2. Jesus said the same thing about Judas, Jn 13:18, from Ps 41:9; also Ps 55:13
 - 3. As a man isolated in his misery, Job prefigured Christ

Kid-speak: *Nobody* acted like they liked Job anymore! They all thought *God* didn’t like him anymore. Isn’t it funny how we think God doesn’t like somebody just because they’re sick?

- K. Ponder this. Who was being tested more, Job or his 3 friends?
 - 1. Job was already guaranteed to make it through, since God, having committed to testing him, automatically committed to restoring him
 - 2. But the 3 friends had no such guarantee- except to the extent, same as Job, that they were God’s elect. Their *commentary* on the afflictions was their test, and they blew it! They even swayed Job to blow it!
 - a. Their restoration ended up being *contingent on Job*
 - b. Though Job’s restoration didn’t take effect until he prayed for them (His “captivity” was restored, 42:10)

Job 19:20 My bone has clung to my skin and to my flesh, || and I escape with the skin of my *dual rows* of teeth.

- L. Job can *feel* and is probably able to *see* the outline of his skeleton
 - 1. He has atrophied. His food intake is probably minimal. The wasting effect of the disease is probably maximal.
 - 2. Coverdale has “Only there is left me the skynne about my teth.” That rendering is viable, meaning either that his lips had receded greatly, such that they appeared missing, or that his gums were barely holding his teeth in.
 - 3. And, yes, the expression “escaped by the skin of my teeth” is from this verse

Job 19:21 Be gracious to me, be gracious to me- you my friends! || For the hand of God has touched me.

L. In Hebrew, its $\text{חַנּוּנִי חַנּוּנִי}$, *chanuni, chanuni!* Job is still *begging* for his friends' sympathy! What a travesty!

1. If they knew a sin he'd done, it would have been completely different. As it was, they OWED him sympathy until their suspicions could be confirmed.
2. But that's way difficult once you've decided someone's guilt. Listen- do your best to *talk yourself out of it!!*

Kid-speak: Job had to beg his friends to be nice to him again. Should somebody have to beg us that? No! We should love people even if they don't ask.

- a. This is one of the huge lessons of Job
- b. Once your spirit becomes prosecutor, argue the case the *other* direction. Even where you have facts- where does fact separate from your gut reaction to it?
- c. You must get to fact alone. The 3 friends didn't. They thereby **maliciously** STRANDED Job.
- d. "But how could we reasonably assume anything else?" they object

M. Where God's providences 'misalign' with my life, I need you to give me the benefit of the doubt.

1. Job, buying into the friends' folly, had *God* over here as opponent and *them* near at hand as needed sympathizers.
2. Friends *should* say, "I'm with you, even if you feel God is against you" (not if God actually *was* against you because of sin), and Job rightly expected that from them

Job 19:22 Why do you chase me, as *the Powerful One* [EI] *does*, and are not satisfied with my flesh?

N. God *was* 'chasing' Job, but not with hostile intent, as Job had come to suppose. God was simply using Satan to refine him.

O. "Satisfied with my flesh"- with the fact that my flesh is boiled, blackened, flaking, shrinking...

1. Isn't that enough reprisal for *you* if you thought I'd sinned?
2. Can't you leave the rest of my payback in *God's* hands and

just comfort me?

Kid-speak: Job thought God was mad and chasing him down. Isn't it easy to feel that way if everything's going bad? But how do we know if God's really mad at us or not? The Bible! It tells us the things that make God mad. What are they called? Sin.

Job 19:23 Who will here grant *it*, and my discourses be written? Who will grant [+ "in/with"] the document, that ["and"] they be inscribed?

- P. Job realizes that something epic is going on. It needs to be written down.
1. Of course, every man's life is epic. Heaven or Hell hang in the balance of each life. That's epic +.
 2. But Job senses something more. When had God ever before so thoroughly afflicted a formerly blameless man?
 - ◆ 3. Unfortunately, Job senses it from the wrong angle. *Once more*, as in 16:17-18, he wants to be memorialized as the man who held to his integrity, even *in the face of God*.
- Q. "Who will grant/give" is literal, but it is most often translated something like, "O that-!", which seems legit
- R. Job obviously had no idea that this *would* be written down
1. Frankly, he seemed to be viewing this as God's 'dirty little secret'
 2. He certainly would not have imagined this being inscribed as it turned out- with him as the hero turned villain
 3. He just wants an accounting of what he considers a cosmic injustice

Kid-speak: Job wanted all this to be written down so everybody could see that he was right. But was he right that God was doing wrong? No, but now by lying about *that*, was God made at Job? Yes, 36:17.

- S. Most unbelievers do. They feel God owes them; otherwise, they'd be in repayment mode, as they should be, paying God back for all His goodness, with thanks and obedience.
- T. Jesus *became* an inscription. All our rebellions against God were 'tattooed' into Him on the cross.

1. Think of all the trillions of books opened on the last day, containing *all* the deeds of *all* unbelievers, Rev 20:12.
2. Everyone judged by their deeds goes into the eternal flames, Rev 20:15.
3. So where did the books of *believers* go? Those books were written into Jesus on the cross. “God made the One who engaged in no sin to become sin for us,” 2 Cor 5:21.
 - a. *My* place in the Lake of Fire was visited on *Christ* on the cross.
 - b. If that happened, the Spirit brings me to a knowledge of my *sinfulness* and *sins*, empowering me to turn from them

IV. For the Walking Wounded (1 Thess 5:14, “Uphold the strengthless”) Job is a story of isolation. Most of the book, he’s cast out FROM MEN, and, *he thinks*, FROM GOD. Don’t let the “from men” part determine the “from God” part for you.

V. Conviction (2 Tim 4:2, “Convince, rebuke”): **What have I done wrong?**
How have I lost righteousness?
 Can I sympathize with those who feel isolated?

VI. Correction/ Realignment (2 Tim 4:2, “Exhort/encourage”):
How will I correct my error? How will I regain uprightness?
 I will see that *your* isolation is at least as big a test for *me*.

VII. Schooling in Righteousness: **How will I avoid the error and follow Christ?**
 I will see the *Cross*’ isolation worked out in the lives of men.

Wrap-up: The Cross’ isolation is one that takes my isolation away and brings me in, adding me to others brought in. Christ was isolated so we could be family.

Until conversion, men naturally prefer isolation from God. Isolation from God is the only one that ultimately matters. Hell is just the continuation of the isolation men insisted on.

Would we be any different if God hadn’t turned us to Him? No. Then grumbling should be anathema to us, since it implies that God has abandoned us.