

Who Will Sympathize?

Job 19:7 - 14

Nutshell: Job felt that God had meanly isolated him. His friends should have sympathized rather than criticized.

In isolating circumstances, Christ's sympathy is the most important one.

I. Context: Job's friends accusing him without proof.

II. Text

Job 19:7 See, I cry out, "Violence!", and I am not answered. I shout, but there is no verdict.

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: Why did Satan say that Job loved God? Because God gave Job lots of nice stuff. Job found out that it **was** harder to love God when he was really sick. But at the end of the book, will Job love God even more? 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.
 - 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** wonders why God has abandoned him, and he appeals to 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 *turns* a foundation of faith *toward* cynicism

Kid-speak: Job didn't have very good friends. They said that bad things happened to him because *he* was bad. But did they know anything bad he'd done? No. Make sure you know before you accuse someone.

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** describes the wicked's consumption, using Job's situation as a template
 12. 19:1-6, **Job** pleads for his friends to stop pummeling him, since God was already doing a good enough job of that
- E. 19:7, Job just said (19:6) that God 'turned him over and trapped him in a jar'. From that precarious place, Job has been crying, "Violence!"
1. It's hard to be heard from inside a jar: "I'm not answered."
 2. "Violence" = unrighteous force, including manipulation. Job is just feeling *straight* force: God smashing him.
 3. One trait of integrity is candor, even when it causes unpleasantness (not *delivered* unpleasantly)
 - a. Job had personal integrity. When he had no beef with God, he had *holy* integrity.
 - b. But now, he has lost his integrity by unrighteously accusing God. All because he assumes God is punishing some supposed sin!
 4. For Job, the only proper verdict would be to restore him to health *or* let him die. Job is frankly stating that God was an unjust judge.

5. Again, is it better to be convinced of it and *not* say it? No. If convinced, better to air it out. Unaired = undealt with.

Kid-speak: Job said he almost yelling about what God did to him. He couldn't believe God treated him that way. So- CAN God let bad things happen to us? Yes. But is He trying to hurt us? No. *Bad things* remind us about sin. Then we have to remember: "I'm a sinner too."

Job 19:8 He has walled up my thoroughfare, and I do not cross over, || and He has situated darkness on my pathways.

- F. What's worse, a predicament or feeling trapped in it? If we see a way of escape, it's (more) bearable.
1. But Job's horror is that he has the worst imaginable circumstance + disease, and he *not only sees no way out*, but perceives that God has prevented all escape
 - a. If you can identify with the claustrophobia of that, you can understand Job's adverse reaction. The wonder is that he has maintained any faith in God at all, Jms 5:11.
 - b. Again, Job is mistaken, but we humans cannot counter our perceptions except by staunchly maintaining a known reality (like a pilot trusting instruments over vertigo)
 - c. Job has maintained many/most Biblical realities, but it only takes *one* to become a hinge that leaves the rest of them dangling
 2. Job uses two words for roads
 - a. Job's "thoroughfare," or big, broad road (his whole life), God had walled off. That's a big job. Imagine an impassable wall built across I-10. Imagine thinking there's no path forward in life.
 - b. Job's "pathway," or beaten track, God has placed under permanent darkness! Again, only God could create such an obstacle. Even if he *could* go- *where??*
 - c. If that's what you feel, how can you picture God being *for* you?

Kid-speak: Job felt like God made it where he couldn't go anywhere or do anything. But where's the one place Job COULD go? To God. Did he need to go anywhere else?

Job 19:9 He has stripped from upon me my honor, || and He diverts the crown from my head.

G. Job recalls his former honor and leadership

1. He had possessed honor/glory. It had been “upon” him. God had stripped it off of him.
2. Job had been a leader in the community. He had real authority, whether directly or indirectly, 29:7-17. This was his “crown.” God had twisted it off of his head.
3. Think of Ps 8 in this regard, of **man’s general glory in the earth**. For those who deny the obviously higher Glory who has granted *them* glory (Ps 8:5), their honor *will* be rightly stripped from them permanently.

Job 19:10 He breaks me down all around, and I go; || and He removes my hope like a tree.

H. Job continues his attempt to make a separation between his *friends’* dealings with him and *God’s*, v 5-6: ‘Since God is beating me up so badly, don’t you need to join in on *my* side?’

1. It’s unnecessary for ya’ll to break me down. God’s doing it.
 - a. His dissolution is so successful, it’s causing my departure from life: “I go.”
 - b. Job believes he’ll die. He just wishes it would happen.
2. Removing his hope like a tree means uprooting, ringing, or poisoning: something from which the tree can’t recover
 - a. Using the tree analogy because men, like trees, have some powers of recovery. Job thought God had denied him that.

Kid-speak: Have you seen the trees that are pulled out of the ground after a hurricane? That’s what Job said God had done to him. You’d have to feel pretty awful to say that. But was Job all the way ‘out of the ground’ (dea)? No. Would God fix him back up? Yup.

- b. Job had used a tree analogy differently earlier- that they can be chopped and recover. God was foolishly treating Job like a tree, chopping him, 14:7.

Job 19:11 Yes [“and”], He enflames Himself against me, and to Himself, He contemplates me as *one of His* troublers.

I. We can't help visualizing God's attitude towards us

1. It can be actuated by pride during times of peace and plenty: “He favors me because I'm wonderful.”
 - a. It can also *pridefully* sulk in difficulty: “He doesn't like me, and if He wants me to change my mind about that, He'll have to start favoring me more.”
 - b. It can be hopeless: “I've sinned. There's no reason He should accept me.”
 - c. It can be by faith: “Though I've sinned, He's promised to fully, gladly accept me through Christ.”
2. Misfortune plays into it. It's very hard to “count it all joy,” as we're commanded, when the wheels have fallen off and we're sitting in a burning wreck. That is where Job was.
- ★ 3. Prayer must be a time when we align our *perception of God's attitude towards us* with what He *says* that is.

Kid-speak: If we think God loves us, won't that make us happy? Shouldn't we be happy all the time, then? So why aren't WE happy all the time. Not enough faith. We don't believe it enough.

4. But Christianity *can* become a modification of the pride position, *refusing* to think God might chide me
 - a. This falls short of Jesus' admonition to his *friends* to fear God as the one who casts into Hell, Lk 12:5
 - b. **In that** place, we can make the connection to the One who took Hell for me. *Without* that step, presumption is easy.

Job 19:12 Unified, His troops advance [“come”], and they mound up upon me their road. Yes [“and”], they camp around my tent.

- J. Job makes himself the battlefield or embattled fortress, with God sending His armies of catastrophe and disease to wage a coordinated war against him
 1. Their siege-mound had become a road right into the city. They'd broken through.
 2. Their encircling becomes more personal. Now they surround

his very tent.

Kid-speak: Job said that all the bad things happening to him were like an army attacking him. If we feel like that, can we still put our hope in God? Yes.

Job 19:13 He has distanced my brothers from me, || and my acquaintances ["ones knowing"] have been effectively estranged from me.

K. Having described his besiegement, he turns from *metaphors* to *real life*. His relatives and acquaintances (broad categories) are keeping their distance.

1. How buoying to have friendship in trial, Prov 17:17; 27:9
2. How devastating not to, Prov 19:7; 27:10

Job 19:14 Those near me have relinquished, || and my familiar friends ["ones known *to me*"] have abandoned me,

L. Closer ties in general. All the nuances of these relationships took a defining turn in responding to his affliction.

1. He probably *now* could grade categories and degrees of friendship. "He/she *used* to be this to me; but now..."
2. When things are going well, we simply accept these statuses. (No problem with that.)

Kid-speak: Job said that all his friends and relatives stayed away from him now. It was hard to be around him. That made him **really** lonely. Hopefully, if someone is suffering, we won't stay away just because it makes *us* sad.

3. Imagine trying to relate to someone apparently dying of head-to-toe, loathsome boils- oh, and he lost all his kids and possessions
 - a. What could you say that wouldn't sound canned (at best) or insincere (at worst)
 - b. And how could you help but fear that showing favor might be casting a vote against God's just wrath?
4. It was a messy, messy situation... just like ones we're always facing (probably to a lesser degree)

- a. We'll never survive bigger tests if we can't handle the smaller, day-to-day ones
- b. Including having a generally compassionate nature: "let all of your *dealings* be brought about in love," 1 Cor 16:14

IV. How does this relate to Christ?

We have focused on the need for sympathy. Coming to Christ is coming to THE Sympathetic One. We cannot rightly relate to Him without understanding this.

V. For the Walking Wounded (1 Thess 5:14, "Uphold the strengthless")

You need sympathy. We all do. Receive it from Christ. But don't forget to *be* sympathetic as well.

VI. Conviction (2 Tim 4:2, "Convince, rebuke"): What have I done wrong?

How have I lost righteousness?

Am I sympathetic? Am I *courageously* (though politely) sympathetic?

VII. Correction/ Realignment (2 Tim 4:2, "Exhort/encourage"):

How will I correct my error? How will I regain uprightness?

I will draw near, especially to the suffering, Rom 12:16.

VII. Schooling in Righteousness: How will I avoid the error and follow Christ?

The nearer we draw *to* Christ's sympathy for us, the more we will develop a sympathetic nature *from* Him.

Wrap-up: Psalm 34:18. Job had the worst reaction to trial. He *refused* God's nearness. But that is our natural response.

But it's also our nature to *despise* (take for granted) God's nearness in times of peace (which the 3 friends were in). We don't learn sympathy while we can.

All men want sympathy, yet they decidedly refuse Christ. In the trade-off, they say, "Fine, I'll do without His sympathy, because if He draws near, He'll make me admit. He'll make me quit _."