

Three weeks ago, we considered the first half of Job's response to Eliphaz (6), which brings us to chapter 7 and the remainder of his response. Chapter 7 divides into three sections: Job laments his life (vv1-10); Job complains to God (vv11-16); Job questions God (vv17-21). I'll summarize each of these sections into a single observation.

- I. Job Laments his Life (vv1-10)
- II. Job Complains to God (vv11-16)
- III. Job Questions God (vv17-21)

- I. Job Laments his Life (vv1-10)

1. It's unclear who exactly Job is addressing in vv1-10—it's clear he speaks directly to God from verse eleven.
2. Given the fact that he was speaking to Eliphaz in the previous chapter, it's likely he's speaking to Eliphaz here.
3. Job's lament has two parts—the futility of life (vv1-5) and the brevity of life (vv6-10): notice these in turn.
4. (1) The futility of life (vv1-5)—in vv1-2, Job uses the imagery of a hired man and servant to make his point.
5. Just as a hired man works hard each day in anticipation of a wage—"Is there not a time of hard service for man on earth?"
6. V2—"Like a servant who earnestly desires the shade"—the implication being, he's labored in the hot sun.
7. Likewise, v3—"So I have been allotted months of futility, and wearisome nights have been appointed to me."
8. The first word "futility" literally means "empty" or "meaningless" and refers to a life void of true meaning.
9. The other word translated "wearisome" refers to "trouble" or "misery" as the result of toilsome labor.
10. And yet, it's important to notice, Job's weariness wasn't experienced in the day, but through the night.
11. V4—"When I lie down, I say, 'When shall I arise, and the night be ended?' For I have had my fill of tossing till dawn."
12. Putting these two words together (futility and wearisome), Job is describing the past few months of his life.
13. His days were filled with emptiness and his nights with weariness—this was his personal assessment.
14. Furthermore, notice he speaks of his days as "allotted" and his nights as "appointed"—that is, by God.
15. Job understood that his hard and difficult days and his long and miserable nights, were determined by God.
16. V5—"My flesh is caked with worms and dust, my skin is cracked and breaks out afresh"—I take this statement literally.
17. One reason behind his futility and weariness was his physical anguish—he was covered in painful sores.
18. (2) The brevity of life (vv6-10)—if verses 1-5 described the quality of life, verses 6-10 describe the quantity.
19. V6—"My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and are spent without hope"—just as a weaver's loom runs out of string, so his life runs out of days.

20. V7—"Oh, remember that my life is a breath! My eyes will never again see good"—because of death.
21. Verses 8-10 describe what follows death—no one will see him again—he will vanish and never return home.
22. Steve Lawson—"Death meant that he would never come to his house again. Life's relationships and routines would be over. His place would know him no more because he would be gone forever. He had no sense of purpose in life."
23. In summary, Job characterizes his life as hard, empty, and brief—short and filled with trouble and misery.
24. Observation—The emptiness of life—here I want to address Job's description or depiction of his life.
25. What are we to say about his portrayal? Well, let me suggest what Job said is true in a qualified sense.
26. In order to explain this, we need to dig a little deeper in the word "futility"—"I have been allotted months of futility."
27. The word actually carries with it two related meanings—the word can literally be translated "empty" or "false."
28. We can wed these two words together like this—they refer to something that promises what it cannot give.
29. Now, most of you know the TC are given twice; first, in Exodus 20 and then again in Deuteronomy 5.
30. In Deuteronomy, Moses uses this same word twice; in relation to the 3rd commandment and 9th commandment.
31. Deut.5:11—"You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain" v20—"You shall not bear false witness."
32. We are not to use the name of God in an empty meaningless way, nor are we to speak falsely of another.
33. Now, let us apply this to Job—his life became empty and meaningless—his life deceived or betrayed him.
34. Put simply—this wasn't what Job envisioned for his life; this wasn't the way he thought it would work out.
35. The reason Job thought his life was empty and meaningless was because he sought something from it that it cannot give.
36. Put another way—this life will be empty and meaningless if we merely focus on its temporal blessings.
37. This is why we are tempted to view this life as empty and meaningless—we're focused on the temporal.
38. For example, the other day we were looking at some old photos; back when our children were all very young (10 and under).
39. I told my wife I missed those days, and before I could say another word, she said what I was thinking (things were simpler).
40. When the children are young you have this fixed notion of how things will turn out—you can see it in your mind.
41. But what happens when things don't turn out like you planned—what about when things turn out differently.
42. Now, don't get me wrong—I am very thankful for how things are turning out—I have reason to rejoice.
43. But things have not turned out the exact way I had hoped—at least not in every way—they rarely do.

44. My life can begin to look empty and meaningless, when I place too much emphasis on temporal things.
45. And here's why—those temporal things (blessings) can either (a) never materialize, or (b) quickly disappear.

II. Job Complains to God (vv11-16)

1. From v11, Job turns the corner, and no long speaks directly to Eliphaz, but speaks instead, to God Himself.
2. Verses 11-21, form an extended prayer to God—Job turns his groans and complaints specifically to God.
3. (1) The nature of his complaint, v11—"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."
4. Job here refers to prayer and in so doing provides us with important instruction on the nature of prayer.
5. True, heartfelt prayer is the verbal expression of the heart—in prayer, the mouth makes known the heart.
6. Thus, when Job says "I will speak in the anguish and bitterness of my soul" he means, he will speak with a soul filled with anguish and bitterness.
7. (2) The reason for his complaint—within vv12-16, Job provides one basic reason for his complaint—God.
8. When I was first converted, I remember a preacher saying—"There's a difference between complaining to God and complaining about God."
9. And there's truth in that statement—but here's the problem—Job was complaining to God about God.
10. He recognized behind all of his problems—the loss of his possessions, family, and health—was God.
11. He felt boxed in like a sea or sea serpent (which lives within the sea)—seas are limited and boxed in.
12. He found no comfort in sleep but only terrorizing dreams and visions—instead of comfort his bed brought terror.
13. V15—"So that my soul chooses strangling and death rather than my body"—the word "body" literally means "bones."
14. It refers to a body of pain, NAS—"So that my soul would choose suffocation, Death rather than my pains."
15. The point being—he would prefer to die than continue in his pain—he would rather suffocate than suffer.
16. V16—"I loathe my life; I would not live forever. Let me alone, for my days are but a breath (vanity)."
17. Job hates his life and doesn't want to live any longer, and he asks God to leave him alone "for my days are (literally) vanity."
18. This word "vanity" is the same one found throughout the book of Ecclesiastes—"Vanity of vanities, all is vanity."
19. The basic point here is—Job was unable to understand how and why God was treating him in this manner.
20. This was his complaint—why was God allowing these things to happen to a righteous God-fearing man!
21. This was the largest cause behind his anguish and misery—he simply couldn't understand how God works.

22. Observation—The mystery of providence—by providence is meant God's work within His creation.
23. As I earlier pointed out from v3, Job understood that his days were allotted and his nights appointed by God.
24. Job understood his troubles came from God; that God was pursuing him, and shooting him with His arrows.
25. This was his difficulty—this was why he viewed his days as vanity—he was unable to know God's ways.
26. This is largely what he meant in v16—"Let me alone, for my days are but vanity"—if you recall, this is the same word found throughout the book of Ecclesiastes ('Vanity of vanities, all is vanity').
27. Now, if we were to examine how Solomon uses that use there, we would find he uses it in three relates ways.
28. First, all is empty apart from God; second, all is temporal compared to eternity; third, all is beyond our grasp.
29. John MacArthur—"Vanity in this sense expresses our human limits when faces with the mysteries of God's purposes."
30. Ecc.8:16-17—"When I applied my heart to know wisdom...I saw that a man cannot find out the work of God that is done under the sun."
31. The phrase "cannot find out the work of God" refers to man's inability to grasp God's work of providence.
32. Now, the question becomes which of these meanings of vanity best fits the context of Job's words in v16?
33. Well, actually three of them fit (his days were empty if considered apart from God, and they were brief if compared with eternity).
34. But I suggest that the third options fits nicely with his complaint in vv11-15 and his questions in vv17-21.
35. His days are vanity because he's unable to make sense of them—why is God treating him in this way?
36. Why him and not his three friends? I think most of have been tempted to ask similar questions—why me? Why us?
37. Why does God deal with His people in the manner He does? He lifts one up and He puts another down.
38. Job 23:8-9—"Look, I go forward, but He is not there, and backward, but I cannot perceive Him; when He works on the left hand, I cannot behold Him; when He turns to the right hand, I cannot see Him."
39. By these phrases he simply means he's not able to see how and why God does the things that He does.
40. Hymn (21)—"God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform; He plants His footsteps in the sea, and rises upon the storm."
41. Brethren, Job could have written this hymn! This is how God was dealing with him. This is why his days were vanity.
42. Why did He have John Gill father 11 children only to have all of them die early but two (and he buried one of these at 12)?
43. Why did He have Robert Murray McCheyne die at 29; Andrew Grey at 21; and Christopher Love at 33 (all of them had faithful and flourishing ministries)?
44. Why did He have Mary Winslow come to America with 10 children, only to have the infant die and receive word her husband died in England (widowed at 40 with nine children).
45. Why did He keep Arthur and Vera Pink without children? Why did He close all of the churches to him?

46. In short—why does God deal so differently with His children? In Job's case—why did He give so much only to take it all?
47. This is why Job is in anguish! This is why finds no comfort! This is why he loathed his life—"For my days are vanity."

III. Job Questions God (vv17-21)

1. Verses 17-21 are the continuation of Job's prayer, wherein he levels four basic and related questions to God.
2. (1) What is man? Vv17-18—"What is man, that You should exalt him, that You should set Your heart on him, that You should visit him every morning, and test him every moment?"
3. This is actually a very wonderful question—"What is man"—that is, what is man to receive such favor?
4. Why would You exalt him above all other creatures? What has man done to deserve such favored treatment?
5. He then speaks of three related evidences of this unique favor—(a) affection, (b) visitation, and (c) correction.
6. (a) Affection—"What is man...that You should set Your heart on him"—fix Your special concern on him.
7. (b) Visitation—"What is man...that You should visit him every morning"—visit him with special care.
8. (c) Correction—"What is man...that you should test him every moment"—"test" means "examine" or "try."
9. It seems likely there's a subtle complaint in these sayings—Yes, man is the focus of Your special care. And as such, You test him every moment.
10. This is how Job felt—as if God were relentless in his pursuit of him (as we see in the very next verse).
11. (2) How long? V19—"How long? Will You not look away from me, and let me alone till I swallow my saliva?"
12. Job basically means—"Won't you give me a break! I can't even swallow my saliva! You are relentless in Your pursuit of me!"
13. (3) Have I sinned? V20—"Have I sinned? What have I done to You, O watcher of men? Why have You set me as Your target, so that I am a burden to myself?"
14. Job describes God as the "watcher of men"—God watches or sees the thoughts and actions of all men.
15. Job is not here denying he sinned, but he's actually laying his soul bare before the all-seeing eyes of God.
16. (4) Why haven't You forgiven? V21—"Why then do You not pardon my transgression, and take away my iniquity? For now I will lie down in the dust, and You will seek me diligently, but I will no longer be."
17. Here we learn "to pardon" and "take away" are the same things—this is what pardon or forgiveness entails.
18. Furthermore, we also find that Job admits he sinned—he admits he crossed the line back in chapter 3.
19. V21b—"For now I will lie down in the dust, and You will seek me diligently, but I will no longer be."
20. It's debated what exactly Job means by these words—it seems he's trying to get the last word in on God.

21. Throughout the chapter, he's spoken about how God has been pursuing him and not leaving him alone.
22. He here shows his belief he would soon die and return to the dust, and then God can find him no more.
23. Observation—The purpose of afflictions—the questions in vv17-21, underscore the purpose of afflictions.
24. Job understood this—in fact, there's a sense in which the Job of vv17-21 is different from the Job of vv1-16.
25. Now, I say these are two Jobs in a qualified sense (obviously they are the same person), but he's doing what we all do.
26. In verses 1-16 he's simply being honest to what he feels, while in vv18-21, he sharing what he knows.
27. He knows full well what God is doing! He knows he sinned (in some sense) in his response to God's trials.
28. He knows God is exposing his remaining corruption in order to purify and sanctify him more entirely.
29. No, I do not know why God allows things to happen. Why do some people remain single, other's baren?
30. Why do some people's children die early and others outlive them? Why are some saved and others are not?
31. Why do some remain healthy and others sickly? Why do some struggle with finances and others do not?
32. Well, brethren while I don't know the answer to any of those questions, I do know the ultimate purpose of every affliction.
33. Every affliction is intended to test or try us—to expose remaining sin or corruption within our hearts.
34. Let me put it this way—while we cannot grasp the wisdom of God in His dealings with us, we can grasp His heart.
35. Job 23:8-10—"Look, I go forward, but He is not there, and backward, but I cannot perceive Him; when He works on the left hand, I cannot behold Him; when He turns to the right hand, I cannot see Him. But He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold."
36. God and His ways are past finding out! I don't understand why He does what He does! I cannot see Him.
37. But—He sees and knows me—He knows everything about me perfectly—and He knows what I need.
38. And He's using every affliction as a means to test me, and when He's finished, I shall be as pure gold.