

Introduction: The book of Job contains all the wisdom about human suffering that God knew His people could understand before He sent His Messiah to earth. There are no human answers to why some people suffer more than others. There is no algorithm that can be devised to determine when any person will suffer, or to what extent, or for how long. *** We see some of this in today's passages. After Job lost all he possessed, in the part we skipped over, his body was almost totally broken down. Then, three of his friends came and sat with him in sympathetic silence. *** After some time, Job broke the silence when out of his extreme anguish he cursed the day he was born. He wished he was never born! *** Eliphaz, his oldest friend, responds to him by speaking the 'conventional wisdom' that God is just, fair, predictable, and always dispenses perfect justice in this life. *** Job follows up by questioning God about the extent of his suffering, and confessing to Him that he had sinned. (Did Eliphaz strike a nerve?) He also begs God to forgive him. *** David asked similar questions in a lament song to God, but concluded with a vow to praise God. *** On the Cross, Jesus redeemed all human suffering by His suffering on behalf of the sins of all people. *** Let's go deeper into these topics, and seek to apply them to ourselves, as we take a closer look at our texts.

I. Job curses the day of his birth, then Eliphaz seeks to correct him with gentle, but strict, 'conventional wisdom' that God always makes things right in this life. (Job 3:1-10; 4:1-9)

A. Job wishes he was never born and curses the day of his birth. (Job 3:1-10)

1. After this Job opened his mouth / then he cursed his day [of birth] // then Job answered and he said / it will perish the day in which I was born / the night it was said: a [strong] man has been conceived. (Verses 1-3)

Never born: After losing all his possessions and his health, and hearing his wife tell him to curse God, Job breaks his silence by telling his friends he now wishes he was never born.

2. That day will be darkness / God above will not seek it / light will not be shined on it // darkness and the shadow of death will not redeem it / clouds will dwell on it / blackness of day will terrify it. (Verses 4-5)

Dark black day: Because of all that has happened, he views his birthday as black darkness.

3. That night will seize darkness / it will not give joy in the days of the year / into the account of months, it will not come. (Verse 6)

No joy: Because of the darkness in Job's life, he can no longer see joy in his future.

4. Behold! That night will be desolate / in it a joyful cry will not come // they will curse it, those cursing a day / those skilled to raise up Leviathan. (Verses 7-8)

Desolate devastation: Job's joy has been replaced by devastation and desolation. He calls on those skilled in cursing and invoking sea monsters to curse the night he was conceived.

5. They will be dark the stars of its twilight / it will wait [in hope] for light, but have none / and it will not see the dawn // because it did not shut up the doors of [my mother's] womb / nor did it hide trouble from my eyes. (Verses 9-10)

Not prevent my mother: Job wishes he had been still-born. He desperately desires he was never born.

Bottom line: Notice that Job only curses the day of his birth – not his God!

Application: Because of Job's attitude, we must be both grateful God allows His people to question Him in great distress; and, we must be careful to never accuse Him of wrongdoing or curse Him.

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B. Eliphaz, the eldest of Job's friends, responds with gentle but strict orthodoxy that God always 'balances the books' in this life. (Job 4:1-9)

1. Then answered Eliphaz the Temanite to say // if someone attempts a word with thee, will thou be impatient? / to be restrained in words, who is able? (Verses 1-2)

Eliphaz: Eliphaz (my God – gold), from the south, does not want to offend his friend, but says he is unable to let Job's complaint go unanswered.

2. Behold! Thou have instructed [admonished] many / and weak hands thou will strengthen // one stumbling, thy words have upheld / and knees being feeble, thou made firm. (Verses 3-4)

Job and others: His first in rank friend recalls all the needy people Job has helped through the years, and he is confident Job will continue to strengthen people.

3. For now it has come to thee and thou are impatient / it touches thee and thou are dismayed. (Verse 5)

Job can't take it: Eliphaz is calling out his friend as one of those people who does good works from his or her strength, but crumbles when his or her strength is gone.

4. Is not thy fear [of God] thy confidence / thy hope, and the integrity of thy ways? (Verse 6)

Faith and hope: With a rhetorical question, Eliphaz seeks to remind Job that his confidence in the awesome God is the source of his hope and God-pleasing ways. He wants his friend to persevere in faith.

5. Thou must remember, please! who being innocent ever perished / and where were the upright cut off? (Verse 7)

Platitude: This is a simple platitude. The reality of life in a sinful world is that many times innocent and upright people are cut off and they do die.

6. As I have seen, those plowing iniquity / and those sowing trouble, they will reap each // from the breath of God, they perish / and from the wind of His anger, they will be consumed. (Verses 8-9)

'Conventional wisdom': Many people need to believe God always makes everything right in this life. It is this 'conventional wisdom' that keeps them going. But, again, in a sinful world, bad things happen to people that are humanly 'good'. (More on this later.)

Application: Unlike Eliphaz, we must commit to withhold counsel, and judgment, until we have carefully and prayerfully gathered enough information to be guided by both the Holy Spirit and the full Word of God.

II. Job responds in anguish to Eliphaz and ironically references a Psalm; David laments with four 'how longs' before closing with praise. (*Job 7:11-21; Psalm 13*)

A. Job responds in anguish to Eliphaz and God, concluding with an ironic take on a Psalm. (*Job 7:11-21*)

1. [Job continues:] Also, I, myself, will not restrain my mouth / I will speak in the distress of my spirit / I will complain in the bitterness of my soul. (*Verse 11*)
Speak in distress of spirit: Job continues to be very honest about how distressed and bitter he is deep in the very essence of his being!
2. Am I the sea, or sea monster / that Thou will put over me a guard? (*Verse 12*)
To God: Now Job addresses God. He metaphorically asks God if he is as life threatening to travelers on water as a sudden violent storm or a huge whale.
3. When I say: my bed will comfort me / it will bear my complaint, my couch // and Thou dismay me with dreams / and from visions, Thou will terrify me // then will choose suffocation, my soul / death rather than my bones [body, self]. (*Verses 13-15*)
You terrify me: Whenever Job thinks he will be comforted, he finds himself dismayed and terrified by God to the point where he feels suffocated to death.
4. I have despised, not forever I will live / Thou must leave me alone, because a breath (vapor are) my days. (*Verse 16*)
Let me be: Job feels that God has overwhelmed him so much that he feels his life is near an end; therefore, he demands that God leave him alone so he can recover.
5. What is man that Thou will magnify him / and that Thou have put him on Thy heart // Thou visited him in the morning / and in a moment Thou will test him? (*Verses 17-18*)
Psalm 8: The beginning words are also found in a Psalm of David (8:4). Job uses these words ironically as he questions God about the testing he is enduring. He is distressed and questioning God, but not sinning.

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6. Until when, will Thou not look (away) from me, / Thou will not forsake me until I swallow my spittle? // I have sinned, what will I do to Thee / the one watching mankind? // Why do Thou put me as a target to Thyself / I have become to myself a burden. (*Verse 19-20*)
Confession of sin: In all his questioning, Job confesses he has sinned and fallen short of God's perfect standard (Psalm 14:1-3; Ecclesiastes 7:20). Still, he is questioning God as to why he is being singled out for this degree of chastisement.

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7. And why will Thou not take away (forgive) my transgression / and Thou will [not] make pass over my iniquity? // Because now on the dust I will lie down (to sleep) / and I (am) not (me). (*Verse 21*)
Why am I un-forgiven: Job begs for God to forgive him. He is lying in dust, in extremely poor health and with no earthly possessions (including children). He is not the man he used to be and he has nothing more to say at this time.

Application: From all this, we must be as fully honest with God, both individually, as Job was; and, also collectively, as God's Church IN Jesus Christ, we must not fear to question God.

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B. With four 'how longs', David laments to Yahweh about his sorrows, but closes with praise. (*Psalm 13*)

1. How long, Yahweh, will Thou forget me perpetually? / How long will Thou hide Thy face from me? (*Verse 1*)
'How long' Thou: David begins by asking God (Thou) how long will he be forgotten and forsaken?
2. How long will I take advice in my soul / sorrow in my heart daily? // How long will he be exalted, my enemy, over me? (*Verse 2*)
My sorrow: Now David makes his lament song-prayer personal to himself: How long will he be in sorrow? This is a universal question for Job, David, and all God's people on earth.

The universal question: how long must I have sorrow?

3. Thou must consider, Thou must answer me, Yahweh, my God / Thou must enlighten my eyes, lest I will sleep the [sleep of] death // Lest will say my enemy: I have prevailed over him / my enemy will rejoice because I will be overthrown. (*Verses 3-4*)
David's plea: David's earnest plea is that Yahweh will deliver him from death sleep at this time so his enemy (adversary) will not gloat over him. This is a typical for a lament song.
4. And I, in Thy steadfast love, I have trusted / I will rejoice in my heart in Thy salvation // I will sing to Yahweh because He has dealt bountifully to me. (*Verses 5-6*)
Lament to praise: All but one lament song (Psalm 88) concludes with praise for the sure hope of salvation from the Covenant God! David expresses his strong faith in God's strong life giving love here based on his experience with God. He knows if he continues to ask in faith, God will save him. Jesus affirmed the fruit of persistent prayer in faith with His parable of a widow and a judge (Luke 18:1-8).

Application: We must confidently ask God 'how long' we must suffer; and, because Jesus redeemed suffering on the Cross, we can always follow David's example to praise God while we wait in hope.

Conclusion: Job curses the day of his birth, then Eliphaz seeks to correct him with gentle, but strict, 'conventional wisdom' that God always makes things right in this life. Job responds in anguish to Eliphaz and ironically references a Psalm. David laments with four 'how longs' before closing with praise.

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