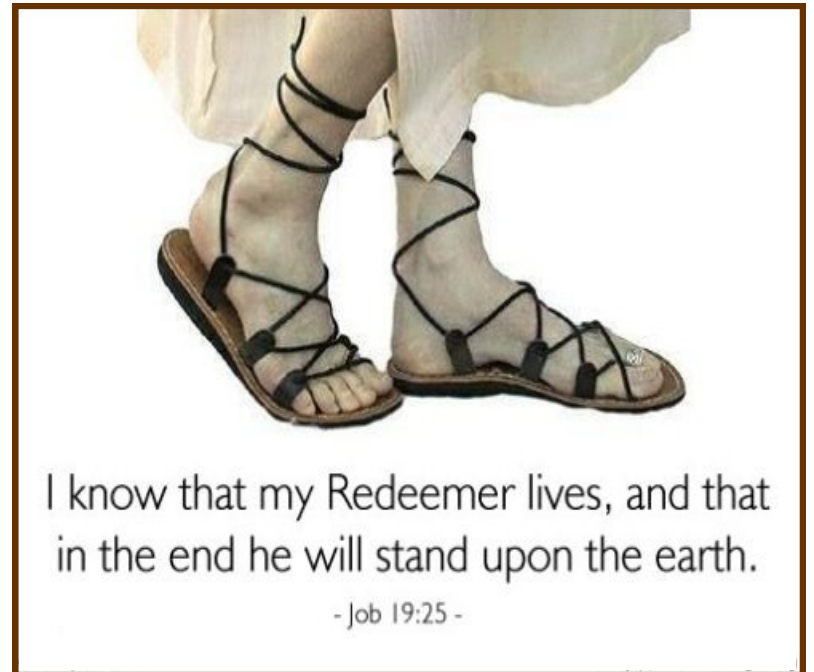


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# *Job*

## *Chapter Six:*



I know that my Redeemer lives, and that  
in the end he will stand upon the earth.

- Job 19:25 -

*The Discourse of Job*

## CHAPTER SIX: THE DISCOURSE OF JOB

### The First Lesson Job is Wounded by God and Desires not to Exist

1 Then Job answered saying: 2 Would that my sins for which I have merited anger and the calamity which I suffer were weighed in a balance, 3 like the sands of the sea. This still could not equal them and so my words were full of bitterness. 4 Because the arrows of the Lord stick fast in me and their pain takes my breath away. God's terror stands arrayed against me. 5 Does a wild donkey bray when it finds grass or an ox low when it stands in a stable full of fodder? 6 Can tasteless food be eaten without salt? Or can someone taste what once tasted brings death? 7 What my soul did not wish to touch before, has now become food in my anguish. 8 Who will grant that my prayer find fulfillment? May God grant my hope! 9 May he who began this, destroy me! May he free his hand and cut me down! 10 This thought, at least, may give me comfort: that in afflicting me with pain, he will not spare me and I will not deny the Holy One's decrees. 11 But what kind of strength do I have to resist? When will the end come so that I can act patiently? 12 My strength is not the strength of a stone nor is my flesh of bronze.

Eliphaz had clearly noted in earlier verses three things in the lament of Job: despair because he seemed to desire not to exist; impatience or immoderate sorrow because of the sighs and moans which he said he was enduring; and presumption because he asserted his innocence. The whole discourse of Eliphaz in the previous chapters was about these three things. In his discourse he proposed for consideration the frailty of the human condition among other things to demonstrate that Job was subject to sin and should have accepted his misfortunes. Job takes the beginning of his response from this point. For it is certain that because of the frailty of the human condition, no man is free from sin however just he may appear to be. Nevertheless, in just men sins are not grave and mortal sins but trivial and venial sins which occur as a result of negligence and deception. If what Eliphaz strives to prove were true, i.e. the adversities of this present life were the proper punishments for sin, it would follow that men would suffer grave adversities because of grave sins and light adversities for light sins. Thus just men would never be subject to grave adversities, which is clearly false. Job proposes this argument, then, against the scientific discussion of Eliphaz and so the text continues, "The Job answered saying: Would that my sins for which I have merited anger and the calamity which I suffer were weighed in a balance.," as if to say: I cannot say that there are no sins in me, yet I am confident that there is no mortal sin in me, but venial sins. If then I merited this sort of anger from God, as punishment for such sins, my calamity and my sin should be weighed in the scale of justice so that one can correspond to the other according to the measure of equality. But the adversity appears to be much greater and so he continues, "Like the sands on the sea," which means without parallel, "this", i.e. the calamity, "could not equal them," i.e. if the opinion of Eliphaz were true and the adversities of this world are inflicted only because of sin, since it is apparent that many wicked men suffer light adversities, Job's sins seem next to nothing in comparison with theirs.

***"Whoever does not love his brother whom he does see, how can he love the God whom he cannot see?"***

**(1 John 4:2)**

He continues lest anyone think that he says this because he is afraid to argue with them because he could not be confident in the truth of his opinion and the justice of his case, "Despite this, finish what you began to say," so that the truth can come to light from mutual debate. So he goes on, "Lend an ear," i.e. listen, "and see," i.e. consider, "if I am lying.?"

For the first impediment to finding the truth through debate is when someone does not want to hear what his adversary is saying.

The second impediment is when he responds to what he has heard in a loud and abusive way. To exclude this he says, "Answer, please, without quarreling." To quarrel, according to St. Ambrose, is "the attack on truth accompanied by relying on shouting."

The third impediment exists when someone in a disputation does not aim at the truth but at victory or glory, as happens in law cases or sophistical debates. "In speaking, judge what is right," i.e. to concede what seems to be true to you, and deny those things which seem false. "And" if you do this, "You will find no evil on my tongue," i.e. anything contrary to the justice which is due to one's neighbor. "Nor stupidity in my mouth," i.e. anything against the wisdom by which one thinks correctly about God.

For Job intended to defend and prove the truth about both divine and human matters.

### ***END OF JOB CHAPTER 6***

From this he goes on to excuse himself from the sadness which he had expressed in words saying, "And so my words were full of bitterness," with the conclusion he infers that his pain was caused by the magnitude of his suffering. He adds that there are two causes of pain. Pain is sometimes caused by things someone has already endured, sometimes by things he is afraid he will endure. He first then assigns the cause of his pain resulting from things which he had already endured saying, "Because the arrows of God stuck fast in me." In this he demonstrates that he had been afflicted unexpectedly; for an arrow comes suddenly from far off. He shows the greatness of the wound as he says, "their pain drains my spirit," i.e. the pain has not permitted me to breathe, but totally robs me of whatever strength and consolation could have been in me. Then he shows the cause of the pain from what he was afraid he would suffer saying, "God's terror stands arrayed against me." For the afflicted are usually consoled by the hope of a better state, but when after one affliction comes, one fears similar or greater afflictions again, he seems to have no consolation left.

The objection could be made: you certainly have cause for suffering, but you should not burst out in words of pain from it. Against this objection Job responds using examples which are found in other animals. For man is like other animals in sensitive nature, and so those things which sensitive nature naturally entails must be present in man, as in the other animals. What is natural cannot be totally suppressed. In other animals one finds that affliction of heart is expressed with the voice, and he notes this when he says, "Does a wild donkey bray when it finds grass or an ox low when it stands in a stable full of fodder?" He implies the answer 'no'. The donkey brays and the ox lows when it lacks the necessary food. It seems natural for animals to vocally express interior torment.

On the other hand, someone might concede that it is natural to express pain vocally conceived, but as the Stoics thought, it does not pertain to the wise man to conceive sadness in his heart for any reason whatsoever. Job demonstrates this to be against sensitive nature. For sense cannot but be repulsed by the unsuitable and the harmful. So he says, "Can tasteless food be taken without salt?" implying the answer no, because such foods without flavor are not fit to delight the sense of taste. Similarly, the heart of man cannot freely tolerate things which are not pleasant, much less things which are bitter and harmful. So he continues, "Or can someone taste what once tasted brings death?," as if to say, 'No' here. Just as this is impossible for the exterior sense, so it is impossible that what is apprehended by the interior sense as harmful should be received without sadness.

But though it is true the wise man suffers sadness, nevertheless his reason is not absorbed by this sadness. Job shows as a consequence that although he himself might suffer sadness, he still had the greatest concern and caution to protect himself against sadness, so as to be led by sadness to do something evil. To avoid this, he preferred death. To give some expression to this he says, "What my soul did not touch before has now become food in my anguish." because what my soul formerly abhorred, it now desires as pleasant. He shows this same thing when he says, "Who will grant that my prayer find fulfillment?" He shows that this prayer is made not only with the lips, but also from the bottom of his heart when he continues, "may God grant me my hope!" He expresses the content of the prayer saying, "May he who began this," i.e. to afflict me, "destroy me," in death. He continues, "May he free his hand and cut me down." The hand of God expresses the divine power by which God has afflicted him, and God binds his hand in a way from his mercy and by his will and when he does not afflict him. However, God frees his hand in a sense when the divine chastisement strikes him is directed to killing him.

Since he said that the things he did not formerly want to touch had now become his food, he shows this must be understood to mean that death which was abhorrent to him, has now become something pleasant. So he continues, "This thought, at least, may give me comfort: that in afflicting me with pain, he (God) will not spare me," i.e. he does not take away his hand, but leads me to death. He shows why he hopes for this when he continues, "And I will not deny the Holy One's decrees," i.e. the decrees of God which are the judgments and sentences by which he afflicted me. For Job feared that he might be led into impatience by his many afflictions, so that his reason could not restrain his sadness. Indeed it is the nature of impatience when reason is so dominated by sadness that one contradicts divine judgments. If, however, someone should suffer sadness in the sensitive part of the soul, but reason remains in conformity with the divine will, this is not the defect of impatience. So Eliphaz accused Job without reason when he said, "And now that the scourge has come on you, you too have fallen away." (4:5) For although he was sad, he still had not been wanting.

Not only do you offer me no help, but you even afflict me further with your words as much as you can. So he adds, "Why do you slander true ideas?" which I spoke first in my lamentation and which Eliphaz seemed to reprove as has been said. He disproves all the reasons which can excuse a detractor to justify his conduct to show this detraction is inexcusable.

The first of these is to censure someone in greater authority for a fault.

He disproves this in this case by saying, "For none of you can accuse me."

The second is when someone criticizes someone else for his own good and not exacerbate the situation. He refers to this saying, "You compose speeches only to rebuke me," and not for my good "you join fine words together," since you carefully compose them so that your words may not seem lightly spoken.

The third is when someone strengthens the arguments he uses against someone else with efficacious reasons. He excludes this saying, "You cast your words to the wind," as if to say: Your words are empty for they do not have the support of reason.

The fourth is when someone censures someone in that time and in a state when it can be pursued he will become better and not worse as a result. But if someone wants to censure another when he is perplexed in soul and is disposed to anger, he does not seem to want his amendment so much but his ruin. So he says, "You seize the orphan, and strive to ruin your friend." He refers to himself as an orphan because set down in his sadness he was destitute of help.

Therefore, he did not have support in himself, in his servants or in his relatives. As a further consequence, he demonstrates that he did not have help from his other friends saying, “Look for the paths to Teman, the roads to Saba,” lands where he seemed to have had his greatest friends, for even Eliphaz had come from Teman. “And wait for a short while,” to see if any friends come by these roads to bring me help. You will not see this because, “They are embarrassed,” to come to me; “because I hoped for them” i.e. because there was a time when I should have hoped for help from them.

This is because men who do not want to help someone are ashamed to visit them if they think they will ask them for help reasonably. “They came,” some of them, “to me and they were covered with shame,” because they did not give me help when they recognized that they should have. It is not surprising for others to refuse to help me since even you, who seem wiser, fail to do it. So he continues, “Now you have come to see me and in only seeing my disease, you are afraid,” but perhaps you feel obliged to help me.

But do not be afraid, because I haven’t asked you for help in anything, nor do I even request you to assist me with money. This is the meaning of, “Have I said: Bring me and give me a gift from your property?” Nor have I sought aid from you in war against enemies, and so he adds, “Free me from the clutches of an enemy, or ransom me from hand of the mighty?” Nor have I sought the help of instruction from you. So this is the meaning of: Have I said to you: “Teach me’?” in speculative matters, “and I will say no more, and if perhaps I have been ignorant: Instruct me?” in practical actions.

Next he gives the reason from his frailty that he would be led to contradict the decrees of the Holy One. Fear of this kind can be overcome by two causes. First, if the strength of reason is so great in itself that it could be overcome in any way. This is the case in those whose free will has been confirmed in grace. But he did not feel this kind of strength in himself. So he says, “But what kind of strength do I have to resist?” any sort of trial. Second, fear could be removed if it were necessary to tolerate trials and sadness's for only a short time. To show this is not true with him he says, “When will the end come so that I can comport myself patiently?” He seems to mean here: what end has been put for my trials so that I can remain patient while I wait for it? To explain this he says, “My strength is not the strength of a stone?” For a stone experiences strength without experiencing feeling, but a man experiences strength along with the emotional experience of harmful things. So he continues, “nor is my flesh bronze”, i.e. without feeling because however strong the reason of a mortal man may be, he still must experience the feeling of pain on the part of the flesh. By this he refutes the attempted rebuke of Eliphaz who censured the very existence of sadness in Blessed Job. For although Blessed Job had strength of mind, still he would have had the sensation of pain on the part of the flesh, which causes sadness. At the same time he refutes the opinion of the Stoics in this who said that the wise man is not sad. Eliphaz seems to have shared their opinion. Blessed Job intends to defend the fact that the wise man is truly sad but is zealous through reason not to be led to do anything unfitting. This is what the Peripatetics taught.

### **The Second Lesson: Job Feels Betrayed by his Friends**

13 Behold, I cannot help myself and those to whom I look for help deserted me. 14 He who takes mercy from a neighbor and forsakes the fear of the Lord. 15 My brothers have passed me by like a torrent, like a stream coursing through the valleys. 16 Those who fear frost will be covered by snow. At the time they are broken up, they will perish; 17 and they will vanish from their place as though dried up. 18 The paths they walk on are confused; they will walk in emptiness and will perish. 19 Look for the paths to Teman, the roads to Saba and wait for a little while. 20 They are embarrassed because I hoped for them and they came to me and were covered with shame. 21 Now you have come to me and in only seeing my disease, you are afraid. 22 Have I said: Bring me and give me a gift from your property? 23 Free me from the clutches of the enemy, or ransom me from the hand of the mighty? 24 Teach me and I will say no more? And if I perhaps have been ignorant: Instruct me? 25 Why do you slander true ideas? For none of you can accuse me. You compose speeches only to rebuke me, 26 You join your words together and you cast your words to the wind. 27 You seize the orphan and strive to ruin your friend. 28 Despite this, finish what you began to say so that the truth may come to light by mutual discussion Lend an ear! See if I am lying. 29 Answer please, without contention and 30 in speaking, judge what you think is right. You will find no evil on my tongue, nor will there be stupidity in my mouth.

Job had shown in the preceding verses that he felt pain and spoke words from his pain in conformity with reason, but yet he was not carried away by his pain in the things which he suffered. But because man, although he suffers some adversities, sometimes guards himself by consolations and help in both himself and in others against these adversities so as to feel little or no pain, blessed Job wants to show that he is destitute of aids of this kind. He does this to put in more evident relief that he spoke rationally when he expressed his pain in speech. So he first shows that he was destitute of the aforementioned remedies from his own part when he says, "Behold, I cannot help myself." For even if he had lost some of his goods, he could have tolerated this without sadness if he could have helped himself to recover these lost goods and so revenge the injury inflicted. But he was not able to do this when he had lost all his riches, children and even the health of his own body.

Further, many things we cannot do ourselves, we can do through friends. So Job shows in the second place that he was also bereft of the help of his friends when he says, "Those to whom I looked for help," i.e. family and servants," deserted me." To show they are blameworthy for this, he continues, "He takes away mercy from a neighbor," namely in the time of sorrow, "forsakes the fear of the Lord," that is, the reverence due to God, because of whom and in whom one loves his neighbor. As John says, "Whoever does not love his brother whom he does see, how can he love the God whom he cannot see?" (1 John 4:2)

Next he shows his family has abandoned him when he says, "My brothers," i.e. my relatives, "have passed me by." He uses the analogy of those who walk along together. If one falls in a ditch, the others pass by nevertheless abandoning him there. In a certain sense, they would be excused for this if they leave him once they have tried to help him because of weariness because they despair of helping him. But he shows that these men are without excuse, because they immediately and suddenly deserted him. He shows this when he says, "like a torrent, like a stream coursing through the valleys," which moves very quickly. That they might not believe they did this with impunity, he adds, "Those who fear frost will be covered by snow," as if to say: He who fails in justice and mercy because of fear for a lesser danger, exposes himself to still greater dangers. So, Job's relatives, too, who passed him by unwilling to show any compassion for him, will themselves sustain suffering in their own losses. He continues showing their danger will be in the future and without remedy, "At the time when they will be broken up," i.e., when they will suffer dangers, "they will perish," totally, "and they will vanish from their place as though dried up." He uses the metaphor of snow, which he has already mentioned, for it does not immediately melt with the first heat when it is very hard and frozen, but when not yet frozen, it melts immediately when touched by the rays of the sun and becomes slush. He shows this saying, "and they will vanish from their place, as though they were dried up," i.e., immediately their whole prosperity will vanish at the first assault of adversity as the snow does at the first heat. He shows the cause of this when he continues, "The paths they follow are tangled up." What is entangled goes back on itself with a kind of twist and turn, and so the footpaths of those men are entangled who seek nothing in their kinsmen and friends except their own advantage. Because of this they simulate friendship in time of prosperity but they pass by in time of adversity. Men who deceitfully seek their own advantage very often fall short in what they hope to gain and so he adds, "They will walk in emptiness." Men are said to walk in emptiness when they do not reach the goal of their walking. Not only will their hope be null, but the opposite will befall them, and so he adds, "and will perish," i.e. will be totally destroyed.