A Protest of Innocence

The Condition of the Wicked

Job 27:1-23
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Text:

Job 27:1-23,

1. And Job took up his discourse again:
2. “As surely as God lives, who has denied me justice, the Almighty, who has made my life bitter—
3. for while my spirit is still in me, and the breath from God is in my nostrils,
4. my lips will not speak wickedness, and my tongue will whisper no deceit.
5. I will never declare that you three are in the right; until I die, I will not set aside my integrity!
6. I will maintain my righteousness and never let it go; my conscience will not reproach me for as long as I live.
7. “May my enemy be like the wicked, my adversary like the unrighteous.
8. For what hope does the godless have when he is cut off, when God takes away his life?
9. Does God listen to his cry when distress overtakes him?
10. Will he find delight in the Almighty? Will he call out to God at all times?
11. I will teach you about the power of God; What is on the Almighty’s mind I will not conceal.
12. If you yourselves have all seen this, Why in the world do you continue this meaningless talk?
13. This is the portion of the wicked man allotted by God, the inheritance that evildoers receive from the Almighty.
14. If his children increase—it is for the sword! His offspring never have enough to eat.
15. Those who survive him are buried by the plague, and their widows do not mourn for them.
16. If he piles up silver like dust and stores up clothing like mounds of clay,
17. what he stores up a righteous man will wear, and an innocent man will inherit his silver.
18. The house he builds is as fragile as a moth’s cocoon, like a hut that a watchman has made.
19. He goes to bed wealthy, but will do so no more. When he opens his eyes, it is all gone.
20. Terrors overwhelm him like a flood; at night a whirlwind carries him off.
21. The east wind carries him away, and he is gone; it sweeps him out of his place.
22. It hurls itself against him without pity as he flees headlong from its power.
23. It claps its hands at him in derision and hisses him away from his place. (NET)

Commentary:

“And Job again took up his parable, and said, As God liveth, who hath taken away my right, And the Almighty, who hath vexed my soul; (For my life is yet whole in me, And the spirit of God is in my nostrils;) Surely my lips shall not speak unrighteousness, Neither shall my tongue utter deceit. Far be it from me that I should justify you: till I die I will not put away mine integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: My heart shall not reproach me so long as I live. Let mine enemy be
as the wicked, And let him that riseth up against me be as the unrighteous.” (27:1-7). To make sure his three friends clearly understand his position, Job calls God as his witness (i.e., a solemn oath) to declare in no uncertain terms that he was not now, nor would he ever plead guilty to all the evil things of which they had accused him. Granted God had been hard on him, but he stood on his integrity and his personal knowledge that he had done his best to live a godly life. He also lets the friends know that he considers them to be wicked and enemies rather than his friends. In verse 3 he says, “For my life is yet whole in me, And the spirit of God is in my nostrils.” These two phrases are parallels, saying the same thing. Note:

“For my life is yet whole in me, And the spirit of God is in my nostrils.”

By spirit he speaks as did Moses when he said “Jehovah . . . breathed into his (Adam’s) nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” (Genesis 2:7). He simply means, So long as I am alive, I will not surrender to your badgering. For him to consent with them was by itself an unrighteous deed, since he was innocent. It should be the strong resolve of every Christian that with God’s help, we “will not put away (our) integrity.” We frequently read of police interrogators who hammer away at a suspect until he confesses to crimes of which he is not guilty. The Christian may sometime find himself under similar attack. Our faith in God and the knowledge of our integrity will help us in such trials. Note that Job calls his speech a parable The Hebrew term rendered parable also described a “discourse,” the obvious meaning here. The RSV gives the better reading.
“For what is the hope of the godless, though he get him gain, When God takes away his soul? Will God hear his cry, When trouble cometh upon him? Will he delight himself in the Almighty, And call upon God at all times? I will teach you concerning the hand of God; That which is with the Almighty will I no conceal. Behold, all ye yourselves have seen it; Why then are ye become altogether vain?” (27: 8-12). In place of “the godless,” The KJV gives us “the hypocrite.” The friends had done their best to convict Job of being a godless hypocrite. In response, Job poses three rhetorical questions to them. The answers would be obvious.

* What hope does the rich godless man have? Surely none!

* When it is time to die, will God hear his cry, i.e., his prayer? No!

* When troubles confront him, does he ask God for help? No!

But Job still had hope that God would again speak to him and come to his rescue. Even though it was thought his death was imminent, Job was confident God would hear his prayer and bless him. In the midst of all his suffering and loss Job had not ceased to call upon God and still believed that God would respond in His own time.

In verse 11, Job tells his misguided friends, “You have pretended to tell me about God and your information was all wrong.” Now says Job, “I will teach you concerning the hand of God.” Job now appeals to common knowledge.
understanding of God was all wrath and punishment. Job understood that God dealt differently with the righteous and the wicked. He also understood God’s mercy and forgiveness. On that knowledge Job rested his hope for better days. They were so determined to convict Job of great evil that they had seriously misrepresented God. Their words were “altogether vain” or worthless.

The Final Speech of Zophar

**Note:** Chapter 27:13-23 seems to reflect the arguments of the friends rather than those of Job. This has led some scholars to conclude that it is the third response of Zophar. We will proceed on that assumption.

“This is the portion of a wicked man with God, And the heritage of oppressors, which they receive from the Almighty: If his children be multiplied, it is for the sword; And his offspring shall not be satisfied with bread. Those that remain of him shall be buried in death, And his widows shall make no lamentation.” (27:13-15). Zophar, frustrated by his failure to convict Job, rubs salt into his fresh wounds. Job’s heart was yet torn for the lose of his ten children. But Zophar, without pity, charges that the early death of all a man’s children is proof of his wickedness. They, like him, will be buried without lamentation, and with no sincere mourning. “And his widows shall make no lamentation.” We have no indication that Job had plural wives. It could refer to the surviving wives of his deceased sons.

“Though he heap up silver as the dust, And prepare raiment as the clay; He may prepare it, but the just shall
put it on, And the innocent shall divide the silver. He buildeth his house as the moth, And as a booth which the keeper maketh.” (27:16-18). This is an allusion to Job’s wealth prior to his punishment. “He was the greatest of the all the children of the east.” (1:3). He refers to his many fine garments and assures Job that they will be given to the innocent upon his death! In saying that Job’s garments were “as the clay,” he meant as numerous as the dust on the ground. This is obviously a hyperbole. In a day when most folks had one or perhaps two changes of clothes, he is saying that Job was extravagant. His house may refer to his dwelling place, but it may also refer to his dynasty. The house of the moth is his fragile cocoon. The booth he mentions is the temporary shelter set up to keep the sun off the head of those whose task is to keep the birds from devouring their crop, or thieves from stealing it. These booths consist of branches of trees propped together to provide shade. They are of no use when it rains or in the cold winter. After the crop is harvested, they are abandoned and are soon on the ground.

“He lieth down rich, but he shall not be gathered to his fathers; He openeth his eyes, and he is not. Terrors overtake him like waters; A tempest stealeth him away in the night. The east wind carrieth him away, and he departeth: And it sweepeth him out of his place. For God shall hurl at him, and not spare: He would fain flee out of his hand.” (27:19-22). Zophar taunts Job, saying, He may die a rich man, but he won’t be privileged to see his righteous ancestors because of his wickedness. When death comes, Job will open his eyes, but there will be no blessings or happiness. In death he will be terrified like a drowning man., like a man whose home is struck by a powerful storm in the night. Because of his
ungodliness (as assumed by Zophar), God shall hurl the storm at him like a soldier hurls his spear or a slinger hurls his stones. Job will try to flee but he will not escape God’s justice.

“Men shall clap their hands at him, And shall hiss him out of his place.” (27:23). Unable to convince Job of his guilt, his friends have become his enemies. Zophar seems pleased to tell Job that friends and neighbors would be happy to see him dead and gone. Rather than mourn his passing, they would openly display their delight in his death.
Questions on Job 27:1-23

1. Why does Job call his response a “parable”? (27:1).  
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2. What is the spirit of God in Job’s nostrils? (27:3).  
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3. What is it that Job was determined not to do? (27:4-5).  
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4. What was it that Job wanted to teach his friends about the hand of God? (27:11).  
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5. Who is speaking in 27:13ff? ___________________________

6. When Zophar says, “His widows shall make no lamentation,” does this suggest Job had many wives? What is a possible answer? (27:15). ________________________________

7. Job 27:16 tells us something about Job. What is it? ______

8. What is Zophar’s point about Job’s house? (27:18). ________
9. In Job 27:19, Zophar speaks of lying down. To what is he referring? 

10. What does Zophar predict Job’s experience in death will be? (27:19b-22).

11. Zophar tells Job what the response of his friends and neighbors will be when they hear of his death. Describe their response. (27:23).