

Job Chapter 17

Verses 1-16: As this suffering man hit bottom, he took his anguish to the Lord.

Job 17:1 "My breath is corrupt, my days are extinct, the graves [are ready] for me."

“The graves are ready” indicates that Job believed death was near.

In chapter 16, which this is actually an extension of, Job was answering his friend and lamenting his situation. He was saying in the verse above, that even the breath of life within him was ruined. He felt he was near death. He thought it was the time that God had chosen.

Job 17:2 "[Are there] not mockers with me? and doth not mine eye continue in their provocation?"

“Mockers”: The would-be counselors had become actual enemies and the provocation for Job’s tears (compare 16:20).

"Provocation" in this verse, means bitterness. His friends had mocked him and spoken very hurtful things to him. The truly sad thing was that Job had done nothing to cause all of this. After this trial was over however, he would have a different attitude toward these friends.

Job 17:3 "Lay down now, put me in a surety with thee; who [is] he [that] will strike hands with me?"

“Surety”: He called on God to promise (by a symbolic handshake), that his case would be heard in the heavenly court.

Job had discovered at this point, that the only one he could trust was God. He was wanting a handshake from God. This would be a sign that an agreement had been struck.

Job 17:4 "For thou hast hid their heart from understanding: therefore shalt thou not exalt [them]."

“Not exalt them”: The blindness of Job’s friends toward his innocence came from God, so Job asked that God would not let them succeed in their efforts against him.

Job was trying to say that it was God who had blinded the eyes of his friends, so they could not see his innocence. Of course, he did not want his friends exalted in the eyes of God, because of what they had done and said.

Job 17:5 "He that speaketh flattery to [his] friends, even the eyes of his children shall fail."

“Speaketh flattery”: This Hebrew term came to mean “a prey” so that Job was referring to someone who delivers up a friend as prey to some enemy.

Job was accusing his friends of attacking him as they would a prey. In the past, they had flattered him when he was a wealthy man. Now they were accusing him of every type of sin, because he was down. They were fair weather friends.

Job 17:6 "He hath made me also a byword of the people; and aforetime I was as a tabret."

“A byword”: This refers to shame, reproach, and a reputation that is extremely bad (compare Deut. 28:37; Psalm 69:11).

“Tabret”: The most disdainful act a person could commit to heap scorn and shame on someone as a wicked and unworthy person. Job’s friends were aiding him in getting such a reputation (verses 7-8).

Job became a byword for his generation for the terrible persecutions he endured. He is still a byword today to all who read the Bible. We are all amazed how Job stayed faithful to God through such terrible trials. All of us have a tendency to measure our trials with the trials of Job. "Tabret" in the verse here, means smiting, or contempt.

Job 17:7 "Mine eye also is dim by reason of sorrow, and all my members [are] as a shadow."

(Compare Psalms 6:7; 31:9). Excessive weeping, such as which stains the cheeks (Job 16:16), will also in most cases dim and dull the eyesight.

"And all my members are as a shadow": Weak, that is worn out, unstable, fleeting, ready to pass away.

He had cried so much that tears were constantly in his eyes. He could see through tears only, and things looked dim to him.

Job 17:8 "Upright [men] shall be astonished at this, and the innocent shall stir up himself against the hypocrite."

Wise and good men, when they shall see me, and consider my calamities, will not be so forward to censure and condemn me as you are. But will rather stand and wonder at the depth and mysteriousness of God’s judgments, which fall so heavily upon innocent men, while the worst of men prosper. Or rather, but or yet.

“The innocent shall stir himself up against the hypocrite”: Notwithstanding all these sufferings of good men, and the astonishment which they cause, he shall be so far from joining his opinions, counsels, and interest with those profane men. Who take occasion from thence to censure afflicted persons, and desert, condemn, and reproach the profession and practice of godliness. That he will the more zealously oppose those hypocrites who make these strange providences of God an objection to religion, and will prefer afflicted piety to prosperous iniquity.

This is the very effect that this book on Job has on everyone. We are astonished at the amount of suffering that Job endured without being overcome. We also cannot believe the attitude of his so-called friends. The least of the terrible things we could call them would be Hypocrites. Notice Job was speaking of this happening after his trial was over.

Job 17:9 "The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger."

"The righteous also shall hold on his way": Job, and other righteous people who find themselves in a similar situation, must remain righteous. If they do, Job knew, the suffering would produce strength (compare 2 Cor. 12:7-10).

The righteous man does not stop being righteous because problems come his way. He will hold fast to his belief in the face of all sorts of trouble. The Bible tells us that our trials come to us to make us strong. Those who patiently endure tribulation will become stronger and stronger.

Job 17:10 "But as for you all, do ye return, and come now: for I cannot find [one] wise [man] among you."

Job was not unteachable. He invited his friends to speak again if they had something wise to say for a change, but not to talk about his restoration because he was done (verses 11-16).

Job had listened to their accusations, and had been truly hurt by their lack of faith in him. He had risen above that and would not let their accusations bother him anymore. They were not wise, but fools.

Job 17:11 "My days are past, my purposes are broken off, [even] the thoughts of my heart."

My days are slipping away from me. Life is well-nigh over. What then, does it matter what you say?

"My purposes are broken off, even the thoughts of my heart": Literally, the possessions of my heart all the store that it has accumulated. My desires, purposes, and wishes. I no longer care to vindicate my innocence in the sight of men, or to clear my character from aspersions.

Job was so weary and had faced so much suffering, that he felt his useful days were over. Job was even weary of trying to defend himself from the terrible accusations. His heart was broken.

Job 17:12 "They change the night into day: the light [is] short because of darkness."

My distressing thoughts, griefs, and fears, so incessantly pursue and disturb me, that I can no more sleep in the night than in the day.

"The light is short": The day light, which often gives some comfort to men in misery, seems to be gone and fled as soon as it is begun.

"Because of darkness": Because of my grievous pains and torments, which follow me by day as well as by night.

They had thoroughly convinced Job that he had no right to expect God to intervene in his behalf. He now was just waiting until the time for death. It seemed a cloudy day, when he was so controlled by the pain wracking his body. It seemed as if it was night all the time. He could not see a glimmer of hope (light).

Job 17:13 "If I wait, the grave [is] mine house: I have made my bed in the darkness."

Rather, surely I look for the grave (Sheol), as my house. I expect no return of prosperity, no renewal of life in a sumptuous mansion, no recovery of the state and dignity from which I have fallen. I look only for Sheol as my future abode and resting place in Sheol.

"I have made my bed in the darkness": Meaning I regard myself as already there, lying on my narrow bed in the darkness, at rest after my afflictions.

Job was so full of despair that he had given up hope of any miracles. He did not even expect to be restored to his old glory in this life. He was just sitting in his ashes waiting for death.

Job 17:14 "I have said to corruption, Thou [art] my father: to the worm, [Thou art] my mother, and my sister."

"To corruption": Hebrew; to the pit of corruption, the grave.

"Thou art my father": I am near akin to thee, as being taken out of thee; and thou wilt receive and embrace me, and keep me in thy house, as parents do their children.

"To the worm, Thou art my mother, and my sister": Because of the same original, and the most strict and intimate union and conjunction between me and the worms.

He felt as if this disease was gradually doing away with his body. He felt the corruption of the disease all over his body. It was his constant companion. He was not complaining to God about the disease. He had accepted it as his lot. The mother and sister above, were speaking of his embracing this corruption. He had accepted it as his lot.

Job 17:15 "And where [is] now my hope? as for my hope, who shall see it?"

"Where is now my hope": Job's hope was in God alone.

Job was at the very height of despair. He had decided there was no hope for him anywhere.

Job 17:16 "They shall go down to the bars of the pit, when [our] rest together [is] in the dust."

"Pit": A reference to death, also used by our Lord (in Matt. 16:18).

He was convinced that his time for death was near. I believe his sadness was over not being satisfied that he had reconciled with God. Poor Job had no idea what sin he had committed to bring this terrible calamity into his life. He knew he must have done something terrible and had not gotten forgiveness for it, because he did not know what it was. He actually believed that he might wind up in hell.

Job Chapter 17 Questions

1. What was Job saying in verse 1?
2. What does "provocation" in verse 2 mean?
3. Who were the mockers of verse 2?
4. What was Job wanting from God in verse 3?
5. What would that mean, if he got it?
6. What did Job believe was the reasons for his friends not believing him?
7. When had the friends flattered Job?
8. They were _____ friends.
9. God had made Job a _____ of the people.
10. Why is he a by-word to our generation?
11. What does "tabret" mean?
12. Why was Job's eye dim?
13. What is everyone astonished of about Job?
14. What is the least terrible thing we could call Job's friends?
15. What will a righteous man do in the face of trouble?
16. How had Job's attitude toward his friends changed?
17. Job had become so weary and had faced so much suffering, that he felt he was about to _____.
18. If I wait, the _____ is mine house.
19. What did he call corruption in verse 14?

20. When Job was at the height of despair, what question did he ask?