

Job Chapter 16

Verses 16-1 – 17:16: Job responded with his second rebuttal.

Verses 1-22: This is Job's second response to his friends, who he decries as "miserable comforters" (13:3-4). Job calls himself "broken" (7:1), and he begins to despair as those who suffer often do: "Where ... is my hope?" (7:15).

Job 16:1 "Then Job answered and said,"

As soon as Eliphaz had finished speaking, Job stood up, and made the following reply.

Verses 2-5: "Miserable comforters are ye all": Job's friends had come to comfort him. In spite of 7 blissful days of silence at the outset, their mission had failed miserably, and their comfort had turned into more torment for Job. What started out as Eliphaz's sincere efforts to help Job understand his dilemma had turned into rancor and sarcasm. In the end, their haranguing had heightened the frustrations of all parties involved. If the matter were reversed and Job was comforter to his friends, he would never treat them as they have treated him. He would have strengthened and comforted them.

Job had been tortured and tried to the limit; his suffering was so complete that others could never say they alone experienced any particular suffering as he had.

Job 16:2 "I have heard many such things: miserable comforters [are] ye all."

The discussion degenerates into a series of insults and name-calling. Job protests his innocence, but begins to lose hope in his desperate situation.

I would have to agree with Job. They were no comfort to him at all. They were even worse than the world around him. They had known him well, and had talked of the LORD with him many times. This reminds me so much of what happens to someone in the church who is going through difficulties. The brothers and sisters in Christ should build them up and help them through the difficulty, but more often they do harm to them. Christians have a tendency to kill their wounded.

Job 16:3 "Shall vain words have an end? or what emboldeneth thee that thou answerest?"

Margin, as in Hebrew words of wind; that is, words which were devoid of thought; light, trifling. This is a retort to Eliphaz. He had charged Job (Obad. 15:2-3), with uttering only such words. Such forms of expression are common in the East. "His promise, it is only wind." "Breath, breath: all breath."

"Or what emboldeneth thee?": "What provokes or irritates thee that thou dost answer in this manner? What have I said, that has given occasion to such a speech. A speech so severe and unkind?"

Why did this friend think that he was capable of judging Job? Job did not want to hear any more words from this friend. We must be careful when we are judging this Scripture, and make sure we have not been like Job's friend. When someone is sick, it does not mean they have sinned. Jesus proved this when he healed the blind man. The apostles asked Jesus who had sinned, he or his parents, and Jesus said neither had. The blindness was so that God could be glorified in the restoration of the sight.

Job 16:4 "I also could speak as ye [do]: if your soul were in my soul's stead, I could heap up words against you, and shake mine head at you."

I.e. I could multiply accusations and reproaches against you, as you do against me.

"Shake mine head at you": In way of derision, as this phrase is most commonly used (as 2 Kings 19:21; Psalm 22:7; Isa. 37:22; Matt. 27:39).

Job 16:5 "[But] I would strengthen you with my mouth, and the moving of my lips should assuage [your grief]."

So God strengthens his people with strength in their souls, when he answers them with good and comfortable words. An angel strengthened Christ as man when in an agony, comforting him, suggesting comfortable things to him. So one saint may strengthen and comfort another when in distress, whether of soul or body (see Psalm 138:3). And thus, Job had strengthened and comforted others, with his words in former times, as Eliphaz himself owns (Job 4:3). And so he would again, were there a change in his circumstances, and objects presented.

"And the moving of my lips should assuage your grief": Words uttered by him, which are done by the moving of the lips, should be such as would have a tendency to allay grief. To stop, restrain, forbid, and lessen sorrow. At least that it might not break out in an extravagant way, and exceed bounds, and that his friends might not be swallowed up with much sorrow.

This is so true. The tongue is a weapon that can build a person up, or can cut them to pieces. His friends were not true friends. They had used their friendship to get an audience with Job, and then proceeded to tear him apart. Job could do the same thing to them, but he did not. He could have accused them of evil doing, because what they were doing to him was certainly evil.

Verses 6-17: As is often the case, a person's anger can reflect his or her love. Believers who get angry with God reveal that they care about Him even though they do not fully understand Him.

(In verses 6-14), Job considered God an "enemy" (verse 9). Job was not alone in struggling this intensely with God. Jacob fought with the Angel of the Lord all night (Gen. 32:24-30); Peter

argued with God (Acts 10:9-16). Anger with God can sometimes be a catalyst for spiritual growth. It can mean a person is outgrowing a less mature understanding of God.

Verses 6-9: These poignant thoughts from Job lamented his suffering as severe judgment from God, who had worn him out, withered his strength, and chewed him up by severe scrutiny (“sharpeneth his eyes upon me”).

Job 16:6 "Though I speak, my grief is not assuaged: and [though] I forbear, what am I eased?"

To God by prayer, or to you in the way of discourse,

"My grief is not assuaged": I find no relief or comfort. Job, having reproved his friends for their unkind behavior toward him, and aggravated it by contrasting therewith his resolutions to have acted in a friendlier manner toward them, had they been in his place. Now returns to his main business, namely, to describe his miseries, in order that, if possible, he might move his friends to pity and comfort him.

"Though I forbear, what am I eased?" What portion of my grief departs from me? I receive not one grain of ease or comfort. Neither speech nor silence does me any good.

The word "assuaged" means restrained. His speech did not bring him relief from his sorrow or his suffering. If he did not say anything at all, that did not help either.

Job 16:7 "But now he hath made me weary: thou hast made desolate all my company."

He turns again, in his passionate plaint, to God, whom he alternately speaks of in the third person and addresses in the second.

Thou; he speaks in the second person to God, as in the former clause in the third person of God. Such change of persons are very usual in Scripture, and elsewhere.

“Thou hast made desolate all my company,” by destroying all his children and alienating the hearts of his friends either of complaining, or of my life.

His friends could have been company to him and helped him forget a little of the pain, instead they added to his pain.

Job 16:8 "And thou hast filled me with wrinkles, [which] is a witness [against me]: and my leanness rising up in me beareth witness to my face."

Not through old age, but through affliction, which had sunk his flesh, and made furrows in him, so that he looked older than he was, and was made old thereby before his time (see Lam. 3:4). For this is to be understood of his body, for as for his soul, that through the grace of God, and righteousness of Christ, was without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.

"Which is a witness against me": As it was improved by his friends, who represented his afflictions as proofs and testimonies of his being a bad man. Though these wrinkles were witnesses for him, as it may be as well supplied, that he really was an afflicted man.

"And my leanness rising up in me": His bones standing up, and standing out, and having scarce anything on them but skin, the flesh being gone.

"Beareth witness to my face": Openly, manifestly, to full conviction. Not that he was a sinful man, but an afflicted man. Eliphaz had no reason to talk to Job of a wicked man's being covered with fatness, and of collops of fat on his flanks (Job 15:27).

The pain was showing in his face. He was wrinkled from pain and looked even older than he was. He was losing weight and that made him look wrinkled as well.

Job 16:9 "He teareth [me] in his wrath, who hateth me: he gnasheth upon me with his teeth; mine enemy sharpeneth his eyes upon me."

Literally, his wrath teareth and he hateth me. God treats Job as severely as if he hated him. That he is actually hated of God Job does not believe; otherwise he would long since have ceased to call upon him, and pour out his heart before him.

He gnasheth upon me with his teeth": (Compare Psalm 35:16; Psalm 37:12).

"Mine enemy": (Or rather, adversary).

"Sharpeneth his eyes upon me": I.e. makes me a whetstone on which he sharpens his angry glances.

There is no physical hurt as bad, as when friends have turned against you. Their accusations and terrible remarks were tearing Job to pieces.

Job 16:10 "They have gaped upon me with their mouth; they have smitten me upon the cheek reproachfully; they have gathered themselves together against me."

The pack of petty foes that howl at the heels of his greater enemy. The figure of wild beasts is not strictly maintained, but passes in the second clause into the reality. The gestures described are those of contempt and destructive hatred (see Psalm 22:13, Isa. 57:4, Micah 5:1, Lam. 3:30; compare John 18:22; 19:3, Acts 23:2).

"They have gathered themselves together against me": The phrase means probably that they line up in one body against him, and combine in their attack against him.

We spoke earlier how Job was a type of Christ. They struck Jesus, as they struck Job here. Both were smitten without a cause.

Job 16:11 "God hath delivered me to the ungodly, and turned me over into the hands of the wicked."

The meaning is, that God had committed him to their hands as a prisoner or captive. They had power over him to do as they pleased.

“To the ungodly”: Into the hands of wicked people, meaning undoubtedly his professed friends.

“And turned me over”: The word used here means to throw head long, to precipitate, to cast down. Here it means, "He has thrown me headlong into the hands of the wicked."

Again, Job was not aware that his attack was of Satan. We do know that God allowed the attack, but the actual attack was of Satan. Job was right in his estimation that God had turned him over to the wicked. It would have been much easier to endure had Job known that it would end, and that this was an attack of the devil, not God.

Verses 12-14: Job refers to God as his “adversary”, who had broken, shaken, shot at, and cleaveth my reins.

Job 16:12 "I was at ease, but he hath broken me asunder: he hath also taken [me] by my neck, and shaken me to pieces, and set me up for his mark."

I lived in great peace and prosperity, which makes my present miseries more grievous to me; and therefore, my complaints are excusable, and I deserve pity rather than reproach from my friends.

"Broken me asunder": Broken my spirit with the sense of his anger, and my body with loathsome ulcers, as also by destroying my children, a part of my own flesh or body.

"Taken me by my neck, and shaken me to pieces": As a mighty man doth with some young stripling, when he wrestled with him.

"Set me up for his mark": That he may shoot all his arrows into me, and that with delight, which archers have in that exercise.

Job had been at ease. He had been blessed mightily of God. He felt that he was at peace with God. Suddenly from out of nowhere, he was attacked on every side. The greatest grief that Job suffered was the loss of his children. He was marked for attack. He thought God had shaken his life completely up.

Job 16:13 "His archers compass me round about, he cleaveth my reins asunder, and doth not spare; he poureth out my gall upon the ground."

His plagues or judgments, elsewhere compared to arrows, and here to archers, surround me on all sides, and assault me from every quarter. Whoever are our enemies, we must look on them as God's archers, and see him directing the arrow.

“He cleaveth my reins asunder”: He wounds me inwardly, mortally, and incurably; which is also signified by pouring out the gall; such wounds being deadly. “The metaphor,” says Heath, “is here taken from huntsmen. First, they surround the beast; then he is shot dead. His entrails are next taken out; and then his body is divided limb from limb.”

This description is no worse than what actually happened. This was one of the worst attacks on anyone in the Bible. Job believed he suffered a judgement of God. He had no idea why.

Job 16:14 "He breaketh me with breach upon breach, he runneth upon me like a giant."

He renews and repeats the attack, and thus completely overwhelms me. One blow follows another in such quick succession, that he does not give me time to recover.

“He runneth upon me like a giant”: With great and irresistible force, as some strong and mighty warrior whom his adversary cannot resist.

This just means that one attack was followed by another.

Verses 15-20: He had no one to turn to in his sorrow, except God (verse 19), who was silent and had not vindicated him.

Job 16:15 "I have sewed sackcloth upon my skin, and defiled my horn in the dust."

Unaware of God's sovereignty and of Satan's devices against him, Job begins to assume that God is against him for an unexplainable reason. “Sackcloth” is a sign of mourning. The “horn” he had laid “in the dust” is a sign of strength.

The sackcloth had become Job's permanent garment, ever since the problems came to him. He had sat in a bed of ashes, magnifying his humble attitude, and increasing his mourning. The horn symbolizes power, so we might say that he had lost his power, and sat in the ashes of humbleness.

Job 16:16 "My face is foul with weeping, and on my eyelids [is] the shadow of death;"

He has wept so much that his face is stained with his tears.

"And on my eyelids is the shadow of death": There is an awful shadow on his eyes and eyelids, portending death.

It is not unusual for a person who is extremely sick to have great dark circles around their eyes. These circles could be called the shadow of death. His crying would cause his face to look bad. It would be swollen and red probably.

Job 16:17 "Not for [any] injustice in mine hands: also my prayer [is] pure."

Still claiming that he does not deserve his sorrows, and that these calamities had not come upon him on account of any enormous sins, as his friends believed.

"My prayer is pure": My devotion; my worship of God is not hypocritical, as my friends maintain.

Job was still contending that he had not sinned, that he was aware of. He felt that he had clean hands and a pure heart. The prayer of Job was pure, because it came from a pure heart.

Verses 18-21: Job was not crying out for a mediator but for an advocate. He wanted a lawyer who would represent him before God. Here again is the gospel in Job, Jesus is the believer's advocate at the throne of God (Heb. 7:25; 1 John 2:1).

Job 16:18 "O earth, cover not thou my blood, and let my cry have no place."

God's destructive enmity will bring Job to death, though there is no wrong in his hands and his prayer is pure (Job 16:17). This feeling makes him appeal to the earth not to cover his innocent blood. He shall die, but it is an unjust death, and his blood shall lie on the bosom of the earth open, appealing to heaven for vindication, and uttering an unceasing cry for justice.

"Let my cry have no place": That is, "Let there be no place in the wide earth where my cry shall not reach. Let it have no resting place: let it fill the whole wide earth."

We know from Genesis, that the innocent blood of Abel cried out from the ground. This was a statement from Job, that his blood was innocent of wrong doing. His cry should not hide, but be heard of the Almighty.

Job 16:19 "Also now, behold, my witness [is] in heaven, and my record [is] on high."

"My witness is in heaven" implies an advance in Job's faith over (9:33), where he pleaded for an impartial arbiter. He seems certain here that there is a heavenly witness who will testify on his behalf.

The witness of Job in heaven was God. Job felt sure that his record in heaven was clean. If no one else knew the truth, God did.

Job 16:20 "My friends scorn me: [but] mine eye poureth out [tears] unto God."

Or Ye my scorers who profess and ought to be my friends.

“Mine eye poureth out tears unto God”: That He would maintain the right of man with God, and of the son of man with his neighbor. Or, “that one might plead for man with God as the son of man pleads for his neighbor”. This is what he has already longed for in (Job 9:33).

Job's friends were no friends at all. Job's only true friend was God. Job had cried buckets of tears since this trial had begun.

Job 16:21 "O that one might plead for a man with God, as a man [pleadeth] for his neighbor!"

“One might plead for a man with God”: The pleading would be for a verdict of innocent on behalf of a friend or neighbor in a court setting before the judge/king. God anticipated the need of an advocate, and He has provided One in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 2:5; 1 John 2:1-2).

To me this is saying that Job wanted to have as personal a relationship with God, as he had with a neighbor. His plea would be heard and understood, because God would know of his plight. Jesus took on the form of flesh and dwelt among us, that He might relate better to the problems we face in our flesh.

Job 16:22 "When a few years are come, then I shall go the way [whence] I shall not return."

Literally, a number of years, which generally means a small number.

"I shall go the way whence I shall not return": This verse would more fitly begin the following chapter, which opens in a similar strain, with an anticipation of the near approach of death.

Job was so sick that he felt death was very near.

Job Chapter 16 Questions

1. What did Job call his friends in verse 2?
2. What do Job's friends remind the author of?
3. Why did this friend think he had the right to judge Job?
4. How did Jesus prove that someone who is sick has not necessarily sinned?
5. What could Job have done to these friends, if they had been in his place?
6. The tongue is a _____.

7. It can _____ up or _____ down.
8. What does "assuaged" mean?
9. Instead of comforting Job, his friends added to his _____.
10. The pain was showing in his _____.
11. What was tearing Job to pieces?
12. In verse 10, we see Job as a type of _____.
13. Who allowed this attack of Satan on Job?
14. How could this have been easier for Job to endure?
15. What was the greatest loss that Job felt?
16. Job believed he suffered a Judgement of _____.
17. The sackcloth had become Job's _____ garment.
18. The horn symbolizes _____.
19. Job felt that he had _____ hands and a _____ heart.
20. Who was Job's only true friend?
21. In verse 21, Job wanted a _____ relationship with God.