



What Is Man, That You Make So Much Of Him?

Grappling with God: The Gospel According to Job #5

Job 7:7-21

David Sunday

July 13, 2014

I pray for those who have recently passed through a trial or see one on the horizon. Would You—the God Who shines light into the darkness and creates new life—shine into our hearts through the storms and trials we face. Shine into our hearts through Your Word so we would be strengthened in our faith and rest in the assurance which You have won. Christ has prevailed. It is well for all who trust in Him. We pray You would use Job’s anguish and lament to fortify our hearts in the assurance of faith which we have in Jesus Christ. We ask this in His name. Amen.

Astronomers say there are more visible stars in the universe than there are grains of sand on the seashore. That’s how vast our universe is. The earth is the size of a mere grape in the vast immensity of this universe. As of noon on July 11, 2014 there were 7, 246,141,408 people living in the world. At New Covenant Bible Church, there might be 400 people gathering in the sanctuary. I tried to figure out what percentage of the world’s population we represent but gave up because there were so many zeroes after the decimal point.

What is man, that God is mindful of us? What does humanity matter to a God Who created such a vast universe? Does God care about human beings? Does one solitary individual matter to Him? Is He really attentive to you and me—our worries and fears, our sicknesses and pains, our labors and pleasures, births and deaths? Does He hear our prayers and praises, watch our ways and witness our words? Is He really tenderly caring for all the minute details of our fleeting, finite lives?

In chapters six and seven of Job, we hear a man grappling with what Mike Mason calls “the bewildering and homely reality of the human condition.” Job knows he is a mere man, made of dust. He does not feel strong or significant right now. Yet he knows that the Lord is paying attention to him. At this point in Job’s sufferings, this is not a source of comfort for him. Remember Job has lost his whole family, lost all his livelihood and is covered with boils from head to toe. He is suffering greatly. At this moment, Job would find it difficult to sing the hymn.

Frail children of dust, and feeble as frail,
in thee do we trust, nor find thee to fail;
thy mercies how tender, how firm to the end,
our Maker, Defender, Redeemer, and Friend.

(from O Worship the King by Robert Grant, 1779-1838)

Job is not feeling the tenderness of God’s mercies but rather feeling the terror of God’s assault. He feels as though God has become a hostile enemy—as if he has become the target of God’s artillery.

In Job 6:4, Job describes this feeling of being God’s enemy.

*For the arrows of the Almighty are in me;
my spirit drinks their poison;
the terrors of God are arrayed against me.*

Nevertheless, Job has not turned his back on God. Even though he says his vexation is weightier than all the sands of the sea (Job 6:2) and wishes God would grant him the comfort of letting him die, he still wants to remain faithful to God. Look at what he says after pleading that God would end his life.

*This would be my comfort;
I would even exult in pain unsparing,
for I have not denied the words of the Holy One.*
(Job 6:10)

It is as if he is saying, “God, I’m hanging on here. I don’t want to give up on my faith or deny You but I don’t think I can go on another moment. I feel like I’m about to lose it. Please end my life while I can still say I have not denied Your words and have been faithful to You.” He wants to remain faithful to a God Whom he does not understand at the moment.

At the beginning of Job 7, Job says he feels like a slave working the earth under the heat of the sun, longing for the shadows of the evening. Yet the nighttime provides him no rest. He

feels like all he has left now is misery—as if his future has no brightness left. We see what it is like for him physically in Job 7:5-6.

*My flesh is clothed with worms and dirt;
my skin hardens, then breaks out afresh.
My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle
and come to their end without hope.*

Even though Job feels that every day goes on interminably, yet the span of his life is soon coming to an end. He feels that his life is going to end without hope (verse 6).

But in the face of all this turmoil, Job does something that makes this section a pinnacle and an important turning point in the book. He does something that none of his friends ever do—with the possible exception of Elihu at the end of the book. He turns to God in prayer. We are going to focus on his prayer. It's not a nice, tidy prayer but it is honest. Unlike his friends, whom Christopher Ash describes as “confident, impressive and eloquent, but wrong,” Job is pathetic, poignant, confused and full of anguish but deeply right with God.

As we listen to Job's prayer in Job 7:7-21, here is something to consider. Who is it that really knows God? Is it those who can talk eloquently about Him or those who talk honestly to Him? Job talks honestly to God.

Let's read the outpouring of his heart in all its agony and perplexity.

⁷*“Remember that my life is a breath;
my eye will never again see good.*
⁸*The eye of him who sees me will behold me no more;
while your eyes are on me, I shall be gone.*
⁹*As the cloud fades and vanishes,
so he who goes down to Sheol does not come up;*
¹⁰*he returns no more to his house,
nor does his place know him anymore.*
¹¹*“Therefore I will not restrain my mouth;
I will speak in the anguish of my spirit;
I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.*
¹²*Am I the sea, or a sea monster,
that you set a guard over me?*
¹³*When I say, ‘My bed will comfort me,
my couch will ease my complaint,’*
¹⁴*then you scare me with dreams
and terrify me with visions,*
¹⁵*so that I would choose strangling
and death rather than my bones.*
¹⁶*I loathe my life; I would not live forever.
Leave me alone, for my days are a breath.*
¹⁷*What is man, that you make so much of him,
and that you set your heart on him,*

¹⁸ *visit him every morning
and test him every moment?*
¹⁹ *How long will you not look away from me,
nor leave me alone till I swallow my spit?*
²⁰ *If I sin, what do I do to you, you watcher of mankind?
Why have you made me your mark?
Why have I become a burden to you?*
²¹ *Why do you not pardon my transgression
and take away my iniquity?
For now I shall lie in the earth;
you will seek me, but I shall not be.”*

(Job 7:7-21)

This is the Word of God.

Job is confused. He said in chapter six that he is experiencing vexation—a word which refers to a tiring, exhausting anger that drains you of energy for living. In his vexation, Job really doesn't know what to ask for in prayer. That is part of the turmoil through which he is going. It's difficult to outline an anguished prayer. It might even be insulting to take the anguished outpouring of a man's heart and try to develop an outline of it.

I think Francis Anderson captures it well.

- Job prays God would take notice of him and remember him (verses 7-10).
- Job prays God would leave him alone (verses 11-21).

Is Job confused? Yes, but I think it is also realistic.

In verses 7-10 Job prays, “God, please notice me.” He prays as a man who thought he was loved by God and had experienced God's care all the days of his life. He prays as a man who had given thanks to God, feared Him and praised Him from Whom all blessings flow. He had experienced God's mercy, kindness and favor. Then it was all stripped away in an instant with no explanation.

Job suffered and continues to suffer hardship and affliction. There is no meaning or purpose to it that Job can see. He sees his life as a vapor or 'breath' and feels like the future has no hope. *“My eye will never again see good”* (verse 7). Job has no hope unless God remembers him, looks on him in favor, intervenes and takes notice of him. Job refers to the 'eye' of God which is upon him (verse 8) and says, “God, if you don't do something soon I will disappear from before your eyes and it will be too late.” *“...while your eyes are on me, I shall be gone”* (verse 8). “I'll never be seen on earth again. God, please notice me. Please act.”

Yet in Job 7:11-21, it's almost as if Job says, “Do I really want God to notice me anymore?” He shifts gears and starts to say, “God, please leave me alone.” He models the Psalmist who says:

*With my voice I cry out to the Lord;
with my voice I plead for mercy to the Lord.
I pour out my complaint before him;
I tell my trouble before him.*
(Psalm 142:1-2)

God does not like complainers. Yet it is far better to complain to Him than to murmur about Him. Bring your complaint to the Lord. Someone has paraphrased Job 7:11 like this: “I won’t shut up. I’ll shout from the torment of my spirit and protest from the bitterness of my soul.”

In verse 12, Job refers to the sea or a sea monster. Some of your versions might have the original words ‘yam’ which means ‘sea’ and ‘tannin’ which means ‘sea monster’. These were well-known figures from Canaanite religion. They were seen as powerful forces that contested as threats to the created order. Job is saying, “God, why do You view me as a threat to You? I’m not like the sea or the sea monster. Why are You treating me like this?”

He then says he will just go to bed. “*My bed will comfort me, my couch will ease my complaint*” (verse 13). But he can’t find any relief or rest because in the middle of the night God scares him with dreams and terrifies him with visions. He says, “I would rather be strangled than endure this and rather have death than live in these bones and my own experience” (verse 15). “*I loathe my life; I would not live forever*” (verse 16). One commentator says, “Job’s existence has turned into a nightmare in which God—like death in the old myths—is trying to strangle him.” He protests, “Why, God?”

Listen, the very asking of the question sustains his access to God. Job makes his way to God with prayers that are sobs. Here is some wisdom. Narrow and inhuman is the religion that bans weeping from the vocabulary of prayer. We do not have a narrow, inhumane religion. We do not have a God Who bans weeping from the vocabulary of prayer. We have a God Who Himself wept in the face of death and suffering. Praise God we do not have a narrow, inhumane religion.

At the end of Job 7:16, Job says something which I’ve never heard another believer say in prayer. I don’t recommend we make this part of our daily litany of prayers but it is honest. “*Leave me alone, for my days are but a breath.*” Have you ever prayed that?

Then he utters these words which are repeated in some very important places throughout the Bible, “*What is man, that you make so much of him...*” (verse 17). King David says, “*what is man that you are mindful of him...*” (Psalm 8:4) as he remembers his nights as a shepherd boy when he would look at the night sky and see God’s handiwork—the moon and stars which God had set in place in the vastness of the universe. King David—in wonder and amazement—says to

God, “What is man that you take such notice of us, treat us with honor and dignity, make us rulers of Your creation and put everything in subjection to us? Why us? Why do you care so much about us?”

For David, those were words of comfort and of worship to the God Whose name is majestic in all the earth. Yet for Job it is a complaint. Scholars call Job 7:17-18 a ‘bitter parody’ of Psalm 8.

*“What is man, that you make so much of him,
and that you set your heart on him,
visit him every morning
and test him every moment?”*

Job feels like he is under God’s constant scrutiny. He prays he would just have a moment of privacy—that God would notice him less and wouldn’t always be watching him. *“How long will you not look away from me...”* (verse 19). “Could you leave me alone so I can swallow my spit?”

The word ‘if’ probably shouldn’t begin Job 7:20 because it is not in the original language. Job already admits he is a sinful man. But he cannot figure out what he has done to deserve such sufferings. He says, *“I sin...”* In other words, “I know I sin.” “[but] *what do I do to you, you watcher of mankind? Why have you made me your mark?”* “It’s as if You have Your arrows aimed at me.” *“Why have I become a burden to you?”*

In the past, Job had offered sacrifices before God and had experienced God’s forgiveness and mercy. He is a man who lived in repentance. He can’t figure out what he has done to get this.

*“Why do you not pardon my transgression
and take away my iniquity?
For now I shall lie in the earth;
you will seek me, but I shall not be.”*
(Job 7:21)

What are we to make of this prayer? I don’t believe it is a defiant prayer but instead a daring, faith-filled prayer to a God Whose ways Job does not understand. Even as Job is praying that God would leave Him alone, Job is drawing near to God in prayer. Even as Job is praying for God to stop scrutinizing him, he realizes God is looking at him every moment, “never looking away” (verse 19). Even though he feels God has cursed him and consigned him to never-ending misery, Job longs to be faithful to this God.

What are we to make of these words? I think there are two applications that will be helpful to us as we prepare to go into a world full of suffering and as we experience trouble in our own lives.

1. View Job as an evangelist—a preacher of good news.
2. View Job as an example.

View Job As An Evangelist

I wouldn't suggest to go here first for evangelism training. This is probably not in any 'Evangelism Explosion' text or *Two Ways to Live*. We don't use this text very often in our witness to others. Job is an evangelist in a minor key. The book of Job is one movement in a grand symphony. The theme of this symphony keeps returning to hope, joy, grace and a God Who does good to His people. The book of Job is a movement in a minor key and this passage is a stanza that is very dissonant from the gospel.

But it is here precisely because there is a gospel. It is because of the gospel that we hear these words as dissonant. If there was no gospel—no grand finale to make sense of all this misery and suffering—Job would be the most honest, realistic, true-to-life person there is. How can you argue with what he is saying in light of what he is experiencing?

A great composer might weave notes into his composition that sound so off. It puts you in suspension as you wait for the resolution. When the resolution finally happens, it is all the more glorious because those dissonant, minor-key notes were added.

The good news is that whatever God is, He is not detached, distant, disengaged or safe. He is a God Who cares about what is happening with humanity. He watches individuals and wants a relationship with them. He is willing to risk that relationship and to be misunderstood because what He is doing in human beings is so much bigger than what they can understand.

He is a God Who will—in the end—reveal Himself to Job. When Job sees Him and hears His voice, that will be all Job needs. No explanation will be required. The good news in this prayer is that Job believes God is sovereign and actively involved in his life. These realities are not in doubt. He's struggling to trust that God is good and gracious and to explain the meaning of all this suffering.

We hear in these words a faint echo of a glorious gospel that began in the heart of God in eternity past and which will come to a grand crescendo when God's Son enters our world. He joins Himself to our frail, feeble humanity and suffers with and for us.

I'd like us to look at one of the passages in the grand finale. As we read these verses, consider what it would have been like for Job if he could have read these words. What if Eliphaz, Bildad or Zophar could have said, "Job, could I open up God's Word and read to you something that might shed some light, hope, purpose and meaning into your sufferings?" What would it have been like for Job to hear these words?

For it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. It has been testified somewhere,

*"What is man, that you are mindful of him,
or the son of man, that you care for him?
You made him for a little while lower than the angels;
you have crowned him with glory and honor,
putting everything in subjection under his feet."*

Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him.

(Hebrews 2:5-8)

At present we often see a world that seems like it is spinning out of control and over which we have no control. We see a world of hardship, suffering and affliction and wonder if it is going to result in anything good. It is. Why?

But we see him [Jesus] who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, [Who became a man] crowned with glory and honor [Why?] because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, [the Creator of the universe] in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.

(Hebrews 2:9-10)

What would it have been like for Job to hear these words and to understand that humanity is the pinnacle of God's creation and the object of God's redemption? Humanity matters so much to God, God became a man. Jesus suffered and His sufferings were not meaningless. Rather, they became the gateway to glory and we who are united to Him are going to share in that glory. Our sufferings are part of God's plan to bring that grand crescendo of redemption, glory and consummation to light.

Tim Keller says, "Jesus died, not so that we would never suffer. He died so that our suffering would never be in vain." That's the truth of Hebrews 2. What would it have meant to

Job to be able to read these words that we can read and embrace the truth we can know? I think it would have made a world of difference.

See Job as an evangelist in a minor key and look to the resolution of his desperate dirge in Jesus Christ. Look to the hope towards which he is pointing us.

View Job As An Example

This prayer in Job 7 is an example for us. Who really knows God? Is it those who can talk eloquently about Him or those who talk honestly to Him?

Job talks honestly to God. He is one of these refreshing kind of men who refuses to tell a lie for the honor of God. He knows God's honor requires nothing but the truth. Job doesn't feel like praise requires pretending or that devotion demands denial of reality. Even if he doesn't understand what God is up to, as Job grapples with God he understands there is no use trying to hide anything from God. So he pours it all out and tells it just like he sees it.

In doing so, he gives us an example of what it looks like to pour out our hearts before the Lord. God invites us to follow Job in pouring out our hearts and in being honest with Him in prayer. No pretense, hollow platitudes or holding back will do. God knows everything we're thinking. So would it not honor Him more if we told Him what was in our hearts rather than pretending we can hide it from Him?

Hear God exhorting us in Psalm 62:8:

Trust in him at all times, O people;
pour out your heart before him;
God is a refuge for us. Selah

What wonderful, inviting words those are. "*Pour out your heart[s].*" This doesn't mean everything in our hearts is right. It isn't a license for blasphemy or irreverence in God's presence. It does mean to not wait until we get our hearts cleaned up to talk to God about what is in our hearts.

While Job's friends theorized about God and tried to defend Him, Job poured out his heart—bitterness and all—to God. Job's wrestling with God in prayer honored God more than all of his friend's theologizing about God.

Do you know what it's like to pour out your heart to the Lord? When is the last time you've really done that? Do you trust God enough to pour out your heart to Him? Is there joy in your heart? Don't hold it in; pour it out to the Lord. Is there fear and anxiety in your heart? Don't brood over it. Pour it out to the Lord. Is there doubt, confusion or bewilderment? Don't

let it take you into a downward spiral of paralysis and disillusionment. Unravel it in the presence of the Lord. Tell Him what is in your heart. Are you hurting, weary, grieving, sorrowful, angry or bitter? Don't hold it in and let it develop a root which produces bitter fruit. Instead, pour it out to the Lord. Don't pretend He doesn't know what you are thinking. Show Him the trust and give Him the honor of letting Him bear your burdens and hear the outpouring of your heart.

Why? He is a God Who cares for you. He gives the stars their names, holds the universe in its place and cares about what is going on in your life. He watches you every morning. Nothing that happens in your life is outside His notice and tender care. He is a high and lofty One Who inhabits eternity, but also the One who dwells with him who is humble and contrite in heart, who trembles at His Word.

Helmut Thielicke was a German pastor in the years following World War II. He pastored his congregation through a very difficult time in German history. He said: Tell me how lofty God is for you and I'll tell you how little He means to you. Is God simply a lofty, distant, detached idea? If He is so lofty you can't pour out your heart to Him, He means very little to you. This could be a theological axiom. The lofty God has been lofted out of my private life. It is certainly remarkable but it is true. God has become of concern to me only because He has made Himself smaller than the Milky Way [think of a baby—an embryo in the Virgin Mary; Behold our God], only because He is present in my little sick room when I gasp for breath or understand the little cares I cast on Him or take seriously the request of a child for a scooter with balloon tires. God concerns me because Jesus takes my speck of anxiety and my personal guilt upon Himself.

He's not just the lofty God; He's the God Who is near. *“Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you”* (1 Peter 5:6-7). Thanks be to God. Amen.

New Covenant Bible Church

[4N780 Randall Road, St. Charles, IL 60175](http://www.newcbc.org)

(630) 584-2611 ♦ www.newcbc.org

All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

Text provided by sermontranscribers.net ♦ emily@sermontranscribers.net