

The Book of Job

JOB 19:19-29

REDEMPTION FOUND - Believers Can Trust God To Be Faithful To Them.

A person doesn't have to be alone to be lonely. We can be surrounded by people and yet not feel connected to them. That can happen even when sitting at a table with people we would count as friends. Such was the case with Job. He was surrounded by so-called friends and yet experienced the sting of abandonment and loneliness because they had turned against him. However, Job realized that even though his friends had abandoned him, the Lord never would.

Think about a time when you felt alone even though you were surrounded by people. What factors make a person feel alone even when in a crowd?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

JOB 15:1–21:34

This section of the Book of Job contains the second cycle of dialogues between Job and his friends. In Job 15:2-3, Eliphaz accused Job of having abandoned his faithful devotion to God and thus hindering his prayers. Eliphaz accused Job of arrogance and hypocrisy (15:7-19). He surmised Job was suffering and would continue to suffer because Job shook "his fist at God" (15:25). Job responded by saying his friends were "miserable comforters" (16:2). While Job lamented his suffering, he revealed his hope in an Advocate and Mediator who would stand up for him before God (16:18-21).

In Job 18:1-21, Bildad's response to Job was an angry verbal assault, restating the retribution principle that bad things happen to wicked people and good things happen to godly people. Bildad assumed Job was wicked and concluded that Job really did not know God (18:21). Even though Job bemoaned his condition and still did not understand why he was suffering, he hoped in his Redeemer who would resurrect him (19:1-29).

In Job 20:1-29, Zophar stated he was upset. What Job said was insulting to Zophar and his claim to wisdom (20:1-3). Then Zophar argued that no matter how wealthy and successful the wicked may be, their health and prosperity will be short-lived and eventually come crashing down just like what had happened to Job. Even though Job had declared that his Redeemer lives and he would one day see God (19:25-27), Zophar said that Job would lie dead in dust (20:11). Zophar contended that because Job was wicked, he would never again enjoy life (20:12-21). According to Zophar, the only things Job had to look forward to were agony, despair, and death (20:22-29). Job's response dismantled his friends' simple notions of the retribution principle, because the wicked do not always suffer and the righteous often do (21:1-34).

As you read Job 19:19-29, note how Job highlighted humanity's need for a Redeemer. How is the need for a Redeemer tied to the warning given to the friends?

EXPLORE THE TEXT

FAILING FRIENDS (JOB 19:19-22)

V. 19 All my intimate friends detest me; those I love have turned against me. V. 20 I am nothing but skin and bones; I have escaped only by the skin of my teeth. V. 21 “Have pity on me, my friends, have pity, for the hand of God has struck me. V. 22 Why do you pursue me as God does? Will you never get enough of my flesh?

VERSE 19

Most people are familiar with the phrase, “With friends like these who needs enemies?” This expression fittingly summarizes what Job expressed in Job 19:19-22 about his friends—Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar—who had come to console him in his time of agony and grief. Job’s friends despised him, meaning they were disgusted by him.

Moreover, what added to Job’s suffering was that these were men Job loved. In Job’s time of need, they turned against him. Job’s remaining and extended family already found him repulsive (19:17), and now when he looked to his closest confidants for help and encouragement, they scorned him too.

What Job endured reminds us of what Jesus experienced. When Jesus was suffering in the garden of Gethsemane, His disciples could not even support Him by staying awake to keep watch and pray. Furthermore, when the enemy came and arrested Jesus, all of Jesus’ closest friends abandoned Him. Peter went so far as to deny he even knew the Lord three times (Luke 22:39-62). These events and what followed in Jesus’ suffering on the cross should remind believers that even when those closest to us may not understand what we are experiencing and may even abandon us, our Lord Jesus Christ empathizes with us in our time of need and will never forsake or abandon us.

What makes the failure of a friend to show compassion so disheartening to the person needing help?

VERSE 20

As a result of Satan’s onslaught, Job had become a shocking and horrific shell of himself. His body was emaciated down to skin and bones. His physical condition was so dire that he was as near to death as any living being could be, up to this point surviving and escaping the cold grip of death only by the skin of my teeth, meaning just barely. This was Job’s way of describing his body as having wasted away to the brink of death. Unending, excruciating pain tormented him.

VERSES 21-22

Then Job cried out a double plea for pity from his friends. In the Old Testament, the repetition of a word or phrase is for the purpose of emphasis. Job emphatically implored his friends to show him compassion and mercy. The emphatic way he said it demonstrates how much Job desperately needed them to be compassionate and kind to him. Why? Because Job believed that God had struck him with a violent, devastating blow.

Yet it was their belief that God had struck Job down in retribution for his sin that caused Job’s friends to refuse to show him mercy. In their eyes, Job was condemned to experience the full measure of what was the rightful judgment of God on a deserving sinner. The actions of Job’s friends should be a reminder that there are those who think they are taking a stand for God when in reality they are against

Him. (See 42:7.) Equally important, we must remember God was not the one who struck Job. Twice Satan told God to strike Job, but both times God told Satan that Job “is in your power” or literally “in your hand.” What’s more, God limited what Satan could do to Job (1:11-12; 2:5-6).

How delighted Satan must be when people blame God for what Satan has done!

Thus all the horrible things Job experienced were by Satan’s hand. Nevertheless, Job was unaware of God and Satan’s conversations and assumed it was God who had struck him. People must resist the temptation of always blaming God for their difficulties. How delighted Satan must be when people blame God for what Satan has done! In contrast, we are never more like God than when we show compassion to those who are suffering, even to sinners who are suffering. If God withheld His mercy and compassion from sinners, then no one would have any hope of salvation. Everyone needs compassion.

Why should the people of God be quick to show compassion to those who suffer no matter the reason for their suffering?

Job’s questions to his friends in verse 22 are revealing. He was basically saying, “Look at me! Hasn’t God done enough to me already? What reason do you have to pile on to what God is already doing to me? And even if I had sinned against God, what is my sin against you? How is it your place to contribute to my sufferings? It appears as if you have some kind of morbid appetite that enjoys watching me suffer. You just cannot seem to get enough of it.”

We must not have unrealistic expectations of even the most pious of our Christian brothers and sisters. They deal with the same sin nature within them we contend with ourselves. Consequently, it is just as inevitable that they will let us down as we will them. This truth will help us be understanding of our friends’ lack of understanding. Jesus alone always understands what we are going through.

LIVING REDEEMER (JOB 19:23-27)

V. 23 “Oh, that my words were recorded, that they were written on a scroll, V. 24 that they were inscribed with an iron tool on lead, or engraved in rock forever! V. 25 I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth. V. 26 And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; V. 27 I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!

VERSES 23-24

Job hoped for a permanent record of what he had said and was about to declare. He feared he would die before he was vindicated and cleared of all of the false accusations his friends had cast at him. He wanted a permanent statement that would put the record straight to the people of his day and future generations.

Job’s desire for his words to be engraved in rock suggests a monument, possibly like an inscription on a tombstone. Stone monuments with engravings are common from the ancient Near East. God answered Job’s request, and God’s Word contains a permanent record of Job’s vindication and declaration.

BIBLE SKILL: Use a Bible dictionary to better understand a word.

Read articles about “redeemer” in a Bible dictionary. Review Bible passages identified in the articles. What was the significance of Job declaring that his redeemer was living? How does that image of a living redeemer impact how we understand Christ’s work in our redemption?

VERSEs 25-27

Verse 25 contains the beginning of Job’s emphatic declaration. He began by asserting I know that my redeemer lives. This is an affirmation of extreme confidence. He did not say “I think” or “I suspect” or “I hope.” Job knew. Also, there is a personal aspect to Job’s assertion that he expressed with the word, my. He did not say “a Redeemer lives” but that my redeemer lives.

The Hebrew word for redeemer is *gō’el*. At its most basic meaning it refers to one who protects, saves, rescues, and restores. For instance, to protect a family’s inheritance, a near relative could purchase their land to prevent its sale to someone outside the family. This near relative was called a “kinsman-redeemer.” This idea also applied to a person who sold himself into slavery in order to pay off a debt. A close relative played the role of a redeemer if he paid off the debt and thereby purchased his poor relative’s freedom from bondage. Boaz in the Book of Ruth demonstrated the role of a kinsman-redeemer. Arguably, the greatest picture of redemption in the Old Testament is in the Book of Exodus when God promised to “redeem” Israel from slavery (Ex. 6:6). Then, God rescued His people who had been unjustly enslaved by the Egyptians.

On numerous occasions the prophets and psalmists referred to Yahweh as the Redeemer of His people. So who was the Redeemer to whom Job referred? Verses 25-27 are so tightly connected there is no doubt that the Redeemer to whom Job referred is God. The New Testament reveals Jesus Christ is our Redeemer. In the end, God will stand on Job’s grave and be his eternal vindication. The phrase stand on the earth can also be translated “stand against the dust.” When Adam sinned in the garden of Eden, God told him, “you are dust, and you will return to dust,” speaking of Adam’s death (Gen. 3:19). Job knew that his God would not allow dust to be his end, as verses 26-27 indicate.

Even after Job’s skin would become dust, he believed he would see God in his flesh. Instead of Job’s skin being eaten away and his being marched away to “the king of terrors,” as Bildad declared (18:13-14), Job anticipated the day he would see God with his own eyes, and when he did, God would not be a stranger to him. In other words, God would be his friend. The hope of a bodily resurrection was at the center of Job’s faith as it is at the center of all of those who place their faith in God and the person and work of Christ.

KEY DOCTRINE: Glorification

Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed (Titus 2:11-14).

In John 11:24-27, Martha expressed this faith when her brother Lazarus died. Jesus declared Himself to be the resurrection and the life and that those who believe in Him will live even if they physically die. Martha believed that the Lord would accomplish this, and so did Job. Job may not have known how God would do it, but he knew he could trust God to do it. Consequently, Job longed for the day he would see his God face to face and worship Him.

How does the promise of a future resurrection in Christ impact how a believer lives?

WARNING ISSUED (JOB 19:28-29)

V. 28 “If you say, ‘How we will hound him, since the root of the trouble lies in him,’ V. 29 you should fear the sword yourselves; for wrath will bring punishment by the sword, and then you will know that there is judgment.”

VERSES 28-29

Job concluded with a warning to his friends, saying that they too faced the judgment of God. Fear the sword, he warned them. The friends who had made accusations against Job would be judged by the same standard they had proposed God would use against Job. Eliphaz had told Job: “your own mouth condemns you ... your own lips testify against you” (15:6). Here, Job turned the tables on his friends and countered that this was in fact true for them. Job’s suffering happened because he was righteous, not because he was a sinner. Perhaps, if Job’s friends had been more righteous Satan might have targeted them.

Why must humility always accompany a loving warning to others concerning God’s judgment?

APPLY THE TEXT

People enduring hardships need each other to show compassion to them.

Believers can live with confidence in God’s redemption.

Believers can lovingly warn others of God’s judgment to be faced by all.

Who do you know who is facing a challenging time? What actions do you need to take this week to show them compassion?

Reflect on what a person with total confidence in God looks and acts like. What do you need to change in your life so that you are closer to the person you imagined with total confidence in God?

As a group, discuss the role the group plays in lovingly warning others about God’s judgment. What needs to be changed within the group to more lovingly warn others?