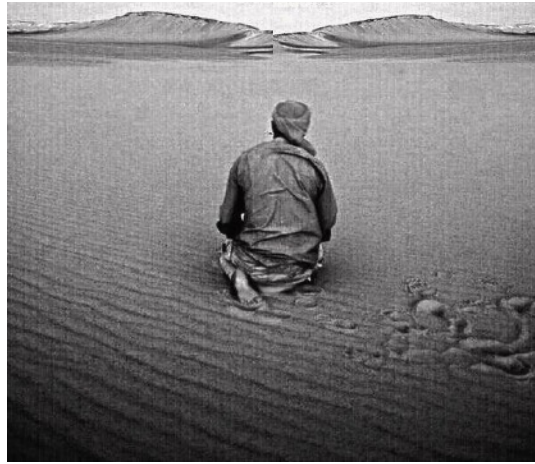


7 Job's first words after his week of silence



As we listen to Job's very first words after a week of absolute and painful silence, we hear a broken-hearted soul. Picture this husband, father, and business leader sitting on a pile of ashes with three of his close friends sitting nearby. See his bald head and grimacing face as his painful boils swell and leak out fluids from his entire body. His clothes are torn and stained.

Job has now been sitting or laying on boils for days. Every small movement of his arms, legs, neck, torso, hands, face, and feet causes stinging and deep throbbing pain. He cries. He groans. As he is consumed with pain, he broods. "This is a nightmare that never will go away. Oh, how I miss our children! I couldn't even join my wife and family and be part of their burials." He feels shock. "I can't believe so many of my dear servants were slaughtered," and "How will the people survive now that my enemies have abducted our livestock?" He writhes in pain. "I can't find a comfortable position. My body has become my worst enemy! My wounds torment me day and night!"

After a week of silence, he finally speaks. It's not pretty.

Job curses not only the day of his birth but also the day of his conception—

"May the day on which I was to be born perish, as well as the night *which* said, 'A boy is conceived.' May that day be darkness; may God above not care for it, nor light shine on it. May darkness and black gloom claim it; may a cloud settle on it; may the blackness of the day terrify it. *As for* that night, may darkness seize it; may it not rejoice among the days of the year; may it not come into the number of the months. Behold, may that night be barren; may no joyful shout enter it. May those curse it who curse the day, who are prepared to disturb Leviathan. May the stars of its twilight be darkened; may it wait for light but have none, and may

it not see the breaking dawn; because it did not shut the opening of my *mother's* womb, or hide trouble from my eyes.” *Job 3:1-10*

Throughout his long dark and dreary discourse in Job 3, his initial thoughts of longing to “never have lived” will be repeated in every conceivable way. This chapter is very dark indeed and reveals Job’s disturbed thoughts of misery. Job is verbose and describes how he wishes he hadn’t been born or lived.

“Why did I not die at birth, come out of the womb and pass away? Why were the knees *there* in front of me, and why the breasts, that I would nurse? For now I would have lain down and been quiet; I would have slept then, I would have been at rest, with kings and counselors of the earth, who rebuilt ruins for themselves; or with rulers who had gold, who were filling their houses *with* silver. Or like a miscarriage which is hidden, I would not exist, as infants that never saw light. There the wicked cease from raging, and there the weary are at rest. The prisoners are at ease together; they do not hear the voice of the taskmaster. The small and the great are there, and the slave is free from his master.” *Job 3: 11-19*

Job is basically saying there is so much human misery that death can be a relief to him and anyone who doesn’t survive birth.

He is not done yet. He talks about grief, feeling bitter within, of those who have such miserable lives they wish they were dead and rejoice when they find the grave.

“Why is light given to one burdened with grief, and life to the bitter of soul, who long for death, but there is none, and dig for it more than for hidden treasures; who are filled with jubilation, *and* rejoice when they find the grave? *Why is light given* to a man whose way is hidden, and whom God has shut off?” *Job 3:20-23.*

Despondent, Job feels it’s not even worth having light in a world when someone like him feels that even God has cut off his much needed connection.

Now Job speaks about how he truly feels inside and how he cries a lot. Poor Job. He feels so utterly miserable.

“For my groaning comes at the sight of my food, and my cries pour out like water. For what I fear comes upon me, and what I dread encounters me. I am not at ease, nor am I quiet, and I am not at rest, but turmoil comes.” *Job 3:24-26*

Although Job refused to curse God as he tries to wrap his mind around the horrors of all he has tragically lost, Job groans, weeps, feels sad that all he might have dreaded has come. He

can't be quiet as he experiences agony. So, Job sits now with his all his miseries cursing the day of his birth.

It doesn't feel like a wonderful life

Job longed to never have been born. Have we ever felt the same way? He reminds me of the lead character in the 1946 Frank Capra film, *It's a Wonderful Life*. The movie follows the life of a faithful, small-time savings and loan businessman, George Bailey (played by Jimmy Stewart). George has given honest and compassionate aid to his community of Bedford Falls for decades, often sacrificing his own personal goals and dreams of travel and adventure. He has longed for a more meaningful life.

Finally, on one cold and snowy Christmas Eve, George's uncle admits he has lost an \$8000.00 cash deposit from the bank. In dire straits, George is forced to approach his evil adversary—the conniving, big time banker, Mr. Potter. George begs Potter for a loan. Having no compassion, ruthless Potter falsely accuses George of embezzlement (knowing all the while that his associate has already found the money). As Mr. Potter begins to call the cops, George leaves the bank office and begins to emotionally fall apart.



Arriving back home in an angry tizzy, he over-reacts to his family, acting out years of pent-up disappointment and frustration. He has reached the end of his rope. “What was the point of my life at all?” He leaves the house and goes to a local bar, and as he drinks, he says, “Dear Father in heaven, I'm not a praying man, but if you're up there and you can hear me . . .” He begins crying. “Show me the way. Show me the way.”

On that cold, miserable night George goes to a bridge to jump into the freezing waters below. What he didn't know was that while he was desperately trying to end his life, his wife, children and others in his small town were praying to God on his behalf. “Help George,” they said. “Help George.”

Before George can jump, an older man beats him to it. So, George saves the man from the icy waters and comes to learn that the man he saved is actually an angel named Clarence. Clarence's assignment from God was to save George's life by helping him see that his life indeed matters.

When George begrudgingly says, "I wish I had never lived at all," the angel obliges. Transported back in time, George soon sees how many people ended up living desperate and miserable lives because they did not receive his positive influence, compassion, and financial provision. Angel Clarence explains, "Strange, isn't it, how one man's life touches so many other peoples' lives?" He adds, "When a person isn't around he leaves an awful hole in the world, doesn't he?"

George returns to his senses because he has become profoundly aware that his life indeed has mattered in the past and still matters.

Clarence transports George back to his very real life. As George rushes home, he no longer cares whether he will go to jail or not. He tearfully apologizes and joyfully grabs his wife and children close around him. Meanwhile, men and women from his community soon flood his home, having heard of his major financial set back. They fill a large basket with their own money—to cover the lost bank funds. His war hero brother, hearing the news of George's distress, offers major financial backing. It's his thanks to George for all he had previously given him. In the end, with tears in his eyes and his family in his arms, George rejoices, "It's a wonderful life."



Job is not there yet. He is just at the beginning of being stuck in the land of despair. He has a long road ahead, a difficult road of walking with God in the midst of overwhelming darkness. He will not see the light of day for a very long time.

So, Job asks himself and God the same kinds of questions we may ask when our lives face major setbacks: "What was the point of having lived at all? My present circumstances are so severe! If I had never been born, I wouldn't be feeling this boatload of pain and suffering!"

Later in the book Job would speak of the extent of his grief and losses:

“Oh that my griefs were actually weighed
And laid in the balances together with my calamity!
For then it would be heavier than the sand of the seas . . .” *Job 6:2-3a*

That’s a lot of misery and grief. Although Job’s griefs and calamities are overwhelmingly heavy, he will carry on.

We are not alone while we endure our own dark days. We are in the company of Job and so many other followers of God who have been tried by major ordeals and have dealt with times of great pain. As we pray, “God help me,” God is listening and caring. When we say to him, “I wish I had never been born,” he wants to let us know, “Your life matters and has mattered to many.” We might tell God, “I see no good future,” and he may remind us, “You are too discouraged now to see how your life has purpose. Since your birth, I have been watching you and I care. Keep talking to me. I know your life is miserable. I’m listening. And I have more for you to do. Be patient and endure, and you will see that your life matters. I want you to have hope. I am with you. I want to comfort you. ”

Aren’t we grateful for Job’s life story? Aren’t we glad that he was born and didn’t expire? Job’s life also gave me hope as my future seemed dark and fearful. As people generation after generation read about Job’s life they discover that his life can bring them hope, even as they too wish they might not have been born. Job can bring hope to all of us by showing how he endured his crushing trials with faith. Job brings hope to each of us because we know the end of his story.



Thought questions—

~Read Job chapter 3 and note his feelings. What were your initial thoughts and responses during your own time of suffering or when a calamity came to you or your loved ones? How do your thoughts and feelings compare to Job’s words that he spoke in Job chapter 3? Does he seem too dramatic?

~As you read Job chapter 6:1-4, think about your life when it's been hard. When have you experienced severe griefs and calamities? What was the most difficult part of your time or times of suffering?

~What stories, scripture, people, or other thoughts have helped you look ahead and begin to have a more hopeful perspective during your wilderness times? (See Job 13:15, Romans 4:17-18, 8:20-25; 15:4, Hebrews 13:5, and Colossians 1:23, 27).

~How did your friends respond to you when you felt buried by your griefs and calamities? In Job chapter 2:11-13, we find that Job had three friends come and gather together to sit silently with him for a week. Their reactions to Job are reflective of their shock and their presence was very comforting to Job. What did Job's friends do when they saw Job? Who has come alongside you to be with you? In what ways did they encourage you? Job speaks honestly to God and his friends in Job 3. With which family and friends can you speak totally openly to and with full honesty?

Images:

1. Photo of man sitting in the desert, origin unknown, (accessed 5/11/2017).

2. Image of George Bailey depressed at bar asking God for help, Public domain, <https://aurorasginjoint.com/2013/12/14/its-a-wonderful-life/>, (accessed 7/28/2021).

3. Image of George Bailey with his family, Public domain, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Its-a-Wonderful-Life>, (accessed 7/28/2021).

4. Image of George Bailey with his encouraging community, image of George Bailey, wife and child, Public domain, <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/features/its-a-wonderful-life-christmas-classic-film-james-stewart-frank-capra-a8681486.html>, (accessed 7/28/2021).

5. Image of George Bailey, wife and child, Public domain, <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/features/its-a-wonderful-life-christmas-classic-film-james-stewart-frank-capra-a8681486.html>, (accessed 7/28/2021).