

CHAPTER 7

Job, in this chapter, goes on to express the bitter sense he had of his calamities and to justify himself in his desire of death.

I. He complains to himself and his friends of his troubles, and the constant agitation he was in (v. 1-6).

II. He turns to God, and expostulates with him (v. 7, to the end), in which,

1. He pleads the final period which death puts to our present state (v. 7-10).

2. He passionately complains of the miserable condition he was now in (v. 11-16).

3. He wonders that God will thus contend with him, and begs for the pardon of his sins and a speedy release out of his miseries (v. 17-21). It is hard to methodize the speeches of one who owned himself almost desperate, ^{<800>}Job 6:26.

<800>JOB 7:1-6

THE REPLY OF JOB

Job is here excusing what he could not justify, even his inordinate desire of death. Why should he not wish for the termination of life, which would be the termination of his miseries? To enforce this reason he argues,

I. From the general condition of man upon earth (v. 1): “He *is of few days, and full of trouble*. Every man must die shortly, and every man has some reason (more or less) to desire to die shortly; and therefore why should you impute it to me as so heinous a crime that I wish to die shortly?” Or thus: “Pray mistake not my desires of death, as if I thought the time appointed of God could be anticipated: no, I know very well that that is fixed; only in such language as this I take the liberty to express my present uneasiness: *Is there not an appointed time (a warfare, so the word is) to man upon earth? and are not his days here like the days of a hireling?*” Observe,

1. Man's present place. He is upon earth, which God *has given to the children of men*, ^{<856>}Psalms 115:16. This bespeaks man's meanness and

inferiority. How much below the inhabitants of yonder elevated and refined regions is he situated! It also bespeaks God's mercy to him. He is yet upon the earth, not under it; on earth, not in hell. Our time on earth is limited and short, according to the narrow bounds of this earth; but heaven cannot be measured, nor the days of heaven numbered.

2. His continuance in that place. Is there not a time appointed for his abode here? Yes, certainly there is, and it is easy to say by whom the appointment is made, even by him that made us and set us here. We are not to be on this earth always, nor long, but for a certain time, which is determined by him in whose hand our times are. We are not to think that we are governed by the blind fortune of the Epicureans, but by the wise, holy, and sovereign counsel of God.

3. His condition during that continuance. Man's life is *a warfare*, and *as the days of a hireling*. We are every one of us to look upon ourselves in this world,

(1.) As soldiers, exposed to hardship and in the midst of enemies; we must serve and be under command; and, when our warfare is accomplished, we must be disbanded, dismissed with either shame or honour, according to what we have done in the body.

(2.) As day-labourers, that have the work of the day to do in its day and must make up their account at night.

II. From his own condition at this time. He had as much reason, he thought, to wish for death, as a poor servant or hireling that is tired with his work has to wish for the shadows of the evening, when he shall receive his penny and go to rest, v. 2. The darkness of the night is as welcome to the labourer as the light of the morning is to the watchman, ¹¹¹⁶Psalm 130:6. The God of nature has provided for the repose of labourers, and no wonder that they desire it. *The sleep of the labouring man is sweet*, ¹¹¹⁵Ecclesiastes 5:12. No pleasure more grateful, more relishing, to the luxurious than rest to the laborious; nor can any rich man take so much satisfaction in the return of his rent-days as the hireling in his day's wages. The comparison is plain, the application is concise and somewhat obscure, but we must supply a word or two, and then it is easy: exactness of language is not to be expected from one in Job's condition. "*As a servant earnestly desires the shadow, so and for the same reason I earnestly desire death; for I am made to possess, etc.*" Hear his complaint.

1. His days were useless, and had been so a great while. He was wholly taken off from business, and utterly unfit for it. Every day was a burden to him, because he was in no capacity of doing good, or of spending it to any purpose. *Et vitae partem non attigit ullam* — *He could not fill up his time with any thing that would turn to account.* This he calls *possessing months of vanity*, v. 3. It very much increases the affliction of sickness and age, to a good man, that he is thereby forced from his usefulness. He insists not so much upon it that they are days in which he has no pleasure as that they are days in which he does not good; on that account they are months of vanity. But when we are disabled to work for God, if we will but sit still quietly for him, it is all one; we shall be accepted.

2. His nights were restless, v. 3, 4. The night relieves the toil and fatigue of the day, not only to the labourers, but to the sufferers: if a sick man can but get a little sleep in the night, it helps nature, and it is hoped that he will do well, ^{GENI}John 11:12. However, be the trouble what it will, sleep gives some intermission to the cares, and pains, and griefs, that afflict us; it is the parenthesis of our sorrows. But poor Job could not gain this relief.

(1.) His nights were wearisome, and, instead of taking any rest, he did but tire himself more with tossing to and fro until morning. Those that are in great uneasiness, through pain of body or anguish of mind, think by changing sides, changing places, changing postures, to get some ease; but, while the cause is the same within, it is all to no purpose; it is but a resemblance of a fretful discontented spirit, that is ever shifting, but never easy. This made him dread the night as much as the servant desires it, and, when he lay down, to say, *When will the night be gone?*

(2.) These *wearisome nights* were *appointed* to him. God, who determines the times before appointed, had allotted him such nights as these. Whatever is at any time grievous to us, it is good to see it appointed for us, that we may acquiesce in the event, not only as unavoidable because appointed, but as therefore designed for some holy end. When we have comfortable nights we must see them also appointed to us and be thankful for them; many better than we have wearisome nights.

3. His body was noisome, v. 5. His sores bred worms, the scabs were like clods of dust, and his skin was broken; so evil was the disease which cleaved fast to him. See what vile bodies we have, and what little reason we have to pamper them or be proud of them; they have in themselves the

principles of their own corruption: as fond as we are of them now, the time may come when we may loathe them and long to get rid of them.

4. His life was hastening apace towards a period, v. 6. He thought he had no reason to expect a long life, for he found himself declining fast (v. 6): *My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle*, that is, "My time is now but short, and there are but a few sands more in my glass, which will speedily run out." Natural motions are more swift near the centre. Job thought his days ran swiftly because he thought he should soon be at his journey's end; he looked upon them as good as spent already, and he was therefore without hope of being restored to his former prosperity. It is applicable to man's life in general. Our days are like a weaver's shuttle, thrown from one side of the web to the other in the twinkling of an eye, and then back again, to and fro, until at length it is quite exhausted of the thread it carried, and then we *cut off, like a weaver, our life*, ~~<BND>~~ Isaiah 38:12. Time hastens on apace; the motion of it cannot be stopped, and, when it is past, it cannot be recalled. While we are living, as we are sowing (~~<RIB>~~ Galatians 6:8), so we are weaving. Every day, like the shuttle, leaves a thread behind it. Many weave the spider's web, which will fail them, ~~<RIB>~~ Job 8:14. If we are weaving to ourselves holy garments and robes of righteousness, we shall have the benefit of them when our work comes to be reviewed and every man shall reap as he sowed and wear as he wove.

~~<BIB>~~ JOB 7:7-16

THE REPLY OF JOB

Job, observing perhaps that his friends, though they would not interrupt him in his discourse, yet began to grow weary, and not to heed much what he said, here turns to God, and speaks to him. If men will not hear us, God will; if men cannot help us, he can; for his arm is not shortened, neither is his ear heavy. Yet we must not go to school to Job here to learn how to speak to God; for, it must be confessed, there is a great mixture of passion and corruption in what he here says. But, if God be not extreme to mark what his people say amiss, let us also make the best of it. Job is here begging of God either to ease him or to end him. He here represents himself to God,

I. As a dying man, surely and speedily dying. It is good for us, when we are sick, to think and speak of death, for sickness is sent on purpose to put us in mind of it; and, if we be duly mindful of it ourselves, we may in faith put God in mind of it, as Job does here (v. 7): *O remember that my life is wind*. He recommends himself to God as an object of his pity and compassion, with this consideration, that he was a very weak frail creature, his abode in this world short and uncertain, his removal out of it sure and speedy, and his return to it again impossible and never to be expected — that his life was wind, as the lives of all men are, noisy perhaps and blustering, like the wind, but vain and empty, soon gone, and, when gone, past recall. God had compassion on Israel, *remembering that they were but flesh, a wind that passeth away and cometh not again*, ^{<1888>}Psalm 78:38, 39. Observe,

1. The pious reflections Job makes upon his own life and death. Such plain truths as these concerning the shortness and vanity of life, the unavoidable and irrecoverable of death, *then* do us good when we think and speak of them with application to ourselves. Let us consider then,

(1.) That we must shortly take our leave of all the things that are seen, that are temporal. The eye of the body must be closed, and shall no more see good, the good which most men set their hearts upon; for their cry is, *Who will make us to see good?* ^{<1906>}Psalm 4:6. If we be such fools as to place our happiness in visible good things, what will become of us when they shall be for ever hidden from our eyes, and we shall no more see good? Let us therefore live by that faith which is the substance and evidence of things not seen.

(2.) That we must then remove to an invisible world: *The eye of him that hath here seen me shall see me no more there*. It is *hades* — *an unseen state*, v. 8. Death removes our lovers and friends into darkness (^{<1888>}Psalm 88:18), and will shortly remove us out of their sight; when we *go hence we shall be seen no more* (^{<1913>}Psalm 39:13), but go to converse with the things that are not seen, that are eternal.

(3.) That God can easily, and in a moment, put an end to our lives, and send us to another world (v. 8): *“Thy eyes are upon me and I am not; thou canst look me into eternity, frown me into the grave, when thou pleasest.”*

*Shouldst thou, displeased, give me a frowning look,
I sink, I die, as if with lightning struck.*
— Sir R. Blackmore

He takes away our breath, and we die; nay, he but *looks on the earth* and it trembles, ~~842~~ Psalm 14:29, 30.

(4.) That, when we are once removed to another world, we must never return to this. There is constant passing from this world to the other, but *vestigia nulla retrorsum* — *there is no repassing*. “Therefore, Lord, kindly ease me by death, for that will be a perpetual ease. I shall return no more to the calamities of this life.” When we are dead we are gone, to return no more,

[1.] From our house under ground (v. 9): *He that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more* until the general resurrection, shall come up no more to his place in this world. Dying is work that is to be done but once, and therefore it had need be well done: an error there is past retrieve. This is illustrated by the blotting out and scattering of a cloud. It is consumed and vanisheth away, is resolved into air and never knits again. Other clouds arise, but the same cloud never returns: so a new generation of the children of men is raised up, but the former generation is quite consumed and vanishes away. When we see a cloud which looks great, as if it would eclipse the sun and draw the earth, of a sudden dispersed and disappearing, let us say, “Just such a thing is the life of man; it is *a vapour that appears for a little while and then vanishes away*.”

[2.] To return no more to our house above ground (v. 10): *He shall return no more to his house*, to the possession and enjoyment of it, to the business and delights of it. Others will take possession, and keep it till they also resign to another generation. The rich man in hell desired that Lazarus might be sent to his house, knowing it was to no purpose to ask that he might have leave to go himself. Glorified saints shall return no more to the cares, and burdens, and sorrows of their house; nor damned sinners to the gaities and pleasures of their house. Their place shall no more know them, no more own them, have no more acquaintance with them, nor be any more under their influence. It concerns us to secure a better place when we die, for this will no more own us.

2. The passionate inference he draws from it. From these premises he might have drawn a better conclusion that this (v. 11): *Therefore I will not*

refrain my mouth; I will speak; I will complain. Holy David, when he had been meditating on the frailty of human life, made a contrary use of it (⁽⁻¹³⁹⁾Psalm 39:9, *I was dumb, and opened not my mouth*); but Job, finding himself near expiring, hastens as much to make his complaint as if he had been to make his last will and testament or as if he could not die in peace until he had given vent to his passion. When we have but a few breaths to draw we should spend them in the holy gracious breathings of faith and prayer, not in the noisome noxious breathings of sin and corruption. Better die praying and praising than die complaining and quarrelling.

II. As a distempered man, sorely and grievously distempered both in body and mind. In this part of his representation is he is very peevish, as if God dealt hardly with him and laid upon him more than was meet: “*Am I a sea, or a whale* (v. 12), a raging sea, that must be kept within bounds, to check its proud waves, or an unruly whale, that must be restrained by force from devouring all the fishes of the sea? Am I so strong that there needs so much ado to hold me? so boisterous that no less than all these mighty bonds of affliction will serve to tame me and keep me within compass?” We are very apt, when we are in affliction, to complain of God and his providence, as if he laid more restraints upon us that there is occasion for; whereas we are never in heaviness but when there is need, nor more than the necessity demands.

1. He complains that he could not rest in his bed, v. 13, 14. There we promise ourselves some repose, when we are fatigued with labour, pain, or traveling: “*My bed shall comfort me, and my couch shall ease my complaint.* Sleep will for a time give me some relief;” it usually does so; it is appointed for that end; many a time it has eased us, and we have awaked refreshed, and with new vigour. When it is so we have great reason to be thankful; but it was not so with poor Job: his bed, instead of comforting him, terrified him; and his couch, instead of easing his complaint, added to it; for if he dropped asleep, he was disturbed with frightful dreams, and when those awaked him still he was haunted with dreadful apparitions. This was it that made the night so unwelcome and wearisome to him as it was (v. 4): When *shall I arise?* Note, God can, when he pleases, meet us with terror even where we promise ourselves ease and repose; nay, he can make us a terror to ourselves, and, as we have often contracted guilt by the roving of an unsanctified fancy, he can likewise, by the power of our own imagination, create us much grief, and so make that our punishment which has often been our sin. In Job's dreams, though they might partly arise

from his distemper (in fevers, or small pox, when the body is all over sore, it is common for the sleep to be unquiet), yet we have reason to think Satan had a hand, for he delights to terrify those whom it is out of his reach to destroy; but Job looked up to God, who permitted Satan to do this (*thou scarest me*), and mistook Satan's representations for the *terror of God setting themselves in array against him*. We have reason to pray to God that our dreams may neither defile nor disquiet us, neither tempt us to sin nor torment us with fear, that he who keeps Israel, and neither slumbers nor sleeps, may keep us when we slumber and sleep, that the devil may not then do us a mischief, either as an insinuating serpent or as a roaring lion, and to bless God if we lie down and our sleep is sweet and we are not thus scared.

2. He covets to rest in his grave, that bed where there are no tossings to and fro, nor any frightful dreams, v. 15, 16.

(1.) He was sick of life, and hated the thoughts of it: "*I loathe it; I have had enough of it. I would not live always*, not only not live always in this condition, in pain and misery, but not live always in the most easy and prosperous condition, to be continually in danger of being thus reduced. *My days are vanity* at the best, empty of solid comfort, exposed to real griefs; and I would not be for ever tied to such uncertainty." Note, A good man would not (if he might) live always in this world, no, not though it smile upon him, because it is a world of sin and temptation and he has a better world in prospect.

(2.) He was fond of death, and pleased himself with the thoughts of it: his *soul* (his judgment, he thought, but really it was his passion) *chose strangling and death rather than life*; any death rather than such a life as this. Doubtless this was Job's infirmity; for though a good man would not wish to live always in this world, and would choose strangling and death rather than sin, as the martyrs did, yet he will be content to live as long as pleases God, not choose death rather than life, because life is our opportunity of glorifying God and getting ready for heaven.

<KJV> JOB 7:17-21

THE REPLY OF JOB

Job here reasons with God,

I. Concerning his dealings with man in general (v. 17, 18): *What is man, that thou shouldst magnify him?* This may be looked upon either,

1. As a passionate reflection upon the proceedings of divine justice; as if the great God did diminish and disparage himself in contending with man. “Great men think it below them to take cognizance of those who are much their inferiors so far as to reprove and correct their follies and indecencies; why then does God magnify man, by visiting him, and trying him, and making so much ado about him? Why will he thus pour all his forces upon one that is such an unequal match for him? Why will he visit him with afflictions, which, like a quotidian ague, return as duly and constantly as the morning light, and try, every moment, what he can bear?” We mistake God, and the nature of his providence, if we think it any lessening to him to take notice of the meanest of his creatures. Or,

2. As a pious admiration of the condescensions of divine grace, like that, ~~<KJV>~~ Psalm 8:4; 144:3. He owns God’s favour to man in general, even when he complains of his own particular troubles. “*What is man, miserable man, a poor, mean, weak creature, that thou, the great and glorious God, shouldst deal with him as thou dost? What is man,*”

(1.) “That thou shouldst put such honour upon him, *shouldst magnify him, by taking him into covenant and communion with thyself?*”

(2.) “That thou shouldst concern thyself so much about him, *shouldst set thy heart upon him, as dear to thee, and one that thou hast a kindness for?*”

(3.) “*That thou shouldst visit him with thy compassions every morning, as we daily visit a particular friend, or as the physician visits his patients every morning to help them?*”

(4.) “That thou shouldst *try him, shouldst feel his pulse and observe his looks, every moment, as in care about him and jealous over him?*” That such a worm of the earth as man is should be the darling and favourite of heaven is what we have reason for ever to admire.

II. Concerning his dealings with him in particular. Observe,

1. The complaint he makes of his afflictions, which he here aggravates, and (as we are all too apt to do) makes the worst of, in three expressions:

(1.) That he was the butt to God's arrows: "*Thou hast set me as a mark against thee,*" v. 20. "My case is singular, and none is shot at as I am."

(2.) That he was a *burden to himself*, ready to sink under the load of his own life. How much delight soever we take in ourselves God can, when he pleases, make us burdens to ourselves. What comfort can we take in ourselves if God appear against us as an enemy and we have not comfort in him.

(3.) That he had no intermission of his griefs (v. 19): "*How long will it be ere thou cause thy rod to depart from me, or abate the rigour of the correction, at least for so long as that I may swallow down my spittle?*" It should seem, Job's distemper lay much in his throat, and almost choked him, so that he could not swallow his spittle. He complains (^{<818>}Job 30:18) that it *bound him about like the collar of his coat*. "Lord," says he, "wilt not thou give me some respite, some breathing time?" ^{<818>}Job 9:18.

2. The concern he is in about his sins. The best men have sin to complain of, and the better they are the more they will complain of it.

(1.) He ingenuously owns himself guilty before God: *I have sinned*. God had said of him that he was a *perfect and an upright man*; yet he says of himself, *I have sinned*. Those may be upright who yet are not sinless; and those who are sincerely penitent are accepted, through a Mediator, as evangelically perfect. Job maintained, against his friends, that he was not a hypocrite, not a wicked man; and yet he owned to his God that he had sinned. If we have been kept from gross acts of sin, it does not therefore follow that we are innocent. The best must acknowledge, before God, that they have sinned. His calling God the *observer*, or *preserver*, of men, may be looked upon as designed for an aggravation of his sin: "Though God has had his eye upon me, his eye upon me for good, yet I have sinned against him." When we are in affliction it is seasonable to confess sin, as the procuring cause of our affliction. Penitent confessions would drown and silence passionate complaints.

(2.) He seriously enquires how he may make his peace with God: “*What shall I do unto thee, having done so much against thee?*” Are we convinced that we have sinned, and are we brought to own it? We cannot but conclude that something must be done to prevent the fatal consequences of it. The matter must not rest as it is, but some course must be taken to undo what has been ill done. And, if we are truly sensible of the danger we have run ourselves into, we shall be willing to do any thing, to take a pardon upon any terms; and therefore shall be *inquisitive as to what we shall do* (³¹⁶⁶Micah 6:6, 7), what we shall do to God, not to satisfy the demands of his justice (that is done only by the Mediator), but to qualify ourselves for the tokens of his favour, according to the tenour of the gospel-covenant. In making this enquiry it is good to eye God as the preserver or Saviour of men, not their destroyer. In our repentance we must keep up good thoughts of God, as one that delights not in the ruin of his creatures, but would rather they should return and live. “Thou art the Saviour of men; be my Saviour, for I cast myself upon thy mercy.”

(3.) He earnestly begs for the forgiveness of his sins, v. 21. The heat of his spirit, as, on the one hand, it made his complaints the more bitter, so, on the other hand, it made his prayers the more lively and importunate; as here: “*Why dost thou not pardon my transgression? Art thou not a God of infinite mercy, that art ready to forgive? Hast not thou wrought repentance in me? Why then dost thou not give me the pardon of my sin, and make me to hear the voice of that joy and gladness?*” Surely he means more than barely the removing of his outward trouble, and is herein earnest for the return of God's favour, which he complained of the want of, (³¹⁶⁶Job 6:4. “Lord, pardon my sins, and give me the comfort of that pardon, and then I can easily bear my afflictions,” ⁴⁹⁰²Matthew 9:2; ²³³³Isaiah 33:24. When the mercy of God pardons the transgression that is committed by us the grace of God takes away the iniquity that reigns in us. Wherever God removes the guilt of sin he breaks the power of sin.

(4.) To enforce his prayer for pardon he pleads the prospect he had of dying quickly: *For now shall I sleep in the dust.* Death will lay us in the dust, will lay us to sleep there, and perhaps presently, now in a little time. Job had been complaining of restless nights, and that sleep departed from his eyes (v. 3, 4, 13, 14); but those who cannot sleep on a bed of down will shortly sleep in a bed of dust, and not be scared with dreams nor tossed to and fro: “*Thou shalt seek me in the morning, to show me favour, but I shall not be;* it will be too late then. If my sins be not pardoned while I

live, I am lost and undone for ever.” Note, The consideration of this, that we must shortly die, and perhaps may die suddenly, should make us all very solicitous to get our sins pardoned and our iniquity taken away.