

CHAPTER 30

It is a melancholy “But now” which this chapter begins with. Adversity is here described as much to the life as prosperity was in the foregoing chapter, and the height of that did but increase the depth of this. God sets the one over-against the other, and so did Job, that his afflictions might appear the more grievous, and consequently his case the more pitiable.

I. he had lived in great honour, but now he had fallen into disgrace, and was as much vilified, even by the meanest, as ever he had been magnified by the greatest; this he insists much on (v. 1-14).

II. He had had much inward comfort and delight, but now he was a terror and burden to himself (v. 15, 16) and overwhelmed with sorrow (v. 28-31).

III. He had long enjoyed a good state of health, but now he was sick and in pain (v. 17-18, 29, 30).

IV. Time was when the secret of God was with him, but now his communication with heaven was cut off (v. 20-22).

V. He had promised himself a long life, but now he saw death at the door (v. 23). One thing he mentions, which aggravated his affliction, that it surprised him when he looked for peace. But two things gave him some relief: —

1. That his troubles would not follow him to the grave (v. 24).
2. That his conscience witnessed for him that, in his prosperity, he had sympathized with those that were in misery (v. 25).

<80E>JOB 30:1-14

JOB'S HUMBLED CONDITION

Here Job makes a very large and sad complaint of the great disgrace he had fallen into, from the height of honour and reputation, which was exceedingly grievous and cutting to such an ingenuous spirit as Job's was. Two things he insists upon as greatly aggravating his affliction: —

I. The meanness of the persons that affronted him. As it added much to his honour, in the day of his prosperity, that princes and nobles showed him respect and paid a deference to him, so it added no less to his disgrace in his adversity that he was spurned by the footmen, and trampled upon by those that were not only every way his inferiors, but were the meanest and most contemptible of all mankind. None can be represented as more base than those are here represented who insulted Job, upon all accounts.

1. They were young, younger than he (v. 1), *the youth* (v. 12), who ought to have behaved themselves respectfully towards him for his age and gravity. Even the children, in their play, played upon him, as the children of Bethel upon the prophet, *Go up, thou bald-head*. Children soon learn to be scornful when they see their parents so.

2. They were of a mean extraction. Their fathers were so very despicable that such a man as Job would have disdained to take them into the lowest service about his house, as that of tending the sheep and attending the shepherds with the dogs of his flock, v. 1. They were so shabby that they were not fit to be seen among his servants, so silly that they were not fit to be employed, and so false that they were not fit to be trusted in the meanest post. Job here speaks of what he might have done, not of what he did: he was not of such a spirit as to set any of the children of men with the dogs of his flock; he knew the dignity of human nature better than to do so.

3. They and their families were the unprofitable burdens of the earth, and good for nothing. Job himself, with all his prudence and patience, could make nothing of them, v. 2. The young were not fit for labour, they were so lazy, and went about their work so awkwardly: *Whereto might the strength of their hands profit me?* The old were not to be advised with in the smallest matters, for in them was old age indeed, but their *old age was perished*, they were twice children.

4. They were extremely poor, v. 3. They were ready to starve, for they would not dig, and to beg they were ashamed. Had they been brought to necessity by the providence of God, their neighbours would have sought them out as proper objects of charity and would have relieved them; but, being brought into straits by their own slothfulness and wastefulness, nobody was forward to relieve them. Hence they were forced to flee into the deserts both for shelter and sustenance, and were put to sorry shifts

indeed, when they *cut up mallows by the bushes*, and were glad to eat them, for want of food that was fit for them, v. 4. See what hunger will bring men to: one half of the world does not know how the other half lives; yet those that have abundance ought to think sometimes of those whose fare is very coarse and who are brought to a short allowance of that too. But we must own the righteousness of God, and not think it strange, if slothfulness clothe men with rags and the idle soul be made to suffer hunger. This beggarly world is full of the devil's poor.

5. They were very scandalous wicked people, not only the burdens, but the plagues, of the places where they lived, arrant scoundrels, the scum of the country: *They were driven forth from among men*, v. 5. They were such lying, thieving, lurking, mischievous people, that the best service the magistrates could do was to rid the country of them, while the very mob cried after them as after a thief. *Away with such fellows from the earth; it is not fit they should live*. They were lazy and would not work, and therefore they were exclaimed against as thieves, and justly; for those that do not earn their own bread by honest labour do, in effect, steal the bread out of other people's mouths. An idle fellow is a public nuisance; but it is better to drive such into a workhouse than, as here, into a wilderness, which will punish them indeed, but never reform them. They were forced to dwell in *caves of the earth*, and *they brayed like asses among the bushes*, v. 6, 7. See what is the lot of those that have the cry of the country, the cry of their own conscience, against them; they cannot but be in a continual terror and confusion. *They groan among the trees* (so Broughton) *and smart among the nettles*; they are stung and scratched there, where they hoped to be sheltered and protected. See what miseries wicked people bring themselves to in this world; yet this is nothing to what is in reserve for them in the other world.

8. They had nothing at all in them to recommend them to any man's esteem. They were a vile kind; yea, a kind without fame, people that nobody could give a good word to nor had a good wish for; they were banished from the earth as being *viler than the earth*. One would not think it possible that ever the human nature should sink so low, and degenerate so far, as it did in these people. When we thank God that we are men we have reason to thank him that we are not such men. But such as these were abusive to Job,

(1.) In revenge, because when he was in prosperity and power, like a good magistrate, he put in execution the laws which were in force against vagabonds, and rogues, and sturdy beggars, which these base people now remembered against him.

(2.) In triumph over him, because they thought he had now become like one of them. ^{<2340>}Isaiah 14:10, 11. The abjects, men of mean spirits, insult over the miserable, ^{<4385>}Psalms 35:15.

II. The greatness of the affronts that were given him. It cannot be imagined how abusive they were.

1. They made ballads on him, with which they made themselves and their companions merry (v. 9): *I am their song and their byword*. Those have a very base spirit that turn the calamities of their honest neighbours into a jest, and can sport themselves with their griefs.

2. They shunned him as a loathsome spectacle, abhorred him, fled far from him, (v. 10), as an ugly monster or as one infected. Those that were themselves driven out from among men would have had him driven out. For,

3. They expressed the greatest scorn and indignation against him. They spat in his face, or were ready to do so; they tripped up his heels, pushed away his feet (v. 12), kicked him, either in wrath, because they hated him, or in sport, to make themselves merry with him, as they did with their companions at foot-ball. The best of saints have sometimes received the worst of injuries and indignities from a spiteful, scornful, wicked world, and must not think it strange; our Master himself was thus abused.

4. They were very malicious against him, and not only made a jest of him, but made a prey of him — not only affronted him, but set themselves to do him all the real mischief they could devise: *They raise up against me the ways of their destruction*; or (as some read it), *They cast upon me the cause of their woe*; that is, “They lay the blame of their being driven out upon me;” and it is common for criminals to hate the judges and laws by which they are punished. But under this pretence,

(1.) They accused him falsely, and misrepresented his former conversation, which is here called *marring his path*. They reflected upon him as a tyrant and an oppressor because he had done justice upon them; and perhaps Job's friends grounded their uncharitable censures of him

(~~1216~~ Job 22:6, etc.) upon the unjust and unreasonable clamours of these sorry people; and it was an instance of their great weakness and inconsideration, for who can be innocent if the accusations of such persons may be heeded?

(2.) They not only triumphed in his calamity, but set it forward, and did all they could to add to his miseries and make them more grievous to him. It is a great sin to forward the calamity of any, especially of good people. In this *they have no helper*, nobody to set them on or to countenance them in it, nobody to bear them out or to protect them, but they do it of their own accord; they are fools in other things, but wise enough to do mischief, and need no help in inventing that. Some read it thus, *They hold my heaviness a profit, though they be never the better*. Wicked people, though they get nothing by the calamities of others, yet rejoice in them.

5. Those that did him all this mischief were numerous, unanimous, and violent (v. 14): *They came upon me as a wide breaking in of waters*, when the dam is broken; or, “They came as soldiers into a broad breach which they have made in the wall of a besieged city, pouring in upon me with the utmost fury;” and in this they took a pride and a pleasure: *They rolled themselves in the desolation* as a man rolls himself in a soft and easy bed, and they rolled themselves upon him with all the weight of their malice.

III. All this contempt put upon him was caused by the troubles he was in (v. 11): “*Because he has loosed my cord*, has taken away the honour and power with which I was girded (~~1218~~ Job 12:18), has scattered what I had got together and untwisted all my affairs — because he has afflicted me, therefore *they have let loose the bridle before me*,” that is, “have given themselves a liberty to say and do what they please against me.” Those that by Providence are stripped of their honour may expect to be loaded with contempt by inconsiderate ill-natured people. “Because he hath loosed *his cord*” (the original has that reading also), that is, “because he has taken off his bridle of restraint from off their malice, they cast away the bridle from me,” that is, “they make no account of my authority, nor stand in any awe of me.” It is owing to the hold God has of the consciences even of bad men, and the restraints he lays upon them, that we are not continually thus insulted and abused; and, if at any time we meet with such ill treatment, we must acknowledge the hand of God in taking off those restraints, as David did when Shimei cursed him: *So let him curse, for the Lord hath bidden him*. Now in all this,

1. We may see the uncertainty of worldly honour, and particularly of popular applause, how suddenly a man may fail from the height of dignity into the depth of disgrace. What little cause therefore have men to be ambitious or proud of that which may be so easily lost, and what little confidence is to be put in it! Those that to-day cry *Hosannah* may to-morrow cry *Crucify*. But there is an honour which comes from God, which if we secure, we shall find it not thus changeable and loseable.

2. We may see that it has often been the lot of very wise and good men to be trampled upon and abused. And,

3. That those who look only at the things that are seen despise those whom the world frowns upon, though they are ever so much the favourites of Heaven. Nothing is more grievous in poverty than that it renders men contemptible. *Turba Remi sequitur fortunam, ut semper odit damnatos* — *The Roman populace, faithful to the turns of fortune, still persecute the fallen.*

4. We may see in Job a type of Christ, who was thus made a *reproach of men* and *despised of the people* (^{<1216>}Psalm 22:6; ^{<2513>}Isaiah 53:3), and who hid not his face from shame and spitting, but bore the indignity better than Job did.

<815>JOB 30:15-31

JOB COMPLAINS OF HIS AFFLICTION

In this second part of Job's complaint, which is very bitter, and has a great many sorrowful accents in it, we may observe a great deal that he complains of and some little that he comforts himself with.

I. Here is much that he complains of.

1. In general, it was a day of great affliction and sorrow.

(1.) Affliction seized him, and surprised him. It seized him (v. 16): *The days of affliction have taken hold upon me, have caught me* (so some); *they have arrested me*, as the bailiff arrests the debtor, claps him on the back, and secures him. When trouble comes with commission it will take fast hold, and not lose its hold. It surprised him (v. 27): *“The days of*

affliction prevented me,” that is, “they came upon me without giving me any previous warning. I did not expect them, nor make any provision for such an evil day.” Observe, He reckons his affliction by days, which will soon be numbered and finished, and are nothing to the ages of eternity, ^{<4047>}2 Corinthians 4:17.

(2.) He was in great sorrow by reason of it. His *bowels boiled* with grief, and *rested not*, v. 27. The sense of his calamities was continually preying upon his spirits without any intermission. He *went mourning* from day to day, always sighing, always weeping; and such cloud was constantly upon his mind that he went, in effect, *without the sun*, v. 28. He had nothing that he could take any comfort in. He abandoned himself to perpetual sorrow, as one that, like Jacob, resolved to go to the grave mourning. He walked out of the sun (so some) in dark shady places, as melancholy people use to do. If he went into the congregation, to join with them in solemn worship, instead of standing up calmly to desire their prayers, he *stood up and cried* aloud, through pain of body, or anguish of mind, like one half distracted. If he appeared in public, to receive visits, when the fit came upon him he could not contain himself, nor preserve due decorum, but stood up and shrieked aloud. Thus he was *a brother to dragons and owls* (v. 29), both in choosing solitude and retirement, as they do (^{<2343>}Isaiah 34:13), and in making a fearful hideous noise as they do; his inconsiderate complaints were fitly compared to their inarticulate ones.

2. The terror and trouble that seized his soul were the sorest part of his calamity, v. 15, 16.

(1.) If he looked forward, he saw every thing frightful before him: if he endeavoured to shake off his terrors, they turned furiously upon him: if he endeavoured to escape from them, they pursued his soul as swiftly and violently as the wind. He complained, at first, of the *terrors of God setting themselves in array against him*, ^{<3864>}Job 6:4. And still, which way soever he looked, they turned upon him; which way soever he fled, they pursued him. *My soul* (Heb., *my principal one, my princess*); the soul is the principal part of the man; it is our glory; it is every way more excellent than the body, and therefore that which pursues the soul, and threatens that, should be most dreaded.

(2.) If he looked back, he saw all the good he had formerly enjoyed removed from him, and nothing left him but the bitter remembrance of it:

My welfare and prosperity pass away, as suddenly, swiftly, and irrecoverably, as a cloud.

(3.) If he looked within, he found his spirit quite sunk and unable to bear his infirmity, not only wounded, but *poured out upon him*, v. 16. He was not only weak as water, but, in his own apprehension, lost as water spilt upon the ground. Compare ~~1224~~ Psalm 22:14, *My heart is melted like wax.*

3. His bodily diseases were very grievous; for,

(1.) He was full of pain, piercing pain, pain that went to the bone, to all his bones, v. 17. It was a *sword in his bones*, which *pierced him in the night season*, when he should have been refreshed with sleep. His nerves were affected with strong convulsions; his *sinews took no rest*. By reason of his pain, he could take no rest, but sleep departed from his eyes. *His bones were burnt with heat*, v. 30. He was in a constant fever, which dried up the radical moisture and even consumed the marrow in his bones. See how frail our bodies are, which carry in themselves the seeds of our own disease and death.

(2.) He was full of sores. Some that are pained in their bones, yet sleep in a whole skin, but, Satan's commission against Job extending both to his bone and to his flesh, he spared neither. His *skin was black upon him*, v. 30. The blood settled, and the sores suppurated and by degrees scabbed over, which made his skin look black. Even his garment had its colour changed with the continual running of his boils, and the soft clothing he used to wear had now grown so stiff that all his garments were *like his collar*, v. 18. It would be noisome to describe what a condition poor Job was in for want of clean linen and good attendance, and what filthy rags all his clothes were. Some think that, among other diseases, Job was ill of a quinsy or swelling in his throat, and that it was this which bound him about like a stiff collar. Thus was he *cast into the mire* (v. 19), *compared to mire* (so some); his body looked more like a heap of dirt than any thing else. Let none be proud of their clothing nor proud of their cleanness; they know not but some disease or other may *change their garments*, and even *throw them into the mire*, and make them noisome both to themselves and others. *Instead of sweet smell, there shall be a stench*, ~~2324~~ Isaiah 3:24. We are but dust and ashes at the best, and our bodies are vile bodies; but we are apt to forget it, till God, by some sore disease, makes us sensibly to feel and own what we are. "*I have become already like that dust and ashes*

into which I must shortly be resolved: wherever I go I carry my grave about with me.”

4. That which afflicted him most of all was that God seemed to be his enemy and to fight against him. It was *he* that *cast him into the mire* (v. 19), and seemed to trample on him when he had him there. This cut him to the heart more than any thing else,

(1.) That God did not appear for him. He addressed himself to him, but gained no grant — appealed to him, but gained no sentence; he was very importunate in his applications, but in vain (v. 20): “*I cry unto thee, as one in earnest, I stand up, and cry, as one waiting for an answer, but thou hearest not, thou regardest not, for any thing I can perceive.*” If our most fervent prayers bring not in speedy and sensible returns, we must not think it strange. Though the seed of Jacob did never seek in vain, yet they have often thought that they did and that God has not only been deaf, but angry, at the prayers of his people, ~~1804~~ Psalm 80:4.

(2.) That God did appear against him. That which he here says of God is one of the worst words that ever Job spoke (v. 21): *Thou hast become cruel to me.* Far be it from the God of mercy and grace that he should be cruel to any (his compassions fail not), but especially that he should be so to his own children. Job was unjust and ungrateful when he said so of him: but harbouring hard thoughts of God was the sin which did, at this time, most easily beset him. Here,

[1.] He thought God fought against him and stirred up his whole strength to ruin him: *With thy strong hand thou opposest thyself,* or art an adversary against me. He had better thoughts of God (~~1806~~ Job 23:6) when he concluded he would *not plead against him with his great power.* God has an absolute sovereignty and an irresistible strength, but he never uses either the one or the other for the crushing or oppressing of any.

[2.] He thought he insulted over him (v. 22): *Thou lifted me up to the wind,* as a feather or the chaff which the wind plays with; so unequal a match did Job think himself for Omnipotence, and so unable was he to help himself when he was made to ride, not in triumph, but in terror, upon the wings of the wind, and the judgments of God did even *dissolve his substance,* as a cloud is dissolved and dispersed by the wind. Man's substance, take him in his best estate, is nothing before the power of God; it is soon dissolved.

5. He expected no other now than that God, by these troubles, would shortly make an end of him: “If I be made to ride upon the wind, I can count upon no other than to break my neck shortly;” and he speaks as if God had no other design upon him than that in all his dealings with him: “*I know that thou wilt bring me, with so much the more terror, to death, though I might have been brought thither without all this ado, for it is the house appointed for all living,*” v. 23. The grave is a house, a narrow, dark, cold, ill-furnished house, but it will be our residence, where we shall rest and be safe. It is our long home, our own home; for it is our mother's lap, and in it we are gathered to our fathers. It is a house appointed for us by him that has appointed us the bounds of all our habitations. It is appointed for all the living. It is the common receptacle, where rich and poor meet; it is appointed for the general rendezvous. We must all be brought thither shortly. It is God that brings us to it, for the keys of death and the grave are in his hand, and we may all know that, sooner or later, he will bring us thither. It would be well for us if we would duly consider it. *The living know that they shall die;* let us, each of us, know it with application.

6. There were two things that aggravated his trouble, and made it the less tolerable: —

(1.) That it was a very great disappointment to his expectation (v. 26): “*When I looked for good, for more good, or at least for the continuance of what I had, then evil came*” — such uncertain things are all our worldly enjoyments, and such a folly is it to feed ourselves with great expectations from them. Those that wait for light from the sparks of their creature comforts will be wretchedly disappointed and will *make their bed in the darkness.*

(2.) That it was a very great change in his condition (v. 31): “*My harp is not only laid by, and hung upon the willow-trees, but it is turned to mourning, and my organ into the voice of those that weep.*” Job, in his prosperity, had taken *the timbrel and harp, and rejoiced at the sound of the organ,* ^{Job 21:12} Notwithstanding his gravity and grace, he had found time to be cheerful; but now his tune was altered. Let those therefore that rejoice be *as though they rejoiced not,* for they know not how soon their *laughter will be turned into mourning and their joy into heaviness.* Thus we see how much Job complains of; but,

II. Here is something in the midst of all with which he comforts himself, and it is but a little.

1. He foresees, with comfort, that death will be the period of all his calamities (v. 24): Though God now, with a strong hand, opposed himself against him, “yet,” says he, “*he will not stretch out his hand to the grave.*” The hand of God’s wrath would bring him to death, but would not follow him beyond death; his soul would be safe and happy in the world of spirits, his body safe and easy in the dust. Though men *cry in his destruction* (though, when they are dying, there is a great deal of agony and out-cry, many a sigh, and groan, and complaint), yet in the grave they feel nothing, they fear nothing, but all is quiet there. “Though in hell, which is called *destruction*, they cry, yet not in the grave; and, being delivered from the second death, the first to me will be an effectual relief.” Therefore he wished he might be *hidden in the grave*, ~~413~~ Job 14:13.

2. He reflects with comfort upon the concern he always had for the calamities of others when he was himself at ease (v. 25): *Did not I weep for him that was in trouble?* Some think he herein complains of God, thinking it very hard that he who had shown mercy to others should not himself find mercy. I would rather take it as a quieting consideration to himself; his conscience witnessed for him that he had always sympathized with persons in misery and done what he could to help them, and therefore he had reason to expect that, at length, both God and his friends would pity him. Those who mourn with them that mourn will bear their own sorrows the better when it comes to their turn to drink of the bitter cup. *Did not my soul burn for the poor?* so some read it, comparing it with that of St. Paul, ~~413~~ 2 Corinthians 11:29, *Who is offended, and I burn not?* As those who have been unmerciful and hard-hearted to others may expect to hear of it from their own consciences, when they are themselves in trouble, so those who have considered the poor and succoured them shall have the remembrance thereof to make their bed easy in their sickness, ~~411~~ Psalm 41:1, 3.