

Job 2:11-13

Far From Fair Weather Friends

¹¹ Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that had come upon him, they came each from his own place, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. They made an appointment together to come to show him sympathy and comfort him. ¹² And when they saw him from a distance, they did not recognize him. And they raised their voices and wept, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads toward heaven. ¹³ And they sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great. – Job 2:11-13 ESV

Amid all his sorrow and suffering, Job gets a visit from three of his closest friends. Each of them had received news of Job's losses and made plans to leave their respective towns and rendezvous in Uz to provide moral support to their mutual friend. We know from chapter 32, that another friend named Elihu joined them at some point. At this point, we know nothing about these men, other than their names but in time their individual personalities will become increasingly more evident.

But for now, all we know is that they graciously agreed to gather in Uz to check on the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of their friend. It is important to note that what motivated their travel plans was "this evil that had come upon" Job (Job 2:11 ESV). The Hebrew word for "evil" is רָעָה (*ra'*) and it refers to that which is bad, wicked, malignant, or simply disagreeable. But it would appear that these men had all come to the same conclusion. Whatever had happened to their friend was the result of evil, and it will soon become clear that they assumed that Job had done something to deserve the distress and devastation he was experiencing. They believed there was a cause-and-effect rationale behind all that had happened to Job and they would soon deem it their responsibility to help Job confess whatever sin he had committed to merit God's judgment.

Yet, upon their arrival in Uz, the well-meaning and highly motivated friends of Job find their friend's condition far more distressing than they could have ever imagined. The skin disease from which Job suffered had left him virtually unrecognizable. Their shock and distress at Job's alarming physical state left them stunned. But soon, their silence soon gave way to mournful cries of pity as "they tore their robes and threw dust into the air over their heads to show their grief" (Job 2:12 NLT). This rather theatrical display of emotions was probably not what Job had expected and, most certainly, not what he needed at the moment. This dramatic demonstration was intended to convince Job that they felt his pain and could somehow relate to all that he had suffered. This is not to suggest that these friends were insincere or simply putting on a show of false sympathy. They were doing what was culturally customary in that day and age. The sincerity of their actions is evidenced by their willingness to sit in silence beside their grieving friend for a full seven days as he continued to mourn Job his staggering losses.

No one said a word to Job, for they saw that his suffering was too great for words. – Job 2:13
NLT

No doubt, this show of mutual support meant a great deal to Job. He had just lost all ten of his adult children and the only words of comfort and counsel he got from his wife was to curse God and die (Job 2:9). He had been left alone to wrestle with the import of his situation, so the arrival of his friends would have been a source of great encouragement. Their decision to join him in Uz was a sign of their love and affection for him, and their willingness to sit in silence while Job mourned demonstrates that they were there for the long haul. Their visit was not a spur-of-the-moment kind of thing, and they were in no rush to return home. They quietly waited, biding their time until Job was ready to hear what they had to say. And, as we will see, they were not at a loss for words; they were simply waiting for the right time to share their insights into Job's circumstances.

These men demonstrated the truth of the proverb: "A friend is always loyal, and a brother is born to help in time of need" (Proverbs 17:17 NLT). In Job's time of need, his friends were there for him. Their presence was palpable and tangible. Even as they sat alongside him in silence, their close proximity served as a balm for the pain Job was having to endure. His trials were no less difficult, but he no longer faced them alone.

Yet, the arrival of Job's friends would not be without its own set of difficulties. These compassionate companions would soon break their silence and begin to share their personal insights into Job's predicament. Once the seven days of mourning had passed, they would begin to offer up their well-reasoned assessment of Job's situation and outline a strategy for remedying the problem.

But Job will beat them to the punch. His patient endurance will run its course and he'll take the opportunity to take exception with God's providential plan for his life. Surprisingly, the blameless Job will end up cursing his ill-fated life and express his preference for an early death. His carefully constructed facade of faithfulness will begin to crumble under the weight of his burdens. It's not that Job no longer believes in God; it is that he no longer has the strength to endure the weight of his own sorrow and suffering. But God will show no surprise at Job's outburst. He will hear His servant out and then allow Job's friends to share their collective wisdom. But ultimately, God will step in and set the record straight. The entire ordeal surrounding Job's life will be given an explanation and the sovereign plan of Almighty God will be exposed for all to see.

Job 3:1-26**Beaten Down? Look Up**

¹ After this Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth. ² And Job said:

- ³ *“Let the day perish on which I was born,
and the night that said,
‘A man is conceived.’*
- ⁴ *Let that day be darkness!
May God above not seek it,
nor light shine upon it.*
- ⁵ *Let gloom and deep darkness claim it.
Let clouds dwell upon it;
let the blackness of the day terrify it.*
- ⁶ *That night—let thick darkness seize it!
Let it not rejoice among the days of the year;
let it not come into the number of the months.*
- ⁷ *Behold, let that night be barren;
let no joyful cry enter it.*
- ⁸ *Let those curse it who curse the day,
who are ready to rouse up Leviathan.*
- ⁹ *Let the stars of its dawn be dark;
let it hope for light, but have none,
nor see the eyelids of the morning,*
- ¹⁰ *because it did not shut the doors of my mother's womb,
nor hide trouble from my eyes.*
- ¹¹ *“Why did I not die at birth,
come out from the womb and expire?*
- ¹² *Why did the knees receive me?
Or why the breasts, that I should nurse?*
- ¹³ *For then I would have lain down and been quiet;
I would have slept; then I would have been at rest,*
- ¹⁴ *with kings and counselors of the earth
who rebuilt ruins for themselves,*
- ¹⁵ *or with princes who had gold,
who filled their houses with silver.*
- ¹⁶ *Or why was I not as a hidden stillborn child,
as infants who never see the light?*
- ¹⁷ *There the wicked cease from troubling,
and there the weary are at rest.*
- ¹⁸ *There the prisoners are at ease together;
they hear not the voice of the taskmaster.*

¹⁹ *The small and the great are there,
and the slave is free from his master.*

²⁰ *“Why is light given to him who is in misery,
and life to the bitter in soul,
²¹ who long for death, but it comes not,
and dig for it more than for hidden treasures,
²² who rejoice exceedingly
and are glad when they find the grave?
²³ Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden,
whom God has hedged in?
²⁴ For my sighing comes instead of my bread,
and my groanings are poured out like water.
²⁵ For the thing that I fear comes upon me,
and what I dread befalls me.
²⁶ I am not at ease, nor am I quiet;
I have no rest, but trouble comes.”* – Job 3:1-26 ESV

Suffering and sorrow don't come with expiration dates. The saying, “time heals all wounds” may be true but it doesn't explain how long the wait may be before the healing comes and the pain goes away. In Job's case, time passed but the grief that accompanied his losses failed to dissipate. He continued to struggle with residual physical as well as psychological pain. The arrival of his friends must have meant a lot to Job and he probably appreciated their willingness to sit with him in silence for seven days as he attempted to process all that had happened.

But the time came when Job couldn't hold back his frustration and anger any longer, and the blunt-force nature of his honesty leaves us feeling a bit uncomfortable. While we can probably relate to what he has to say, we find it strange to see them in writing and even more disconcerting to think about anyone saying them out loud.

And what we read in chapter 3 seems to contradict the Job we were introduced to in chapters 1 and 2. This blameless, upright, and God-fearing man (Job 1:8), had faced the unexpected and unprecedented losses of his family and fortune with unparalleled faith and resilience.

“Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” – Job 1:21 ESV

“Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?” – Job 2:10 ESV

But now we're given a starkly different look at this suffering servant of Yahweh. The cumulative effect of his losses had produced a burden that Job found too great to bear any longer. He was ready to give up and hand over his “faithful servant” badge. With the passing of time, some of his physical wounds had healed but his heart was raw, and he had come to a place where his suffering was no longer bearable or justifiable. He couldn't rationalize his way out of his own

growing sense of futility and frustration. None of it made any sense and, no matter how he analyzed the data, none of it left him with a particularly favorable view of God.

In a blatant display of anger, he cursed the day he was born. Job could see no meaning to his existence. With the devastating loss of his ten adult children and the complete dismantling of his means of livelihood, Job could see no purpose for his life.

*“Let the day of my birth be erased,
and the night I was conceived.
Let that day be turned to darkness.
Let it be lost even to God on high,
and let no light shine on it.” – Job 3:3-4 NLT*

In a sense, Job is declaring his birth to have been a cosmic mistake. After carefully considering all his losses, he can't conceive of a reason to keep on living. And his growing sense of futility is completely understandable. After burying all his children and picking up the pieces of his shattered life, Job is having a difficult time seeing the silver lining on the dark cloud that has become his life.

*“Let the darkness and utter gloom claim that day for its own.
Let a black cloud overshadow it,
and let the darkness terrify it.” – Job 3:5 NLT*

He simply wants the darkness to completely consume his life and put him out of his misery. And while reading his emotionally charged words leaves us feeling uncomfortable, it also makes Job highly relatable. He has fallen from his pedestal of faith and become one of us. Gone are the pithy and pious-sounding platitudes about God's goodness and his willingness to accept the good and the bad from God's gracious hands. And rather than bragging about leaving this life the same way he entered it – naked – Job is now declaring his desire to have been stillborn.

*“Why wasn't I born dead?
Why didn't I die as I came from the womb?
Why was I laid on my mother's lap?
Why did she nurse me at her breasts?” – Job 3:11-12 NLT*

*“Why wasn't I buried like a stillborn child,
like a baby who never lives to see the light?” – Job 3:16 NLT*

At this point in his life, Job could see no redeeming value in continuing to exist. He couldn't fathom a better tomorrow or a day when the pain would be replaced with joy and hope. The darkness was overwhelming. And sadly, that darkness was preventing him from glimpsing the goodness of his God. Job had reached a low point in his life, where despair morphed into doubt and heartache robbed him of all hope. His reasoning powers had been diminished by his

circumstances, and his faithfulness had been weakened by his own sense of powerlessness. He echoes the sentiments of Solomon, written in the book of Ecclesiastes.

*I also thought about the human condition—how God proves to people that they are like animals. For people and animals share the same fate—both breathe and both must die. So people have no real advantage over the animals. How meaningless! Both go to the same place—they came from dust and they return to dust. For who can prove that the human spirit goes up and the spirit of animals goes down into the earth? So I saw that there is nothing better for people than to be happy in their work. That is our lot in life. And no one can bring us back to see what happens after we die. – Ecclesiastes 3:18-22
NLT*

To say that Job was pessimistic would be a gross understatement. One might easily describe him as clinically depressed, even suicidal. This is such a contrast to the man God described as “blameless—a man of complete integrity. He fears God and stays away from evil. And he has maintained his integrity” (Job 2:3 NLT).

The circumstances of life had left Job beaten down and unable to look up to God for help and hope. His statements are not in the form of a prayer. His poetic-sounding speech is not directed to God, but seemingly uttered into the vacuum of his pointless existence.

*“Why is life given to those with no future,
those God has surrounded with difficulties?” – Job 3:23 NLT*

He had come to the conclusion that his life no longer held any meaning or purpose. And he seems to blame God for all that had happened. It was God who had surrounded his life with difficulties. So, if all his problems were from the sovereign hand of God, how or why should he expect God to reverse course and bless him? Like so many of his contemporaries, Job was convinced that both blessings and curses came from God. Blessings were considered to be proof of God’s favor. Disease, pain, and financial loss were evidence that one had offended a holy God and was under His curse.

So, given the sheer scope of Job’s trials, it is no surprise that He had drawn the conclusion that he was under an irreversible and wholly unavoidable curse. His pessimism reaches an all-time low with his final statement:

*“What I always feared has happened to me.
What I dreaded has come true.
I have no peace, no quietness.
I have no rest; only trouble comes.” – Job 3:26 NLT*

He had feared the worst, and it had come true – in a big way. But what Job failed to realize was that God was not done yet. Job’s problems, while great, were not insurmountable. The darkened state of his future was not a foregone conclusion. There were things to which Job was

ignorant. There were details concerning his life story that were as yet unrevealed. He was completely unaware of the spiritual battle taking place in the unseen realm. The conversations taking place between God and Satan were out of sight and out of mind. He had no way of knowing that this entire sequence of events was being carefully orchestrated from heaven – not as curses to punish him for wickedness, but to reveal the power and providence of his God.

Job was being tested, to see if he truly believed in the sovereignty, goodness, and greatness of his God. And while his little diatribe doesn't portray a man of vibrant faith, it does reveal a man whose fallen humanity was all too real and whose need for a glimpse of God was all too necessary. And the good news is, God was not done yet.