

TWO THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN YOU SUFFER UNJUST TREATMENT

18 Then Bildad the Shuhite said, ²When will you end these speeches? Be sensible, and then we can talk. ³Why are we regarded as cattle, and considered to be stupid in your sight? ⁴You who tear yourself to pieces with your anger—should the earth be devastated for your sake? Or, [for your sake], should [an earthquake] move the boulders from their place?

⁵Indeed, the lamp of the wicked is extinguished; the flame of his fire ceases to burn. ⁶The light in his tent becomes dark; the lamp beside him is extinguished. ⁷The vigor of his stride wanes, and he stumbles over his schemes. ⁸His feet get caught in a net—he steps into a web. ⁹A trap seizes him by his heel; a snare grabs hold of him. ¹⁰A noose for him lies hidden on the ground; a trap lies in his path.

¹¹Terrors startle him on every side and, [like a dog], chase at his heels. ¹²His strength is exhausted, and calamity is ready for him when he falls. ¹³His skin is eaten by disease; the plague sent by death consumes his limbs. ¹⁴He is torn from the security of his tent and marched away to the king of terrors. ¹⁵Nothing that belongs to him remains in his tent; brimstone is scattered over his estate. ¹⁶His roots below dry up, and his branch above withers. ¹⁷[Even] the memory of him perishes from the earth; he leaves behind no name in the land. ¹⁸He is driven from light into darkness, and he is chased out of the world. ¹⁹He has no offspring or descendants among his people, and there is no survivor where once he lived. ²⁰Westerners are appalled at his fate, and Easterners are seized with horror. ²¹Surely, this [will be] the [final] dwelling place for an evil man, the place for him who does not know God.

19 Job replied, ²How long will you torment me and crush me with words? ³Ten times now you have reproached me; you have not been ashamed to treat me harshly. ⁴If it is true that I have gone astray, my error is my concern alone. ⁵If you would indeed exalt yourselves above me and use my disgrace against me, ⁶understand that God has subverted me and drawn his net around me. ⁷Although I cry out, “I have been wronged!” I get no response; even though I shout for help, there is no justice.

⁸He has blocked up my way so that I cannot pass through; he has shrouded my path with darkness. ⁹He has stripped me of my honor and removed the crown from my head. ¹⁰He tears me down on every side until I perish; he uproots my hope like a tree. ¹¹His anger burns against me; he regards me as one of his enemies. ¹²His troops advance in columns; they construct a siege ramp against me, and they encamp around my tent. ¹³He has alienated my brothers against me, and my friends are totally estranged from me. ¹⁴My relatives have abandoned me; my companions have forgotten me. ¹⁵My household and my maids regard me as a stranger; they look at me as though I were an alien. ¹⁶I summon my servant, but he does not answer; even if I beg him with my own mouth. ¹⁷My breath is repulsive to my wife; I am loathsome to my own children. ¹⁸Even young children despise me; when I appear, they ridicule me. ¹⁹All my associates detest me; those I love have turned against me. ²⁰My bones cling to my skin; I have escaped with only the skin of my teeth. ²¹Have pity on me, my friends, have pity, for the hand of God has struck me. ²²Why do you pursue me like God does? Will you never get enough of my flesh?

²³O that my words were recorded, that they were inscribed on a monument—²⁴with an iron[pen and lead, engraved in rock forever! ²⁵But I know that my Redeemer is

alive, and at last he will stand upon the earth. ²⁶After my skin has been so [utterly] mutilated, still, in my flesh, I will see God. ²⁷I myself will see him; my own eyes will see him. [Indeed], I will see him personally, and not someone else. How my heart yearns within me! ²⁸If you say, “How will we prosecute him? Surely, the root of the trouble is in him!” ²⁹you yourselves should fear the sword; for [what you are doing] are iniquities worthy of punishment by the sword! Be aware that there is [a day of] judgment. (Job 18:1-19:29)

Introduction

In the spring of 1947 Jackie Robinson became the first black man to play major league baseball. It had been an injustice that black men were barred from the major leagues because of the color of their skin.

And this black man would encounter a great deal of unjust and cruel treatment because he was attempting to play major league baseball. Some of his own teammates on the Brooklyn Dodgers refused to accept him. Many of the opposing players would revile him with the most awful language. On occasion, opposing players would intentionally seek to injure him.

Yes, this black man—Jackie Robinson—encountered a great deal of unjust treatment. But he persevered. Some fifty years later he was vindicated and honored by being named the greatest athlete of the twentieth century.

There may be times when the Christian finds himself suffering unjust treatment and false accusation. When such times occur, may we be sustained and encouraged by remembering two things found here in this present passage of Job.

I. Realize that You Are Experiencing the Fellowship of Christ’s Sufferings

Bildad rebukes Job for voicing his complaint: *“You who tear yourself to pieces with your anger—should the earth be devastated for your sake? Or, [for your sake], should [an earthquake] move the boulders from their place?”* (18:4.) Bildad is maintaining that it is arrogant and impious for Job to protest against God and question God’s dealings with him—by so doing, Job is acting like an ungodly, wicked man. He accuses Job of wanting the earth to be devastated by a natural catastrophe for his sake, or desiring that *“[an earthquake] move the boulders from their place.”* Note: The prophet Isaiah would pray that the LORD would appear with cataclysmic upheavals of nature for His name’s sake:

Oh, [Jehovah, I pray] that you would tear open the heavens, that you would come down, that the mountains might quake at your presence—²like fire kindles the brushwood, like fire causes water to boil—[come down] to make your name known to your enemies and cause the nations to quake at your presence! (Isa. 64:1-2.)

Here Bildad charges Job with wanting God to do so for Job's sake! Who does Job think that he is? Furthermore, Bildad, by addressing Job as *"you who tear yourself to pieces with your anger,"* judges that much of Job's agony is self-inflicted; it is the result of his chafing against God's discipline.

Bildad now proceeds to describe the terrible fate of the wicked (18:5-21,) as a warning to Job concerning what lies in store for him if he maintains an arrogant, wicked attitude. He asserts, *"the lamp of the wicked is extinguished"* (18:5-6.) These verses stress that all light, which is associated with life and blessing, shall be extinguished; the wicked man will be consigned to the outer darkness of condemnation. Bildad goes on to compare the wicked to a wild animal that falls victim to a trap (18:7-10.) In the case of the wicked man, it is a trap of his own making: *"he stumbles over his schemes"* (18:7b.) Because his way is unholy, it becomes a trap that ensnares him and holds him captive for the day of judgment, a similar sentiment is expressed by the Psalmist: *"He who is pregnant with evil and conceives trouble gives birth to disillusionment. ¹⁵He who digs a hole and scoops it out falls into the pit he has made. ¹⁶The trouble he causes recoils on him; his violence comes down on his own head"* (Psl. 7:14-16.) Furthermore, terrors (springing from a guilty conscience and the awareness of the coming judgment) shall haunt the wicked man all the days of his life with no escape: these terrors are on every side (18:11.) The wicked man is in jeopardy of being overcome by calamity (i.e.; the judgment of God both in its temporal form as well as its ultimate form): *"calamity is ready for him"* (18:12.)

Finally, he shall succumb to death. Death is portrayed as a wild beast, which, having stalked its prey, now pounces upon it and devours it (18:13.) The wicked shall be uprooted from this world, even though he may have thought himself to be as secure and unmovable as a tree (18:14.) Upon his departure into death, nothing that belongs to him remains in his tent (18:15a.) He will not even have the satisfaction of leaving behind an inheritance for his children, and thus a perpetuating of his name and his estate. On the contrary, all his wealth, and his very dwelling, will become the possession of strangers.

Contempt and dishonor: *"brimstone is scattered over his estate"* (18:15b;) ... the blotting out of the memory of his name: *"[even] the memory of him perishes from the earth"* (18:17a;) ... he cutting off of his children: *"he has no offspring or descendants among his people"* (18:19a,) leaving no one to carry on his name and estate—this shall be the fate of the wicked man. Those who behold his final fate will be astonished with shock and holy fear—just as men trembled in fear before his unholy tyranny while he was alive in the days of his ungodly reign (18:20.)

Bildad solemnly testifies to Job that surely this is the inevitable fate of the wicked man (18:21.) This is the destiny of the one *"who does not know God"*—i.e.; the man who refuses to acknowledge God's sovereign lordship over his life and his responsibility/accountability to God his Maker. Not to know God means to have no fellowship with God, either because a person has willfully broken his relationship

with God or because he has refused to enter into covenant with God (Hartley, pp. 280-281.)

Job describes Bildad's speech (and warning) as vexing to his soul (19:1-2a.) It is a message that brings grief to Job's soul—it strikes to the very core of his being (thereby showing that he is not a wicked man whose heart is callous and hardened.) It has such an affect on Job, even though Bildad's speech is merely words: "*How long will you torment me and crush me with words?*" (19:2b.) Bildad's message does not come against Job with the devastating power of conviction because it does not apply to him: Job is not a wicked man.

Job maintains his innocence; he denies that he is guilty of great iniquity or willful wrongdoing, admitting only to being guilty of "*error*" (תְּשׁוּבָה) (19:4.) Job employs the Hebrew term that is used to describe inadvertent sin that is part of being human; the kind of wrongful act that everyone commits by reason of being human (Hartley, p. 283.)

Job resents the fact that his friends insist on falsely accusing him: they use his disgrace against him (19:5b.) They judge him to be guilty because of what has befallen him (his disgrace,) not by pointing out any grievous, willful transgression he has committed. By their judgmental conduct they exalt themselves against him (19:5a,) maintaining a "holier than thou" attitude towards him. Job insists that it is not a matter that he has been ensnared in his own trap, as Bildad implies (18:7-10.) On the contrary, Job protests, "*God ... has drawn his net around me*" (19:6.) Job is not suffering the just and inevitable consequence of his own sinful conduct; rather, for some reason unbeknown to Job, God has seen fit to bring these calamities upon him: it is God who has "*subverted*" (or, "*overthrown*;" עָוַת) Job.

Job protests, "*Although I cry out, 'I have been wronged!'* [i.e.; that he is undeserving of such calamity as has befallen him], *I get no response!*" (19:7.) Job cries out for deliverance; but, he laments, "*there is no justice*" (19:7b.) Justice would demand that he be released from such suffering, but no release has yet come. On the contrary, rather than coming to His faithful servant's rescue, God has set Himself against Job with what appears to be unreserved severity (19:8-20.) God has set an unscalable wall before Job and has enshrouded his path with darkness; Job feels trapped in darkness with no possibility of escaping or progressing (19:8.) God has reduced Job to a state of humiliation, stripping him of his glory and removing the crown from his head (19:9.) When God stripped him of his honor, which had adorned him like a garment, and removed the crown from his head, he deposed Job from his high position as elder statesman. No longer able to take his seat in the counsel, he now sits on the ash heap in shame (Hartley, pp. 285-286.) God has taken away Job's hope, just as a tree is uprooted from the ground (19:10.) Indeed, Job asserts that God's anger burns against him and He regards Job as one of His enemies (19:11.) God, like a mighty general, dispatches His troops against Job, and they surround his tent (19:12.) God has deprived Job of his friends, and even his

own family members—including his wife—are estranged from him: *“those I love have turned against me”* (19:13-19.) In addition to all this, Job has been afflicted with severe physical suffering: *“my bones cling to my skin”* (19:20.)

In this state of physical and spiritual anguish, Job cries out to his friends to have pity on him (19:21-22.) He earnestly appeals to them for pity, appealing to them as his friends—those to whom he should be able to look for sympathy (19:21.) He cannot understand why they insist on pursuing (or, persecuting/prosecuting) him like God does (19:22.) His companions are fellow men like himself, they should understand his physical and spiritual frailty and thus be sympathetic towards him. But, on the contrary, they are acting toward him like ravenous beasts: they will never get enough of his flesh (19:22b;) they have an insatiable appetite to devour their friend.

What Job fails to comprehend—or can only grasp very faintly—is the fact that he is sharing in the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings. Job is the victim of false accusation and slander (in 19:1-2 Job refers to Bildad’s speech that falsely identifies him with the wicked.) Our Lord Jesus Christ, likewise, would be the victim of false accusation and slander (cp. Matthew 26:59) and would be identified with the wicked (cp. Isaiah 53:9, 12)

The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death. (Matt. 26:59)

[Although] he was assigned his burial with wicked men, he was with a rich man in his death, because he had done no violence, nor was there any deceit in his mouth. ...¹²Therefore, I will give him a portion with the great, and he will divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors—he bore the sins of many and interceded for the transgressors. (Isa. 53:9,12)

Job is reduced to a state of humiliation (19:9.) Our Lord Jesus Christ, likewise, allowed Himself to be subjected to a state of utmost humiliation: *“Let us focus our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God”* (Heb.12:2.)

Job experienced the horror of being alienated from God (19:11-12.) Our Lord Jesus Christ, likewise, experienced the horror of being alienated from God His Father (cp. Isaiah 53:4; Mark 15:33-34)

Surely he has borne our afflictions and carried our sorrows; but we regarded him as one who was stricken by God, smitten by him and afflicted [as an evildoer]. (Isa. 53:4)

When the sixth hour [of the day] arrived, darkness [fell] over the whole land until the ninth hour. ³⁴At the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? (which, being interpreted, [means], My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?) (Mk. 15:33-34)

Job suffered the pain and grief of being separated from his intimate friends (19:13-19.) Our Lord Jesus Christ, likewise, suffered the pain and grief of being separated from His intimate friends: *“Not even his brothers believed in him”* (Jn. 7:5), and in the garden of Gethsemane, at the time of His arrest, all his disciples deserted him and fled. (Matt. 26:56)

At those times when you as a Christian suffer unjust treatment or false accusation, realize that you are experiencing the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings (cp. Philippians 3:10; Philippians 1:29; 1 Peter 4:12-13,19)

I regard [all such things] [i.e.; all that Paul once cherished as being of spiritual and religious value] as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ, ⁹and be found in him—not having my own righteousness, which [is derived] from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness that is from God [received] by faith—¹⁰so that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed to his death, ¹¹that I may in some way attain the resurrection from the dead. (Phil.3:8-11)

... it has been graciously granted to you, for Christ’s sake, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him. (Phil. 1:29)

Beloved, do not be surprised by the fiery trials among you (that have come for the purpose of testing you), as though a strange thing has happened to you. ¹³On the contrary, since you are participating in the sufferings of Christ, rejoice; so that at the revelation of his glory you may indeed rejoice with exultation ... ¹⁹Therefore, let those who are suffering in accordance with the will of God commit their souls in doing what is right to a faithful Creator. (1 Pet. 4:12-13,19)

II. Be Assured that You Shall at Last Be Vindicated

Job expresses his desire that his words (i.e.; his profession of innocence and righteousness) be recorded for posterity, that they be *“engraved in a rock forever”* (19:23-24.) Job is aware that if he does nothing, his claims will be forgotten after his death and his fate will serve as a prime example of a hypocrite’s tragic end. Therefore, he desires that his testimony might be preserved so that some day when it is proven true, he will be vindicated on earth. Then his honor will be restored (Hartley, p. 291.)

Job now goes on to express a bold and confident assurance that God will at last vindicate him: God will testify to Job’s innocence and restore him to fellowship (19:25-27.) Job testifies, *“I know that my Redeemer is alive, and at last he will*

stand upon the earth" (19:25.) Here is Job's firm and sure conviction, ("*I know*") that the divine "*Redeemer*" (Vindicator, Defender, **לְשׂוֹמֵר**) will at last appear in Job's defense and for his vindication. "*I know that my Redeemer is alive*" may be translated, "*I know that my Redeemer is living.*" Although at present He has not revealed Himself and has not come forth to Job's immediate defense; nevertheless, Job is certain that the divine Redeemer knows the facts of his situation and will finally act on his behalf.

What does Job mean by the phrase, "*at last?*" Is he referring to the day of the resurrection (the Last Great Day)? Or is he referring to a future day in this present life before his death? It seems best to take the phrase, "*at last,*" as a reference to a future day before Job's death; which, indeed, proved to be the case, note Job 42:7-9,

After Jehovah had spoken these words to Job, he said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "My anger burns against you and your two friends, because you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has. ⁸So now take seven bulls and seven rams and go to my servant Job and offer up a whole burnt offering for yourselves. My servant Job will pray for you—because I accept him—so that I will not deal with you according to your folly. You have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has." ⁹So Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite did what Jehovah told them to do; and Jehovah accepted Job's prayer. (Job 42:7-9)

Job goes on to declare, "*After my skin has been so [utterly] mutilated, still, in my flesh, I will see God*" (19:26.) The point is that at the last moment, at the very extremity of Job's suffering, when his skin "*has been so [utterly] mutilated*" that he is at the point of death, at that last moment the LORD will appear as his great Redeemer. In the light of further revelation, especially New Testament revelation, we realize that Job's hope and conviction find their ultimate fulfillment in the final resurrection on the Last Great Day, note John 5:28-29, where the Lord Jesus testifies, "*the hour is coming when all who are in the tombs shall hear his voice ²⁹and shall come out: they who have done good shall be resurrected to life; but they who have done evil shall be resurrected to condemnation.*" The theophany (the appearance of God in His majesty and glory) recorded in Job 38-42 is a type (i.e.; a model and precursor) of the Last Great Day.

The basis of Job's faith in a future vindication stems from his deep and unshakable confidence in the justice of God. Although, for some reason presently unbeknown to Job, God has seen fit to suspend His enactment of justice on Job's behalf, nevertheless, because of God's divine integrity, that day of justice and vindication will come at last. Job's confidence in God's justice, and hence the assurance that he will be vindicated, overcomes his doubts that were expressed

in vs. 23-24, (those verses expressed the hope of vindication in some distant future day after Job had succumbed to death.)

Job expresses a deep longing for that day of vindication when God as his divine Redeemer will act on his behalf; anticipating that day, Job exclaims, "*How my heart yearns within me!*" (19:27b.) Such is also the longing of the New Testament Christian's heart: "*He who bears witness about these things says, 'Yes, indeed, I am coming soon!' Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!*" (Rev. 22:20.) Whereas previously Job has been close to being consumed with despair, he is now consumed with hope and the eager expectation of the day of vindication: the day when God will act on his behalf.

Job closes his present speech with a warning to his friends who have assumed the role of his accusers (19:28-29.) Job warns them that there is coming a day of judgment (19:29b;) a day when he will be exonerated; and, conversely, those who have falsely accused him will be judged (note, again, Job 42:7-9.)

At those times when you as a Christian suffer unjust treatment or false accusation, be encouraged by the assurance that you shall at last be vindicated:

... God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering. ⁶God is just: He will pay back affliction to those who afflict you ⁷and give relief to you who are afflicted, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. ⁸He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power ¹⁰on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. (2 Thess. 1:5-10a)

Therefore, let those who are suffering in accordance with the will of God commit their souls in doing what is right to a faithful Creator. (1 Pet. 4:19)

Conclusion

There are times when the Christian suffers the fate of the unrighteous, even though he is innocent. When such times occur in our lives, let us be aware of these two things: 1) let us realize that we are experiencing the fellowship of Christ's sufferings; and 2) let us be assured that we shall at last be vindicated together with Christ our Savior.