

## March 19

**Scriptures:** Read Job 3 & 4

**Key Verse:** “Can a mortal be more righteous than Cod? Can a man be more pure than his Maker?” (Job 4:17)

### Overview

When Job’s three dearest friends heard of his misfortune and affliction, they came with sincere hearts to console and comfort him (2:11). They were not only very important and wealthy, but they were the intelligentsia of their day, the noted wise men, like Job had once been. By the time they arrived, many weeks may have passed since Job’s initial attacks of misfortune. His friends, however, were unprepared to see their once happy, healthy, and prosperous friend Job in such a terrible state. He who was once the most prestigious and well respected man in the community had become the most wretched outcast. His friends openly expressed their shock and grief, but without speaking a word they approached Job horrified and sat with him on the ground.

It seems strange that these good old friends did not speak together until one week had past. It may well have been an ancient eastern custom that when mourners came to console one who had lost a loved one (Job had lost all ten of his children), they remained in silence until the bereaved person spoke first. Finally, when Job broke the silence, his words expressed all the thoughts he had been keeping inside of him. Rather than addressing the men, he appears to be speaking with himself. The many days of torturous pain and suffering had left him feeling tired and miserable about his very existence. His once hopeful attitude had turned into despair and bitterness. He gradually sank deeper and deeper into depression. He not only wished he were dead, but he cursed the days of both his conception and birth. (c.f. Jer. 20:14-18)

Job felt it would have been better had the world been in a state of chaos, like that which the creature Leviathan could bring about, than for the natural order of the world to remain, thus allowing His mother to conceive and give birth to him (3:7-10). Leviathan appears to have been a large dragon-like creature, and some have suggested it could have been a type of dinosaur (chapter 41). Whatever it was, Leviathan seems to symbolize a great strength in opposition to the cosmic order.

Job was engulfed in self-pity and occupied with pondering the question, “Why?” Had his God forsaken him? Even though he doubted that God still cared for him, he never doubted that God was sovereignly in control. Through it all, Job never cursed God as his wife had suggested and Satan had predicted (2:5). It was in Job’s hopeless state of deep despair that God would soon reach out to restore him. No, God would never abandon his faithful servant. We can learn that if there was still hope for Job, in his inconceivably horrible situation, we today should never have reason to loose hope.

The first of Job’s three friends to speak was Eliphaz (likely the eldest). His approach was philosophical, and his words did contain some truth, expressing the orthodox religious views of his day. He began by relating his sympathy for Job, but his real thoughts soon came through as he implied that Job’s suffering must have come as a result of some great hidden sin in his life, for

“who ever perished being innocent?”, and “those who plow iniquity... reap the same.” These are true statements, but they did not apply to Job’s situation. They spoke to Job as though his death was imminent and the logical conclusion, considering his disease; but the Lord had other plans for Job’s life.

Job himself came from the same background as Eliphaz and must have thought the same way. No wonder his suffering was such a mystery to him; he could not explain it. He did not have the advantage of the reader in understanding what was going on in the spiritual realm. This same view of Eliphaz continued down into New Testament times. Our Lord Jesus was asked, “...’who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’ Jesus answered, ‘Neither... but that the works of God should be revealed in him’” (John 9:2, 3). Faithful believers in the Lord can have confidence that their times of suffering will ultimately end with the Lord receiving glory. No matter what the circumstances of our life might be, we are to live to bring glory to God.

Eliphaz told Job that he had received a divine revelation which affirmed the depraved nature of mankind. With rhetorical questions, he asked Job if a man could be more righteous than God. He may have been insinuating that Job’s sin was self-righteousness and bringing judgment upon God. The reader, however, is aware that this was not the case with Job. Even if Job were to die in his terrible condition, he still would remain wise (4:21), for he never lost his fear of the Lord (respect and love).

## **Prayer**

O Lord, we pray the words of the old hymn, “Change and decay in all around I see. O Thou who changest not, abide with me.”