

JOB

Chapter 29

Job's Summary Defense

And Job again took up his discourse, and said: 2 “Oh, that I were as in the months of old, as in the days when God watched over me, 3 when his lamp shone upon my head, and by his light I walked through darkness, 4 as I was in my prime, when the friendship of God was upon my tent, 5 when the Almighty was yet with me, when my children were all around me, 6 when my steps were washed with butter, and the rock poured out for me streams of oil! 7 When I went out to the gate of the city, when I prepared my seat in the square, 8 the young men saw me and withdrew, and the aged rose and stood; 9 the princes refrained from talking and laid their hand on their mouth; 10 the voice of the nobles was hushed, and their tongue stuck to the roof of their mouth. 11 When the ear heard, it called me blessed, and when the eye saw, it approved, 12 because I delivered the poor who cried for help, and the fatherless who had none to help him. 13 The blessing of him who was about to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. 14 I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; my justice was like a robe and a turban. 15 I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. 16 I was a father to the needy, and I searched out the cause of him whom I did not know. 17 I broke the fangs of the unrighteous and made him drop his prey from his teeth. 18 Then I thought, ‘I shall die in my nest, and I shall multiply my days as the sand, 19 my roots spread out to the waters, with the dew all night on my branches, 20 my glory fresh with me, and my bow ever new in my hand.’ 21 “Men listened to me and waited and kept silence for my counsel. 22 After I spoke they did not speak again, and my word dropped upon them. 23 They waited for me as for the rain, and they opened their mouths as for the spring rain. 24 I smiled on them when they had no confidence, and the light of my face they did not cast down. 25 I chose their way and sat as chief, and I lived like a king among his troops, like one who comforts mourners.

29:1–31:40 Like a lawyer submitting his final brief, Job presents a three-part summation: Part one (ch. 29) is a nostalgic review of his former happiness, wealth and honor; part two (ch. 30) is a lament over the loss of everything, especially his honor; part three (ch. 31) is a final protestation of his innocence. (CSB)

29:1–25 A classic example of Semitic rhetoric, using the following symmetrical pattern: blessing (vv. 2–6), honor (vv. 7–10), benevolence (vv. 11–17), blessing (vv. 18–20), honor (vv. 21–25). (CSB)

29:2–6 Words charged with emotion. In earlier days, God had been Job’s friend and companion. (CSB)

29:3 *by his light I walked.* Symbol for God’s blessing and guidance. (TLSB)

This is a symbol of God’s guidance and blessing. (PBC)

29:4 *when the friendship of God was upon my tent.* Lit. “when God’s council was by my tent,” or “when God was an intimate in my tent.” The clause evokes a situation similar to that in Ge 18, where God and two members of his heavenly council eat and drink at Abraham’s tent—and there

God discloses to his friend the imminent birth of the promised son and God's intentions concerning Sodom and Gomorrah. (CSB)

Job enjoyed God's intimate counsel. God instructed him so that he prospered and enjoyed his family. (TLSB)

29:6 *butter... oil.* Symbols of richness and luxury (see 20:17; Eze 16:19). (CSB)

Figurative for wealth and prosperity, because the person had sufficient milk to make butter. *streams of oil!* Olive oil pouring from a stone press. Job's prosperity is described as streaming from him for the benefit of the needy (vv 12–13; 15–16). See p 236. In 1Ki 17:12, the lack of oil and flour spelled death for the widow of Zarephath and her son. (TLSB)

Job had so much milk or cream that he could use them to bathe his feet if he wished. (PBC)

29:7 *gate of the city.* Where the most important business was conducted and the most significant legal cases were tried. (CSB)

The city gates were the places in which public business was conducted, contracts executed, legal judgments handed down, and government administered (Gn 23; Dt 22:15). Job had high standing in his community and was known as the preeminent wise man of his day (1:3). (TLSB)

prepared my seat. As a city elder, a member of the ruling council. (CSB)

29:8 *withdrew.* Young men of the community showed deep respect by retreating into the background. (TLSB)

rose and stood. Elders rose and, advancing toward Job, stood until he had seated himself. (TLSB)

29:10 *tongue stuck.* Everyone was silent, waiting for Job to speak. These verses (vv 7–11) show the unqualified respect accorded Job. (TLSB)

29:12–13 *I delivered ... the fatherless ... caused the widow's heart to sing.* Implicitly responding to Eliphaz's accusation in 22:9, Job expresses his concern for the helpless and unfortunate (see 24:9; 31:16–18, 21). (CSB)

29:12 *delivered the poor.* Job used his resources to rescue the needy in their distress. Here, charity to the needy was not a function of government but a sign of Job's compassion. ((TLSB)

29:14 *I put on righteousness ... justice was my robe.* For similar imagery see Isa 59:17; 61:10; Eph 6:14, 17. (CSB)

Clothing was often symbolic of station (cf v 25). However, here clothing represented gifts of God. Job was covered with the divine gifts. (TLSB)

In similar language the Bible elsewhere describes virtues as garments that beautify the wearer. In his daily life Job's righteousness and justice were as plain to see as the clothes he wore. (PBC)

29:15 Luth: "Any person can be eye, soul, and belly to another, when he guides him, gives life to him, and preserves him in life and carefully bears him in the womb" (AE 10:143). Chrys: "He

who does not turn aside from the calamities of others, will not suffer even in his own misfortunes, because he has learned to sympathize. He who will not bear the griefs of sympathy, will learn all sorrow in his own person. In the case of a bodily disease, when the foot is mortified, if the hand does not sympathize by cleansing the wound—washing away the discharge, and applying a plaster—it will suffer the like disease of its own. So she who will not minister to another when she is not herself afflicted, will have to bear sufferings of her own. For the evil spreading from the other part will reach to this [part] also, and the question will not be of ministering to the other, but of its own cure and relief. So it is here also. He that will not relieve others, will be a sufferer himself” (NPNF 1 13:504). (TLSB)

29:18 *I thought*. Job muses on what might have been the course of his life. (CSB)

I shall die in my nest. Job expected that he would live out his days under God’s care in his snug home, like a bird in its nest with its family. This expectation was overturned by the onslaught of the adversary. (TLSB)

29:19 *roots spread out to the waters* – Perhaps we don’t appreciate the significance of those words, for most regions of the US have sufficient rainfall. In the area where Job live the climate was dry, almost desert-like. Fresh green shrubs were not common except in oases, and the people were dependent on dew to give the plants sufficient moisture. (PBC)

Job describes his expectation of prosperity and long life as a tree planted by a stream, which always has sufficient water. (TLSB)

29:20 *bow ever new*. Wood of his bow would not dry out; therefore, the bowstring would not lose its tautness. Symbol of manly strength (Ps 18:34). (TLSB)

This expression is used in the Bible to indicate strength and agility. (PBC)

29:21–25 His counsel was valued (vv. 21–23), his approval sought (v. 24) and his civic leadership accepted with gratitude (v. 25). (CSB)

29:23 People awaited Job’s words like children eagerly awaited the first sweet drops of a spring rain to fall in their mouths (cf Zec 10:1). (TLSB)

29:25 Job describes his condescension to those he helped. He helped the people in need by choosing the best way for them to go. He lived with them so he could share even in their suffering of bereavement and comfort them in their losses. (TLSB)