

JOB

Chapter 16

Job Replies: Miserable Comforters Are You

Then Job answered and said: 2 “I have heard many such things; miserable comforters are you all. 3 Shall windy words have an end? Or what provokes you that you answer? 4 I also could speak as you do, if you were in my place; I could join words together against you and shake my head at you. 5 I could strengthen you with my mouth, and the solace of my lips would assuage your pain. 6 “If I speak, my pain is not assuaged, and if I forbear, how much of it leaves me? 7 Surely now God has worn me out; he has made desolate all my company. 8 And he has shriveled me up, which is a witness against me, and my leanness has risen up against me; it testifies to my face. 9 He has torn me in his wrath and hated me; he has gnashed his teeth at me; my adversary sharpens his eyes against me. 10 Men have gaped at me with their mouth; they have struck me insolently on the cheek; they mass themselves together against me. 11 God gives me up to the ungodly and casts me into the hands of the wicked. 12 I was at ease, and he broke me apart; he seized me by the neck and dashed me to pieces; he set me up as his target; 13 his archers surround me. He slashes open my kidneys and does not spare; he pours out my gall on the ground. 14 He breaks me with breach upon breach; he runs upon me like a warrior. 15 I have sewed sackcloth upon my skin and have laid my strength in the dust. 16 My face is red with weeping, and on my eyelids is deep darkness, 17 although there is no violence in my hands, and my prayer is pure. 18 “O earth, cover not my blood, and let my cry find no resting place. 19 Even now, behold, my witness is in heaven, and he who testifies for me is on high. 20 My friends scorn me; my eye pours out tears to God, 21 that he would argue the case of a man with God, as a son of man does with his neighbor. 22 For when a few years have come I shall go the way from which I shall not return.

16:2–5 Helpful advice is usually brief and encouraging, not lengthy and judgmental. (CSB)

16:2 *miserable comforters*. Job would eventually be comforted, but not by his three friends (see 42:11). (CSB)

Oxymoron; the more comfort they offer, the more pain they inflict. (TLSB)

16:3 *windy*. One basic difference between the theology of Job and that of his friends was that Job had a knowledge and appreciation of the gospel whereas theirs was strictly a law-based theology. (PBC)

16:4 *shake ... head*. A gesture of insult and scorn (see Ps 22:7; Jer 48:27; Mt 27:39). (CSB)

16:5 Job knows the difference between mere words and real deeds of love. He believes he could comfort them if they were suffering. (TLSB)

16:7 *my company*. His entire intimate social world (cf 19:13–20). Job is alone in his misery. (TLSB)

16:9 The figure here is graphic and disturbing: God, like a ferocious lion (see 10:16), attacks and tears at Job's flesh. (CSB)

hated me. The Hebrew for this word is translated "enemy" in 19:11. (CSB)

Hbr *satam*; likely refers to Satan. Job describes what he perceives as God's strange or alien character as the destroying beast raging against mortals. His description is reminiscent of Satan (cf 1Pt 5:8). (TLSB)

16:10–14 Job sees himself as God's target and views his situation as the reverse of Eliphaz's description in 15:25–26. (CSB)

16:10 *struck me insolently on the cheek* – This verse uses language strikingly similar to that of Psalm 22, which is a vivid prophetic picture of the suffering and crucifixion of our Savior Jesus Christ. In that psalm we read: "All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads" and "Dogs have surrounded me, a band of evil men have encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet." (PBC)

16:15–17 Job summarizes his misery: Though innocent, he continues to suffer. (CSB)

16:13 *my gall.* Job feels as if God has torn open his vital organs, mortally wounding him. The gallbladder symbolizes something bitter and pictures Job's emotions and affections as spilling bitterness. (TLSB)

16:14 *breach.* God's forces break down Job's defenses and penetrate his interior world. (TLSB)

16:15 *sackcloth ... dust.* Signs of mourning. (CSB)

Hbr *saq*; rough cloth woven from goat or camel hair. He wears the tokens of grief. All his power and dignity had been covered with the deepest humiliation. (TLSB)

16:17 Job uses language similar to the liturgical confession of worshipers entering the temple precinct (cf Ps 24:4). He sees no transgression that would account for God's hostility. (TLSB)

16:18–21 Verse 18 (see v. 22; 17:1) indicates that Job does not think he will live long enough to be vindicated before his peers. His only hope is that in heaven he has a friend (v. 20), a holy one (see 5:1), who will be his "witness," his "advocate," his "intercessor," one who will plead with God on his behalf. (CSB)

16:18–19 As Moses called heaven and earth as witnesses (Dt 4:26; 32:1), so Job calls on earth and heaven to testify about God's flagrant violation of justice. (TLSB)

16:18 *blood ... cry.* Job felt that his blood, like Abel's, was innocent and would therefore cry out from the ground after his death. (CSB)

Innocent Abel's blood cried to God for justice "from the ground" (Gn 4:10). Job does not want the earth to let his blood be silenced until God acts on his plea for a favorable verdict. (TLSB)

16:19–21 *He who testifies for me is on high.* This heavenly "witness" is God Himself. Job appeals to God (v 20) against God (v 21). He appeals to the God of justice and forgiveness, as he

knows the true God must really be, and against the strange and raging God he is experiencing. The “witness” here, like the “arbiter” of 9:33, is more likely an intercessor or intermediary who will plead with God like a “man does with his neighbor” (v 21). This longing for an advocate before God, who Himself is God, became a reality in Christ (1Jn 2:1–2). (TLSB)

16:20 *friends*. The Hebrew for this word is translated “mediator” in 33:23 and “spokesman” in Is 43:27. – Of Jesus Christ Paul confessed, “There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ” (1 Timothy 2:5). Similarly John stated, “If anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense – Jesus Christ, the Righteous One” (1 John 2:1). (CSB)

16:21 *a son of man*. Representative of fallen humanity. (TLSB)

16:22 *a few years have come*. Job does not expect his death immediately. (CSB)

way...not return. To the netherworld. (CSB)

The way of no return (cf 10:21), to the land of the dead. (TLSB)

Ch 16 Job’s misery only increased through the aggravating words of his friends. Everyone has abandoned him. Even God treated Job as His enemy. But Job confesses that God will nevertheless be his witness and intermediary at the coming judgment. I.e., Job properly keeps justification as something outside of himself; his witness/intermediary will deliver him. Regardless of the circumstances and the depth of darkness you may face, call on Jesus Christ, the only mediator between God and all people (1Tm 2:5). No matter how bad things may be, Christ is now interceding for you at the right hand of God (Rm 8:34). • We rejoice, O Father, that Your Son intercedes for us. Hear our plea. Amen. (TLSB)