

JOB

Chapter 17

Job Continues: Where Then Is My Hope?

“My spirit is broken; my days are extinct; the graveyard is ready for me. 2 Surely there are mockers about me, and my eye dwells on their provocation. 3 “Lay down a pledge for me with you; who is there who will put up security for me? 4 Since you have closed their hearts to understanding, therefore you will not let them triumph. 5 He who informs against his friends to get a share of their property—he eyes of his children will fail. 6 “He has made me a byword of the peoples, and I am one before whom men spit. 7 My eye has grown dim from vexation, and all my members are like a shadow. 8 The upright are appalled at this, and the innocent stirs himself up against the godless. 9 Yet the righteous holds to his way, and he who has clean hands grows stronger and stronger. 10 But you, come on again, all of you, and I shall not find a wise man among you. 11 My days are past; my plans are broken off, the desires of my heart. 12 They make night into day: ‘The light,’ they say, ‘is near to the darkness.’ 13 If I hope for Sheol as my house, if I make my bed in darkness, 14 if I say to the pit, ‘You are my father,’ and to the worm, ‘My mother,’ or ‘My sister,’ 15 where then is my hope? Who will see my hope? 16 Will it go down to the bars of Sheol? Shall we descend together into the dust?”

17:1 *my spirit is broken* – Literally snuffed out, as a fire might be extinguished. (PBC)

the graveyard is ready for me. He had only the grave to look forward to. (PBC)

17:2 *mockers.* Not necessarily his friends. A crowd may have gathered. While they jeer him, his eyes focus on the hostility reflected in their faces. (TLSB)

my eye dwells on their provocation – He referred to his friends as “mockers” who could only bear “hostility” against him. The charges they had brought against him were very serious. If the charges were false, his friends could be punished severely for falsely accusing him, according to the law of God as recorded by Moses in Deuteronomy 19:16-19. (PBC)

17:3 *lay down a pledge for me with yourself.* Job is asking God for a guarantee that he is right, that he is not guilty of sins that deserve punishment (as his counselors have said). (CSB)

security. Lit, “striking hands”; gesture confirms the agreement. Since Job has no witness for his security (someone who will lay down a pledge for him in the heavenly court), he prays that God Himself will be merciful and be that witness. The Christian knows that this hope is indeed fulfilled in God’s Son, but it is not known how clearly Job himself saw this. Job has taken a decisive step toward his certain conviction and declaration, recorded in 19:25–27. (TLSB)

Job turned to God and begged him to give him a pledge that he was innocent of the charges leveled against him. These words indicate that Job still had faith in God and that God would be the witness he spoke of in the previous chapter (16:19). (PBC)

17:4 *their hearts.* Those of his three friends. (CSB)

God closed the mockers' hearts. (TLSB)

17:5 Job quotes a proverb to counter the false accusations of his friends. (CSB)

Not a curse, but a proverbial saying. His detractors deserve the punishment of those who denounce their friends in order to enrich themselves. (TLSB)

17:6–9 The guarantee Job asked for is not provided, so he feels that God is responsible for making him an object of scorn. If the tone of vv. 8–9 is intended as sarcastic (as v. 10 would seem to indicate), the “upright” and “innocent” are the counselors. (CSB)

17:6 *byword*. An object of scorn and ridicule (see the covenant curse in Dt 28:37). (CSB)

Public disgrace. Entire community scorns him. (TLSB)

People had come to associate the name of “Job” with the most humiliating suffering. (PBC)

17:7 *my members are like a shadow*. Physicians in ancient times believed that the eye had a source of light within it, perhaps because of the way the eye reflects light outward. Job is further distressed over the deterioration of his body. His eyes are so dim that objects flit before them like shadows. (TLSB)

What a contrast to his earlier noble appearance when he was respected as the greatest man in the community. (PBC)

17:9 *righteous*. Job says he must hold to what he believes is right. Aug: “A man may be called righteous, who has gone so far towards perfection in righteousness as to be very near it; and this we do not deny to have been in the power of many even in this life, when they walk in it by faith” (NPNF 1 5:167). Truly, the one who clings to the Righteous One is righteous. (TLSB)

17:10–16 Zophar had promised that Job’s repentance would turn his darkness into light (11:17). Job now makes a parody on such advice (vv. 12–16). His only hope is the grave (see v. 1), which will not be as his home had been (vv. 13–15). (CSB)

17:10 *come on again*. The friends may have begun to leave. (CSB)

Job saw little hope of progress in the discussion with his three friends because their minds were closed. (PBC)

17:12 *light...near* – “According to the consolations of his friends, his present trouble was just like the darkest hour which just precedes the dawn, if he would admit the guilt they ascribed to him.” (Kretzmann)

17:13–16 *hope for Sheol as my house*. To find relief from his pain. (TLSB)

17:14 In the grave, one’s family consists only of decomposition and maggots. (CSB)

pit. The grave or Sheol. (TLSB)

17:16 *bars of Sheol*. See 38:17; Mt 16:18. In Mesopotamian literature, all who entered the netherworld passed through a series of seven gates. (CSB)

Wooden beams used to secure gates; may depict Sheol as a prison. (TLSB)

Ch 17 After Job's great confession of faith in his heavenly witness-mediator, he begins to consider his outward circumstances once again. He describes how the situation was becoming bleaker. As you see your own weakness, "draw near to God, and He will draw near to you" (Jas 4:8). God "put up security" for you when Christ laid down His life, giving His precious blood! • We praise You, O Christ, for covering us with Your perfect righteousness! Amen. (TLSB)