

JOB

Chapter 6

Job Replies: My Complaint Is Just

Then Job answered and said: 2 “Oh that my vexation were weighed, and all my calamity laid in the balances! 3 For then it would be heavier than the sand of the sea; therefore my words have been rash. 4 For the arrows of the Almighty are in me; my spirit drinks their poison; the terrors of God are arrayed against me. 5 Does the wild donkey bray when he has grass, or the ox low over his fodder? 6 Can that which is tasteless be eaten without salt, or is there any taste in the juice of the mallow? 7 My appetite refuses to touch them; they are as food that is loathsome to me. 8 “Oh that I might have my request, and that God would fulfill my hope, 9 that it would please God to crush me, that he would let loose his hand and cut me off! 10 This would be my comfort; I would even exult in pain unsparing, for I have not denied the words of the Holy One. 11 What is my strength, that I should wait? And what is my end, that I should be patient? 12 Is my strength the strength of stones, or is my flesh bronze? 13 Have I any help in me, when resource is driven from me? 14 “He who withholds kindness from a friend forsakes the fear of the Almighty. 15 My brothers are treacherous as a torrent-bed, as torrential streams that pass away, 16 which are dark with ice, and where the snow hides itself. 17 When they melt, they disappear; when it is hot, they vanish from their place. 18 The caravans turn aside from their course; they go up into the waste and perish. 19 The caravans of Tema look, the travelers of Sheba hope. 20 They are ashamed because they were confident; they come there and are disappointed. 21 For you have now become nothing; you see my calamity and are afraid. 22 Have I said, ‘Make me a gift’? Or, ‘From your wealth offer a bribe for me’? 23 Or, ‘Deliver me from the adversary’s hand’? Or, ‘Redeem me from the hand of the ruthless’? 24 “Teach me, and I will be silent; make me understand how I have gone astray. 25 How forceful are upright words! But what does reproof from you reprove? 26 Do you think that you can reprove words, when the speech of a despairing man is wind? 27 You would even cast lots over the fatherless, and bargain over your friend. 28 “But now, be pleased to look at me, for I will not lie to your face. 29 Please turn; let no injustice be done. Turn now; my vindication is at stake. 30 Is there any injustice on my tongue? Cannot my palate discern the cause of calamity?

6:2–3 Job appeals for a sympathetic understanding of the harsh words he spoke in ch. 3. (CSB)

The words Eliphaz had stung Job. Instead of giving him comfort, they had only added to his suffering. (PBC)

6:2 *vexation*. Eliphaz says that “vexation” kills the fool (5:2).(TLSB) Job responds as if to say, “My vexation weighs more than all the sand in the sea.” (Wet sand was proverbially heavy; Pr 27:3.) Eliphaz completely fails to grasp the dimensions of Job’s suffering. (TLSB)

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Ancient scales had two trays balanced from a center pole. Resorting to exaggeration, Job said that if his sufferings were placed on one tray and all the sand of the sea on the other, his sufferings would outweigh them. (PBC)

rash. Job does not apologize for his outbursts but challenges Eliphaz and others to understand why he cannot exercise self-restraint in such catastrophic circumstances. (TLSB)

Although we can't condone Job's strong language in accusing God, we must try to understand that the afflictions which God had permitted Satan to bring upon Job were extremely severe. (PBC)

6:4 *arrows of the Almighty.* Job shares Eliphaz's "orthodox" theology and believes that God is aiming his arrows of judgment at him—though he does not know why (see 7:20; 16:12–13; see also La 3:12; cf. Dt 32:23; Ps 7:13; 38:2). (CSB)

Spiritual and mental anguish. In 7:20, the Lord uses Job as a target. Job thinks God has become his enemy. Job is unaware of the conversation between God and Satan in chs 1–2 and cannot perceive God's love and confidence in him. (TLSB)

Job felt that God had used him as a target for shooting his poisoned arrows. (PBC)

6:5–6 Job claims the right to bray and bellow, since he has been wounded by God and offered tasteless food (words) by his friends. (CSB)

6:5 Animals are content when fed but make noise when they feel the pain of hunger. Job vents his grief and anger because of the pain of the catastrophes. (TLSB)

6:6 *mallow?* Any plant from the genus *malva*, which produces an unappealing slime. In other words, the speech of Eliphaz in chs 4–5 is bland, shallow, and insipid. (TLSB)

6:8–9 Job repeats the thoughts of ch. 3. (CSB)

6:8 *that I might have my request* – As Job had no hope that he should ever be redeemed from his present helpless state, he earnestly begs God to shorten it by taking away his life.

6:9 *crush me.* Job asks God to take his life, "crushing" him back into the dust from which he was made (Gn 3:19). Even in deep despair, Job does not consider suicide. He leaves the decision to God. (TLSB)

cut me off – This means to cut the thread so a fabric can be removed from the loom. (PBC)

6:10 *This.* In the afterlife, Job would have the joy of knowing that he had remained true to God. (CSB)

Not only would he then be freed from his many miseries, he would also have satisfaction that God had heard his prayer for release. (PBC)

not denied. Job has not yet yielded to the temptation to “curse God and die” (2:9). If God would end Job’s life at this point, then Job would at least have the comfort of knowing that he died with his integrity intact (a point even Eliphaz admitted, 4:6). (TLSB)

the words of the Holy One. Eliphaz claims a special revelation (4:16b–21) but does not clearly reveal who spoke to him. Job has also received revelation and knows its source: the Holy One. (TLSB)

6:11–13 With no human resources left, Job considers his condition hopeless. (CSB)

6:13 *any help in me.* Job finds nothing in himself that helps—no strength, no patience, no power, no confidence. He only wishes to die before he breaks completely. (CSB)

6:14–15 See Gal 6:1. Job needs spiritual help, but his friends are proving to be undependable. (CSB)

6:14 *He.* Job’s overcritical remarks apply not only to Eliphaz but also to all who came to offer their “help.” In his great pain, Job does not acknowledge their friendship or recognize their attempts to comfort him. (TLSB)

6:15–17 Job compares his friends (“brothers”) to the wadis or creek beds in the Near East that overflow in the rainy season (when the extra water is not needed) and dry up in the summer (when farmers could really use the water). They are fair-weather friends, unreliable when really needed. (TLSB)

6:15 *brothers.* By calling his friends his “brothers,” Job makes their callousness stand out more sharply. (CSB)

The word for “undependable” is literally “treacherous.” When he needed them most they didn’t come through. (PBC)

6:18–20 Sometimes commercial caravans, desperate for water, left the highway in search of a stream (v 18). Finding only dry riverbeds, they died (a vivid and harsh picture of Job’s own situation). Even experienced traders from Tema and Sheba could find themselves in this predicament. Confident of finding water, they become disappointed (“ashamed”) to find only dry creeks. Job expects his friends to stand by him (like the caravan travelers expected water), but they fail to provide any help at all (like dry riverbeds). (TLSB)

6:21 *you.* Plural; all those who advised Job. Since they have not ever been in his situation, they are unable to understand it. Their “help” has been no help at all. (TLSB)

6:22–23 Job has not asked them for anything except what will cost them nothing: their friendship and counsel. (CSB)

Redeem me. Hbr *padah*, “ransom,” “redeem.” Job first uses the language of redemption that will become central to the Book. *Padah* is used in parallel with *ga’al* (“redeem”; cf Hos 13:14; Jer 31:11), from which the word “Redeemer” comes (19:25). Job does not ask his friends for money or to expose themselves to danger. He asks them to understand his despair, but they cannot do so. (TLSB)

6:25 *upright words*. Job is referring to his own words. (CSB)

Job's words show that he was open to his friends' opinions and wanted to discuss his problem with them. The Hebrew word translated "painful" also implies frank, honest, straightforward talk. (PBC)

6:26 *wind*. Job's friends try to correct his "words" or "speech," the symptom of his pain, without addressing the cause of those words. They are responding to what Job said (mere "wind") rather than the root of the problem—his suffering. Job wants them to feel his anguish, not discuss a theory of suffering. (TLSB)

By his speech Eliphaz showed he didn't understand Job's situation. He had ignored what Job said and treated his words as "wind." (PBC)

6:27 *cast lots*. Job compares their heartlessness to the callous disregard of a person who would "cast lots" (like rolling dice) for the sale of orphans or to negotiate the price of a "friend." (TLSB)

6:28–29 Job appeals to his friends as a friend. Again, he wants their understanding, support, and sympathy. (TLSB)

6:29 Job softens his tone, pleading that his friends take back their false accusations. (CSB)

6:30 *Cannot my palate discern*. Using the picture of a tongue and palate that still sense accurately what is placed on them, Job assures his friends that he knows the difference between right and wrong. (TLSB)

Ch 6 Job harshly accuses Eliphaz and his other friends of failing to provide even the smallest amount of comfort or help. When we are down and out, we should avoid attacking those who try to help. Do not expect someone who has never experienced your kind of loss to understand. However, we should welcome their friendship and good intentions. Only God truly understands your situation. In Christ Jesus, He has experienced the full range of human suffering (Heb 4:14–16). • Father, when we are at our lowest point, turn our faces to the cross of Christ. Open our hearts so that we know You truly understand our loss and suffering. Help us find strength in Jesus. "What a friend we have in Jesus, All our sins and griefs to bear! What a privilege to carry Ev'rything to God in prayer!" Amen. (LSB 770:1) (TLSB)