

JOB

CHAPTER 2:11 – 4:6

Introduction

God's servants got depressed:

▶▶ Elijah fled a days journey into the wilderness, sat under a tree and prayed that he might die, saying "It is enough! Now, Lord, take my life..."¹

▶▶ Jeremiah declared "Woe is me, my mother, that you have borne me, a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth."²

▶▶ Jonah sat outside Nineveh and said, "O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live."³

▶▶ Our text in Job reveals deep spiritual depression. Chapter three begins by stating, "Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth."⁴

God's servants got depressed; God's servants **get** depressed! **You** grow weary in your well doing⁵ and feel like fainting spiritually; **your** hands hang down and **your** knees grow weak and feeble.⁶

While it can be comforting in and of itself to realize that you are in good company, you don't want to succumb to spiritual depression. You want to overcome spiritual depression.

If succumbing to spiritual depression is the subject of chapter three, overcoming spiritual depression is the point of the first six verses of chapter four. Job has just been *muttering* to himself; Eliphaz tells him to *minister* to himself! It's good advice for overcoming, rather than succumbing to, spiritual depression.

¹ First Kings 19:4

² Jeremiah 15:10

³ Jonah 4:3

⁴ Job 3:1

⁵ Galatians 6:9

⁶ Hebrews 12:12

We'll see two things in our study:

#1 Mutter To Yourself And You'll
Succumb To Spiritual Depression

#2 Minister To Yourself And You'll
Overcome Spiritual Depression

* * *

#1 Mutter To Yourself And You'll
Succumb To Spiritual Depression
(2:11 – 3:26)

The last time we heard Job speak he was ministering to himself:

Job 1:21 And he said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD."

Job 2:10 "...Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?"

Some time has passed – perhaps considerable time. It may have taken weeks for his three friends to arrive; then they sat silent another seven days and seven nights. When the silence is broken, Job's words are very different than they were previously. We'll see just how important a difference in a moment.

First, let's set the scene for the remainder of the book by reading the closing verses of chapter two:

Job 2:11 Now when Job's three friends heard of all this adversity that had come upon him, each one came from his own place; Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. For they had made an appointment together to come and mourn with him, and to comfort him.

Job 2:12 And when they raised their eyes from afar, and did not recognize him, they lifted their voices and wept; and each one tore his robe and sprinkled dust on his head toward heaven.

Job 2:13 So they sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his grief was very great.

It would have taken a great deal of time for Job's friends to hear the news, communicate with one another, and set a time to visit their friend. Job had been living in the garbage dump outside the city, sitting on an ash heap, scraping his boils with a piece of broken pottery. He suffered from insomnia; when he could sleep, he suffered

from nightmares. His breathe stunk; he had diarrhea. His skin had been blackened, so that his friends didn't recognize him at first. Upon arrival they simply sat with him in the dump and shared his plight.

Thus begins the main body of the book. Job's three friends will each address his suffering with their advice. Eliphaz, then Bildad, then Zophar will address Job. After each of their speeches about why they believe Job is suffering, Job will answer them. They will address him a second time, then a third time; and each time Job will answer them in turn. After these three cycles a third man, Elihu, will address Job. Finally, God himself will address Job regarding his suffering and the book will come to its glorious conclusion.

For now, they simply sit with him. There is something to be said for the power of your presence with someone who is suffering. Words are not so important as waiting. Someone once said, "They won't care how much you know until they know how much you care." Job's friends have come in for a great deal of criticism for their words, and it is well deserved as you will see in subsequent chapters. But, for now, they are a good example of coming alongside in distress, in sharing in the sufferings of their friend. They traveled a great distance to be with him, and they sat where he sat – in the ashes.

Job begins to speak, but the words seem strange coming from his lips:

Job 3:1 After this Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth.

Job 3:2 And Job spoke, and said:

Job 3:3 "May the day perish on which I was born, And the night in which it was said, 'A male child is conceived.'

Job 3:4 May that day be darkness; May God above not seek it, Nor the light shine upon it.

Job 3:5 May darkness and the shadow of death claim it; May a cloud settle on it; May the blackness of the day terrify it.

Job 3:6 As for that night, may darkness seize it; May it not rejoice among the days of the year, May it not come into the number of the months.

Job 3:7 Oh, may that night be barren! May no joyful shout come into it!

Job 3:8 May those curse it who curse the day, Those who are ready to arouse Leviathan.

Job 3:9 May the stars of its morning be dark; May it look for light, but have none, And not see the dawning of the day;

Job 3:10 Because it did not shut up the doors of my mother's womb, Nor hide sorrow from my eyes.

Job is depressed. He has literally lost everything – both his wealth and his health. His situation in this life seems utterly

hopeless. The combination of these things has overwhelmed him and he has succumbed to spiritual depression.

Before we go on, let me point out something of biblical interest in Job's speech. He mentions, in verse eight, a creature called Leviathan. This creature is mentioned five times in the Bible – in Job 2:8 and 41:1, in Psalms 74:14 and 104:26, and in Isaiah 27:1. This creature will be fully described in Job 41. If you read its description there you'll see that it is a great aquatic dinosaur. This has significance to the creation versus evolution debate. Job evidently was contemporary with this great dinosaur. We believe that dinosaurs existed, but that they were contemporary with mankind – not millions of years old. In fact, there may be dinosaurs still on the earth today! There is evidence outside the Bible to suggest the relatively young age of the earth, and of dinosaurs. The facts of science are not to be feared; only the theories which overlook those facts to avoid the inevitable conclusion that there is a Creator Who cares.

The rest of chapter three, verses eleven through twenty-six, continue to express spiritual depression. Job wishes he had never been conceived, never been born... Or that he had died at birth! Then he could have bypassed the earth and all its misery and gone directly to his rest in the afterlife.

Here's something to consider: Job believed that he was a person the moment he was conceived! And he believed that infants who die go to a place of rest and freedom.

Job didn't know a great deal about the afterlife, but he knew there was one. Prior to the resurrection of Jesus everyone who died went to Hades. It is described in Luke 16 as being divided into two compartments – a place of rest, called Paradise; and a place of torment. Now that Jesus has risen, for believers, "to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord" in heaven. The unsaved still go to Hades, to await a final resurrection and their final destination – the Lake of Fire, which we call Hell.

Job's words seem strange when compared to his earlier speech. The length and severity of his situation had been wearing on him. He began muttering to himself about his deplorable condition.

I've done this; haven't you? Wished you'd never been born... Hated the course of your life... Thought that your life was a joke without a punch line... Wanted to skip the time between birth and death and go right into the presence of the Lord...

There's no doubting that Job was in dire circumstances. If anyone ever deserved to despair of his life, it was him. We can certainly not fault him for the words he muttered.

But they are not helpful. In fact, mutterings like this only drive you deeper into your spiritual depression.

Remember with me again what Job had said earlier:

Job 1:21 And he said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD."

Job 2:10 "...Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?"

These words were still true; they **are** still true! While we understand how his sufferings had affected his change of heart, we must recognize that Job's mutterings were themselves contributing to his depression – giving his depression substance, building it a foundation, letting it take deep root in him.

I can only suggest to myself and to you that you resist the temptation to engage in mutterings. Instead, take the advice of the psalmist who, himself no stranger to depression, wrote in Psalm 42:5,

Psalms 42:5 Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him For the help of His countenance.

Instead of muttering to yourself, *minister to yourself!*

Ministering to yourself is the advice Eliphaz gives as chapter four opens.

#2 Minister To Yourself And You'll Overcome Spiritual Depression (4:1-6)

On the whole, the advice of Job's three friends is bad. They are not described as "miserable comforters" for nothing! Nevertheless, I must say that these first few words of Eliphaz are thoughtful and insightful. He will immediately, beginning in verse seven, digress from being helpful; but for now we would do well to hear him and heed him.

Job 4:1 Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said:

Job 4:2 "If one attempts a word with you, will you become weary? But who can withhold himself from speaking?"

Job 4:3 Surely you have instructed many, And you have strengthened weak hands.

Job 4:4 Your words have upheld him who was stumbling, And you have strengthened the feeble knees;

Eliphaz reminds Job that his words had often been a source of comfort to others in their suffering. They had "strengthened weak hands" to go on holding onto the Lord... They had "upheld him who was stumbling," coming alongside him in his difficulty with mercy and grace... They had "strengthened feeble knees" to go forward in their walk with the Lord...

Job 4:5 But now it comes upon you, and you are weary; It touches you, and you are troubled.

Job believed what he had ministered to others. Now he would know what he believed by experiencing it himself!

You can and should minister to others according to God's Word regardless of your own personal experience. You can and should certainly say to sufferers,

"Naked [you] came from my mother's womb, And naked shall [you] return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD."

Job 2:10 "...Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?"

But if you have not personally experienced the power of those words in your own sufferings, be very careful *how* you speak to others in their sufferings. Those same words can seem hollow or full, depending upon your depth of experience with them. Too often we give believers trite answers, Bible bits, that are true but hollow – having never been tried in our own lives. When they are proven true

in your own suffering, then they are full of wisdom, compassion, mercy, and grace.

While you are experiencing suffering and learning the truth of what you believe,

Job 4:6 Is not your reverence your confidence? And the integrity of your ways your hope?

In other words, fall back in faith on what you already know and go forward in faith.

▶▶ Fall back in faith: Let your reverence be your confidence. You know that God has purpose behind your suffering; you know that God is perfecting you beyond your suffering.

▶▶ Go forward in faith: Let the integrity of your ways be your hope. Determine to continue following the Lord, knowing that you have a future hope – both in this life and especially in the next.

God will prove Himself faithful. You will come to know the power of what you believe. In the mean time, confidence and hope can be yours during your suffering by faith.

Conclusion

When you suffer, you may or may not be surrounded by others to comfort you. And, if there are others around you, they may or may not be helpful in their attempts to comfort you!

But you can minister to yourself. What you know is true; learn its power through experience.

Don't mutter to yourself and succumb to spiritual depression. Minister to yourself and overcome it!

