

# JOB

## CHAPTERS 29 & 30

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### Introduction

Some of you will remember a popular song that told the story of a violin being sold at auction. There was little interest in bidding on the instrument when it was first presented by the auctioneer; it was old, out of tune, scratched and otherwise undesirable. Suddenly a man stepped up, took the instrument in his hands, tuned it, and began to play. The music was beautiful, almost heavenly. Bidding became frenzied as the audience appreciated the usefulness of the instrument when played by the hands of a master.

The song is a picture of *your* usefulness in the hands of God. He is the Master; you are the instrument. As He uses you, the ensuing spiritual service is like beautiful heavenly music being played.

I wonder how popular a song would be if it told the opposite story. Suppose the master violinist suddenly put down his instrument, put it on the shelf and left it unused and seemingly forgotten. I can assure you that a song like that would win no Grammys or Dove awards!

But that is precisely the situation you discover in the twenty-ninth and thirtieth chapters of Job. Job doesn't use the illustration of a violin; he uses the **bow** in the archer's hand. In 29:20 he describes his usefulness by comparing himself to a tightly strung bow:

Job 29:20 My glory is fresh within me, And my bow is renewed in my hand.

In 30:11 he describes his uselessness in terms of a bow whose string has been loosed:

Job 30:11 ...He has loosed my bowstring and afflicted me...

Job, in his afflictions, has gone - - in his own estimation - - from being *useful* to being *useless*; from being a bow ready to shoot, to being a bow that is unstrung.

Job's feelings of usefulness or uselessness affect his attitude toward the future. When feeling useful, Job exaggerates the future, saying in 29:18-19,

Job 29:18 Then I said, 'I shall die in my nest, And multiply my days as the sand.  
Job 29:19 My root is spread out to the waters, And the dew lies all night on my branch.

When feeling useless, Job eliminates the future, saying in 30:22-23,

Job 30:22 ... You spoil my success.  
Job 30:23 For I know that You will bring me to death, And to the house appointed for all living.

There will be times in your life when you feel useful or useless. It will be important to remain balanced, level-headed, grounded during those extremes. We'll see two things in our study:

#1 Don't Exaggerate The Future  
When You're Feeling Useful

#2 Don't Eliminate The Future  
When You're Feeling Useless

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#1 Don't Exaggerate The Future  
When You're Feeling Useful  
(Chapter 29)

It is a wonderful, fulfilling feeling to be used by God. In chapter twenty-nine Job reviews his former usefulness in the hands of God.

Job 29:1 Job further continued his discourse, and said:  
Job 29:2 Oh, that I were as in months past, As in the days when God watched over me;

Someone once described "the good old days" as a combination of a bad memory and a good imagination! Too often we long for things past in a way that is untruthful.

That was not the case with Job. His memories were accurate; his “good old days” were truly good. He first and foremost remembered the **priority** of his **walk**:

Job 29:3 When His lamp shone upon my head, And when by His light I walked through darkness;

Job 29:4 Just as I was in the days of my prime, When the friendly counsel of God was over my tent;

Job 29:5 When the Almighty was yet with me, When my children were around me;

Job 29:6 When my steps were bathed with cream, And the rock poured out rivers of oil for me!

Job begins in his own tent, with the priority of his devotional life. He speaks of the “friendly counsel of God,” of God as His intimate friend Whom he spent time with at home. Next, his family takes priority. With these priorities in his walk, he could go forth to meet the world at large.

Job next remembered the **power** of his **words**:

Job 29:7 When I went out to the gate by the city, When I took my seat in the open square,

Job 29:8 The young men saw me and hid, And the aged arose and stood;

Job 29:9 The princes refrained from talking, And put their hand on their mouth;

Job 29:10 The voice of nobles was hushed, And their tongue stuck to the roof of their mouth.

Job 29:11 When the ear heard, then it blessed me, And when the eye saw, then it approved me;

The leading men of the city took seats in the gate to handle civic affairs. Everyone, young and old alike, respected Job. They kept their mouths shut when Job was around, knowing he would speak with God’s wisdom. Look at verses twenty-one through twenty-five:

Job 29:21 Men listened to me and waited, And kept silence for my counsel.

Job 29:22 After my words they did not speak again, And my speech settled on them as dew.

Job 29:23 They waited for me as for the rain, And they opened their mouth wide as for the spring rain.

Job 29:24 If I mocked at them, they did not believe it, And the light of my countenance they did not cast down.

Job 29:25 I chose the way for them, and sat as chief; So I dwelt as a king in the army, As one who comforts mourners.

There was a power in Job’s words - - a power to help, a power to heal. God empowered his words.

God wants to empower your words. That doesn't mean you're always speaking prophecy, or that there is an echo when you speak! But there can be a power in what you say, and in how you say it. In First Peter 4:11 you read,

1 Peter 4:11 If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Colossians 4:6 says,

Colossians 4:6 Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

Job also remembered the **pattern** of his **works**:

Job 29:12 Because I delivered the poor who cried out, The fatherless and the one who had no helper.

Job 29:13 The blessing of a perishing man came upon me, And I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.

Job 29:14 I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; My justice was like a robe and a turban.

Job 29:15 I was eyes to the blind, And I was feet to the lame.

Job 29:16 I was a father to the poor, And I searched out the case that I did not know.

Job 29:17 I broke the fangs of the wicked, And plucked the victim from his teeth.

There was a pattern, a habit, of good works in Job's past. He was consistent and could be counted upon by those in need. He went out of his way to discover needs, not just waiting for them to come to his attention. Even if serving others involved danger, Job was there to help.

God has before ordained good works for you to walk in. You should be able to look back and discover their pattern.

▶▶ Job looked back and saw that he had been useful. He got up every morning and felt as if he were a compound bow, tightly strung by the Master Archer, ready to be used. And that was a true assessment; God was using him mightily.

It's wonderful to be used, but there is also a danger. Job exaggerated the future, as you read in verses eighteen through twenty:

Job 29:18 "Then I said, 'I shall die in my nest, And multiply my days as the sand.  
Job 29:19 My root is spread out to the waters, And the dew lies all night on my branch.  
Job 29:20 My glory is fresh within me, And my bow is renewed in my hand.'

Job saw no end to his usefulness in God's hands. He expected to live a long, healthy life and to die peacefully at home. In-between he would be refreshed day and night, strengthened for each new challenge. What a surprise, then, the events of chapters one and two must have been for him - - shattering his exaggerations of the future!

Christians often exaggerate the future during seasons of usefulness. Churches often base their budgets and building projects on future exaggerations. Here's one: "We're growing, so we will continue to grow and so we can afford to build beyond our means - - the blessing will continue."

Don't get me wrong: I'm not suggesting that you be pessimistic or fearful of the future. You can have expectations - - just not exaggerations. There *are* times of great usefulness; but there are **also** times when you feel useless - - and those times are no less a blessing from the hand of your heavenly Father. You can have great faith in what God wants to accomplish and remain balanced and sensible.

**Your** future plans aren't always consistent with *God's* future plans. It is often your failed future exaggerations that lead you into spiritual depression and cause you to question God's wisdom. God says, in Jeremiah 29:11,

Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.

God has a glorious future planned for you. Getting there sometimes involves times of seeming uselessness, of being put on the shelf. That's what Job laments in chapter thirty.

## #2 Don't Eliminate The Future When You're Feeling Useless (Chapter 30)

Job's bowstring is loosed by his suffering. Chapter thirty begins with "But now..."

Job 30:1 "But now they mock at me, men younger than I, Whose fathers I disdained to put with the dogs of my flock.

Job 30:2 Indeed, what profit is the strength of their hands to me? Their vigor has perished.

Job 30:3 They are gaunt from want and famine, Fleeing late to the wilderness, desolate and waste,

Job 30:4 Who pluck mallow by the bushes, And broom tree roots for their food.

Job 30:5 They were driven out from among men, They shouted at them as at a thief.

Job 30:6 They had to live in the clefts of the valleys, In caves of the earth and the rocks.

Job 30:7 Among the bushes they brayed, Under the nettles they nestled.

Job 30:8 They were sons of fools, Yes, sons of vile men; They were scourged from the land.

Job 30:9 "And now I am their taunting song; Yes, I am their byword.

Job 30:10 They abhor me, they keep far from me; They do not hesitate to spit in my face.

Job gets no respect - - not even from the most outcast citizen of his society. He is the bottom rung of the ladder; he is the ground the ladder is placed upon! He is as low as you can get in the order of things.

Job 30:11 Because He has loosed my bowstring and afflicted me, They have cast off restraint before me.

Job 30:12 At my right hand the rabble arises; They push away my feet, And they raise against me their ways of destruction.

Job 30:13 They break up my path, They promote my calamity; They have no helper.

Job 30:14 They come as broad breakers; Under the ruinous storm they roll along.

Job 30:15 Terrors are turned upon me; They pursue my honor as the wind, And my prosperity has passed like a cloud.

Job attributes the disrespect of others to his uselessness. God has rendered him useless, and people therefore have no use for him.

How tragic that Job sought out the outcast, but those same people cast him out.

Why do you minister to others? You do it because it is right, and out of obedience to Jesus. Their reaction is not your ultimate concern.

Job 30:16 And now my soul is poured out because of my plight; The days of affliction take hold of me.

Job 30:17 My bones are pierced in me at night, And my gnawing pains take no rest.

Job 30:18 By great force my garment is disfigured; It binds me about as the collar of my coat.

Job 30:19 He has cast me into the mire, And I have become like dust and ashes.

In chapter twenty-nine, Job remembered the priority of his walk. But now his former priorities seem useless to him. His steps were “bathed with cream”; now he is “cast... into the mire.”

In chapter twenty-nine, Job remembered the pattern of his works. But now he says, in verses twenty-four through twenty-six,

Job 30:24 Surely He would not stretch out His hand against a heap of ruins, If they cry out when He destroys it.

Job 30:25 Have I not wept for him who was in trouble? Has not my soul grieved for the poor?

Job 30:26 But when I looked for good, evil came to me; And when I waited for light, then came darkness.

He can do no good works... Whatever God was building in him seems ruined.

Job also remembered the power of his words. They were powerful no more; verses twenty-seven through thirty-one say,

Job 30:27 My heart is in turmoil and cannot rest; Days of affliction confront me.

Job 30:28 I go about mourning, but not in the sun; I stand up in the assembly and cry out for help.

Job 30:29 I am a brother of jackals, And a companion of ostriches.

Job 30:30 My skin grows black and falls from me; My bones burn with fever.

Job 30:31 My harp is turned to mourning, And my flute to the voice of those who weep.

Job feels useless compared to his former usefulness. Thus his perspective on the future has changed:

Job 30:20 I cry out to You, but You do not answer me; I stand up, and You regard me.

Job 30:21 But You have become cruel to me; With the strength of Your hand You oppose me.

Job 30:22 You lift me up to the wind and cause me to ride on it; You spoil my success.

Job 30:23 For I know that You will bring me to death, And to the house appointed for all living.

Job sees only continued calamity and cruelty in his future, until he finally dies on his ash heap. He has eliminated any future he might have.

▶▶When you're feeling useless, you have this same tendency to eliminate the future. Your situation may not be as radical as Job's. In fact, it is probably minor in comparison. But a feeling of uselessness can inspire you to quit your ministry, to give-up an area of service. Why try so hard when no one cares and no one comes?

I don't know why God sometimes looses my bow string, why He unstrings my bow. *I would rather He wouldn't!* But those times don't eliminate my future; they are part of God's plan, part of building me for my future. I must take them as times of being abased, learning how to be content and to trust despite my pessimism

### Conclusion

Job used an interesting phrase back in 29:4 when he said,

Job 29:4 Just as I was in the days of my prime, When the friendly counsel of God was over my tent;

He missed what he called "the friendly counsel of God." God now seemed his foe rather than his friend, and God's counsel seemed foul.

I, too, prefer friendly counsel. But God is my friend through blessings *and* through buffetings. What seems foul to me is necessary for God to accomplish in me those things He desires, and which I ultimately desire.

Whether you are feeling useful or useless, God is your friend - - your intimate companion. Let Him give you His perspective on your future.