

Job 21:1 ¶ But Job answered and said,

Job 21:2 Hear diligently my speech, and let this be your consolations.

Job 21:3 Suffer me that I may speak; and after that I have spoken, mock on.

Job responds to Zophar's speech by asking his friends to allow him one bit of comfort or compassion—to pay attention to what he has to say. After that, they can continue mocking him.

Job 21:4 As for me, is my complaint to man? and if *it were so*, why should not my spirit be troubled?

Job 21:5 Mark me, and be astonished, and lay *your hand upon your mouth*.

Job 21:6 Even when I remember I am afraid, and trembling taketh hold on my flesh.

Job points out that his argument had not been directed at men; if that had been the case, he would not be so troubled in spirit. In other words, my argument has been directed to God; I'm more concerned about His treatment of me than of your treatment of me. This should amaze you. In fact, when I think about it, I begin to tremble in fear. In other words—How can I possibly be talking this way to God? How can I deign to question Him?

If Job's friends would have just opened their closed minds a bit, they might have recognized Job's insistence of his innocence in light of his fear of God as ringing true. They might have admitted that they didn't know everything. There was obviously evidence around them supporting Job's assessment of the wicked that prosper, and he was going to challenge them to take note of that fact.

Coffman made a good observation, quoting from the Layman's Bible Commentary: "When we compare Job's position with that of his friends, 'It is easy to see that both understandings are unrealistic extremes; and both betray a fundamental error.' What is that error? It is simply this that, 'The rewards of either wickedness or righteousness are limited to what occurs in one's earthly lifetime.'"

Job 21:7 ¶ Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power?

Job 21:8 Their seed is established in their sight with them, and their offspring before their eyes.

Job 21:9 Their houses *are safe from fear*, neither *is the rod of God upon them*.

Job 21:10 Their bull gendereth, and faileth not; their cow calveth, and casteth not her calf.

Job 21:11 They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance.

Job 21:12 They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ.

Job 21:13 They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave.

Job basically takes issue with what his "friends" have been saying. He notes that there are plenty of wicked men that live and become men of great wealth. They

have children and live in safety without suffering God's judgment. Their livestock continue to multiply. They entertain and make merry. They live prosperous lives until they die.

I liked Guzik's comment: "Job challenged the moral order of the universe as previously understood by Job's friends. He challenged them to see that if it was possible for a wicked man to be seemingly blessed, then perhaps also a righteous man like Job could seem to be cursed."

Job 21:14 Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.

Job 21:15 What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?

Job then reasons that to be why they see no purpose in getting to know God and serving Him. How would it profit them to seek His favor?

Job 21:16 Lo, their good is not in their hand: the counsel of the wicked is far from me.

Job 21:17 ¶ How oft is the candle of the wicked put out! and how oft cometh their destruction upon them! God distributeth sorrows in his anger.

Job 21:18 They are as stubble before the wind, and as chaff that the storm carrieth away.

Job realizes that everything good is from God despite what men think. Then he wonders why God doesn't judge the wicked. Implied—Yet he judges me so grievously, a man who has tried to serve Him in obedience.

Still, Job knows that the wicked will eventually be rejected by God, like chaff that is carried away by the wind.

I am pretty sure that David was quoting from Job in Psalm 1.

Psalms 1:4 "The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away."

Job 21:19 God layeth up his iniquity for his children: he rewardeth him, and he shall know it.

Job 21:20 His eyes shall see his destruction, and he shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty.

Job 21:21 For what pleasure hath he in his house after him, when the number of his months is cut off in the midst?

Most other translations clarify that the beginning of verse 19 implies something like—"You say" or "It is said," God will punish the children of the wicked. It would be better, however, if God judged the wicked and not their children. He suffers nothing if his children are judged after he dies.

We know that scripture declares that every person is judged for his/her own sin.

Ezekiel 18:20 "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him."

Deuteronomy 24:16 "The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin."

John 3:17–18 "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

The sad truth is that more often than not, the children follow in the ways of their fathers.

How hard it is for people of faith to try to make sense of all that we see—especially when it comes to the prosperity of the wicked vs. the suffering of the person of faith. It's so hard to look beyond the here and now to recognize that there is a greater purpose in what God allows to touch the lives of His people—as is the case with Job, though he doesn't know it.

Job 21:22 Shall *any* teach God knowledge? seeing he judgeth those that are high.

Job 21:23 One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet.

Job 21:24 His breasts are full of milk, and his bones are moistened with marrow.

Job 21:25 And another dieth in the bitterness of his soul, and never eateth with pleasure.

Job 21:26 They shall lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover them.

Job realizes that there is no one that can teach God anything; He is the ultimate Judge. He goes on to identify a conundrum. Some men die having lived in health, peace and security, and some men die bitter of soul, having never known the good life. In the end, as the old saying goes, "Death is the great equalizer." In death they are no different; both are buried and become food for worms.

This is only true of physical death. Spiritual death proves to be the great separator.

Job 21:27 ¶ Behold, I know your thoughts, and the devices *which* ye wrongfully imagine against me.

Job 21:28 For ye say, Where *is* the house of the prince? and where *are* the dwelling places of the wicked?

Job 21:29 Have ye not asked them that go by the way? and do ye not know their tokens,

Job 21:30 That the wicked is reserved to the day of destruction? they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath.

Job 21:31 Who shall declare his way to his face? and who shall repay him *what he hath done*?

Job 21:32 Yet shall he be brought to the grave, and shall remain in the tomb.

Job 21:33 The clods of the valley shall be sweet unto him, and every man shall draw after him, as *there are innumerable* before him.

Job tells his “friends” that he knows what they are thinking about him, and it is not true. He knows that they consider all that he has suffered as evidence testifying to the fact that he is a wicked man. If they would but do a little investigation, they would find out that he is right about the truth that there are many wicked people who prosper and rise to positions of leadership and influence. There are many wicked people who die and are honored with great funerals attended by many.

So, as quoted from Guzik above, “perhaps also a righteous man like Job could seem to be cursed.”

Job 21:34 How then comfort ye me in vain, seeing in your answers there remaineth falsehood?

I liked the NIV version: “So how can you console me with your nonsense? Nothing is left of your answers but falsehood!”