

## JOB 2-3

Toby Sumpter

Trinity Reformed Church - Moscow, ID

A.D. June, 7, 2009

### Introduction

How do you respond to hardships? Do you resign yourself to the evil? Do you become angry and fight it?

### The Boils

The Lord gives The Satan permission to touch Job's body short of taking his life (2:6), and The Satan strikes Job with "boils" (2:7). This reminds us of the sixth plague that fell on Egypt which sprang from the dust that Moses through toward heaven (Ex. 9:9-11). Remember also that in the renewal of the covenant in Deuteronomy, God promised to bring curses on Israel if they broke covenant (Dt. 28:15ff). Specifically, the "boils" of Egypt are mentioned as part of that curse (Dt. 28:27, 35). The description of the curse is also eerily close to how the plague falls upon Job. Another specific instance of this is Hezekiah's boil which was initially declared by God to be a terminal illness (2 Kgs. 20:1).

### The Ashes

Job's response is to deal with the boils by scraping them and to sit in a pile of ashes (2:8). We've previously pointed out that the calamities that fall upon Job are described in sacrificial imagery (1:13-19). Sitting in ashes is a sign of being under the judgment of God (Jon. 3:6). Ash is like dust and dirt, except that it is also the remains of something that has been consumed by fire. Ash is a symbol of humility and mortality, but Abraham did not see that status as inconsistent with questioning God's designs (Gen. 18:27).

### The Wife

Job's wife is only mentioned here, and she infamously urges Job to curse God and die (2:9). Her specific question is what Yahweh explicitly referenced to Satan (2:3), and the word is related to the word for "perfect" or "blameless" (1:1, 8). Job's response clearly seems to indicate his disapproval of his wife's advice (2:10). Job also clearly believes that these calamities are "evil" and that they are from "God." And the narrator again assures us that Job did not sin with his mouth.

### The Friends

Job's three friends come to "mourn" with Job, but the word has a history that suggests more than this. The first time we see this word is in Gen. 4 where Cain is cursed to "wander as a fugitive" (Gen. 4:12). Israel is cursed with wandering in exile later as well (1 Kgs. 14:15, 2 Kgs. 21:8). At the end of Job, Job's family and friends will "mourn" with Job in an entirely different way (Job 42:11). The three friends cry at the sight of Job, tear their clothes, and Job in the dust and ashes (2:12). Another clue that Job's three friends are not really coming to comfort Job is in the verbal cue that they "throw" the dust "toward heaven." Their dust is thrown toward heaven just like the sixth plague that fell on Egypt (Ex. 9:10). They are not comforters; they are more plague. And they sit together in silence for one week (2:13).

### The Curse

In order to understand what follows in the course of most of the rest of the book, we need to consider this transition into chapter 3 carefully. Job has just told his wife that they ought to receive good and bad things from God, but when Job opens his mouth, he speaks a curse. Furthermore, as we approach the following chapters, we do so assured that what Job speaks is right (Job 42:7). Chapter 3 is an elaborate curse against the day he was conceived, the day he was born, longing for death, and admission that this is what he always feared.

### Conclusion and Applications

Rather than pitting Job's response to his wife against his curse, a better way is to see both answers as part of a biblical response to suffering. This is the response of faith, joy, and holy anger and despair.

Consider David who sings that he will bless the Lord at all times (34:1), and then in another place despairs of God's care and lovingkindness (Pss. 22, 60, 74, 88).

Or consider our Lord who cries out to His Father in the garden before His arrest and cries out in the words of Psalm 22 that God has forsaken Him.

Or remember the examples of Hezekiah and Abraham, both of whom who calmly received God's Word and then refused to let that be the last word.

Faith looks to God in hope, but faith is not blind or lifeless. Faith is hungry for goodness and justice and mercy. Faith is the woman who won't stop bringing her request to the master. Because He is the Master.



*Published by:* Canon Press • P.O. Box 8729 • 205 E. 5th St. • Moscow, ID 83843 • 800-488-2034  
www.canonpress.org • orders@canonpress.org • Fax 208-882-1568