

Is there hope in suffering? – Job 19:1-29
James Muldoon - Carey Baptist Church – 25 May 2008

Job is a righteous man who is suffering. Three friends have come to comfort him, but they are just making his situation worse. Their words of comfort (!) add up to this: “You’re suffering Job? You want to know why? It’s because God is against you. And why is He against you? Because you’re a miserable sinner and it’s high time you repented!” Bildad’s words in Chapter 18 have been particularly vindictive. Job’s great longing in Chapter 19 is to be vindicated.

i Vindication

In **v1-6** Job protests against Bildad’s words from the previous chapter. After all, if Job has done wrong, that’s between him and God, isn’t it? But Job knows that he is innocent. He feels that God has denied him justice and pitted himself against him.

In **v7-12** he describes in vivid terms how he’s been battered, pummelled, thrashed, and pounded. And, says Job, it’s all down to God. It’s God who has done all this to him. God has denied him justice.

In **v13-19** Job reveals how friendless he has become. Everyone has turned against him. Maybe you’ve felt like that at times. It’s one of the bitterest experiences anyone could go through. Maybe you’ve thought, “Surely there must be one person who’ll be kind to me...?”

In **v20-22** he cries out for mercy. He pleads with his friends to show him some pity. “It’s bad enough that God is denying me justice,” he says. “Why must you do so too?”

And then **v23-24** show his yearning for vindication. He wants a permanent record to be kept for ever of his innocence. This desire has been growing in him as his suffering has continued. See **Job 9:32-35** and **Job 16:19-21**, for example.

This, of course, is a very human urge. It’s the notion of the need for justice which persuades many people that there must be something beyond the grave. Justice is often not done on earth. And if that’s that, it makes life meaningless. How can you make sense of life if there’s no justice in the end? It makes it pointless even trying to do the right thing.

All of which makes the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ stand out all the more. If ever there was a miscarriage of justice, it was when He was condemned to die on the cross. And die he did: to save all who believe in him from all the wrongdoing they have committed.

ii Vindicator

In **v25** Job has glorious blaze of insight. He is carried to one of the highest places in the whole of the Old Testament. He says, “**I know that my Redeemer lives...**”

The word translated “Redeemer” there is the well-known Hebrew word “בֹּאֵל” (“go’el”). The בֹּאֵל was a relative who redeemed sold property so that it is not lost from the family, and who redeemed family members if they found themselves in slavery, and who vindicated murdered family members by avenging their blood. The בֹּאֵל was a redeemer, a vindicator, an advocate, a saviour; and a close kin relative to the one he was standing up for.

Job, then, knows that there is someone who stands in relationship to himself and that this someone will vindicate him and be an advocate for him. Who is it? It’s God himself (especially if the NIV footnote translation is accepted). Job knows that he is in a relationship with God. And he knows that one day God will vindicate him, making it apparent to all that Job is a righteous man.

We, of course, have greater light than Job did. And we know that our לֵאמֹר is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is our brother. And, in the highest court in the universe, he is speaking up for us. He took our sin away when he died for us on the cross and rose again. He gave us his righteousness. He is our vindicator. As God sees us, he sees us as righteous... And all because of him.

Is he your vindicator? He will vindicate you if you believe in him. Confess your wrongdoing and your imperfection to God. Trust in Jesus Christ. Begin to live for him. If you do, he will be your לֵאמֹר, your vindicator.

iii Vindicated

In **v26-27**, Job says that he expects to be vindicated. The Hebrew is tricky, but Job expects to have a bodily experience of seeing God. Either he expects to see God and to be vindicated by him before he dies. Or he expects God to raise him after death and to vindicate him then.

Probably Job has a moment of brilliant divine insight which shows him beyond death to the end of time here. That wouldn’t be unique in the Old Testament: see **Psalms 16:10**, for example. It would, of course, be very rare.

Whatever Job knew, we have the greater illumination of the New Testament. And this is what we’re taught there. Death is the separation of soul and body. The Christian’s soul goes to be with the Lord immediately whilst the body decomposes. When Christ returns, our bodies will be raised. They will be glorious, new, resurrection bodies which will not be subject to decay like our present ones. Our spirits will be reunited with them. And we will dwell in the presence of the Lord in his renewed universe for all eternity. Like Job, you will be completely vindicated before the whole of creation at that point... And all, of course, because of the work of Christ.

Are you ready for that day? If not, trust in Christ. If so, do you realise how blessed you are? Even now God sees you clothed with all the purity and spotlessness and integrity and beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ. You are vindicated and innocent and righteous now. And at the end of time, the whole of creation will see that! May we all be reduced to tearful, relieved, sighing gratitude for what our לֵאמֹר has done for us!