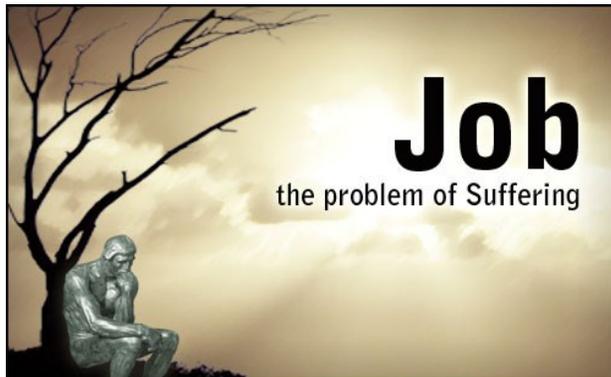


He explains then the evils overcoming him, and he begins with interior evils when he says, "My bones are inflamed without rest." This can refer to the weakness of the interior powers coming from too much heat, and also to the affliction of the heart proceeding from the intensity of the heat of pain. To show this kind of turmoil is too early, he says, "Days of affliction have anticipated me." For all men suffer in their old age from ill health, but he has been anticipated with afflictions in his youth. Then, as to exterior evils he says, "I went along grieving," for when I walked among men I pretended sadness after misery. But although sadness is the cause of anger, there was still no anger in me, and so he then says, "Standing up without fury, I cried in the crowd," explaining my miseries. These came partly from the lack of friends about whom he continues, "I was the brother of snakes," because those who should have loved me as a brother, bit me like snakes, "and the companion of ostriches," who usually forget even their own offspring. (39:15) So they were so forgetful of me that they did not help me. His adversity was also partly the result of weakness of the body, and so first as to exterior infirmity he says, "My skin turned black on me," from the interior corruption of the humors." Then, as to the interior infirmities he continues, "and my bones dried out from the heat," so great an amount of inordinate heat rested on me that it dried up the marrow of bones. His adversity partly consisted in the exterior signs of sadness, and so he uses images to show how his signs of joy had been changed. These are either musical instruments, and he expresses this alternative saying, "My lyre was turned to mourning," as if to say: Mourning had taken the place of the lyre I used to use in joy for me; or songs sung by the human voice, and so he says, "and my song," which I used to express my joy, has changed, "to the voice of those who weep."

END OF JOB CHAPTER 30



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Job

Chapter Thirty:



I know that my Redeemer lives, and that
in the end he will stand upon the earth.

- Job 19:25 -

The Discourse of Job Continues

*The commentary on the Book of Job, is by Saint Thomas Aquinas and was translated
by Brian Mulladay and edited by Rev. Joseph Kenny, O.P.
The book shows how human affairs are ruled by divine providence using
probable arguments.*

CHAPTER THIRTY: THE DISCOURSE OF JOB CONTINUES

The Lesson: His Present Distress

1 But now, men younger in age I than make sport of me. The fathers of those men were unworthy to guard the dogs of my flock, 2 whose strength of hands held nothing for me, and they were not accounted worthy of life itself. 3 In want and hunger they are sterile; they gnawed in desolate places, filthy with loss and misery, 4 and they are grass and the bark of trees and the root of junipers was their food. 5 They uproot these things from the enclosed valleys, when they had found each of them they ran to them shouting; 6 they lived in desert stream beds and in the caverns of the earth or in gravel. 7 They were happy in places like this, and they live under briars they think voluptuous. 8 The sons of fools and of disreputable men and not known on earth at all. 9 Now I have been turned into a verse in their songs, and I have become a proverb for them. 10 They abhor me and they flee from me. They are not afraid to spit in my face. 11 He opened up his quiver and struck me down and he placed a bridle in my mouth. 12 At the right hand of the dawn, my misfortunes immediately arose. They have ruined my feet and they crushed them in their byways like waves. 13 They have demolished my routes; they have lain in ambushes for me and they prevailed, and there was no one who brought aid. 14 They rushed in upon me like a breached wall or an open gate and they rushed in on my mishaps. 15 I have been reduced to nothing; like the wind he took away my desire, and like a cloud my health vanished. 16 Now my soul droops within me and days of pain take possession of me. 17 At night, pain tears my bones and those who consumed me do not sleep. 18 My clothing is consumed by their great numbers and they encircle me like a cowl on my tunic. 19 I have been made equal to filth and I have become like dust and ashes. 20 I will call to you and you will not hear me, I stand and you do not notice me. 21 You have changed into someone cruel in my opinion and you persecute me with a heavy hand. 22 You raised me up, placing me almost above the wind and you powerfully dashed me to pieces. 23 I know that you will hand me over to death where the house of every living thing has been built. 24 Yet not for their destruction do you send forth your hand and if they are corrupted, you save them. 25 I once wept over him who was afflicted and my soul had compassion on the poor. 26 I expected good things and evil things came to me. I waited for the light and darkness rushed in. 27 My bones are inflamed without any rest, and days of affliction came upon me. 28 I walked along grieving; rising up without fury. I cried out in the crowd 29 I was the brother to snakes and the companion of ostriches. 30 My skin turned black on me and my bones dried out from the heat. 31 My lyre was turned to mourning and my tongue to the voice of those who weep.

Those who are despised by men often find help from God, but he was deserted by God in temporal adversity, and so he says, "I will call to you," seeking continually to be freed from this adversity, "and you will not hear me," very quickly. "I stood," for I persevered in prayer, "and you do not notice me," by freeing me from adversity. Thus if I were to consider only my temporal state, I would consider you a cruel and hard enemy, and so he then says, "You have changed into someone cruel in my opinion," according to the appearance of the exterior scourges when you do not spare me even when I entreat you." "And you persecute me with a heavy hand," for you afflict me gravely. Therefore from all exterior appearances it seems that you granted me prosperity in the past to my hurt, and so he adds, "You raised me up," in the time of prosperity, "placing me almost above the wind," in a very exalted position, yet unstable like the wind, "you powerfully dashed me to pieces," you struck me heavily as though you threw me on the ground from high up. He proves that he did not say this in despair saying, "I know that you will hand me over to death," as if to say: I do not suffer these things as though they were not planned, for I know that I will go to a still further defect, death. He says that he knows this because of the condition of mortal life, "where the house of every living thing has been built," since all men tend to death as a man does to his house. However, man is not totally destroyed in death, because the immortal soul remains, and so he says, "Yet not for the destruction," of living men, "do you send forth your hand," to reduce them to nothing by your power. "And if they should be corrupted," by death, "he will save them," and by making their souls happy. I hope for this from your kindness, however hard and cruel you seem to me in these temporal adversities.

After he premised his remarks with his past prosperity (c.29) and subsequent adversity, (vv.1-24) he collects them in a kind of summary saying, "I once wept," in the time of my prosperity, "over him who was afflicted," according to what Scripture says, "Weep with those who weep," (Rom. 12:15) and I also had compassion on those suffering a loss, which he shows when he then says, "and my soul had compassion on the poor," not only in affect, but also in effect, as he said already. (29:12) In return for these works of mercy, "I expected good things," the prosperity of this world according to the opinion of his friends, "and evil things," adversities, "came to me" which clearly demonstrates that their opinion was false. "I waited for the light," the consolation or counsel by which I might escape from evil, "and the darkness" of bitterness and hesitation, "rushed in".

Third, he shows that adversities of this kind are sent by God from their effect, because he had been left totally destitute by them; and so he says, "I have been reduced to nothing," because nothing remained for him from his former prosperity. This consisted in two things. First, in exterior goods, which he lost by violence, and so he says, "like the wind he took away," through violence, "my desire," everything which I found I had desirable in exterior things. In another way, his prosperity consisted in the health of his own person, and as to this he says, "and like a cloud," suddenly and completely, "my health," of my person, "vanished." When his desirable goods had been taken away, his soul remained in sadness, and so he says, "Now my soul droops within me," through sadness. He truly could not have been anything but sad, after he had lost his children and his property. Because he had lost the health of his body, consequently he also felt corporeal pain, which gave him no rest even in the day, and so he says, "days of pain" physical suffering which gets worse at night take possession of me." So he says, "At night pains tear my bones," as if to say: My pains so increase at night that they seem to reach piercing through my bones. He shows that the cause of his pain was from the rotting of his sores saying, "and they who consume me," the worms generated from the rotting of the wounds, "do not sleep," since they give no rest to him. He shows their great number saying, "My clothing is consumed by their great numbers," as if to say: The multitude of the worms is so great that they not only eat my flesh, but also gnaw his clothing. To show that they are diffused not just in one part of the body, but almost in his whole body, even to his head, he then says, "and they encircle me like a cowl on my tunic," as if to say: Because of their great number, they cannot be contained under the cover of the band and garment, but break out into the open and go around his neck. From the punishment of this kind he shows that he has become abominable to men, and so he says, "I have been made equal to filth," so that no one wants to approach me because of the great corruption and the number of the worms, as no one wishes to approach filth. "And I have become like dust and ashes," totally dejected and held in contempt.

After he had listed the many prosperous things which he had enjoyed in times past, here he lists the adversities which he was then suffering. First, in contrast to his former glory and reverence, he shows that he is held in contempt now. Contempt is more difficult for a person to bear in proportion to the lack of worth of the character of the one who holds another in contempt. So he shows that those who hold him in contempt are contemptible in many ways. First, as to time, and so he says, "But now men younger in age than I am make sport of me," and this is the parallel contrary to what he said in the last chapter, "Young men saw me and hid themselves, and the aged rose and stood." (29:8) Second, from mean origin, and so he then says, "the fathers of those men were not worthy to guard the dogs of my flock," for I did not consider them worthy enough to assume the most ordinary services of my household, for example, taking care of the dogs. This is the parallel contrary to what he said already, "the city elders refrained from talking." (29:9) Third, as to their meanness of power. So he says, "whose strength of hands," either the detractors or even their fathers, "held nothing," for I regarded all their power as worth nothing. This is contrary to what he said already, "generals governed their tongues." (29:10) Fourth, as to their lack of honor, and so he says, "and they were not accounted worthy of life itself," because of their numerous grave sins. This is contrary to the parallel statement he made, "The ear which heard, blessed me." (29:11) Fifth, as to poverty he continues, "in want," from lack of possessions, "and hunger," as to the affliction which attends want, "they are sterile," for they are not capable of producing fruit. This is contrary to the statement he made already, "The rock poured out rivers of oil for me." (29:6) Sixth, he shows this as to the the difficult life they led when he says, "They gnawed in desolate places," for they consumed plain foods which they searched for in deserts, like acorns and other things of this sort, because they did not have the fruits of the fields, from their want. The effect of this food is that they are, "filthy," disfigured, "with loss," from the affliction of their own body, "and misery," from their exterior adversities.

He consequently shows that they did not have an abundance of even such cheap food as this, and that they find it with great effort. He expresses this in the next verse, "They uproot these things from enclosed valleys," for they gather them with great difficulty because of the climb down and the climb up. He shows they gather this in small quantity when he says, "when they have found each of them," they contend over this vile food. He expresses this saying, "they ran to them shouting," so one can arrive before the other. All these things parallel by way of opposition what he had said above, "I washed my feet in butter." Seventh, he shows the vile character of their dwellings, because they do not have houses to live in saying, "they live in desert stream beds," which are the dry stream beds caused by storms where they protected themselves from the heat, "and in the caverns of the earth," because of the shade, "or in gravel," because of the cool of the nearby water or because of the softness of the sand. It even seemed pleasant to them when they could find such places to live, and so he says, "they are happy in places like this," as though even they did not have an abundance of these sorts of places. If at times they happen to find more comfortable places, they reckoned this as voluptuous, and so he then says, "and to live under briars," in the shade of small trees, "they think voluptuous," because such a place was more comfortable to lie in than the one they had before. This seems to answer by opposition what he had said before, "I will die in my little nest." (29:18) After enumerating their miseries one by one, as an epilogue he summarizes what he has said by saying, "The sons of fools," in mind, "and of disreputable men," in birth, "and not known on earth at all," conspicuous for no dignity or glory.

As a consequence he shows what Job had suffered from them, and first he shows that he was derided by them by mouth both in their jokes, so he says, "Now I have been turned into a verse in their songs, "because they made up mocking lampoons about him. They also derided him in serious things, and he continues expressing this, "and I have become a proverb for them," because they commonly used the misfortunes of Job like proverbs, giving him as an example of fault and unhappiness. Second, he shows how they held him in contempt in their heart when he then says, "They abhor me," as vile and unclean. Third, he shows how they held him in contempt in deed, first insofar as they bristled in his presence, and so he continues, "and they fled far from me." He says this in opposition to his previous statement, "They awaited me like the rain." (29:23) Second, they proposed injuries against him; "and they were not afraid to spit in my face," as a sign of insult and scorn. Lest one think that he came into scorn because of some fault he had committed, he shows the cause of this contempt from the part of God who struck him. He shows first that he is afflicted by God when he says, "He opened up his quiver and struck me down." Arrows are taken out of a quiver which some use to wound someone. Arrows here mean divine scourges from God because this is the way he uses them in Chapter Six, "The arrows of the Lord stick fast in me, and their displeasure drains my spirit." (v.4) So the quiver of the Lord is the divine disposition from which adversities come to men, which he tells us has been opened, because of the abundance of adversities by which he says he has been tried both exteriorly and interiorly. Second, he asserts that God has hindered him from being able to repel his injuries at least in word. So he then says, "and he placed a bridle in my mouth," because God's scourge took away his confidence in answering, when others took their arguments against him from those very scourges.

He next shows that such adversities have been sent to him by God from the fact that they came to him beyond the usual manner of human adversities. He first demonstrates this from the place where the adversities came. For raids usually arise especially in those countries from the North, where barbarous nations and men who were very ferocious and warlike lived, as we read in Jeremiah, "all evil spreads from the north." (1:14) But those who assaulted blessed Job came from the South where men who are less warlike and ferocious usually live. For the text has already said that his adversity began when the Sabeans took his cattle and asses and killed his herdsmen, (1:15) and so he says, "At the right hand of the East," from the South, which is the right hand side respecting the East, because if someone faces East, the South will be on his right. "My misfortunes immediately arose," because they began immediately when the Sabeans rushed in.

Second, he shows that his adversities are beyond the common expectation as to the magnitude of the assault. For he was assaulted even respecting the loss of goods which give him the ability to work. This is represented by the feet, and so he says, "They have ruined my feet," for they destroyed my faculties, and they did this easily and completely. So he says, "and they crushed them," my feet just mentioned, "in their byways," in their passing without any difficulty. He adds another example when he says, "like waves," for the waves of the sea both suddenly overflow the land or a ship and completely submerge it. Since his feet (his faculties) have been ruined, the consequence is that his progress is also impeded, and so here the text continues, "They have demolished my routes," all the progress of my works. Further they also crushed me in person with deceit, which he intimates when he continues, "they have lain in ambushes for me," and with power, in what he adds, "and they prevailed," without any objection, because no one obstructed them in doing it. So he then says, "and there was no one who brought aid," to me when I was oppressed by them, nor even someone who obstructed them from approaching me. So he continues, "they rushed in upon me like a breached wall or an open gate," as though there had not been an obstacle, either from the substance itself, or from difficulty which is meant by the breached wall, nor from human concern, which is meant by the door. Moreover, those who rushed on me so freely showed no mercy, and so he says, "and they rushed in on my mishaps," for they totally intended to make me unhappy.