

August 15, 2021

11. Job's Response to Suffering: Protest — Job 19:1-16, 13-19 NRSV

I'm a chaplain at Goshen Health in Indiana. Last night, after midnight, I was called in to meet with Bill, a distressed and agitated patient. Bill believed in God. Believed in Jesus. Bill fluently quoted Scripture. But God, in passivity, was Bill's assailant, and Jesus was of no comfort.

What good is faith in God if God is not helpful during adversity? Much of Job's despair is related to God's silence. In Job 19, Job finally gives voice to his exasperation: "OK, God, *my* turn." Job admits that all have sinned, that he has sinned, but insists that he is comparatively righteous; in essence, the punishment doesn't fit the crime.

Job has done nothing to warrant this suffering (has he?). The next move is up to God: *Either vindicate me or destroy me*. Eventually, Job's words break beyond restraint: "How long are you going to keep battering away at me, pounding me with these harangues? Time after time after time you jump all over me. Do you have no conscience, abusing me like this?" (19:1-3, *The Message*).

Job accuses God of being a disconsolate enemy. Instead of caring for the faithful, God is a capricious tyrant.

If I were teaching, I might pose three questions:

- How do you feel about such scalding *human* charges being leveled at God?
- Have you ever done so or felt like it?
- How did you resolve your agenda with God?

Bill accused God of dereliction, desertion. After an hour, he was calm enough to permit a blood draw and swab for COVID. Other staff persons were searching for a facility that could address Bill's mental emotional and spiritual distress. My final interaction with him went like this:

Bill: "Will you pray for me?"

Me: "I have been. You just couldn't hear me."

Bill, exhausted, softly said: "Thank you, Ruben. Will you pray out loud for me now?"

I did.

In preaching class, I was cautioned about introducing a new idea to conclude a sermon. I'm going to break that rule here with two "victim" questions:

- Were Job and Bill victims?
- How does one's views of God inform an answer to this question?

—Ruben Chupp

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Ruben Chupp of Nappanee, Indiana, is a spiritual director, chaplain, and retired pastor. His personal goals: “love God and the person in front of me at any given time; read some, write some, think some, pray some, and take a nap every day; love my wife, Idella, my children, and their children with all the grace I possess; and finally, get home before dark.”

Resources for this session

Salt & Light Videos

Hendy Matahelemual is the presenter for unit 3, Suffering. These teaching videos are great for leader preparation or introducing each session. They are available on [MennoMedia's YouTube channel](#). Hendy is associate minister for community engagement for Mosaic Mennonite Conference.

Live URLs recommended in the Leader guide

The peaceful protests geographic information system (GIS) map by Alex Smith is unavailable. A similar one is available [here](#).

Additional commentary for this session is available at:

<https://www.mennomedia.org/salt-light-supplements/>