

The Wise Draw Near the LORD(15): The Way that I Take

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<Job 23:1~10, ESV>

- 1 Then Job answered and said:
- 2 **"Today also my complaint is bitter**; my hand is heavy on account of my groaning.
- 3 Oh, **that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat!**
- 4 I would lay my case before him and fill my mouth with arguments.
- 5 I would know what he would answer me and understand what he would say to me.
- 6 Would he contend with me in the greatness of his power? No; he would pay attention to me.
- 7 There an upright man could argue with him, and I would be acquitted forever by my judge.
- 8 "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there, and backward, but I do not perceive him;
- 9 on the left hand when he is working, I do not behold him; he turns to the right hand, but I do not see him.
- 10 But he knows the way that I take; when he has tried me, I shall come out as gold.

<Introduction>

Hallelujah!

Up until the last time, the speeches of the three friends have come to a certain conclusion, and now we would like to focus again on Job's situation.

Through this very long and muddy fight, in which they deeply hurt each other, the debate with these three friends has led Job to gradually realize two major things.

Shall we read the following summary together from the title?

***The two things Job comes to realize through the debate with his three friends**

1. Ah, the frameworks of these friends must have been my own frameworks!

"But I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior to you. Who does not know such things as these? (Job 12:3)."

2. Ah, the only answer I can rely on is the Lord!

"My friends scorn me; my eyes pour out tears to God. (Job 16:20)"

(1) First, it is the realization: **"Ah, the various frameworks of these friends must have actually been the same frameworks I had too!"** Because they had walked in faith

together for a long time, what these three friends knew was essentially the same as what Job knew. In fact, Job knew even better in his head what these friends knew, and it's not as if he is ignorant of such things! But now, as he is actually going through this terrible suffering, and as he hears his friends claim that their words are righteous while stabbing at his heart—He begins to realize: **“Ah! Just because something we’ve said is right doesn’t mean it is always right for everyone!”** Also, **“Ah! Until I faced this hardship myself, I too must have insisted that our view of God was correct, just like that!”** And, **“Ah! I too must have once looked at those who suffer in the same way, and hurt them in the name of offering counsel!”** Thus, Job, no different from his friends in the past, now sees, feels, and comes to understand “his former self” and “our human limitations” as if looking into a mirror. This is the image of Job as a wise man, gradually coming to realize these things.

(2) And the other realization is this: that **we can never find the answer within ourselves**. Even though they were considered wise, seasoned believers, when they gathered together, instead of strengthening Job, comforting him, or seeking the Lord together with him, they ended up mocking Job, who was already physically and emotionally breaking down. And Job, not backing down either, only kept poking at each other's wounds even more. In this way, because there is no one or anything within us that we can truly rely on, a believer inevitably ends up being led this way.

As it is written: **“My eyes pour out tears to God.”** Because only the Lord is the true answer, we see Job, the wise man, drawing nearer to the Lord once again today.

Hallelujah!

In the end, all the things we have relied on and considered our strength—whatever they may be—whether wealth, health, friends, husband, wife, parents, or children, even the tendons in our own feet, will all **eventually** fail and be severed.

And so, each of us is nothing more than a fleeting life, destined to one day **stand alone before God as a solitary individual**.

That is why, with the same confession of faith—**“The only answer I can rely on is the Lord!”**—

when we continue to take one step closer to the Lord until the end of our lives, becoming true people of wisdom,

we firmly believe that our faithful God will personally resolve all our issues

and ultimately lead the life of His saints along the path of eternal life.

In today's passage, we can see Job—though still trapped in a broken, bitter well, going back and forth—nevertheless struggling to seek his God the Father, true to the meaning of his name, “Where is my Father?” Then, as we take a closer look at the path Job the wise man gradually comes to understand—“the way I take”—I earnestly bless and pray that all of us, too, as time passes day by day, through every up and down, in both body and spirit, may become **people of wisdom who draw** closer to the Lord step by step.

Today, we'll look at this in two main parts.

<Main>

1. Today also my complaint is bitter

First, this is exactly what Job says today: "**Today also my complaint is bitter!**"

Shall we read verses 1 and 2 together first? Let's begin!

* The two coexisting hearts within Job

1 Then Job answered and said:

2 "**Today also (1) my complaint is bitter** (marah, bitter, sorrowful, defiant); (2) **my hand is heavy on account of my groaning** (His Hand is Heavy on me!).

=> (1) **My heart, bitter and rebellious against God!** (2) **The heavy hand of the Almighty!**

(1) From the very beginning, Job starts his day with the deeply painful words, "Today also."

Last night, as he went to sleep, he surely had at least a small hope in his heart:

"Maybe tomorrow will be a little better. Maybe tomorrow God will answer me somehow.

Maybe tomorrow God will let me move even just a bit away from this bitter suffering."

But! When he opens his eyes in the morning, everything is still the same.

He had a faint hope, but just as he feared—"today also"—nothing in his situation has changed. God still seems nowhere to be found, and his body and soul are still aching, as if dying.

So, "today also," there is **a rebellious heart and anxiety** within him.

This "rebellious heart" in Hebrew comes from the word marah, meaning "**bitter,**" "**sorrowful,**" "**defiant,**" or "**rebellious.**" When one is suffering to the point of death, how can obedience come easily? Of course, what rises up first is a heart of rebellion and defiance.

So, saying things like, "I will rebel against God! I will now live however I want!"

Job is sighing with a heart full of rebellion and sorrow before God,

honestly expressing the turmoil within him—this is the heart of Job "today also."

But then—!

(2) But this is not the only kind of heart Job has—there is another kind of heart coexisting within him.

Immediately following in part (2), we see: "**My hand is heavy on account of my groaning.**"

Now, the Hebrew phrase translated as "the calamity I bear" is actually somewhat ambiguous. In Korean, it's paraphrased as simply "**the disaster I receive,**" but Reformed scholars interpret this in English as: "**His hand is heavy on me! The hand He has laid upon me is heavy!**" The NIV translation also reflects this interpretation.

This means, in short: **“God’s hand, the hand placed on me, feels like such a heavy calamity that I cannot even utter a proper groan!”**

Right now, whether He is laying His hand on me to press me down, or whether He is touching me to bring healing, I still don’t quite know.

But one thing is sure: Job clearly feels **the heavy hand of the Almighty “today also.”**

In this way, along the path he takes, these two hearts continue to coexist within Job even to this day.

As I wrote down at the very bottom, **(1) My heart is bitter and rebellious against God!** Yet, **(2) The heavy hand of the Almighty!**

Between these two hearts, Job is still living day by day, going back and forth. And this is not something found only in Job. Just like Job, many of us believers live through bitter realities—big or small—that show no sign of resolution, always feeling marah—bitter, sorrowful, and painful—even “today.” Within us, these two hearts surely coexist.

The Bible contains many stories of believers who live in such sorrowful circumstances yet at the same time experience the hand of the Almighty God sustaining them.

Overall, Job stands as a representative man of such faith, and as a female representative, perhaps **Naomi** comes to mind. Naomi’s turbulent life is quite similar to Job’s.

Naomi originally lived a very abundant life, living in the powerful nation of Moab with a strong husband and two wonderful sons, with no apparent problems.

Her name, “Naomi,” means “joy” in Hebrew! She lived happily, even welcoming Moabite daughters-in-law, living well with nothing to envy in her life.

However, one by one, major problems began to emerge.

First, her husband dies, and then her two fine sons also die in the land of Moab.

From a life that she had mistakenly thought was complete, joyful, and happy, it became a gloomy life with nothing left. So she sends her daughters-in-law back to their own families in Moab, and she herself tries to return alone to her homeland, to Bethlehem.

But one of the Moabite daughters-in-law, Ruth, confesses to her mother-in-law, saying, “Your people shall be my people, and your God shall be my God,” and she insists on following Naomi to the end. Now, with nothing left to hold onto, Naomi is walking the path back to Bethlehem accompanied only by this foreign daughter-in-law, who is clearly “Moabite style” to anyone who looks at her. Shall we read together Ruth 1:19–21, which records how things were at that time?

*** Two Coexisting Emotions in Naomi**

“So the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem. And when they came to Bethlehem, **the whole town was stirred because of them**. And the women said, “Is this Naomi?” She said to them, **“Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me**. I went away full, and **the Lord** has brought **me back empty**. Why call me Naomi, **when the Lord has testified against me** and **the Almighty has brought calamity upon me?**” (Ruth 1:19-21)”

=> **A life that pours out a heart as bitter as Mara, yet does not forget the living presence of the Almighty God!**

Anyway, for Job too, the real problem was those three friends who kept piercing him, and it seems like wherever you go, there are always people like “Job’s three friends” who pierce and criticize. It says **the whole town was stirred**, so surely they were all whispering and talking about Naomi when they saw her.

“Is that really Naomi? She used to be so well-off, raised in luxury, and even her name was ‘Naomi’—which means joy—but how did she come back looking so shabby? I heard her husband and two sons all died? What in the world happened to her over there? And who’s that next to her? Even if she came back with a burden, why did she bring along a Moabite girl like that?!”

In the face of the townspeople all talking like that, Naomi answers them as honestly as Job does today.

(1) I am no longer Naomi. I’m not “joy” anymore. I am “Mara”! I am “bitter”! My heart is in deep pain even today! I lost my husband and my children! I left full, but now the Lord has brought me back empty!

(2) Even while expressing this bitter and tragic heart, at the same time, she says clearly, “The Almighty has dealt bitterly with me.” She keeps confessing, again and again, the living presence of the Lord God. That is the image of Naomi, a woman of faith.

This kind of posture is exactly what we see in Job, in Naomi, and also in us today—the shared image of a true believer! **Even while pouring out "a heart as bitter as Mara," We live, never forgetting the truth of "the living presence of the Almighty God"!**

This, I am convinced, is the actual image of a wise person who walks their path by drawing nearer to the Lord!

Later, in Job chapter 27, Job makes a very similar confession again. Shall we read verses 2 and 3 together?

***The Wise One Who Draws Near to the Lord**

2. “As **God lives**, **who has taken away my right**, and **the Almighty, who has made my soul bitter** (marah),

3. **as long as my breath is in me**, and **the spirit of God** (ruach, the Breath of God!) **is in my nostrils**,”

=> **A saint who, even while pouring out a heart as bitter as Marah, still lives without forgetting the living presence of the Almighty!**

Indeed, in Job’s heart trapped in a broken well, these two things coexist together.

(1) “God who has rejected my righteousness” — the God who seems to press down even the righteousness I have always tried to live by as a believer following His Word, with His

heavy hand! Also, “the God who troubles my soul,” here again the word “Mara” is used, complaining that God is making me wake up to a bitter, harsh life even today! **Yet at the same time,**

(2) he definitely **confesses “the living God.”** There is the confession: **“God lives!” God is certainly alive!** Also, **“the breath of God is still in my nostrils!”** As long as my breath remains within me, the breath of God dwells within me all my life! **The living God surely stays with me until the end!**

This is the testimony of all believers! Through all the ups and downs, we wise ones must never forget this and live today with this confession of faith.

When we become those wise ones who daily move “my way” closer to the Lord, ultimately our living God, who knows all things great and secret beyond our understanding, will accomplish those things through us!

This is the conclusion of the story of Naomi we looked at earlier.

Let’s read together Ruth 4:14–17.

*** The work God accomplished through Naomi**

“Then the women said to Naomi, “Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without a redeemer, and may his name be renowned in Israel! He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age, for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.” **Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her lap and became his nurse. And the women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, “A son has been born to Naomi.”** They named him Obed. **He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.** (Ruth 4:14-17)”

It’s really fascinating. At the beginning of Ruth, the whole town was gossiping about Naomi’s appearance — saying things like, her husband and sons are all dead, she returned looking ragged, and she came back with a Moabite daughter-in-law — all criticizing and talking behind her back! But now, those very same people, looking at Naomi’s life, **end up praising God!** They even acknowledge **the son born to Boaz and Ruth as “Naomi’s son.”**

However, **the true joy Naomi received at that time,** she did not yet fully understand. That baby she now holds and raises would become Jesse, and Jesse’s son would be King David!

And above all, what is the greatest, most blessed news? Ultimately, from the line of David, our Lord Jesus Christ would be born into this world to save us and complete everything! This great and hidden work of God was accomplished through Naomi — this is the true joy God gave her. Hallelujah!

Likewise, we may not fully understand God’s great and secret works during our lifetime, just like Naomi back then. But one thing is certain: our God will never leave us alone when

we fall in situations like “Mara.” He will strengthen us to hold on to the living Almighty One and rise again! What once felt like the heavy hand of the Almighty will become a true blessing that gently comforts us. He will transform our lives, which once felt bitter like “Mara,” into joy like Naomi. And in the end, the good works God has planned will surely be fulfilled perfectly in His timing — **through us who walk “the path I go” by the breath of God alone.** I firmly believe this!

2. I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat!

Also, when we look at Job walking “the path I go,” he inevitably says something like this: **“How can I find God and come before His dwelling place?”**

Let’s read together the summarized content from verses 3 to 9.

* Where is my Father? (God’s sovereignty and the process of faith)

3. Oh, **that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat!**

8. “Behold, **I go forward**, but he is not there, and **backward**, but I do not perceive him;

9. on **the left** hand when he is working, I do not behold him; he turns to **the right** hand, but I do not see him.”

=> (1) **“That I may be found in Him (be found in Him)…”** (Philippians 3:9)

=> (2) **“You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.”** (Jeremiah 29:13)

Even amid Mara-like suffering, the righteous Job, true to the meaning of his name, is walking this path today with the believer’s concern: “Where is my Father?” How can I find God? How can I approach God’s dwelling place?

Surely God is alive, and since the breath of God still remains within me, I firmly believe that even now God is somewhere hearing all my words and constantly working. **But still, He is utterly unseen.**

I am struggling as if about to die, yet where on earth is our God and what is He doing? Surely He must be working, but whether I go forward or backward, whether to the left or the right, I cannot see or find Him at all!

This is the honest confession of Job who feels trapped in a reality where every direction is completely blocked.

So at this very point, as Job says, is it right or wrong to say that we can find and seek God? Yes? Or No? Actually, the answer is both **Yes and No**, because the Bible speaks to both aspects.

(1) First, as in Philippians 3:9, it says **“that I may be found in Him,”** using the passive voice. This clearly shows that the believer is someone who is found in Him, only in God! It is the Lord who finds me!

Just as our Lord Jesus said, **“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you,”** we are sinners whom the Lord first came to find. The Lord Himself discovers me to be weak, and appoints me as His child and disciple. Though I am always lacking, I willingly receive my Lord and submit under God’s sovereignty.

This is truly the beginning of our faith! This part is **extremely passive**. It is not something we do!

So (1) is about God’s sovereignty. It’s not that anyone can just find God by themselves, but rather the believer is someone who is first and foremost found in the Lord!

(2) But in (2), it also says this:

“If you seek me with all your heart, you will find me and meet me!”

If we have come to believe and rely on the fact that God first found me and chose me as His child, then (2) speaks about **the process of faith**, where those who are already believers actively seek the Lord with their whole heart.

In this **“process of faith,”** we must never be passive. At this point, as believers, as children, as disciples, we must respond more **actively!**

Like Job, we must deeply wrestle with the question: How can I find God? How can I draw near to the Lord? We must strive and wrestle with these questions!

Even when the reality feels like all directions—front, back, left, right—are completely blocked and nothing is visible, we must do our best to seek God’s will according to His Word and live faithfully in the present moment. We are called to become active Christians who live out our faith.

This is **the beautiful faith process of Job**, wrestling in a “Mara”-like situation, **thinking hard and trying to respond actively**. This is exactly what verse 10 continues to show!

Let’s read today’s verse 10 together, and also Psalm 139 where a similar confession appears.

***The Faith Process Confessed by the Saints**

10. But (1) **he knows the way that I take**; (2) **when he has tried me**, (3) **I shall come out as gold**.

=> " (1) **O Lord, you have searched me and known me...** If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me...(2) **Search me, O God, and know my heart!** Try me and know my thoughts! (3) **lead me in the way everlasting!** (Psalm 139:1-24)"

=> (1) **God’s Sovereignty** (2) **God’s Refining** (3) **God’s Outcome (Result)**

Both “Righteous Job” and “David, a man after God's own heart,”—how strikingly similar are their confessions!

(1) First, like in point (1): “This path I’m walking I can never fully understand it myself. I don’t know why such a blocked, challenging road is placed before me. My mind cannot grasp it, and I have no way of knowing it.

But only He knows! It is the Lord who fully knows the way I take. It is the Lord alone who governs my every path in life!”

Likewise, David confesses, “O Lord, you have searched me and known me.” These two—Job and David—both begin by acknowledging **God's sovereignty**.

(2) Then, like in point (2):

They both acknowledge that for weak people like us, it is necessary that He refines us.

That all these trials are God’s process—searching every flawed corner of our hearts, testing us, and shaping us through them. Job and David both firmly confess, by faith, **in God’s Refining**.

(3) And finally, like in point (3): Even someone like me, so full of impurities, can ultimately come forth as pure gold—Job’s confession is that the Lord will surely bring him to that end. And David likewise prays, “Lead me in the way everlasting!” Both men, to the very end, faithfully confess their trust in **God’s Outcome**.

Hallelujah!

Today, I’ll conclude the sermon by singing a song myself. Originally, I wanted to sing it together with you, but it’s actually a solo piece, so I’ll sing it alone. But if any of you know it, please feel free to join me.

There’s an animated movie called Joseph: King of Dreams—it’s about the story of Joseph from the book of Genesis. In that movie, there’s a song Joseph sings while he’s in prison. The lyrics feel very much like something Job himself would sing today, so I’d like to close with this song.

The English title is “You Know Better Than I,” and in Korean, it has been translated and sung by Pastor Kwan-Woong Chun as “You know my way better than I do”. I’ll sing it in Korean, and then repeat the chorus once more in English.

***Joseph’s Song in Prison — “You Know Better Than I”**

I thought I knew the way. I followed it, even though I couldn’t understand it all.

**But now, inside the prison bars of despair, When You opened the eyes of my heart,
I came to understand the truth.**

You know everything, Lord —You know my path.

I entrust my life entirely to You, Because You know my way better than I do.

You know better than I, You know the way I've let go the need to know why, I'll take what answers you supply For you know better than I

I earnestly hope that, even in the moments of Marah—which we clearly cannot fully understand—though we may not see Him, our God is surely always walking with us on our path in all His goodness. Therefore, just like the process of faith confessed by Job and David, and like the lyrics of the song, may we first submit under the sovereignty of God, who knows all of our ways; then, in the midst of God's discipline that molds us, may we struggle deeply and be shaped actively; and finally, may we firmly believe in God's result, which is the eternal way, and become those who know how to entrust “the way that I take” entirely to the Lord. This is my sincere blessing for both you and me.

<Conclusion>

Dear beloved saints,

Today, through the life of Job, we reflected on “the way that I take.” Let me summarize it in two key points under the theme:

*** The Wise Draw Near the LORD(15): The Way that I Take**

1. Today also my complaint is bitter

: Even in situations of **bitter sorrow** like Marah, a wise person of joy who always does not forget **the living Almighty God** and **the breath of God** still within me, and who walks “**the way that I take**”!

2. I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat!

: Let us submit under ‘**God's sovereignty**’, be actively molded through ‘**God's discipline**,’ and ultimately hold firmly to ‘**God's outcome**’—becoming faithful ‘**people of wisdom**’ who entrust “**the way that I take**” fully to the Lord.

May we all become such wise people of God—both you and I—this is my earnest prayer and blessing.